

**MINISTRY IN THE LIFE OF FAITH**  
**GENESIS 14:1-16; 18:20-33**

When God called Abram he gave him the promise, “I will bless you.” He did this in more ways than Abram imagined possible. But God also promised, “I will make you a blessing.” This is just as important as being blessed.

God makes the promise to give a blessing to all of those who make a faith commitment to him. You and I have received this promise and we have received the blessings. But when God blesses someone, it is always so that they can become a blessing. God made Abram a blessing to a great number of people during the days of his earthly life, but no one was blessed more through him than his nephew Lot.

Two dramatic incidences recorded by Moses give us insight into this part of Abram’s life. They reveal to us the truth that the life of faith is one of ministry. Not only does faith bring blessings into your life, it also makes your life a tremendous blessing to those around you. There are two aspects of this ministry that grows out of the life of faith that are highlighted in the biographical sections concerning Abram. The first relates to his rescue of Lot when he was captured along with the kings of the plain. The second relates to Abram standing before God on behalf of Lot when he was in danger of being destroyed along with the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Surely if we are to live by faith, our faith in God will involve us in this same type of ministry.

## **I. MINISTRY OF INTERCEPTION.**

The detailed historical account included in this record by Moses has many interesting details. Biblical scholars questioned the historical accuracy of it for a whole generation, but then archeologists discovered ancient records that included the names of the kings that are found in this chapter. In fact they learned that the primary king mentioned in verse one is none other than Hamoribi who was so famous for his laws that he shared with his generation. The kings listed in verse one were the descendents of Shem while those listed in verse two are the descendents of Ham. The whole story recorded here revolves around this conflict between the kings from a distant land who came against the kings of the plains which included Sodom and Gomorrah. Because Lot had moved into Sodom and had become a part of the community, when the city fell to this coalition of kings, he was carried away as a captive.

Someone brought Abram a report of the capture of Lot and the fall of the cities of the plains. If he had done the human thing, he probably would have simply said, “he got himself into this mess, let him get himself out of it.” But that was not his response. His faith in God had developed in him such character that he made an entirely different response to the plight of Lot. He involved himself in what we are calling a ministry of interception. He felt it was his responsibility to do whatever he could to rescue Lot from this plot and to bring him back to a life of freedom and fullness again.

### **1. Faith enables the compassion.**

The record simply reads, “when Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the three hundred and eighteen trained men and born in his household and went in pursuit as

far as Dan.” While there is no reference in the text to any compassion on Abram’s part, we know that it was compassion and concern that motivated him to take action. There was no other reason for Abram to do what he did except that he really cared for his relative Lot. He was moved into action by compassion.

Faith gives you an entirely different perspective on the problems that other people encounter. It will keep you from standing aside and objectively watching them while they are being destroyed and doing nothing. Faith will bring to you a sense of inner concern and responsibility that will move you to action. This ministry of interception is always an expression of compassion and concern.

We need a fresh infusion of this kind of compassion. Many of us have members of our families that are captive to alien forces spiritually right now. We work with people who are captive to all kinds of destructive forces. And yet we are not moved to attempt any kind of rescue or interception. As our faith grows so will our compassion for those who have been taken captive.

## 2. Faith provides the courage.

While it is true that Abram had under his command three hundred and eighteen trained servants, it is still true that he was outmatched by the forces of the kings that had taken Lot a captive. While no numbers are given concerning the number of soldiers involved in the conflict, without doubt there were many more than Abram had under his command. But Abram was depending on God not the number of soldiers under his command. He believed that the God that he worshipped at

the altars at Bethel and Hebron would indeed be able to deliver this enemy into his hands and to enable the rescue of Lot. So with great courage he marshaled his forces and attacked his enemy during the nights and achieved a complete victory over the enemy. He was able to rescue not only Lot, but also the other citizens of the plains who had been taken captive. He was able to bring back the possessions that these enemies had carried away. He really achieved more than he could have ever imagined.

Most of the studies that I have seen indicate that it is our fear that keeps us from being involved in the ministry of interception. We are afraid of what someone might say or what someone may do so we allow our relatives and friends to be taken captive without us ever raising a hand to bring about the rescue. We never speak to them. We never visit them. We never offer them any help. We never share the Gospel with them. We are afraid. The only way we will overcome that fear is through our faith. It is faith in God that enables us to be strong and courageous in the ministry of interception.

I am praying for a whole company of Abrams in the life and work of First Baptist Church who will care enough about the unsaved and lost, those held captive by the enemy, that they will involve themselves regularly in this ministry of interception. If we will get involved in the conflict for the souls of men, God will reward us with some wonderful victories.

## **II. THE MINISTRY OF INTERCESSION**

While there are several intervening incidents included in the record between chapter 14 and chapter 18 of Genesis, the two passages before us are tied together by the involvement of Lot and

the ministry of Abraham. This man of faith is enabled not only to intercept Lot when he has been taken captive, but he is also enabled by his faith to be an effective intercessor for Lot when his whole family is in danger.

The experience of Abraham standing before God on behalf of Lot and Sodom is one of the most beautiful examples of intercessory prayer in the Bible. The whole incident was prompted by God making known to Abraham what He would do. I suspect that God revealed to Abraham what He was planning to do because He knew what Abraham would do if he knew. God was moving his servant into a ministry of intercession. From this experience of Abraham we can learn some significant and abiding lessons concerning intercessory prayer.

1. Faith provides the boldness for intercessory prayer.

The response of Abraham to the news that Sodom was to be destroyed is a wonderful example of boldness in prayer. It is a bold step for a human being to stand before almighty and holy God to intercede for another. Listen to the beginning of Abraham's prayer, "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing – to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the judge of all the earth do right?" It is Abraham's understanding of the righteous and just nature of God that makes him bold in standing before God on behalf of Sodom. Faith always acts in this way.

Some of us are negligent when it comes to intercessory prayer. Some are timid when it comes to intercessory prayer. We approach God apologetically, as though we were doing some strange thing. But God would lead us to become persons of faith so that we would be involved in this bold ministry of intercession.

## 2. Faith gives birth to humility in intercessory prayer.

As you read on through this prayer experience of Abraham his humility becomes rather obvious. Listen to these words that were in his second petition to the Lord, “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?” Is that not a beautiful expression of genuine humility! Abraham stands before God with a full awareness of who God is, but he also knows who Abraham is. He knows that Abraham was created by God out of dust and that in the end his body will return to the dust as it was. He is a creature with no claim upon God. And yet with a head bowed he can boldly come into the presence of God to make his petition on behalf of wayward Lot.

## 3. Faith provides the persistence.

Abraham began with a lot of optimism concerning the city of Sodom. He thought that surely there must be at least fifty righteous persons in this city of Sodom. So he made fifty his first petition to the Lord. When God informed that Sodom did not have righteous men, he moved down to forty-five. When God informed him that it did not have forty-five, he moved down to

forty. When God informed him that there were not forty, he moved down to thirty. When informed him that there were not thirty, he moved down to twenty. When informed he could not find even twenty, Abraham asked for mercy if there were ten. But when God informed him that not even ten righteous persons could be found, Abraham gave up his petition. He must have concluded that if these cities did not have ten righteous persons then there were not worthy of being spared.

This is a beautiful example of persistence in intercession. To many times we make a petition, and if it's not answered rather quickly then we stop our praying. But Abraham was there with such urgency in his heart that he persisted with God all the way down to the petition for mercy if there are only ten righteous men.

It is faith that undergirds such a life of intercession. There is a direct correlation between the persistence in your prayer life and the strength of your faith. As you grow in faith, you will grow in your effectiveness as an intercessor.

Intercessory prayer is such an important thing. It is a way that your life blesses others. But it is also wonderfully true that as you bless others you yourself will be blessed.

4. Faith provides the selflessness.

Intercessory prayer is a very selfless act. Abraham interceding for Lot asked nothing for himself. He seeks no favor from God or Lot. His only concern is with the welfare of Lot and the will of God. I cannot think of any ministry we do for others that is more selfless than intercessory

prayer. It is our faith in God, our walk with God, our communion with God that brings us to the place that we can rise above the natural selfishness of life and intercede for others.

To many of us have been content to be blessed by our faith but we have not let others be blessed through our faith. Let me encourage you to continue to grow in faith so that you will be more effective and consistent in the ministry of interception and intercession.

A number of years ago C.D. Meigs caught the spirit of this life of faith when he wrote an old hymn that we used to sing often. The lines of the hymn read,

Lord, help me to live from day to day

In such a self forgetful way

That even when I kneel to pray

My prayer shall be for others.

Help me in all the work I do

To ever be sincere and true

And know that all I do for you

Must needs be done for others.

Let self be crucified and slain

And buried deep; and all in vain

May efforts be to rise again

Unless to live for others.

Others, Lord, yes others

Let this my motto be,

Help me to live for others,

That I may live like thee.

Yes, the blessed can be a blessing as they live by faith.