

Genesis 14

How To Face Temptation

How do you respond when you hear about a person who claims to be a Christian who has fallen into sin? Some people think it should be public knowledge. When they see a brother fall into sin they blog all the details and tell all their friends.

Other people think this way: "He got what was coming to him, that's what he gets for playing around with fire, what else can you expect?" And I've seen Christians almost joyful that another Christian had fallen, especially when that Christian held to a little different doctrinal belief, or maybe had a little different viewpoint of the Christian life.

The judging Christian says "Ah ha, I was right after all. If they would have just believed the way I do they wouldn't have had these problems."

This obviously isn't what Jesus had in mind when he talked about leaving the 99 to find the 1 lost sheep who had wandered away.

And it certainly isn't what God had in mind in Galatians 6: 1 & 2. There we read: *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

That's God's principle for restoring a fallen brother or sister. Our job isn't to step on their fingers as they hang onto the edge, it's to restore such a one, heal, mend, put back together again.

And what you find in principle in Galatians 6 you find in illustration in Genesis 14 and the account of Abraham and Lot.

Chapter 14 of Genesis is one of those chapters that we are tempted to breeze over real quickly. It contains so many long, unpronounceable names, so much geography, and so much history that we can hardly keep up with what's happening.

And yet, if we just blow by Chapter 14 we miss this beautiful illustration of Galatians 6 and the instruction that God wants us to receive personally.

In chapter 14 we find Lot is a man who is overtaken.

Turn to Genesis 14 page 12

Back in chapter 13 we read about, Abraham and Lot having a dispute about pasture land for their flocks. Abraham who had learned his lesson about trusting God said to Lot, chose whatever land you want and I'll take what is left over.

Lot stood upon the mountain and looked out over the well watered portion and chose the plain of Jordan. He had chosen purely on the basis of greed. He had moved in that direction at the expense of all the moral risks involved in living in the area of wicked and ungodly Sodom.

At the end of chapter 13 we are told that Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom. That is the way the downward slide usually starts. Lot said, I know Sodom's an ungodly place full of ungodly people but it won't hurt any to hang out around the place. And by chapter 14 we find that Lot was actually living in Sodom itself.

In the first 12 verses of chapter 14 we find that outcome of Lot's move to Sodom. This is the result of the decision that he makes in chapter 13.

I. We Set Ourselves Up For A Fall If We Are Not Walking Close To God

Read Verse 1 - 4

What you have being described here was a very common situation during the 20th century BC.

These kings were rulers over city states and there was always warring and fighting going on as the stronger tried to dominate the weaker.

We find here that 4 kings from Mesopotamia had overrun, and then collected tribute money, from 5 kings living in the fertile Jordan Valley. For 12 years the five kings paid tribute and then in the 13th year they rebelled and stopped the payment.

That caused Chedorlaomer, who was one of the 4, to gather up troops from the other 3 city states and move westward.

As he did he subjugates and devastates all of the lands east of the Jordan. Then he moves south all the way to Mt. Sinai and Kadesh Barnea and finally swings back north to the area of the five kings.

The five aren't going to submit again so they organize their troops. A battle took place but the five lost again and in the process the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah flee for their lives into the mountains.

And in verse 11 we read... **Read 11 & 12**

This is the first mention of a battle in the Bible. You'd have to believe that hundreds of skirmishes had taken place between small kingdoms before this, but God didn't chose to tell us about those. This one would have been lost in the annals of unrecorded history too if it hadn't been for one thing. They took Lot, Abraham's nephew, and carried him away.

Ever since the early 19th Century the so called scholars and biblical critics have relegated these chapter to the area of myth. Since it seemed impossible to identify those kings and since the route they supposedly followed couldn't be found, it was viewed as a fictitious story that was created purely to make Abraham seem powerful and famous.

W. F. Albright was one of those who figured this chapter was all Jewish myth, until in 1929 he discovered a line of early and middle bronze age mounds all along this route that the 4 kings reportedly followed. These mounds turned out to be the ruins of the cities destroyed by the invaders and it was even named "the king's highway" by later archeologists.

One of those later archeologists was Nelson Glueck, and in his book "Rivers In The Desert" he wrote, I found that every village in their path had been plundered and left in ruins, and the country side land waste. The population had been wiped out or led away into captivity. For hundreds of years thereafter, the entire area was like an abandoned cemetery, hideously unkempt, with all of its monuments shattered, and strewn in pieces on the ground.

Then in 1975 archeologists excavated the city of Ebla at Tel Mardikh in what is today north-west Syria. They found almost 20,000 of clay tablets which were the royal archives of the city. These tablets date back to the middle of the third century BC, even earlier than Abraham's time. Tablet 1860 names the five cities of Gen. 14:2--in the exact same order--as trade partners of Ebla!

This chapter, like the others in the Bible, has been unquestionably confirmed by

archeology. The kings existed, the battles took place, but the real key figure in this story is Lot. This is where his greed and failure to worship Jehovah God have brought him.

Now all the enjoyment and the gratification of living in the well-watered plains of Jordan have gone. Now the enticement of Sodom has soured through the battle and Lot's capture. And Lot's begun to discover the consequences of his decision. Now it was all tears, trials and tragedy.

He is now a captive of the kings of the east. Lot is beginning to reap the effects of what he has sown. But I think that behind all that we see happening we can know that God hasn't abandoned Lot. God is working to chasten and reprove Lot and restore him again.

You see what's happening in this chapter isn't just an accident in the international affairs of the nations. It is an incident in the program of God. Lot has slipped away from God. He's gone astray and turned to his own way. But God has a purpose for Lot.

II Peter tells us that Lot is was believer in Jehovah God. It's good we have Peter's explanation or I would have said there's no way this guy was actually in God's family. He was a rebellious child, that's for sure.

But Lot was God's child through faith and God doesn't let believers go on in rebellion because He loves them and wants what is best for them like a parent to a child.

The New Testament book of Hebrews says, *For whom the LORD loves He chastens.* Hebrews 12:6 That chastening isn't meant to punish, it's meant to correct.

In one single sweep of God's hand he had completely removed all of Lot's possessions. What a powerful lesson. The one who gives is the one who takes away. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches.* I Timothy 6:17

The Bible says, *The way of transgressors is hard.* Proverbs 13:15

Follow this now. In a matter of days everything that Lot had built his life on

evaporated. The result of Lot's decision, the result of Lot's moving away from God, was the chastening of God.

Not the punishment of God. God didn't say, "Think you can play around? I'll show you buddy." But He said, "Lot, I love you and because I love you I'm taking away everything you are trusting in so that when you are down as low as you can go, you have no where else to look but up."

Now, God has ways of working that go beyond our abilities and our powers. But God in his plan has purposed that we be used by him. He uses Christians to reach other people for Christ, and he uses believers to restore other fallen believers.

Abraham was the one to be used in this case to restore a brother that had been overtaken in a fault.

I. We Set Ourselves Up For A Fall If We Are Not Walking Close To God

II. God Will Restore Us But There's Always A Price To Pay For Us And The One Helping Us

Read Verse 13

Abraham got the news about Lot and here is where Abraham's character really shows because here is where he could have most easily written Lot off.

When we see another Christian flirting with the world, when we see that one overtaken by sin, that is when it is easiest to get up on our self-righteous high horse and say "Good for Him! He got what was coming to him. If he was spiritual like I am he wouldn't have gotten into that mess in the first place!"

Well, how did Abraham respond? Did he say "Finally, Lot got what he deserved, he's been a pain in the neck since we left Ur."? Did he say "That will teach him to mess with me I'm God's anointed"?

Abraham didn't respond with indifference, bitterness, or self righteousness. The spiritual person isn't the one who washes his hands of the whole situation. He is the one whose willing to get his hands dirty!

Read Verses 14 through 16

Abraham had accumulated an army servants. His total entourage must have been well over 1000. 318 of them could bear arms so he took them along with 3 companies of local people and goes after Lot.

The 4 eastern kings were loaded down with the spoils of war. Not only that but they were probably partying all the way home. They had won the battle, there was no one else to challenge them and so as they camped for the night most of them were probably in a drunken stupor.

It's at that moment that Abraham over takes them. He's got a small, inferior army compared to their vast group but he used strategy.

He divided up the men, encircled the camp and then swooped down upon them from all sides. Those that were able to wake up from the drunkenness thought this enormous army was bearing down on them from all sides. And in the confusion they turned on one another and Abraham wins the battle.

Now as far as battles go, this is exciting that Abraham was able to do what he did, very similar to the strategy of Napoleon and Oliver Cromwell. But again the significance isn't in the battle but the fact that Lot was rescued. If it wouldn't have been for Lot, we would have never known about this conflict.

And so Abraham delivers Lot from the hand of the oppressors. He restores Lot to a possible relationship with Jehovah.

Abraham was willing to pay the price necessary to get the job done. When he first heard of Lot's plight he could have shrugged his shoulders and said "Gee, that's too bad. Too bad I'm just a farmer not a fighter. Too bad, they have such a big army and I know so little about war." Abraham could have concocted a thousand reasons why he should keep his nose out of Lot's dilemma.

And the same reasons Abraham might have invented, we can come up with for not helping each other. We look out at our dying world with an estimated 2 billion people who have not so much as heard of John 3:16 and we say "What can I do?" We see brothers and sisters in Christ being tripped up by sin and we ask "How could I ever do anything to help?"

We have our family, our business, our school to deal with. We have our

responsibilities at home. We can't be out bearing everybody else's burdens. We have enough problems of our own.

But God says, *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.* That's a command not an option.

And it always involves paying a price. Taking risks : the risks of loosing out along the way. The risks of being misunderstood and rejected. The risks of sacrifice when it comes to your own personal life. Abraham was willing to do that and Abraham obviously had a boldness. He faced this Mesopotamian alliance which was the mightiest military machine of his day. And even though he was far out numbered he still said the odds aren't too great. He still went after Lot and faced the opposition.

Why was Abraham willing to go? It was only because of his faith in the strength of Jehovah. It was only because he knew that *God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.* I Corinthians 1:27-28

That kind of understanding and that kind of faith that gives us boldness to challenge odds that are way beyond us.

When you and I are called on to restore a fallen brother or sister we may face enemies like alcoholism, drug addiction, immorality, hatred, jealousy. The odds may look overwhelming but our sufficiency is not of ourselves but of God.

Abraham had been going through a refining process. From the time that God had called him to leave his home until now he had made a series of mistakes and failures but every time he'd turn back to God for direction and strength. And something beautiful was happening through all this, Abraham was getting to know God better.

And the better you know God, the more you will trust Him. Abraham had a bold faith because he learned that God's character was trustworthy.

You want your faith to grow? Learn to know God better and you will learn to trust God more.

So there was an outcome of Lot's move to Sodom just like there is so often when we

flirt with sin. He was overtaken.

Abraham, seeing Lot in this situation was willing to pay the price of Lot's restoration.

But as Galatians 6 warns any time we seek to help others who have fallen because sin we have to consider ourselves lest we also be tempted.

I. We Set Ourselves Up For A Fall If We Are Not Walking Close To God

II. God Will Restore Us But There's Always A Price To Pay For Us And The One Helping Us

III. Even The One Helping Has To Be Careful Of Falling Themselves

Look what happened to Abraham.

Read Verses 17 & 21

Actually the King of Sodom was just trying to give Abraham what he deserved. He said "You keep the stuff you recovered and give me the people of my city that had been taken captive. You keep the gold, silver and animals."

Think about what might have been going through Abraham's mind right at that point. Since God has promised Abraham all the land, he might have thought, "Well this may be it. This might be God's method of blessing me."

This was actually a intense test and it came right on the heels of a significant victory. The temptation was to gain wealth through a relationship with the wicked city of Sodom. That was Lot's test when he and Abraham split up the land.

Now Abraham was facing this same temptation that Lot had failed in. Right after our spiritual victories is usually our weakest point. It is usually the time when we are most apt to let down our guard.

In Matthew 16 we read about Jesus' disciple Peter who makes an amazing spiritual proclamation, *You are the Christ, the son of the Living God.* Matthew 16:16

Immediately after that he faced his greatest temptation. Jesus had just announced that he was going to Jerusalem to die.

Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" Matthew 16:22

But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." Matthew 16:23

Satan used Peter immediately after his great spiritual victory. And that is the way it is for all of us. So the king came to Abraham and made his offer.

How does he respond? **Read Verse 22 - 24**

When he said I have lifted my hand to the Lord he means "my hand in taking an oath."

"I won't even take a shoelace. I don't want anything to do with you. I want to be identified as a man who only gets his blessings from God. I want everybody to know, including you that Jehovah is God and He has the power to keep His word. He promised to bless me and He's doing it. The Lord of glory doesn't give his glory to another."

Now how did Abraham handle this temptation? What gave him the spiritual insight at this point of greatest weakness?

The answer lies between verse 17 and 21.

Read verses 18 - 20

Suddenly there came on the scene this man by the name of Melchizedek. He was a remarkable character, a stranger commissioned by God to fortify Abraham's faith. And this was at the time that Satan was ready to attack. *melek* is Hebrew for "king." *tsedeq* is the Hebrew word for righteousness.

Abraham didn't have the Bible like we do. He couldn't flip open a New Testament or the Psalms to fortify his faith by reading God's promises. Instead God sent the King of Righteousness Himself to strengthen this faith.

God is always on time. When a person's life is characterized by an attitude that says, "I realize I'm just passing through life," and he stays close to God, then God is always there to help and strength in time of need.

Melchizedek blesses Abraham and reminds him that God owns everything. He is *el elyon*, the most high God who possesses heaven and earth. This is the God who's promised Abraham all the land and all spiritual blessings.

And Abraham responds (at the end of verse 20) and gives tithes of all to Melchizedek.

The giving of tithes signifies recognition of ownership. And when Abraham gives tithes to Melchizedek he is yielding himself again to Jehovah as his sovereign Lord. Melchizedek is an Old Testament picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Part of Jesus work as great high priest is to nourish and sustain believers.

He's called the king of Salem. The Hebrew word comes from the same root as *shalom*, the word for peace.

When we are being strengthened by the king of Salem, then were not going to be deceived by the king of Sodom.

When our souls are nourished by Jesus Christ, then we'll be able to met any temptation, no matter how strong.

See Abraham was worshipping the most high God and that meant that he was acknowledging God above every one or every thing else in life. Nothing or no one took the priority over God.

God was the center of his life, his joy, his strength, his peace.

If God is your all and all, and your walking in fellowship with Him, you'll be able to meet those temptations of life and turn them into triumphs.

Brethren, in other words those of you who have personally trusted in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, and slips from the path of righteousness, you who are spiritual; going on for the Lord, living in the Spirit, restore such an one.

Do it in the spirit of gentleness with love and with bold faith. And as you do it, be careful to find your strength in God so that you don't fall to the enemy yourself.