

### The Life of Faith, Pt 3: Warfare (Gen 14:1-16)

Genesis 4:8 Cain told Abel his **brother**. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel **his brother** and killed him.<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel **your brother?**” And he said, “I do not know. **Am I my brother’s keeper?**”<sup>10</sup> He said, “What have you done? The voice of **your brother’s** blood is crying to Me from the ground.”<sup>11</sup> “Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive **your brother’s** blood from your hand.

Genesis 13:7 And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram’s livestock and the herdsmen of Lot’s livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land.<sup>8</sup> So Abram said to Lot, “Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, **for we are brothers**. [i.e., family, ethnically, biologically and/or spiritually] ...<sup>11</sup> So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other.<sup>12</sup> Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in **the cities of the valley**, and moved his tents as far as **Sodom**.<sup>13</sup> Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD.

Now look at Genesis 14:12 where kings come and conquer Sodom.<sup>12</sup> They also took Lot, **Abram’s nephew**, and his possessions and departed, for he was **living in Sodom**.<sup>13</sup> Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre [it’s in Hebron, 13:18] the Amorite, **brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner**, and these were allies with Abram.<sup>14</sup> When Abram heard that **his relative** [f.n. lit. “brother”] 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.<sup>15</sup> He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus.<sup>16</sup> He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his **relative** [brother] ...

The answer to “Am I my brother’s keeper?” is yes, biologically and spiritually. The life of faith understands we’re not to fight our family (as we see later in Genesis with Abram’s physical offspring, brothers Jacob and Esau, the brothers of Joseph, etc.). Abram, the father of the faith shows us we’re not to fight *with our family*, but we’re to fight *for our family*. Abram understood his responsibility to his family physically and spiritually (prayer, Gen 18, also v. 19).

Abram didn't do this because Lot was deserving of this rescue. Abram could have reasoned, "hey, Lot is reaping what he sowed. If Lot hadn't been walking by sight and selfishness when he chose that land, none of this would have happened. I'm sorry but he deserves to suffer the same fate and judgment as sinful Sodom."

Kent Hughes: 'Abram could easily have elected to do nothing. Lot had made his choice. [Lot] had cared for no one but himself. Lot had pitched his tent near Sodom and then moved into town! ... People would get further hurt if [Abram] got involved. And what if something happened to him? He was the one indispensable man. But Abram chose to take actions. He was the original Braveheart'<sup>1</sup>

There's an OT battle scene as stirring as any Mel Gibson movie about fighting for your brothers or families. When Israel returned to the land to rebuild and defend, Nehemiah says "...*I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears and bows. When I saw their fear, I ... spoke... "Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses"* (Neh 4:13-14)

As we fight this fight of faith, we need to remember more than the man Abram. Remember the Lord who is great and awesome! This is not a story about Abram's great and awesome warrior skills, as the King of Salem recognizes in v. 20: "... *blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.*" This story is more about God than the human sub-characters. Abram is the *father* of faith but Jesus is the *Author* of faith to fix our eyes on. And for those in the family of faith, He calls us to be like Abram in Gal 3 and 6:1 (NIV) **Brothers, if someone is caught [or overtaken, NKJV] in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him...**

Am I my brother's keeper? Yes. And that includes my spiritual family. Lot was ensnared by his sinful choice to move in to Sodom and he was caught and overtaken literally and could not get out of the problem. But Abram is a spiritual man who restores his brother and we're to do the same for brothers in Christ held captive by sin.

In 2 Timothy Paul says we're to be "*a good soldier of Christ Jesus ... and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace ... [and it says to help others] escape from the snare of the devil [who've] been held captive by him to do his will ... I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.*" (2:2, 26; 4:7).

Good soldiers of the Lord pursue and help others escape who've been captured by the evil one as we fight the good fight of faith. When a brother is ensnared in sin, we're willing to risk to restore. Our battle as Christians is not against flesh and blood like the war we read about with Abraham in the OT, but we do have a spiritual warfare and responsibility to help our spiritual brethren in the fight of fight, as we fight with courage for our faith and families today.

That's the NT concept, but first we need to see this OT context.

**14:1** *And it came about in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, <sup>2</sup> that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). <sup>3</sup> All these came as allies to the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea).*

[\\*CLICK HERE FOR POWERPOINT SLIDES USED\\*](#)

Genesis 14 is the first mention of kings and wars in the Bible, both key terms and themes that continue literally Genesis to Revelation. This is the first “world-war” in biblical history, a multi-national international conflict. It reveals at least 6 biblical truths about war

*1. War is not always evil but can be necessary because man is*

There is a time for fathers and nations to protect their own, and in this chapter Abram is presented as fighting the good fight, not for some personal revenge or reward, but because it was right to fight. Evil men had taken a family member so Abram fights a good fight. It's because he *is his brother's keeper* (contrast Cain) that he does it. It's because of evil from Gen. 3 this war in Gen. 14 takes place. Adam's sin in the garden requires Abram's war in the desert here.

Not only in this chapter but as you keep reading the Torah you see again and again God decreeing war to end the further evil of men. In fact, God commanded Israel later to go to war with these lands:

Deuteronomy 20:16 “Only in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes.  
<sup>17</sup> “But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the LORD your God has commanded you, <sup>18</sup> so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the LORD your God.”

Just a few chapters earlier, in Gen. 9:6 God says “whoever sheds the blood of man, by man his blood shall be shed.” Bloodshed is sometimes necessary and sometimes prevents further bloodshed. So God in Genesis 9:6 ordains governments and nations to this, not for personal reasons or pride or power or the premium of oil in the gulf, not like people from Babylon (Chedarlaomer, Neb, Saddam).

This is not just an OT concept, before Jesus, it’s also taught in the NT: Romans 13:4 says the armies, authorities, governments are:

“... a minister of God to you for good. **But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing;** for it is a minister of God, **an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil ...**

... <sup>6</sup> For because of this you also pay taxes ...

Richard Phillips says: ‘To deny the necessity of war in a world like ours is to deny our duty to be our neighbor’s keeper and to fail to love our neighbors as we ought to love ourselves [Rom. 13:9]. It denigrates the impulse of protection of life enshrined in the sixth commandment [also v. 9] and sunders the covenantal bonds of mutual responsibility on which society depends ... If war is necessary to oppose and overthrow evil in this world, especially when that evil marches under force of arms, then the purpose of war must be to promote life and peace ... [if] a war is to have godly purposes, then it must be waged in a righteous manner. What are the standards by which Christians assess the justness of a war?’

St. Augustine is generally attributed with outlining the main contours of just war theory that have prevailed in Christian thought. First, he addressed the issue of motive: war must be waged for the right reasons ... And as we practice war – for we must in this present evil age – let us look to our reward not in what the sword can win us, but in the day when the sword shall be re-forged as a plowshare, and when out of the warring nations a new humanity in Christ will be joined in bonds of brotherhood for a peace that will never end.<sup>2</sup> Maranatha! Come our Warrior-King!

There is a day when war will be no more and there will be no more swords, after the Prince of Peace returns to earth with His sword, after the final war described in Revelation 20, evil finally banished. But until then there will be wars, rumors or wars, and need of war, because without intervention evil men’s sin will know no bounds.

## *2. God may use sinful nations to judge other sinful nations in war*

This is also a theme you can trace through history, starting here.

The very names of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and the rest speak of their evil. A Jewish writer highlights this in the Hebrew: '*Bera king of Sodom* [in v. 2 in Heb. can] ... mean "in evil." *Birsha king of Gomorrah* ... could also mean "in wickedness." *Shinab king of Admah*. *Shinab* refers to the moon god Sin, and it means "Sin is father." The fourth king was *Shemeber king of Zeboiim*, and his name means "Your name is mighty."<sup>3</sup>

Look at Genesis 13:13: "*Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD.*" And then chapter 14 describes how God defeated these exceedingly wicked sinners, and the others whose leaders' names aren't the most righteous either.

Application for America? If God did it with Sodom ...

### *3. God uses warfare for opportunities for His people*

'In the providence of God, this very invasion, and the destruction by this invasion, prepared the way for the takeover of these areas ... the very areas they destroyed were later inhabited by descendants of people related to Abraham; that is, the sons of Lot, the Ammonites and Moabites; and the sons of Isaac, the Edomites, through Esau. The center and military might of the previous possessors of the area had now been destroyed, emptying the territory for these new inhabitants that will come out of *Abram*...' <sup>4</sup>

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In the aftermath of the Cold War in former Communist Russia, the gospel went forth in great measure. May it do the same in Iraq, etc.

### *4. Warfare should draw man's attention back to God*

This is what happens in v.20 with the King of Salem (future study). The fact that Abram's 318 men succeed in v. 14-16 defeating these kings is intended to draw our attention to the greater King of kings. When you read what these 5 kings did unstopably in v. 5ff, you're supposed to be astonished at what Abram was able to pull off with 318 men and to know something big is at work, Someone big: God

Chedarlaomer and company had easily conquered the Rephaim in v. 5, a term associated with giants by Abram's later descendants. The Emim also in v. 5 may come from the Heb. root "awesome." Chedarlaomer had defeated the awesome ones and giant Rephaim, but Abram had a very big God who was truly The Awesome One!

Gen. 12:3 promised that those who mistreated or treated lightly Abram and his family, they would be cursed or judged by God. We already saw it with mighty Pharaoh receiving plagues and curses because he takes Abram's wife (even not knowing it) in chapter 13 and now in chapter 14 we see it again with mighty Chedarlaomer for taking and treating wrongly another member of Abram's family

Remember, the first 5 books of the Bible are being given by Moses to Israel as they prepare to enter the Promised Land and to conquer great and mighty nations. This passage should have given them courage to know if their "Father Abraham" could defeat seemingly undefeatable Chedarlaomer with God's help, Jericho is no big deal. If God is for us, who can be against us? One with God is a majority

\*Joshua 1:9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong ..."

This passage would have encouraged Gideon in the next book after Joshua and Jericho. An almost identical number of men (300) are used for a very similar night attack, also dividing up at night for surprise attacks, defeating bigger armies, pursuing them (Judges 7)

This would have also encouraged David 2 books later in 1 Sam. 30 when Amalekites took captive Israel's family members, wives, and children, including David's own family. And Abram's descendant David follows in his forefather's footsteps, fighting for his family. David with 400 men pursues and defeat larger armies, by the direction of God, and similarly safely bring back all the people. In each of these cases, the attention is drawn to God. David: "It's not by sword...the Lord saves. The battle is the Lord's" (1 Sam 17:47)

##### *5. Warfare is not just God's judgment, but it includes God's grace*

It is true that God uses warfare at times for judgments, but it's also true God's saving grace is extended to those very same peoples:

- ex: Egypt judged but some of its people saved (Ex. 12:38)
- ex: Rahab rescued from Jericho (Joshua 2, 6)
- Canaanites are still being saved in NT (Mt 15, **Gen 12:3**)
- Lot is saved out of Sodom again before God destroys it
- And other peoples and places in this chapter receive grace
- Hebron is a later place of grace/refuge, Kadesh for Israel

\*SEE SLIDES FOR VISUALS ON BELOW\*

Shinar (Genesis 14:1) is also in Genesis 11:2 the place where men united in rebellion against God at the Tower of Babel. In Genesis 14:1 there is another alliance of sinful men to build a kingdom and make a name for themselves (see Genesis 11:4).

But God calls Abram from Iraq (Ur) and promises He will make Abram's name great and all nations will be blessed in him (12:1-3)

Daniel 4 suggests another notable man from Shinar (called "Babel" in Gen 11, later Babylon) is also saved. Psalm 87:4 indicates others from this land also came to know God, who says: "Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon." (Psalm 87:4 ESV)

Ellasar also in Genesis 14:1 some scholars believe was in Assyria. God's grace comes to Assyria later by the prophet Jonah and Nineveh repents. An even bigger mass salvation in Assyria seems prophesied in Isaiah 19:24-25 where Assyria will be with Israel "a blessing in the midst of the earth ... whom the Lord of hosts has blessed saying, 'Blessed is ... Assyria, the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.'" (along with Egypt also from Genesis 13!)

In Matthew 2, Magi from the East come to the promised land, but this time coming to worship Jesus the newborn King. Some think they came from the area of Babylon or Elam (mentioned in Gen. 14:1). Wherever they came from, it is a fulfillment of Abram's promise in Gen. 12:3 (Gal. 3), including formerly enemy nations.

Some converts to Abram's faith from Elam (also in Gen 14:1) and other Persians/Arabs are among those saved in Acts 2:9-11 when they hear the gospel from descendants of Abraham on the day of Pentecost, in fulfillment of Genesis 12:3 (see also Gal. 3:8-29).

A number of Goim (Gentiles, term also in Gen 14:1) come to faith and join Israel in the time of David. A notable faithful godly soldier of David's is Uriah the Hittite (people group in 14:1?), who demonstrates truer godliness than David in the story (2 Sam 10-11)

Consider Genesis 14 and the family tree of Jesus the Messiah: Matthew's gospel introduces Jesus as "son of Abraham" (Mt 1:1) and ends with the same phrase "all nations" (28:19) as Abraham's promise in Genesis 12:3 (in Septuagint). The genealogy of Jesus then includes many people from nations mentioned in Genesis 14:

- Abraham (Matt 1:2) was from Ur in Babylon (part of land mentioned in Gen 14:1)
- Isaac (Matt 1:2) married from Syria (Gen 25:20), where Damascus is (Gen 14:15)
- Jacob (Matt 1:2) married someone from Haran (Gen 29), modern Turkey (Gen 14:1)

- Tamar and Rahab are both Canaanites (Mt 1:3, 5), the land where Abram is dwelling in, Gen 14
- Ruth is a Moabite (Matt 1:5) from the land the kings pass through in Genesis 14
- The wife of Uriah the Hittite (Mt 1:6, people group in Gen 14:1?), etc.

Consider also God's grace later seen in another place from Gen 14:

- Genesis 14:15 describes Abram the Hebrew on a road to Damascus pursuing Lot to rescue him.
- Acts 9 describes a later "Hebrew of Hebrews," a descendant of Abraham also on a road to Damascus, when Jesus, the Son of Abraham, comes and pursues Saul and rescues him!

### *6. The Warfare Theme in Scripture Ultimately Points to Jesus*

Lot was delivered not because he was such a godly person, but because of God's promises to Abram, because of covenant grace. It's also the only reason God saves us spiritual children of Abram. This would not be the last time Lot would need to be rescued, and 2 Peter 2 makes a direct connection between Lot's rescue again in Sodom, and God's rescue of us in salvation and from temptation: *"if He rescued Lot...then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly"*

God's inspired commentary on Lot and his need of rescue should make us look beyond Abram to his Lord and our need of rescue. What Abram does here is not to be attributed to his natural courage or disposition – remember this Abram in chapter 12 was a coward in a non-battle situation hiding behind his wife and lies because he feared someone might hurt him because of Sarah in his family. But now we see Abram engaging in battle, putting his life on the line to rescue a family member, not his soul-mate but his faraway nephew

Abram left the comforts of his home at the risk of his own death to come and rescue Lot, who was undeserving and unable to save himself from his captors, and Abram pursued and brought Lot back from what would be a life of slavery and fear under this evil king.

Jesus in greater measure left the comforts of His home at the cost of His own death to rescue us undeserving sinners unable to save ourselves from our captors, and pursued us and brought us home, delivering us from lifelong slavery and fear under the evil one.



We are to see that someone more than Abram is at work here. It's his faith, to be sure, but Jesus is the author and perfecter of faith. Fix your eyes not merely on Abram fulfilling the brother's-keeper role for his kinsman, but on Jesus the greater Kinsman-Redeemer who is able to keep all His brothers. Listen to how Hebrews says it:

*Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers ... he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by fear ... For surely ... he helps ... Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way ... brothers ... fix your thoughts on Jesus..."* (Heb. 2:11, 14-17, 3:1)

Was Abram not only a shepherd but a warrior? Jesus is far more. The Lord is the ultimate shepherd in Ps 23 and ultimate warrior in Ps 24:8: *Who is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle.* <sup>9</sup> *Lift up your heads, O gates, And lift them up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in!* [Messiah] <sup>10</sup> *Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts* [armies]

Babylon is literally or symbolically at war with God's people from Genesis to Revelation. From Nimrod in Babylon (Gen 10) to Kedarlaomer from Babylon (Gen 14) to Nebuchadnezzar, the spirit of Babylon and antichrist continues. Revelation 17-18 presents the final enemies of God as "Babylon" with a confederation of even more kings than the Genesis 14 group and if I understand it right, Jesus with Abraham and the armies of all redeemed believers of history will again come back with him to this land, riding white horses (Rev. 19:14), and Jesus will deliver any from His family on earth still living and will pursue and destroy all earth's armies. It says His name is "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."