

98-11-08a

As we continue our worship this Sunday morning, turn with me to Psalm 91. Psalm 91. As I mentioned Friday night, we are going to, as a group, at least offer you the opportunity to do sort of formal Scripture memorization.

And as I was compiling our list of verses to memorize, sort of the first group that we want to look at. All of these verses have to do with God's strengthening presence, His comfort, His provision, His strength in time of trial. And Psalm 91 is such a great passage that initially I had only taken an excerpt of this to add to our list.

But I now think upon reflecting over the weekend that, and don't be dismayed, but I think as a group we'll memorize the Psalm. It's 16 verses. It may look daunting, but it's really not.

It has a logical progression through the Psalm. And we'll take three or four verses per week here over the next few sessions. And even if you just remember parts of this over the long term, it's a wonderful piece of the Word of God to have in our souls.

And so we'll look at it this morning as our Scripture reading. This also bears directly on our study of Abram in Genesis chapter 14 and 15. And it is a reminder to us that we have a calling from God.

We live our lives before the Lord, but the burden does not rest on us in the sense of having to generate our own strength or our own solutions. God sustains and provides. He protects, defends, and He makes our way straight when we seek to do His will.

And this is a wonderful selection of Scripture. It is titled in the New King James, The Secret Place of Security, Psalm 91. He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God. In Him I will trust. Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence.

He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge. His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.

A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look and see the reward of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place.

No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling. For He shall give

His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.

You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot. Because He has set His love upon me, therefore I will deliver Him. I will set Him on high, because He has known my name.

He shall call upon me and I will answer Him. I will be with Him in trouble, I will deliver Him and honor Him. With long life I will satisfy Him and show Him my salvation.

These promises and various portions of this psalm are familiar to us. We know that a portion of this passage came up in the dialogue between the Lord Himself and Satan during the Temptations. Remember, Satan goes back in quotes from Psalm 91, when he takes the Lord up and places Him on the pinnacle of the temple.

And he says, cast yourself down from here, because you have a promise of God that says, He will give His angels charge over you, to keep you. In their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. So, Satan's idea is that if Jesus casts Himself off of the height of the temple, the angels will come and catch Him, so that He doesn't even break a foot.

Many times we go to scripture and we see these verses of comfort, of assurance, of the promise of protection and provision and so forth. And we just take that particular verse out and try to claim it. But you'll notice in Psalm 91 that there are conditions on this promise.

And Jesus understood those conditions when He answered Satan. What does the psalm begin by saying? He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. These promises are made to those who dwell in the secret place of the Almighty.

And this is a choice that we make. We choose where to dwell. We've seen Lot and Abram make the choice.

They're both believers. They have both been delivered out of the land of their birth, the land of their origin. They've both come back up out of Egypt into the land of promise.

But they make a choice as to where they will dwell. Lot chooses the fertile, attractive plain and the city area of Sodom. Abram goes up to Hebron and Bethel, the house of God.

By the way, this Most High is Elyon, the same term that is used for God by Melchizedek, God Most High. This idea is repeated in verse 9. The believer who makes the Lord his dwelling place is heir of these promises. And then it's a reminder again in the latter part of the psalm.

And beginning in verse 14, you'll notice that there are quotation marks because in verse 14, God speaks in the first person. Because He has set His love upon me, I will deliver Him, says the Lord. So at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end, you have the emphasis and the reminder that all of these promises of provision, protection, deliverance, the sustaining strength of God, all of this is available to us when we make God our dwelling place, when we set our love upon Him.

And this is a practical thing. This is a decision we make. It is an opportunity that we avail ourselves of in a concrete way.

We can do this today and tomorrow and the next day. How do you make the Lord your dwelling place? How do you set your love on God? Well, this is the subject of our study in Colossians on Friday night. We've seen, as we reviewed chapter 1 on Friday night, how this is accomplished.

We choose to place the priority on our calling, on who we are in Christ. We do all things heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men. And we do so with the enabling power of God.

Where does the power of God come from? We don't have the strength in and of ourselves to be pleasing in God's sight. We don't have the strength to live out the life that God has called us to. Where does that strength reside? It's in the Word of God and in the Spirit of God.

So, as we are doing this morning and as we attempt to do each day, the dwelling place of God to which we go is His Word. God has magnified His Word above His name. The Word of God is living and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword.

It pierces to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit of the joints and the marrow. It is the judge, the critic, the discernor of the thoughts and intents of our heart. If we wonder whether what we are doing and what we are thinking is pleasing in God's eyes, whether the path that we have charted for ourselves, the priorities that we have set, the tasks that we engage in, the way we spend our time, the people with whom we associate and so forth, if we care at all whether those things are pleasing in God's sight, we measure them by the standard of the Word.

What does the Word of God say? Do we find ourselves immersed in an environment of sin? Is there gossip? Is there maligning? Is there judging? Is there temperamentalism where people are sensitive, hypersensitive, where their feelings are on their sleeve, easily offended, easily lash out at one another? Do we partake of that? Do we keep putting ourselves in situations where we are immersed in that sort of thing? We are not dwelling in the shadow of the Most High. We choose with whom we spend our time. We choose what we engage in in our mental life, in our thought life.

We can be in the world and it is necessary that we rub elbows and be exposed to these things, but we do not have to partake. It is our choice whether we sink to that level or whether we dwell in the secret place of the Most High. As we have seen when we studied the subject of the indwelling of Jesus Christ, the formation of the character of Christ in our souls, this is the refuge, this is the cleft in a rock to which we go when we find ourselves surrounded by sin, surrounded by evil.

Sometimes we have no choice in the things to which we are exposed. But if we want deliverance from the snare and from the pestilence, if we want the refuge under the wings, the feathers of God, if we want the shield and buckler of God's truth, there is a way to enjoy those blessings and those promises and it is to make it a point, to make it our goal day by day by day to dwell in the shadow of the Almighty, to seek out that secret place that He creates for us in our soul. We have said many times and we say regularly that the power of God resides in His Word and in His Spirit.

Where are those things? Where are they when they live that active life and when they exercise the active power of God? Where are they? It is not between the covers of this black book with the gold stamping. It is not on the magnetic media of a tape. It is not in the radio frequency of a radio broadcast or a TV program.

Where do the Word of God and the Spirit of God reside? It is in the hearts and souls of believers. That is the dwelling place. That is the place where, remember the passage, it is in the Old Testament and in the New.

It isn't that you have to ascend up to heaven. It isn't that you have to sink into the depths of the earth. The Word of God is near you in your hearts.

It is right here. This is where it is. So to be heir and to be able to claim these promises and to enjoy these blessings of Psalm 91 is to recognize the place of the Word of God and the Spirit of God in our souls.

God has given each of us. He has given you and He has given me the presence of His Word and of His Spirit. It is what we do with it that determines the outcome of our life.

Do we enjoy discipline as a child being chastised because of failure to get with the program or do we enjoy the heirship and the sonship and the blessings of close relationship with our Heavenly Father? We make that choice. God has done everything. He has put everything in place.

And when we make that choice and when we choose the dwelling place of the Most High, all of these statements are true for us because we are the ones who dwell in that secret place. We are the ones who make the Lord our dwelling place. Verse 14 again, Because He has set His love upon me, therefore I will deliver Him.

I will set Him on high because He has known my name. A lot of religions and cults and

things chant mantras and they have secret words and so forth. What does it mean to know the name of God? Well, name in Semitic culture means reputation.

It means the stories, the deeds, the character of a person. If we know God's name, we know His plan. We know His purpose.

We know His character. We know what He expects from us. He shall call upon me and I will answer Him.

I will be with Him in trouble. I will deliver Him and honor Him. With long life I will satisfy Him.

I will show Him my salvation. What a wonderful promise from God. So, for next week, we'll concentrate if you choose.

We'll try to say the first four verses of this chapter together next Sunday at the outset of our service. So if you'd like, you can memorize that. Otherwise, you can read along with us when we return to this passage next week.

But verses 1 through 4 will be something that you have the opportunity to commit to memory for next week. Let's return now to Genesis and our study of the life of Abram and chapter 14, where we have seen this great threat of armed warfare. Where the kings of the north, the kings of the east have come down and attacked.

They took Lot captive. Abram, hearing of this from fugitive, has gone up and cut them off at the pass with his relatively small band. He has 318 trained servants in his household.

He also has some allies from the Amorites. They go up and in spite of the fact that this reminds us of football. Occasionally you have an undefeated team.

Recently the Green Bay Packers and Brett Favre, they had a string of victories. They were Super Bowl champions and so forth. It's a very daunting thing for a team that maybe has sort of a so-so season going.

They've won four and lost five or something. Here you come up against an undefeated team. There's a psychology that works against you saying we've suffered several losses.

This team has never been defeated. But here's Abram with his small army going against the undefeated armies of these four kings under the leadership of Chedor-Neimur. And yet Abram goes and secures the victory.

He routes these armies. He pursues them. Not only does he defeat them and get the stuff back, he chases them all the way back into their own land and gets every last person and every last material that they thieved away, he gets it all back.

And so in verse 16 of Genesis 14, he brought back all the goods and also brought back

his brother-in-law and his goods as well as the women and the people. He frees all of these people from potential slavery back up in the land of the north. And so as a result, as he returns to his own land, he is met in the Valley of Shaveh by two kings.

And these two kings, as we saw last time, represent the two poles of opportunity, the two priorities that Abram has the opportunity to set in his life. On the one hand, he has the king of righteousness, Melchizedek. Who comes out from the city of Shalom or Salem.

On the other hand, he has the king of Sodom. Which the Bible has already explicitly told us that in verse 13 of chapter 13, you couldn't have a more appropriate verse for Sodom. Genesis 13, 13.

The men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord. Well, here's the king. Here's the leader of the sinful, wicked men against the Lord.

Coming out side by side. You get the idea. Here's Abram with all of the loot behind him.

Here from one direction comes the retinue and the king of Salem. He's got bread and wine in his hands. On the other hand, here comes the king of Sodom.

And as I said last week, in my mind I can't help but just picture a few flies buzzing around his head as he comes up. The meeting with Melchizedek is given to us first. He was a priest of God Most High.

El Elyon. He blessed Abram. He 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. Reminds us of Psalm 91. Because Abram made the choice that he made between him and Lot.

Lot chose one place to dwell. It's the area of the king of Sodom. Abram chose the area not far from Melchizedek.

If you look on a map, Abram's been dwelling in the region of Hebron. It's not very far from Jerusalem. So because of that, God has delivered the enemies into his hand.

He gave him the tithe of all. And we looked last week at the concept of tithe. And of the meaning of that giving of the tenth as a means of support, as an expression of appreciation to God.

This is something that in the Old Testament was a way of acknowledging God and His blessing. In the first fruits, in crops and flocks and so forth, the finest and the best were rendered to God. And in so doing, this is an expression of faith.

When you took the firstborn of the flock forward, when you took the best and flawless

animal and brought it down for sacrifice, these actions go against nature. It goes against common sense. You normally want to reserve the best and finest as your breeding stock and as the future of your enterprise.

But in sacrificing these to God, Israelites, in the ideal at least, recognized that God had the power to bless. That God would sustain, God would provide, God would multiply even though these were taken out of the flock and offered. And so it is an example, it is an exercise in faith.

So after the meeting with Melchizedek, we now resume this morning in verse 21. Because now we have the King of Sodom coming up. Give me the persons and take the goods for yourself.

Let's work a deal. You give me back the people, you can have the loot. Now this is a legitimate, you can go to ancient Near Eastern history and what we have preserved in various records, both biblical and extra-biblical, and it is a common thing that to the victor belong the spoils.

And it would be easy at this point. Remember that there is a common observation we make that right after a great victory is when you are most susceptible to error. We relax a little bit.

Pride goeth before a fall, a haughty spirit before destruction. One of the most prominent examples in the word of God is Elijah on Mount Carmel. The prophets of Baal come up and Elijah comes up.

The prophets of Baal dance and slash themselves and they can't wake up Baal. They can't get Baal to manifest himself in any way, shape or form. All the people are assembled there.

It is a big arena situation in reverse sort of. They are all up on the top of the mountain and all the people are gathered around. It is a big contest, confrontation between Baal and God.

After the prophets of Baal knock themselves out and sort of faint away from loss of blood, here comes Elijah. He digs the moat. He pours the water.

He has the altar and the sacrifice and so forth. Fire comes down from heaven. Consumes the sacrifice.

Consumes the altar. Consumes the water. Consumes the moat.

Consumes the top of the mountain. All the people realize that God is God. Elijah turns around and has all the prophets of Baal executed.

Right after that great mountaintop victory, Jezebel, when she hears that all of her

favorite prophets there have been slain by Elijah, she sends one little messenger, one guy in sandals, seeks out Elijah, finds him and says, God's do so to me and more also if I don't make your life like one of those prophets of Baal sometime pretty soon. That's a paraphrase. And Elijah completely unravels.

One messenger comes and says, Jezebel is really mad at you and she's sworn to kill you. And he absolutely falls apart and he runs away in fear. Right after a great victory, we can be susceptible to failure.

Well, here's Abram having achieved this great victory with a small force. He's a hero. All of these people say, God bless Abram.

He rescued us from a horrible life of slavery and destitution up in the land of the foreigners. The king of Sodom comes out now and says, tell you what, Abram, just let me have the people back because by right, Abram could keep it all. By right of conquest, he could make all these people his servants, incorporate them into his household and let them.

He's got all this stuff built in, more flocks, more herds. He's got this grain that he can plant. He's got all the people.

He could just make his own little city state, the, you know, Abramville up there in the middle of the land. And he's got built in servants and the wherewithal, the flocks and herds and so on. So, the king of Sodom comes up and he thinks, well, gosh, Abram's lovable not to give me anything.

I'll work a deal. I'll ask him for the people back because with the people, the king of Sodom can rebuild the city. He can replant the crops.

He can kind of get the economy back on its feet. If he says, Abram, you keep the people and I'll take the stuff, well, he's going to be sitting down there with piles of loot and no kingdom. So, he's wise and he's looking at things from a human point of view.

And he says, give me the persons and you take the goods for yourself. And this is an, Abram can justify this in his mind. Well, I'm the guy that took the risk.

I made this long hundreds of miles journey up. You know, I put myself at risk. I left my stuff behind and so forth.

But, in verse 22, what does Abram say? He says to the king of Sodom, I have raised my hand to the Lord, God most high, possessor of heaven and earth. This is the identical phrase and it's very unusual. This name for God, when you put El and Elyon side by side, is very rare in the Scripture.

So, he's basically quoting Melchizedek. And, if you were standing there and you

understood Hebrew, what you would clearly come to understand from what Abram says is, Abram is identifying himself. He says, look, I'm not a king of Sodom guy.

I'm a king of righteousness guy. My view is the same as this man you see standing over here, Melchizedek. The king of righteousness, king of Salem, priest of the most high God.

So, he uses the very same words as Melchizedek. He says, I have raised my hand. And, this is just like you do in the courtroom.

It means, it's a euphemism or a figure of speech for swearing, for making a vow. A dedication of oneself. This is one of the things that always surprises me.

And, I often, if I'm talking to, whether it's my own children or any others that go to grade school, you know what they do in grade school. They still do pretty much the same thing that we did when we were all in grade school. You go to class in the morning, the bell rings, everybody gets their coats and stuff off and sits down in their seats.

Teacher stands up and says, everybody stand up. And, they stand up and they face the flag in the corner of the classroom. Although, now they've got TV screens down here at our elementary school.

There's a little TV set bolted to the corner of the classroom. They have a flag standing right in the corner of the classroom. But, in the morning, when they're going to say the Pledge of Allegiance, they put a picture of the flag on the TV screen and they tell everybody to go face the TV.

Now, if this is not a sign of the degeneration and loss of focus that we have in our country, I don't know what is. You've got the flag right there on a pole in the classroom. But, you put a virtual flag up on the TV screen and you pledge allegiance to the picture of the flag instead of the real flag.

I cannot figure that out. And, I had my own daughter go ask that question of the teacher. Why is it that when you've got the flag up there, you know, the American flag always stands on its own right.

So, as you look to the front of the classroom, here's the American flag on its own right on a pole. But, the TV screen's over here on the left of the front of the classroom, in the opposite corner. And, all the kids have to face away from the flag and face the TV screen and pledge allegiance to the picture of the flag.

So, I think they ought to just change it and say, I pledge allegiance to the picture of the flag. I just don't get it. Anyway, to pledge allegiance.

We did this when we were kids. And, you can ask a child. Try this next time you're around some small child in grade school and say, ask them.

You know, do they say the Pledge of Allegiance in the morning? And, then ask them what it means. Every American child knows the Pledge of Allegiance, or ought to, by heart. But, find out if they really have any idea what they're saying over and over and over every day.

Do they know what pledge means? Do they know what allegiance means? Do they know why we talk about the flag? Because, you're pledging allegiance to two things. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic. That it stands for.

To the nation that's under God, indivisible. There's liberty and justice for everybody in the country. But, ask a child who's saying the pledge if anybody's ever stopped to explain what they're saying.

Do they have any heartfelt participation? Are they really pledging? Or, are they just mindlessly citing a bunch of words? And, 99 times out of 100, they're just saying the words. And, it's a tragedy. We ought to know.

They ought to know what they're saying. And, we ought to know the same thing. Well, Abram says, I have pledged allegiance.

And, he knows what he's saying. I have raised my hand. I have pledged my allegiance to the Lord, God Most High, the Possessor of Heaven and Earth.

El Elyon. And, he has made a specific vow. This is a subject we're not going to address it in our study of Genesis.

But, there's an interesting subject in the Word of God you can pursue, which is the making of vows. Especially in the Old Testament. Different ones.

You find David saying in the Psalms, I have made a vow and I will fulfill it. You have examples of people, whether you go to the judges and you see Jephthah making a vow to the Lord, involving the first thing that he sees. He tells God, if you give me victory in this battle I'm about to fight, I will sacrifice.

I will dedicate the first thing that I see upon my return. And, unfortunately for him, the first thing he sees when he returns is his daughter. And, there's some idea there that he actually did a human sacrifice.

And, that's a whole, as they say in the Latin, a crux interpretatum in the Word of God. But, here Abram makes a vow and he says, I haven't just pledged my allegiance to God in general. I've made a specific promise.

Apparently, before Abram ever embarked on this journey, he did something similar to what Jephthah does. He says, oh Lord, if you give me victory, I promise I will not partake

of any of the spoils. I'm not interested in monetary gain.

This is not a financial venture. I'm not an entrepreneur here as I go after these people. I have raised my hand to the Lord that I will take nothing from a thread to a sandal strap.

And, I will not take anything that is yours. He says, I don't want to have sort of a buddy-buddy relationship with the King of Sodom. I don't want the King of Sodom saying, well, you know, I'm chummy with Abram.

He rescues me. I give him goods. Abram says, the fact that I have brought this stuff back to you doesn't mean we're friends.

Doesn't mean we're buddies. Doesn't mean I don't want you to be able to say that we have any truck with one another. And so, this is sort of an insulting speech to the King of Sodom.

And, Abram is pretty blunt. He says, look, I've pledged my allegiance to God Most High. And, what I do, I do before Him.

I don't want you to be able to say that you've given me a thing, not a thread, not a sandal strap. We're not friends. We're not buddies.

There's all that see lots of movies in movie lore that people remember certain little phrases out of movies. And, I think it was probably the first Beverly Hills cop movie between Eddie Murphy and Nick Nolte when he springs him out of jail. And, it starts to look like they might be chummy when they ride around together in a car.

But, one of them is a cop and one of them is a prisoner. And, at different times in the movie, they tell each other, we're not friends. We're not buddies.

Don't get the idea that we are. Well, in a nutshell, that's what Abram is saying here. I will not take anything that is yours.

Abram completely, even though he delivers the people of Sodom. I would call them Sodomites, but I won't. Even though he delivers the people of Sodom, even though he delivers all of their goods and returns them to their king, he says, I have no part with you.

I don't want anything from you. I am distinct and separate from you. The reason I'm dwelling on this a little bit, and I hope it sticks in our minds, is we are in the world.

We are surrounded with people who have no relationship with God. And, we often find ourselves in a position to, when we do the right thing, we may help someone. You may see someone stranded by the side of the road.

You see, I saw a car one time on the expressway outside of Tulsa, and it was raining. It

was getting dark. I was on my way into church on Sunday night, and there was a car at really a bad place to be stopped.

It was a ramp that went around. It was real busy. It's where the Turnpike and I-44 and 66 outside of Catoosa, that's where they meet.

There's a lot of traffic, lots of big 18-wheelers going around there. Wet, getting dark, and here's this car. I could see it as I came around the curve up ahead.

There was two ladies there, and they had a flat tire. Their car wasn't far enough off the road, and it was just a dangerous situation. Well, I was supposed to be there for church.

I was a seminary student. I had some part in the service, but it looked like a situation of need. So, I stopped and got the tire changed for them and got them on their way.

Of course, it made me late and so on. But I didn't stop them and say, By the way, are you believers in the Lord Jesus Christ? Before I help you, I just want to be sure that I'm actually expressing love to one of the fellow saints. If you're not, I'm just going to leave you here and go on.

There are times when you do things that are beneficial to others. You do the right thing because it's right before the Lord and not that there's any merit or even any relationship between you and the person for whom you do this. And you don't expect there to be.

And you don't necessarily want to initiate a relationship with these people just because you've done the right thing. You do what you do before the Lord and not unto men. We have these opportunities, and we want to keep the same focus that Abram has.

I have raised my hand to the Lord God Most High. I'm not doing this for you per se. This is the nature of love that is divine in nature.

This is something that we've been taught by great teachers in the past. True love, the love that reflects the character of God, is based on the character and the merit of the one doing the loving. Not the merit or the quality of the object.

Another way of putting it is we should love based on who and what we are, not on who and what the object is. We do what we do based on who and what we are. Think about the love of God for us.

God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son. What merit, what quality, what worth does the world have? None. It's worthless, it's hopeless, helpless, useless.

The love that God expresses is based on who and what He is. God is love. God is light.

God is compassion. God is grace. And He loved us and saved us based on who and what He is.

When we express love, it should be on the same basis. There doesn't have to be merit. There doesn't have to be worth in the object.

We should love. We should act based on who and what we are, not on who and what the object is or fails to be. This is what Abram has done, and he's making it clear when he talks to the king of Sodom.

I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich. Lest you should say, I paid Abram. Abram sort of worked for me.

Abram did this and I paid him. He was sort of a mercenary on my behalf. The king of Sodom can say, well, you know, he could say to his own people, I bought you back.

I redeemed you by paying this third party to come and rescue you. Abram says, you're not going to do that. I'm not going to give you that opportunity.

The only thing that comes out of what I'm returning to you is the provisions, what the young men have consumed. And I'm not going to speak for Aner and Eshkol and Mamre. Let them take their portion and do with it what they will.

They haven't necessarily raised their hands to God Most High. They're Amorites. So there's an important example, an important lesson there for us.

We exist in the world. We hopefully do things that are beneficial to others, but we shouldn't be looking for a return. We shouldn't use it as a rationalization to participate and to aggrandize ourselves with the things of the world.

Abram, it's a doubly great victory because he's just coming off a great victory, and yet he doesn't make the Elijah mistake. He's still thinking before the Lord. He still has God at the center of his thinking.

And he has the benefit of Melchizedek, who has come and encouraged him in that viewpoint and has reminded him of the blessing of God and where the source of his victory was from. Abram listens to the Word. You always want to ask yourself, well, how did these great heroes of the faith do their heroic things before the Lord? Well, look at this passage.

Why is Abram able to keep his focus when he's got all of this loot? Just think. Abram is a prosperous businessman. He knows the value of a shekel.

He knows the value of flocks and herds and grain. He knows how to take this stuff and make more. He's comparable to any of the rich men of our day that you want to think about.

And there's a part of him that is desirous and can see the potential in all these things. What keeps his focus? He not only hears the Word of God, but he reacts to it. He

responds to it.

God brings that Word fitly spoken. Remember in the Proverbs it says, a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold and pictures of silver. And God gives Abram encouragement from the Word, a reminder of God, a piece of the truth in the mouth of Melchizedek.

And Abram hears it and he responds to it and it keeps him straight. We have that same opportunity. God the Holy Spirit speaks the Word of Truth in our souls when we need it.

We have to have the ears to hear it and to respond to it like Abram does here. He avoids the pitfall. He avoids the trap that Lot has fallen into once and is about to fall into again of rationalizing relationship with Sodom.

Relationship with those who do not fear the Lord and who are embarked on a path of evil. We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back we'll start chapter 15 where we will see the first dialogue between God and Abram.

God has spoken to Abram many times in the past, but now we're going to see a conversation between the Lord and Abram. That's where we'll begin when we resume.