



TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

Talk Genesis 18:16-33: Abraham Intercedes with the Lord for Sodom

Lesson 39

"Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. 17 And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, 18 since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." 20 And the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, 21 I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know." 22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD. 23 And Abraham came near and said, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? 24 Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? 25 Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" 26 So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes." 27 Then Abraham answered and said, "Indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: 28 Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for lack of five?" So He said, "If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy it." 29 And he spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose there should be forty found there?" So He said, "I will not do it for the sake of forty." 30 Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?" So He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." 31 And he said, "Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?" So He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty." 32 Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of ten." 33 So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place."

Background Notes

Sodom was a wicked city. It was under the judgment of God. Sodom was about to be destroyed, but Lot and his family lived in Sodom, and Lot was Abraham's nephew. The two angels who had accompanied the Lord on his visit to Abraham were now heading in the direction of Sodom, but the Lord remained with Abraham. *" Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD" (v22).*

At this point Abraham began to intercede for the righteous people in Sodom. Verses 23-25 are a great example of intercessory prayer: *"And Abraham came near and said, 'Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? 24 Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? 25 Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?'"*

What a great example of intercessory prayer! Notice that it was based on biblical principles, and the way that God had revealed Himself. Will not the Judge of all the earth do the **right** thing? What is the answer to that question? Yes! He will do what is right -- even if it means judgment! In fact, that's exactly the point that is made in verses 20 and 21: *"And the LORD said, 'Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, 21 I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.'"*

The fact that the Lord said He would go to Sodom "and see what they have done" doesn't mean that the Lord didn't know what was going on in Sodom! No, He was emphasizing to Abraham that He was a "just" God, and that He would not judge Sodom unfairly. God never judges unfairly.

Notice, too, that God said He would hold back His judgment for the sake of a few righteous people. The Lord responded to Abraham in verse 26 and said: *26 So the LORD said, 'If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.'*

Encouraged by this response, Abraham began his intercessory countdown. Did you ever wonder why didn't Abraham continue to bargain with the Lord down to five righteous people, or even to one? Maybe Abraham thought Lot had been a little more successful with his righteous influence! On the other hand, maybe the answer is that the Lord stopped the conversation. Verse 33, *"So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham."*

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord enjoys close fellowship with the believer.

The two angels went on to Sodom, but the Lord stayed to talk with Abraham, and to share His thoughts with Abraham. The Lord enjoys close fellowship with believers! The meal setting here in Genesis 18 emphasizes this point. I think that is another reason why the Lord chose this way to visit Abraham -- the communion meal, if you will. Notice that the Lord shared His plan with Abraham: *"And the LORD said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing,'(v17). Amos 3:7 says, 'Surely the Lord GOD does nothing unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.'" The Lord enjoys close fellowship with believers, and He shares His plans with them.*

Notice the reason why the Lord wanted to share His ways with Abraham -- He wanted Abraham to pass the lessons on to His children. *"For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the*

LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him" (v19). A godly heritage for our children is all part of the blessing of having close fellowship with the Lord.

In Revelation 3:20 the Lord says, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*" Many times we apply this verse to unbelievers, in reference to salvation. However, look at the context – it's written to **believers** in the church at Laodicea. The Lord wanted to "come in and dine with them"! Why? Because the Lord enjoys close fellowship with believers.

Do you enjoy close fellowship with the Lord? The Lord wants to have close fellowship with you. Maybe you haven't opened the door and asked Him to come in and commune with you. You may have opened your "heart's door" for salvation, but what about the "door of fellowship?" In my personal experience, my closest times of fellowship with the Lord have been when I am studying or meditating on His Word. Being immersed in God's Word certainly opens the door for close fellowship with the Lord. The Lord enjoys close fellowship with the believer.

2. The Lord encourages the believer to pray for others.

Isn't it interesting that the Lord permitted Abraham to go through this process of reducing the quota of righteous persons in Sodom? Some commentators have said that this was an example of Bedouin bargaining, or even haggling. I don't think so! This was not a bargaining process -- this is a wonderful example of the Lord encouraging intercessory prayer. In fact, it is the first intercessory prayer in the Bible. Abraham was concerned about his nephew Lot, Lot's family, and the people of Sodom. Abraham was beseeching the Lord for others. The Lord didn't rebuke Abraham, but rather He encouraged Him. And the Lord answered Abraham's prayer of concern for Lot. In chapter 19 we will see that the two angels rescued Lot and his two daughters from Sodom.

The Lord encourages the believer to pray for others. Did you ever analyze your prayer life? What percentage of your praying is for others? Chances are that we don't pray enough, or we pray periodically when we have a serious concern, and when we do pray, we don't pray enough for others. The Lord would encourage us to pray for others.

At the time of Samuel's great prayer for the people, he said to them, "*far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you...*" (1 Samuel 12:23).

Not to pray for others is sin. We should pray for others -- certainly for fellow believers, and certainly for people who are not saved. The lost condition of unsaved people should motivate us to have care and compassion for their souls, and to pray for them. Do you pray for your unsaved family members? Do you pray for your unsaved neighbors? Do you pray for the unsaved people you work with or go to school with? Let's read 2 Peter 3:9: "*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us,^[a] not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*" And 1 Timothy 2:4 says, "*[God] desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*"

We got a call yesterday from a Christian woman whose unsaved brother was assaulted and beaten, and was in the hospital. She asked if we would pray for his recovery

and salvation. You better believe we will! The Lord wants us to pray for others --that's what Genesis 18 teaches us. The Lord encourages the believer to pray for others.

Practical Application: Are you the friend of Jesus?

Did you know that Abraham is called "the friend of God"? He's called "the friend of God" three times in the Bible: 2 Chronicles 20, Isaiah 41, and James 2. He is the only believer in the Bible who is referred to in this way, as "the friend of God." Genesis 18 certainly emphasizes this relationship between the Lord and Abraham. The Lord came and had a meal with Abraham, and stayed on to personally commune and share His thoughts with Abraham.

Why was Abraham in this privileged position, to be called the friend of God? It was because Abraham believed God and he obeyed God. He wasn't perfect, but faith and obedience characterized his life.

In John 15:14 that Lord Jesus said, "*You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.*"

Are you the friend of Jesus? When I ask you this morning, "Is Jesus your Savior?" I'm asking you if you have become a Christian. But when I ask you, "Is Jesus your friend?" I'm not only asking you if you're a Christian, but are you an **obedient** Christian?

Are you the friend of Jesus? Don't say "yes" unless you're willing to obey Him, in your personal life, even your thought life, in your relationships, in your marriage, in your family. Jesus said, "You are my friends if you do what I command you." Are you the friend of Jesus?