

Grace To, Grace Through.

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[0 : 0 0] My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm one of the pastors here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today.

A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in his word.

This morning, we're continuing our series in the book of Genesis. Genesis is the very first book in the Bible, so it's easy to find. And it tells the story of the origin of the world and also the origin of Israel, God's people, beginning with Abraham.

We're actually not going to cover the entire book of Genesis. We are just focusing on the story of Abraham in Genesis 11 through 25. And the reason we're focusing in on that is to prepare us to return to our series in the book of Romans.

[1 : 1 1] We're going to jump back in in the fall in Romans chapter 4, which talks about Abraham. So this is all prep right now. Not only does it prepare us for Romans, Abraham's story also helps us ask the question, what does it look like to follow God in faith?

Last week, we saw that Abraham and his nephew Lot had to separate. This is chapter 13. They had both become so wealthy that the land could not support both of them.

They didn't have enough water, enough grass. And so they have to go to different pieces of land. Lot picks first. And you'll remember he picks the very best piece of land with one exception.

He picks apart a parcel of land right next to Sodom, a place of great sin. And so we saw Lot is willing to cozy up to wickedness for the sake of comfort.

He gives in to the temptation to put the good life as first and more important than the kingdom. This week, we're going to see very quickly Lot suffering because of his poor choice.

[2 : 2 3] And so it allows us to see how God responds to his people in their foolishness. How God responds to his people in their foolishness.

That's with that that I invite you to turn with me to Genesis chapter 14. You can turn in your Bible. You can turn on your phone. You can turn in your worship guide.

No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's word. Proverbs chapter 30 verse 5 tells us every word of God proves true. He is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

And so that's why we read now Genesis 14 starting at verse 1. Verse 4.

12 years they had served Chederleomer, but in the 13th year they rebelled. In the 14th year, Chederleomer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the Rephaim and Ashtarothe Karnaim, the Zuzim and Ham, the Emim and Shave Kiriathaim, and the Horites and their hill country of Seir as far as El Perrin on the border of the wilderness.

- [3 : 56] Then they turned back and came to An-Mishpat, that is Kadesh, and defeated all the country of the Amalekites and also the Amorites who were dwelling in Hazazon Tamar.
- Verse 8. Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Adma, the king of Zebuam, and the king of Bela, that is Zoar, went out, and they joined battle in the valley of Siddam with Chederleomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goyim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Ariok king of Elessar, four kings against five.
- Now the valley of Siddam was full of bitumen pits, and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled. Some fell into them, and the rest fled to the hill country.
- So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their provisions and went their way. They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way.
- Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner. These were allies of Abram.
- [5 : 10] When Abram heard that his kinsmen had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and he went in pursuit as far as Dan.
- And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsmen Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.
- I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word. Our Father in Heaven, we do thank you for your Word that you've given to us as a great gift, that we would know and learn how to walk in this world, and most of all, we would know about your mercy, and your salvation, and grace in Jesus Christ.
- We ask that you would help us, that you would help us to see, and understand, and believe in your Word, that you would use it to grow our love, and affection, and reverence, and awe, and obedience to Jesus Christ.
- And we ask all of these things in his mighty name. Amen. In December of 2003, a man named Nick Berg decided to leave his hometown of Westchester, Pennsylvania, which is right outside of Philly, and he left it for the country of Iraq.
- [6 : 44] He made this decision. It had taken Nick a while to figure out what he wanted to do with his life, but he settled on starting a company that would install and repair radio towers.
- He decided that was going to be his life's work. And you may remember, December of 2003 was right after the fall of Saddam Hussein. And so he sees this incredible business opportunity.
- Guess what? Their infrastructure's been destroyed, and I'm going to be the one to come in and save the day and make all the money. I'll repair radio towers that have been hurt, injured.
- I'll install new ones. Everything will be great. Nick's friends and family were appalled, and they warned him, urged him not to go.
- Nick, however, saw only the benefits and none of the dangers. And so seeing only benefits, he separates himself from the land and the protection of the United States.
- [7 : 49] Nick Burke's family then is left wondering what is going to happen to Nick. That's similar to the situation we find ourselves here in this passage this morning.
- You might see where I'm headed with this. Lot has separated himself from the land and the protection of God. Lot sees all the benefits, comes to terms with none of the dangers.
- Remember, chapter 13, he and Abraham have to split. They head in different ways. He looks out, he sees the Jordan Valley, and for him it is only beautiful and alluring.

It's this place of wealth and prosperity, somewhere where he's confident he's going to thrive, and yet we have the hint of coming tragedy, not once but twice.

As he's picking it, remember, we're told, this was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. And then in verse 13, it says, now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.

[9 : 02] So like Nick Burke's friends, the careful listener here is wondering what is going to happen to Lot. We know it will not end well.

There's a lot going on in the first, say, 13 verses, 12 verses, so I'm just going to summarize it for you very briefly. In verses 1 through 9, there is a geopolitical conflict that involves a lot of kings.

We might even say it's not a geopolitical conflict, but geopolitical conflicts, because there's so much going on. Why do we care about this conflict?

We care, we first find out, in verse 2 and verse 8, because Sodom is involved. And if Sodom is involved, then Lot is involved.

That helps us understand why, in the midst of the story of Abraham, we suddenly are told about these 10 plus kings who are fighting with each other. Last week, we were told that Lot moved right next to Sodom.

[10 : 07] Did you notice what we find out in verse 12 of this week? He's not right next to Sodom. He is dwelling in Sodom.

The danger of him setting up camp so close to these sinful people is coming true. So they have the conflict. Sodom's involved.

Verses 10 and 11, Sodom is defeated, which means, verse 12, there is a lot of collateral damage, including Lot. Lot and all of his things are taken.

That is the point of verses 1 through 13. Big conflict, lots of kings, Sodom's involved, because Sodom's involved, things don't end well for Lot. Which takes us back to our question, what does God do with the foolishness of his people?

Lot, this is not an accident. He's not merely a victim of circumstance. He has made a foolish choice to move to a sinful place.

[11 : 14] Now, I want to note at this point, Lot is a very complicated figure. If we just had chapter 13, you might think, you know, Lot has no relationship with God. But actually, the New Testament only speaks positively of Lot.

2 Peter chapter 2 tells us he is a righteous man. It speaks well of Lot that of all the people who did not go with Abraham, he actually goes with him, right, when he leaves his father's land.

And Lot is deeply flawed and wildly foolish. So what is God going to do? Especially when Lot's predicament is because of Lot's decisions.

Well, we find out right away. Verse 13, God shows Lot tremendous grace. And he shows Lot tremendous grace in the way I mentioned in our confession of faith, by his providence.

It just so happens that one man escapes. And this doesn't have to happen, but not only does that man escape, he runs and he tells Abraham.

[12 : 26] In God's providential care, Lot's story is not over. What is God's response to the foolishness of his people?

His response is one of great grace and undeserved mercy. Brothers and sisters, that is God's response to our foolishness as well.

Outside of that, we really don't have much hope. As we've been looking at Abraham and Lot's story over the last few weeks, you might have been thinking, man, maybe some of my priorities are out of order.

Maybe there are things that I have valued above God and his kingdom and his mission. Chapter 14 reminds us there is still so much grace.

God is still protecting and pursuing his people. God is still watching out for you. God is still watching out for you.

[13 : 41] God is still watching out for you. If you belong to him, God is still watching out for you.

Christian. In the midst of your foolishness, our foolishness, stupidity, short-sightedness. And so in Lot's story here, we see two things.

We see an encouragement and a warning. Encouragement, I've already told you. God shows great grace to his people even when they are deeply flawed and sinful.

If you belong to him, God has not given up on you no matter where you are.

And if you do not belong to him, it is not too late. It's not too late to repent and follow after him.

[14 : 47] That's the encouragement. Lot also gives us a sober warning. Yes, Lot's life is saved.

Yes, Lot escapes a future of slavery and so much is lost. Lot will not experience the intimacy and fellowship with God that Abraham does.

Lot will not be a blessing to the nations in the way that Abraham will. And Lot's descendants are going to suffer from his unfaithfulness.

As we watch the story of the Old Testament play out, there is a tragedy for those who are born from Lot. They are going to have one foot in and one foot out of God's people.

They will be half-hearted at best and apostate at worst. So there's an encouragement. God's grace is always there for his people.

[16 : 00] And there's a warning. Actions have consequences. There are real things to be missed and lost if we forsake God's people and God's land.

Now as people in the New Testament, we don't look to a specific land. We cling fast to God's promises and his protection.

And where are those promises acted out? Where does God promise that his protection will happen? It is here with his people in his church. Remember what I told you last week.

Never leave the promised land. I tell you the same thing this week but in a different way. Never leave God's people.

No matter how good it looks over there. Cling to his church. Cling to his word. I've been telling you the last number of weeks about this quote from David Gibson where he says, hey, we can't enjoy created things that we worship.

[17 : 19] The only way to enjoy them is to worship God. C.S. Lewis puts it a different way. This is on page 7 of your worship guide. Put first things first and we get second things thrown in.

Put second things first and we lose both first and second things. What does Lot do here in chapters 13 and 14 but put second things first?

The good land is more important to him than anything else. What does he end up losing? Chapter 19, he doesn't have any good land.

Put first things first and we get second things thrown in. Now we left off here in our story on verse 13.

That's not going to finish it though. Abraham needs more than a messenger. We see in the messenger God's grace to his people, his grace to Lot.

[18 : 25] we're also going to need God's grace through his people. 13, we meet Abraham. He is sitting with his connections, his allies.

We find out Abraham is in fact not a loner. He's been making connections and shaking hands. He's been getting on the ancient Near Eastern linked in and friending people.

He's been attending the desert block parties. You know, if you have something wrong with your car, he has a torque wrench, he'll help you put the wheel back on. And with all that, that's when he receives the news, right?

He is there, he's connected. It's not just that he has allies though, 14. He in fact has 318 of his own men, trained men, which I'm guessing, you know, most of you all when you think about your trained men, doesn't reach the number of 318.

Abraham's really wealthy. He's wealthy, that's why they had to separate. He's not just wealthy, verse 15, he comes up with a creative plan.

[19 : 31] Look, we're going to split into two forces and pursue them to the north. We're going to attack at night. So Abraham's not just been making connections, Abraham knows what he's doing. He is not a newcomer here to ancient Near Eastern warfare.

Then, verse 15, he gives up his time. He's going to pursue them, we're told, Hobah north of Damascus, which is 125 miles north of where Abraham is currently.

So Abraham loses at least a weekend, right? He might even have missed a big game to go and rescue Lot. Abraham gives up his resources, he uses his creativity, he sacrifices his time, and he takes bold and risky action for his stupid nephew.

And he does all of those things because he believes God's promises. Remember the end of chapter 13, God repeats what he's already told him, this land will be yours.

God's grace to his people, God's grace through his people.

[20 : 57] God uses us in his rescue mission. God uses our time, uses our creativity, community, he uses our resources, if and when we believe he will keep his promises.

God shows his grace to his people through his people. So we use whatever God's given us to rescue and restore others.

others. Remember I told you we're in the story of Abraham for two reasons. One, to prepare for Romans. Two, to see what it looks like to follow God in faith.

And part of what it looks like to follow God in faith is to rescue stupid nephews with our 318 trained men, with our time, with our resources, creativity.

Abraham does it because of God's promises, his promise in chapter 12, his promise in chapter 13, and he knows whatever happens, he will never lose his ultimate security.

[22 : 22] Whatever happens, God has given him the promised land and said it will be his. Brothers and sisters, the same is true for us.

When and where we believe God's promises, we will be willing to sacrifice much to save others.

Even when it's because they've made their own bed. things did not end as well for Nick Berg as they did for Lot.

It's a long and gruesome story that I will spare you most of the details. But Nick ends up being captured by a terrorist organization that later becomes known as ISIS, the Islamic state, and he is beheaded on video as a piece of revenge against America and American torture in Abu Graib.

Videos of Nick's beheading go viral. The power and the might of the United States is not enough to protect him. Nick left the land and the protection of the U.S.

[23 : 45] He loses his life. Lot leaves the land of protection of God and is saved because God's promise is that he will never leave us or forsake us.

So he saves his people, he saves you and me in the midst of our foolishness and our stupidity. We do the same for others.

God shows his grace to us and he shows his grace through us. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we do praise you and thank you again for your word, which shows us your great mercy and grace to us in Jesus Christ.

We ask that you would be at work in our hearts and our minds and our lives, that we would believe your promises more and more, that we would risk more and more for you and your kingdom, that we would follow you in faith.

We ask all of these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. I invite you to stand for our closing hymn. Bum, Thank you.