

# (Genesis) 27 - the Faith of the Father of the Faithful: Uncompromising

by S. Lewis Johnson

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*The sermon explores the faith of Abram, the father of the faithful, and its significance for Christian living, highlighting the importance of uncompromising faith, giving ministry without appealing to those who do not know the truth, and studying the Bible.*

**Duration:** 55:15

**Scripture:** Genesis 14:16, Exodus 2:11-12, Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:2, 1 Timothy 6:17, James 1:27, 3 John 1:7

**Topics:** "Uncompromising Faith"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Abram in Genesis chapter 14. He describes Abram as a man who is both deeply connected to God and capable of handling worldly affairs, even in military matters. The sermon discusses a small war in which five rebel cities defy their masters and face swift punishment. The preacher also touches on the financial practices of evangelicalism today, highlighting the importance of living by faith rather than being swayed by worldly possessions.

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## Transcript

In our last study last week, we left Abram dwelling by the Oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, by his altar, and Lot by the city of Sodom. And so we pick up the story now in Genesis chapter 14 for our scripture reading. I want to read the entire chapter.

I'm sure that you're interested again in the official pronunciation of some of these names that appear before us in chapter 14, and so I'm going to go through it and pay particular attention. This is the official pronunciation of these words. I was a little puzzled myself by a few of them, and so last night I even looked up a few of them in the Bible dictionary, and I hope I'm able to pronounce them as they should be pronounced.

Genesis chapter 14, verse 1 through verse 24. And it came about in the days of Amraphel, king of Shinar, Ariok, king of Eleazar, Keterleoma, king of Elam, entitled king of Goyim. Some of you in your editions may have Goyim rather than Goyim.

The New American Standard Bible which I am reading has Goyim. But they made war with Bera, king of Sodom, and with Bersha, king of Gomorrah, Shanab, king of Atmar, and Shemeba, king of Zeboiim, and

the king of Bela, that is, Zor. These kings in the first verse are kings from the east.

You'll recognize Elam as Persia, for example, and Shinar as Babylon. The kings mentioned in the second verse are kings from the area of Sodom and Gomorrah, and in fact four of the kings, or four of the localities, Sodom, Gomorrah, Atmar, Zeboiim. These are little places that were destroyed when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

Verse 3, all these, that is the kings of verse 1, all these came as allies to the valley of Siddim. Then Moses adds, which perhaps is an indication of the antiquity of the basic account, all these came as allies to the valley of Siddim, that is, he adds the salt sea. Twelve years they, that is the five kings in the land, twelve years they had served Ketolaoma, but the thirteenth year they rebelled.

And in the fourteenth year, Ketolaoma and the kings that were with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashtaroth, Carnaium, and the Zuzim in Ham, and the Amim in Shaveh, Kiriathayim, or Thayim, and the Horites in their Mount Seir, as far as El Paran, which is by the wilderness. Then they turned back and came to En Mishpat, that is Kadish, and conquered all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, who lived in Hazazon, Tamar. And the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admar, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bila, that is Zoar, came out, and they arrayed for battle against them in the valley of Siddim, against Ketolaoma, king of Elam, entitled king of Goyim, and Amraphel, king of Shanar, and Ariok, king of Elazer, four kings against five.

Now the valley of Siddim was full of tar pits, and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell into them, that is, they fell into the tar pits. But those who survived fled to the hill country. Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their food supply, and departed, and they also took Lot.

This next phrase, Abram's nephew, is very important, because this links the whole account to the story of the life of Abram. And they also took Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions, and departed, for he was living in Sodom. Then a fugitive came and told Abram, the Hebrew, now he was living by the Oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Ena, and these were allies with Abram.

And when Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. Evidently these three hundred and eighteen men were servants of Abram, and they must have had some form of freedom as well. He had trained them, in addition, for protection.

And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobar, which is north of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot, with his possessions, and also the women, and the people. Then after his return from the defeat of Ketileoma, and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Sheve, that is the king's valley.

And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. Now he was a priest of God Most High. It's, it would seem evident from the way this account is constructed, that Melchizedek accompanied the king of Sodom.

And as the king of Sodom went out as the political leader to greet Abram, Melchizedek stepped forward, and it's obvious from the account that the king of Sodom and Mel, and Abraham recognized that Melchizedek was a greater figure than either of them. And so as he stepped forward, the account focuses

attention upon him and his words. So we read in verse 19, And he blessed him, that is Abraham, and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.

And he gave him, that is he, Abram, he gave him, Melchizedek, a tenth of all. By the way, this is not the beginning of the tithe. There is some evidence to indicate that the giving of a tenth part of things was accustomed in the recognition of the dignity and position of a superior being.

And this reads literally, not he gave him a tithe, but he gave him a tenth part. Now later on in the Mosaic law, as we know, the tithe was introduced as a form of income tax, in that everybody had to pay the tithe. The tithe was not a gift at all.

It was a kind of tax. Everybody had to pay it. Gifts and offerings were above the tithe.

That's why it's rather amusing for the Christian church to speak about tithes. Because in the New Testament, since the law has been done away with, the tithe has been done away with. Gifts are made, but giving is as God has prospered us.

It is voluntary. And consequently the determination of giving is entirely, well it's not different. Because gifts and offerings were gifts and offerings in the Old Testament.

But it does not have any relationship to the tithe. Now we read in verse 21, and the king of Sodom said to Abram, give me the, give the people to me and take the goods for yourself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have sworn to Yahweh, God most high.

You'll notice he identifies the Lord with the name that Melchizedek has used for God. Signifying that they really are speaking about the same person. The Lord, God most high, possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich.

I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten and the share of the men who went with me. Ener, Eshcol and Mamre. Let them take their share.

Now this is rather interesting because of course we read in Genesis chapter 12 that Abram had received a great deal of benefit from Pharaoh when he was in Egypt. But now we read that he says that he will not take anything, not a thread or a sandal thong of anything that belonged to the king of Sodom. That suggests one or two things.

In the case of the gifts of Genesis chapter 12 they were given as a kind of dowry. Because Pharaoh expected to marry Sarah, whom he thought, who he thought was the sister of Abram. And so consequently Abram felt free to accept the gifts as a dowry, for that was a kind of secular practice.

But when it came to spiritual things that was a different matter entirely. Or another explanation may be appropriate. It may be that when Abram was forced to leave Egypt by Pharaoh, when he was in effect forced to leave, Pharaoh ran him out of Egypt.

He may have said to him, you should be ashamed of yourself. Abram was humiliated, he said nothing. You shouldn't be ashamed of yourself, it is I who have blessed you, I've made you the so-called prophet of the Lord rich.

And perhaps he was so humiliated by what had really happened, and that that man could say what he said. That now he says, he doesn't want anybody saying I have made Abram rich. It's possible he learned his lesson when he was in Egypt.

We don't know, the Bible doesn't make either of those explanations definite. But at any rate he makes a definite stand here and says he will take nothing from the King of Sodom. He does not expect his faith to be the faith of Eshcol and Aner.

And so he says let them take their share. If they want to do that, that's their responsibility. I won't force them to live by my faith.

But as for me, I don't want you to say, you've made Abram rich. Abram is the servant of Yahweh, possessor of heaven and earth. May God bless this reading of his word.

The subject for today and the continuation of our exposition of the book of Genesis is the faith of the father of the faithful uncompromising. The challenge of Abram's life, we have been saying, is to live by the vision that God gave to him when he called him out of Ur of the Chaldees, to go out to a land for an inheritance. In a sense that is the kind of challenge that faces each of us as believers.

For we too have a calling. The Apostle Paul speaks about the fact that we have been called. And consequently our calling is to a life with God, while somewhat different than Abram's.

It is essentially the same kind of calling. And the challenge for us is to live by the vision, the understanding of the divine revelation, which has been given to us. His life was not that of constant success.

It's already clear that Abram had his ups and his downs. And yet as you study the life of Abram you discover that there is a growing conformity to the will of God. And even though later on he will fall into some of the same sins that characterized his earlier walk with God.

Nevertheless there is development and progress and growth. That's the essence of the doctrine of progressive sanctification, which the Bible teaches concerning the saints. In the incident that we looked at last week, when strife arose between the shepherds of Lot's flocks and the shepherds of Abraham's flocks.

One saw the grasp of the invisible upon the spirit of Abram. And one saw also how in the test that came to him, when he gave Lot first choice, he showed insight, wisdom, and generosity. The eternal in a sense triumphed over the temporal.

And I think as far as I'm concerned, when I thought about the decision that Abram made, giving Lot first choice, allowing him to take any part of the land that he wished. There came home to me the texts in the epistle to the Hebrews in the eleventh chapter that had to do with, that have to do with Moses. The writer of that epistle says, by faith Moses when he had grown up refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

Choosing rather to suffer ill treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. Considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. Notice that, he was looking to the reward.

And then in the twenty-seventh verse, by faith Moses left Egypt not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is unseen. Now if the enduring as seeing one who is unseen characterized Moses, it certainly also characterized Abram. And as a result of his decision, with reference to the strife, the promises were renewed to him, they were expanded.

And we found an illustration of the fact that in the final analysis it is the separated man who is the strong man, and it is the worldly man who is the weak. We shall see the evidences of that particularly in chapter 14. This chapter incidentally is of great importance for biblical Christianity.

For the first time the biblical events are expressly coordinated with external history. And so we read about kings from the east, and then we read about kings from the land, and the battle that they have. And so we have a coordination of what some like to call secular history, with sacred history.

Strictly speaking all history is sacred history, for God controls all of the affairs of men, even those affairs that we think of as secular. But nevertheless you see in this, that Abram while he is in the world is really not of it. And we find that illustrated here.

Incidentally in connection with this 14th chapter of Genesis, for a long time this was thought to be a fictitious chapter. Because the archaeologists and other students of antiquity had never been able to discover any definite connection between secular history and the events that are referred to here. And even the names of some of the individuals.

One of the greatest of the Semitic scholars, Albright of Johns Hopkins, wrote a few years back, Genesis 14 contains so many archaisms in language, in personal and place names, that it has been long impossible for a serious scholar to deny that its source material must go back to early times. My own attitude toward the historicity of the chapter has oscillated over the decades, but has tended to grow more conservative as new material turns up to elucidate this or that obscurity. And I think that is characteristic of modern scholarship now.

This chapter is seen to be an authentic chapter. And the events, while not everything is confirmed by secular history, nevertheless the events have sufficient confirmation for us to believe, strictly from the standpoint of historiography, that the chapter is an authentic chapter. Now that is important, this integration of coordination of external and biblical history.

But even more important is this chapter for its key and clue to the high priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isn't it interesting that in the New Testament we are told that the Lord Jesus Christ is a high priest, not after the order of Aaron, as one might expect for Aaron as a prominent character in the Old Testament, but he's a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. And this strange, fantastic person is introduced here in Genesis chapter 14 without any reference to his genealogy.

So far as Genesis is concerned, he doesn't have a father, he doesn't have a mother, he doesn't have beginning of days, he doesn't have end of life. It was customary for the prominent characters of Genesis to have their genealogies inscribed in this book, but in the case of Melchizedek we do not have it. So the writer of Hebrews, inspired by the Holy Spirit, thinks about this deeply enough to recognize that point and sees in it that in this way we have a beautiful illustration of an eternal king priest.

And so this, the argument that he uses is a kind of argument from silence, but since of course it is the divine record, he knows that the record is by divine design. And so he sees in Melchizedek a beautiful

illustration of our Lord as the eternal priest. And consequently this becomes very important for the understanding of Jesus Christ's ministry to us as priest, as advocate, as intercessor, a ministry that he's carrying on at this very time.

And so Melchizedek makes Genesis chapter 14 very important. The writer of the epistle of the Hebrews incidentally says that the reason that so many of you are lethargic and indifferent and weak in your Christian life is that you don't know the ministry of the Lord Jesus as the priest after the order of Melchizedek. And so you ought to know that ministry and therefore the heart of that epistle is an exposition of what it means to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

I know there are people who say well I'm interested enough in trying to apply the few things in the Bible that I know and I'm not interested in gaining a deeper knowledge. That reminds me of some words that the old commentator Matthew Henry once said. We shall not only be called into account for the truth that we knew and did not apply, but also for the truth that we might have known and did not come to know.

So when the time of the judgment seat of Jesus Christ takes place and believers pass before that judgment they shall not be judged simply concerning the truth that they know and did not apply, but also by that truth that they might have known if they had diligently studied the word of God. Therefore the priest after the order of Melchizedek is a rather important thing. Finally in this 14th chapter, I know it's dangerous to insert a finally when you're introduction, but nevertheless this is finally, so far as this chapter is concerned, finally the words that Abram spoke to the king of Sodom throw an important light on financial principles of Christian ministry.

And I want to spend a little bit of time on that later on and consequently if you will allow me I will skip rather lightly over the struggle over lot and center a little bit of attention upon the words that Abram spoke to the king of Sodom. In third John there is a very interesting little clause. John speaks about some individuals, recommends them, and says that one of the things that characterizes them is that they went out taking nothing of the Gentiles.

In other words he approved of the fact that they gave their ministry without appealing to those who did not know truth. Now that principle is very important and we find this illustrated in the words that Abram will give to the king of Sodom, to which we'll give attention shortly. We left lot at the end of chapter 13 in Sodom and Abram by the oaks of Mamre.

Abram in a new capacity in chapter 14 is seen as a man equal to kings. The kind of man who knows what it is to commune with God on the mountains by himself, by his flocks and his shepherds, but at the same time a man who is able to enter into all of the affairs of the world and give a good account of himself even in military affairs. An unusual man.

The warring parties are described in the first three verses. It was I guess a small war in which five rebel cities in the land defy their masters from the east and suffer swift and devastating punishment. The campaign of Cateleoma is described in verse four through verse seven.

Evidently Cateleoma and the five, the four, the three other kings that were associated with him when the news came that the kings were rebelling in the land and not paying the tribute as they should have paid it, decided that since he was going to have to make a trip he may as well do a thorough job of it. And so he makes this journey a punitive raid and it becomes an orgy of annihilation. And so he moves from the east to the east down to the south and then across to the west and then up to the north again until the enemies

are gathered in that little valley which is located near the northern end of the Dead Sea.

Where there were pits, pits of Batumen the Hebrew says. So evidently there were lots of pits with pitch in them. And as a result of this wide sweep and finally the confrontation with the five kings from the south in a very disgraceful defeat, the kings crawling amid the Batumen pits, they were overcome by Cateleoma and the kings with him.

And in true marauder fashion Cateleoma and those that were with him take everything that is not nailed down back toward the east and included in the spoils is Lot. What a humiliation for this man who was a true believer the New Testament tells us but a worldly. He had chosen as his prize that land that was about Sodom.

It reminded him remember of the Garden of Eden. It reminded him of the fertile plains in the land of Egypt. And so looking with his eyes and judging from the standpoint of the visible and the material he chose that little plot of ground near Sodom as his own possession.

But this prize that was carnally chosen is now lost. Someone has described this as the capture of Lot or nemesis pursuing sin. How true.

You see our sins do find us out and our worldliness as Christians will ultimately find us out too. We shall discover that we shall suffer for the things that are contrary to his word. Now of course as far as Christians are concerned we know that we shall not suffer the loss of eternal life but we shall suffer the loss of the enjoyment of the communion with God that we might have known.

There is great practical importance on attached to Lot's experience. How frequently do we hear people defending continuance in a position that they admit to be wrong on the plea that they think that thereby they may enjoy a wider sphere of usefulness. We often hear people saying people who are in a very liberal bible despising fellowship.

And you will often hear them say particularly if they are evangelical Christians who have come to a little bit of knowledge about the word of God. Not enough but a little bit at least. You will often hear them saying in a way in which they attempt to excuse their own position.

Well I know that it may not be right for me to be in this fellowship that I'm in but after all I'm expecting to have a Christian witness there. And so to have a Christian witness in that place becomes the predominant motive for staying in a fellowship that is contrary to the express words of holy scripture. Now to all such reasoning Samuel furnishes a pointed and powerful reply.

He says to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams. Now we shall see that of the two men Abram and Lot the one who conceivably by human reasoning might have been thought to withdraw himself from the world. And therefore to have little opportunity for testimony is the one who does have ultimately the testimony.

And Lot has a testimony too but it's a testimony to the failure of worldly Christianity. So there is an important lesson in this. You see the proper position of a Christian is not to identify with the world in order to testify, in order to have a witness in a fellowship that is contrary to the truth.

But the place of effective service and the place of effective witness is to separate from the world and to testify against it. We're not talking about isolation. That of course is not taught in the word of God.

But we are talking about no entangling alliances. And the effectiveness comes when a particular position that is scriptural is the position of the witness. And from that effective testimony against the unbelief of the world given.

That is effective testimony it seems to me. Well the deliverance of Lot is described in verse 13 through verse 16. Someone has said faith makes us independent but not indifferent.

I'm afraid that Abram is a much better believer than I am. I think I would have been inclined to say well Lot has by his decision made it necessary that he learn a lesson. And so let him stew in his own juice.

And consequently he'll learn that when you make decisions for the Lord you should make them by eternal principles. By the unseen principles. But one thing about Abram.

The Bible says incidentally faith purifies the heart. It works by love. It overcomes the world.

And Abram is a man of faith. He is the king of faith. He's overcome the test of self-interest by allowing Lot to choose first.

Now he overcomes the test of self-complacency. Because he recognizes that Lot is his brother. His nephew actually.

But he also is a believer. And they are bound together in a relationship. And so he has a responsibility to him.

But whatever you say about Abram he failed a great deal. He was not a vindictive person. I'm afraid I would have been.

I would I think have enjoyed the thing that happened to Lot. That'll teach him a lesson. And all of us who do like Lot.

But Abram felt that was a call upon him. And so in true evangelical Christianity fashion. Thinking over the fact that here are people that are now oppressed by Chaldeans and those that are with him.

He sets out to remedy the situation. There are people today who tell us that the social effects of evangelical Christianity are not seen. Now that is simply a confession of the ignorance of history.

It is in evangelicalism that we see some of the most outstanding social effects. And here we see it right here. In Abram determining to rescue Lot and those that were with him from the oppression of Chaldeans and the others.

Now the defeat of the kings is described in verse 15 in a most interesting way. He divided his forces against them by night. He and his servants and defeated them and pursued them as far as Habor which is north of Damascus.

You might not have expected this because in Abram there is there there is conjoined the graces of a saint with the talents of a soldier. Now that's not uncommon in the Bible. We have it illustrated in the case of Moses who we learn from tradition outside scripture was a man that was mighty in his exploits among the Egyptians before God called him to the task to which he was to devote the remainder of his life.

We've seen it in Gideon, we see it in David, we see it in others of the Old Testament saints. They were saints but at the same time they were also magnificent military men. An indication of the fact that a man may be an outstanding Christian and at the same time very skilled in his particular task whatever that may be.

He brilliantly displayed military tactics that from time immemorial have characterized good generals. Characterized men like Miltiades and Themistocles of Greece, Julius Caesar, Oliver Cromwell, Napoleon, Stonewall Jackson of course. Incidentally Stonewall Jackson was both a saint and an outstanding general whose tactics incidentally are still studied in our military colleges of Von Moltke and others.

Now notice the things that characterize Abrams skill and you'll recognize immediately if you know anything about military life. I know not much but I know this much. Notice the things that characterize his work as a leader.

Celerity of movement, suddenness of attack, surprise attack by night, skillful division of his forces. That characterized Jackson at places in the early campaigns of the war for the liberation of the south. The outflanking and outmarching of the enemy.

All of these things characterize Abrams attack. It's not surprising that he won. Well the rescue is described in verse 16, and he brought back all the goods and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions and also the women and the people.

Can you not imagine what happened to the remnants of Catalaoma's army when they reached the east? They straggled back amazed at the unexpected end to this campaign which had been a campaign of victory. Until Abram came in touch with them. It was easy to save Lot out of that disorganized multitude and Abram managed to save not only Lot but all of the material goods as well.

But now as is characteristic of all spiritual life, he's won a great victory. But he faces a dilemma which he probably has no inkling of. When you win a great victory that's the time to beware, because you tend to relax.

And consequently when you relax you're at your weakest. And so a greater conflict now faces him in the appearance of the two kings. The king of Sodom and the king of Salem.

And what is represented by them. Now remember Abram was just like any other man. He wanted security.

Men want security don't they? They will sit at their desk and go over their possessions and say, ah I now have a portfolio that is worth seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. But I would feel much better if it were one million. And I know enough millionaires to know that when you sit down with your portfolio one million two hundred and fifty thousand, you would love to have one worth two million.

Security is something we all want. Abram was probably a wealthy man, but security and the test of security was a severe test for him. He was a homeless man.

He probably could easily see how he might lose everything with a bad year or two. Hudson Taylor used to say, every trial is a vote of confidence from my heavenly Father. So the trials come in order to test us and to make us better men and women.

And here comes the trial. The king of Sodom comes. A very handsome business-like offer.

Abram you've won the victory, take it all. Just give us the people. We had the roar of the serpent in the earlier part of the chapter.

We have the roar of the lion I should say in the earlier part of the chapter. Now we have the hiss of the serpent. Satan works in various ways.

Now at this point when they meet the king of Sodom and Abram, Melchizedek is there. This strange mysterious figure. He has a remarkable name incidentally.

Melchizedek comes from two Hebrew words. One melech which means king and tzedek which means righteousness. So his name means king of righteousness.

Furthermore he was the king of Salem. Now Salem was Jerusalem. So here is a king of Jerusalem, king of righteousness.

And incidentally David is the first Israelite to sit on Melchizedek's throne. Now since he's king priest, he's king and priest of Salem and years later David will be installed as king in Salem or Jerusalem being the first Israelite king to sit on the throne of Salem, Jerusalem. And no doubt David thinking about the history of Jerusalem in the past remembered that it was at Jerusalem that Melchizedek had reigned as king priest.

And so in the greatest of the Messianic Psalms, Psalm 110 in the fourth verse David by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit sings, the Lord has sworn and will not repent thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. As he thinks about the Messiah who is to come. So he himself sitting on the throne recognizing himself as typical of the king who is to come announces that he will be a priest after the order of Melchizedek for he has inherited his priesthood when he sits upon the throne in Jerusalem.

Well this great figure appears and evidently the king of Sodom backs off and Abram himself recognizes his superiority and so Melchizedek speaks after he has brought forth bread and wine. Now I cannot help but feel that that has some relationship to the bread and wine of the New Testament. Abram didn't need any refreshment he had all the spoils.

So I rather tend to think that this is symbolic of perhaps the memorials of sacrifice as a basis of communion or perhaps symbolic of the words that he will give in the prophecy or the expression of praise that he gives in verses 19 and 20. At least we are to think of them as symbolic. Symbolic of that which represents a finished work.

Bread and wine. He blesses Abram three times the word is used. He blessed him.

Blessed be Abram. Blessed be God most high. So he blesses Abram he blesses the Lord and this blessing is clearly designed to provide Abram with some strength for the test that is going to face him now.

What are you going to do with the spoils Abram? And so we read that he Abram gave him Melchizedek a tenth part of the spoils. Recognition of the divine office of Melchizedek. Now we hear words from the king of faith.

The king of Sodom said to Abram give the people to me and have the goods for yourself and Abram said to the king of Sodom I have sworn to the Lord God most high possessor of heaven and earth that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours lest you should say I have made Abram rich. Put

in our language he'd say I will not take a red scent from you lest you say I have made it possible for Abram to be rich. You see if a person lives by the vision that God has given to him he won't be disturbed by that because the possessor of heaven and earth Yahweh possessor of heaven and earth he's the possessor of heaven and earth and if he fills the vision vision then the goods of Sodom have little attraction.

What a majestic response this is on the part of Abram the great example of faith. Now that brings me to say just a few words about financial practices and evangelicalism today. The customs of today include collections, indiscriminate, appeals, charges for the ministry of the word of God.

We have actually seminars constantly given in which we are told that if we will pay anywhere from zero to sixty dollars we'll be able to sit in on these meetings in which the word of God is taught. Prayer letters constantly are sent out. Incidentally they know exactly those who send them out exactly the kind of response that is expected.

A Pavlovian kind of response is the thing that is expected. I've sat in on meetings like this and heard men say we are in a little bad straits and so consequently let's send out a prayer letter we know that we will get a certain kind of response. And so we have that in evangelicalism.

We have appeals to foundations that are foundations that are not built upon scriptural principles at all generally speaking. Generally speaking are foundations that are founded by men who do not know our Lord Jesus Christ. Now there are many things that I disagree with Bob Thieme about.

He is a very forthright Arminian and I am a fairly forthright Calvinist as you know. But Bob Thieme was certainly right when he said the greatest con artists of all are Christians. I agree with that.

I think that is true. And one of the reasons for this is that they play upon the kinds of emotions that are ordinarily very good. It is we who are appealing for your funds who are like Elijah.

Someone has likened it to this. We're like Elijah standing on Mount Carmel fighting against Baal. And God has told us to do this.

To take on 50 more radio stations or to build this building or establish this university. He has given us the vision and this is what we're going to do. And are you not going to support us? And we therefore feel if we say no that we are saying no to the Lord.

It's as if we are saying that we will support the prophets of Baal rather than our leader who's standing on the mountain. This past week in the Wall Street Journal in one of the lead articles on the front page there was a story about a particular radio and TV ministry which was so much in debt that the station was threatening to cancel their program. They hadn't paid their bills for six months.

And so the leader, Elijah standing on Mount Carmel, the leader announced that he was going to write a twenty thousand dollar check. Everybody knew it was worthless. I think he knew it was worthless too.

But nevertheless he directed his secretary to write the twenty thousand dollar check. And he said God told me to do it last night. And then on Monday according to his autobiography and according to the story in the journal thirty thousand dollars came in.

And so naturally he was encouraged and later on that year he wrote two more quote faith checks unquote. The title of the article incidentally is faith fails to keep money woes away from a TV ministry. These things

are being carried on in evangelicalism even in those most evangelical circles.

Abram gave no recital of his needs. He sent out no prayer letters with self-addressed envelopes hinting at his needs or anything like that. What should a Christian do? Why should do the obvious thing? Don't respond.

I think of the congregation to which a visiting minister was preaching. And it was said at the conclusion of the meeting that they would take up a love offering. And so they didn't have any collection plates and the preacher was there and he had his hat.

And so they took the preacher's hat and they passed the hat around after he had preached. I wonder how much I would get this morning. But anyway they passed the hat around and finally they returned the hat to the minister and it was conspicuously and embarrassingly empty.

And so slowly and deliberately the preacher took the hat and he inverted it and turned it upside down and shook it good like this. Then he raised his eyes toward heaven and he is said to have prayed fervently. I thank thee dear Lord that I got my hat back from this congregation.

Well I think that would at least teach him a lesson to not take up love offerings. There are sophisticated fundraising machineries by which you can spend thousands and thousands of dollars and whole programs are set forth by which you can obtain money from people. In one article that I read this week from Eternity Magazine there is a statement that fifty thousand dollars was spent by one organization for one week's work in planning a year's prayer letters, TV giveaways and appeals for funds of this one organization.

Now what is the peril of all of this? As I see it, it's this. In the first place it robs God of his glory. He's sovereign in the supply of our needs.

He's the living God. That's what we say isn't it? He's the living God and if he's the living God and if he has called us to ministry then we can be sure that he will supply our needs. And if he doesn't supply the funds there is nothing bad about closing shop.

It may indicate a change in his purpose. What's wrong with that? But if he wishes us to carry on a ministry he will supply our funds. Now I don't like to be put in the embarrassing position of glorying.

The Apostle Paul had to apologize for glorying too and I guess in one sense I can say that's scriptural. But embarrassingly I say to you that's why we don't take up a collection in the morning service here at Believers Chapel. We know there are many of you who are not Christians.

We don't want you to feel you have to support this ministry. This is the responsibility of the Lord through the saints who are moved in gratitude to see that the word of God goes forth. We don't appeal for funds over our radio ministry.

That puzzles a lot of people. I was in Nashville this past week. I received one of the greatest compliments I've ever received.

A young lady. She is a multi-multi-multi-millionaire. If I named her father many of you would know him.

He has founded three national corporations that are worth well some of them up in the billions of assets. She is approached by every appeal in that city. I wish I could tell you what she did once when Vanderbilt Divinity School came to ask for some funds from her.

She's an evangelical Christian has been converted relatively in recent years. Was in Dallas attended Believers Chapel for a lengthy period of time. She said last week, Dr. Johnson is the only person who comes to Nashville and doesn't beg for money.

Now I thought that was one of the greatest compliments I've ever received. I don't carry out the will of God as I would like to. I fail often.

If you knew me and knew my heart you would know the many failures that I have. But that is one thing that I would want to do. To glorify God and not beg for money as if God is poor.

He's not. It robs God of his glory. It weakens the exercise of faith in the invisible God in prayer.

In the Presbyterian Journal of September there was an article by a man who was formerly a registrar vice president of Wheaton College. He wrote an article in which he said that he had been on an extended holiday recently and when he came home he found an accumulation of second and third class mail. It included 78 appeals from 49 Christian organizations.

78 appeals from 49 organizations. It's obvious some of them had already appealed two or three times while he was on his vacation. The title of the article incidentally is, I thought it was good, why pray when you can solicit.

Now this is an experienced Christian man. He's speaking truth. That is the tendency.

Why pray when you can solicit. And finally, I know you're happy to hear that, this often leads to disastrous consequences because deadly strings are often attached to the gifts of the ungodly. When I was in Scotland just a few weeks ago one of the strangest things that I ever expect to see happen, happened.

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was meeting. The professor of dogmatic theology at the university's Divinity School is retiring this year. They were selecting a successor.

A few years back the Divinity School, because it's wandered from the truth and no longer preaches with fervency the doctrine of the grace of God, got into financial difficulties and consequently they were unable to do with their buildings the things that they wanted to do. And so someone thought up the idea, why not attach the Divinity School to the university, so that it will become the theological faculty of the university. There was an association, but let's make it part of the university.

Therefore the university will have the responsibility to support us materially. And so they devised a little scheme of 12 electors, or a committee of 12 to appoint successors, thinking, well after all most of the people in Scotland are in the Church of Scotland, so the six men from the university, since most of them will be Church of Scotland men, and the six men from the Divinity School which selects the professors, well we'll have our way, but at the same time we'll have our money. Well, at the General Assembly on Thursday, I think it was, the rumor got out that the new successor to the professor of dogmatics, who has had a reputation of being an evangelical, a man under whom I've studied several times, the rumor got out that the successor was not going to be a Church of Scotland man.

In fact, the rumor was out that he was going to be a man from the Roman Catholics. Well, it was so disturbing to the people of the Church of Scotland that they quickly passed a motion, someone offered a motion, that no one should take that position who did not believe in the doctrines that Thomas Chalmers believed in. It was the chair of, the Thomas Chalmers chair of theology, an old great evangelical man.

And then finally they became desperate and passed a motion that he should be a man that they approved, but it was too late, they'd already selected him. And so the assembly came to an end on Friday and on Monday it was announced that the successor to the Church of Scotland's theological school, the chair of, the professor of dogmatics was a Roman Catholic scholar, not only a Roman Catholic scholar but one who had been removed from a Roman Catholic institution for heresy himself. You see, the gifts of the world often have deadly strings attached to them.

May God help us to profit from the lesson of Abram. If you're here this morning and you've never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, let me remind you that there is no salvation except in him who has loved us and loosed us from our sins in his own precious blood. The atoning sacrifice has been offered.

If you by the grace of God the Holy Spirit have come to a recognition of your sin, there is salvation and forgiveness of sin offered through Jesus Christ. May God help you to come. Let's stand for the benediction.

We are grateful to thee Lord for the lessons that we learn from the word of God. Enable us, O God, to live in such a way that thy name is honored and glorified. We know we are weak and sinful and very inconsistent.

We do desire, Lord, however, to please thee, to honor thee, and that others may see thee as the sovereign of this universe, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ through whom alone there is salvation. There are some here who have not come to him, O God, bring them to him. Now may grace, mercy, and peace go with us for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

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Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/13/SID13016.mp3>

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