

What You Need to Know About ABRAHAM:

“God Is Faithful to Keep His Promises”

Study Number Six – Genesis 18:1-33

When we finished our last study they were walking in fellowship with God. God spoke to them through the whole chapter and changed their names from Abram to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah, and then told them that the covenant definitely stipulated that Sarah was going to bear a child about this time next year.

And this was a shock to her. That was a shock also to Abraham, because he had planned that his thirteen-year-old son Ishmael, who'd been born to Hagar would be the promised seed. And here was God coming along and saying something totally different.

It's now time for the fulfillment of the promise. This is twenty-four years—99 and 89—and there hasn't been any time between chapters 17 and 18, chronologically, except for time to get circumcised—which was the badge of the covenant—and be obedient in the areas that God had spoken to them about.

So as the scene of the study opens, very little time has passed. And this particular passage deals with two things:

1. HOSPITALITY and
2. PRAYER.

We realize that those two things are true of the people who walk in fellowship with God. They're the two things that mark people who are really walking close to God.

Now the word HOSPITALITY occurs in the New Testament over and over again, but it's always in a context of leadership.

For instance, when they speak of the elders in the church or the deacons, they're given to hospitality. What does it mean to be given to hospitality?

The word hospitality in the Greek text is *philoxenia*. *Phileo* means to love. *Xenia* is the stranger. So, it's to love the stranger.

What happens when we begin to walk with God and to fellowship with Him? We are beginning to love the stranger, because we want to share Christ with them.

Hospitality is the way God has designed for us to find fulfillment in the bearing of fruit in the lives of others.

The second word is going to be the word PRAYER. And we're going to see a dramatic illustration of the intercessory prayer of our hero in this passage.

So if we put those together, when we're in fellowship with God, we have hospitality on the HORIZONTAL. We're always interested in what we can do to help others. That's hospitality

Then on the VERTICAL, we know we must be in communion with God so that every day He's orchestrating our steps, He's planning our path, and we're walking in close fellowship with Him.

Why would he put together these two things in chapter 18, just after he finally fulfils the badge of the covenant with circumcision? He's an obedient servant of the Lord, then why does he talk about hospitality? And why does he talk about prayer? It's because God's normal, healthy child is going to be characterized in this way.

Leonard Ravenhill, before he died, made this statement about prayer:

We never pray for folks we gossip about, and we never gossip about the folks for whom we pray!

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It's when we really get a hold of the fact that hospitality and prayer are God's design for us to be able to witness effectively

to the person of Christ.

The sad thing in all the world is that statistics tell us that the average protestant pastor spends thirty-nine minutes a day in prayer. The percentage of pastors praying for fifteen minutes or less per day is 21%. The percentage of pastors who indicate that they were satisfied with their personal prayer lives was only 16%.

Now in chapter 16 we opened the scene and they were out of fellowship with God. When we opened chapter 17 there were thirteen years where nothing significant happened in their lives, because they were living in the flesh assuming that God was going to bless the child that they'd had through Hagar.

And now they have followed all of the stipulations that God asked—the name changes and the circumcision. We're now ready to see the chapter and the response of our heroes—and what a beautiful chapter we have.

Tim LaHaye's written two or three great books on spirit-controlled temperament. And it describes the four basic temperaments. There's the sanguine, the choleric—they're both extrovert temperaments—and then the melancholy and the phlegmatic—are both introverts.

Abraham was a phlegmatic. To be a phlegmatic he was by nature an introvert. We wouldn't see him on the platform. We wouldn't see him in conversation in a way where he was trying to be the center of attention in a given group.

But he'd also had some great strengths as a phlegmatic:

he was CALM,

he was QUIET,

he was EASY GOING,

he was DEPENDABLE,

he was OBJECTIVE, and

he was a person who was given to PESSIMISM, if things weren't going well.

And that helps us understand why, when he got to Canaan and there were Canaanites in the land and there was no economic security, he would take off and go on down to Egypt like he did.

And that's why, if he's given to pessimistic feelings or to pleasure, he would ask his wife to lie and say that she was his sister. Because he had the worse-case scenario already figured out that he was going to lose his life while they were down there.

But he works well under pressure, he loves to teach.

And he's in this kind of a situation where he's efficient, calm

and under control.

The spiritual weakness of a phlegmatic is the tongue. And it's the tongue that's always saying things so that he has to be told:

James 1:19, 20

Be quick to hear and slow to speak and slow to become angry.

And certainly the tongue can hurt people.

This is the kind of man that we're dealing with when we take the temperament trait and put it on him.

Ready? Here we go—verse 1.

v. 1 The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day.

“The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre”

“Mamre” means “fatness.”

“while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day.”

And one thing that we understand is that he's right in the

place of fellowship. He is in the center of God's will. And here he is "in the heat of the day," sitting in his tent. Just like he's exactly where he needs to be because of what's getting ready to happen in the next verse.

When we really start to walk with God, every encounter becomes a divine encounter. It's like we say, "That was a God thing that we saw each other." That will happen so many times.

Now watch what happens to him.

v. 2 Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

"Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground."

What is the greatest miracle that we've ever seen recorded in verse 2? A hundred-year-old man can't hurry anywhere.

Notice that the next several words are going to describe them as hurrying, quick, hurry, going here, going there.

"he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground."

The fact that he responded in worship is he was aware these were divine beings even though they were clothed in human form.

Most likely one of them was the angel of the Lord, the preincarnate Christ—which we have met already and we will meet again before the study is completed.

The other two must be angelic messengers who have been along to help in the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which are on the horizon.

And so he bows “low to the ground.” It’s a manifestation of worship. It’s a manifestation of humble submission before the Lord.

v. 3 He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by.

“He said, ‘If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by.’”

He is still trying to adjust to the message that he has completely misinterpreted God’s will to this point. And so, as he meets the Lord, the first thing he wants to know is:

“If I have found favor in your eyes,”

In other words, “Do You have some more surprises for me? Do You have some more things that You need to tell me that I

don't understand about Your will? I don't want to assume anymore."

Oh what a treasure!

"If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord,"

It's like he has this relationship with the Lord, he's in fellowship, but he still is uncertain about his condition and how the Lord feels about him spiritually.

We wish we had more of that around here. Where each of us would come to prayer time in the morning, and we have our agenda, our plan, our prayer list, we have it all. If we could just in humility and brokenness say, "Lord, I really want to find favor in Your eyes today. And if there's anything that You need to point out to me in this devotional time, please show me. And help me be, out of love for You, to extricate that from my life so that indeed I'm finding Your joy in the day. If I have found favor in Your sight."

But look at the next phrase. This is so good!

"do not pass your dictator by."

See he's already got ahold of another truth, and that's being a SERVANT. He's not only in fellowship with God, he's not only given to hospitality—as we're going to see in just a minute—he's not only given to intercessory prayer, but he's learned the biggest lesson of all and that is we wake up and yoke up. We

become a servant every day and we're ready and available to do it.

He says, "don't pass your servant by."

Now where have we learned that principle? Many times we've made reference to it in the New Testament, haven't we?

Mark 10:45

I came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give my life a ransom for many.

And the last lesson he taught the disciples. Proud hearts and dirty feet, He washed their feet in John 13. Took the towel and dried them and He said, "Do this unto others."

So much of the stuff that derails us and distracts us is our selfishness that makes us think more of ourselves than in serving others. And that's a struggle we've all got, and we've got to learn to mature to the point where we are ready to be sacrificially involved in the lives of others no matter what it's going to take.

Listen to George Bernard Shaw:

This is the true joy in life . . . being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one . . . being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to

making you happy I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. *I want to be thoroughly used up when I die.* For the harder I work the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle to me. It's a sort of splendid torch which I've got to hold up for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.
(source unknown)

He calls himself a “servant.”

This is the new language of our man walking in fellowship with God.

Verse 4—here comes a recommendation.

v. 4 Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree.

“Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree.”

Now the Lord had the table already served. He has to go announce to his wife that they are going to be three guests for dinner. And so he gives them the water to get it done. And that is eastern hospitality to do so.

So while they're sitting out under the tree, washing their feet and getting ready for dinner, he said:

v. 5 Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant.” “Very well,” they answered, “do as you say.”

“Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant.”

There it is again—“you will”

“‘Very well,’ they answered, ‘do as you say.’”

If we want to make a contrast between studies or a man in fellowship and one that’s out of fellowship, just follow the angels down and see what happens to Lot. Then the angels meet him in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The awkwardness of the situation, the sin, the danger, all the things that just don’t fit because he’s walking out of fellowship with God. He’s never had an altar in his life, it’s never recorded that he prayed, and the difference between the two is just dramatic.

Ever noticed that? That when the Spirit of God is really moving there’s oil in the machinery and things are just happening all around us? It’s just something so beautiful. It’s just so natural, because the Lord’s Spirit is there and He’s blessing and He’s working in people’s hearts.

And here they say, “Very Well, ... do as you say.”

And so we have “your servant” a second time.

Anne Graham Lotz caught this message in her little book *The Joy of the Heart*.

(The Joy of My Heart by Anne Graham Lotz)

Most of us increase our pain by dwelling on it or by analyzing it. We throw a pity party and expect others to join us. We spiral downward into depression, withdrawing into self-preoccupation. But the way to overcome is not to focus on ourselves or on the pain, but to focus on the needs of others.

Would you get your eyes off yourself and your problems and your pressures and your pain and look around? Who do you know who is suffering or struggling in some way? What can you do for them?

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She’s learned to sacrificially be involved in serving others.

v. 6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah.

“Quick,” he said, “get three seahs of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread.”

“So Abraham”—WHAT? Here we go again. The guy is actually jogging here.

“hurried into the tent to Sarah. ‘Quick,’ he said, “get three

seahs of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread.”

“We’re going to have some folks for dinner!”

The whole picture is of “quick,” get it done.

“Honey, hustle up some chow. We’ve got three extra folks here for dinner.”

v. 7 Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it.

“Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it.”

Isn’t that beautiful?

“hurried,”

“quick,”

“ran,”

“hurried.”

They’re on a mission of mercy and hospitality is involved. Get the “tender calf” ready. We’re going to have a fabulous time enjoying a meal together.

v. 8 He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

“He then brought some curds”—of course that’s probably cheese.

“and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them.”

Now notice the next phrase:

“While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.”

He’s a servant. He takes the place of servanthood by the tree and watches them eat so that he can anticipate their needs and bring what they need to have full enjoyment of what has been prepared.

Here he’s manifesting again that sweet spirit of servanthood in giving himself to others. All of this has happened as a result of obedience and back in fellowship in chapter 17.

That’s beautiful to see!

v. 9 “Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him. “There, in the tent,” he said.

“Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him. “There, in the tent,” he said.”

How did he know what her name was? In scripture over and over again we see the Lord's omniscience—His all-knowing.

“Adam, how are you?”

“Zacchaeus come down from that tree. I'm going to eat at your house today.”

“Nathanael you're an Israelite, in whom there is no guile.”
John 1.

So He is very much aware of our names.

To the woman at the well He didn't call her by name, but he said, “you have five husbands and the guy you're living with is not your husband.”

So it's kind of intimidating to have someone call our name and someone who knows all about us.

But the Lord does. And so we have to bring Sarah into the situation.

Now we need to understand in marriage, when God is leading a man in a direction they need to communicate with their wife how He is leading, lest they are going to make her be in a situation where she's totally surprised and she has to lie.

Here's the consequences of failure in effective communication

between marital partners. He didn't go home and tell her that she was going to have a baby! It was still too shocking for him. And they certainly didn't want to talk like that in the assisted living facility in which they were living. Right?

No, he just didn't communicate with her. Otherwise she wouldn't be so unprepared. Now granted, she was eavesdropping.

v. 10 Then the Lord said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.” Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.

“Then the Lord said, ‘I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.’ Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.”

v. 11 Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing.

“Abraham and Sarah”— this is so crucial to understand why this is the perfect time now.

“Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing.”

We have to get to the place, as far as God is concerned, that

there's no possibility that we can do it. And so here at this point this verse tells us in capsule form why God has had to wait for twenty-four years.

Now ninety-nine and eighty-nine, this is the time when God is going to move mightily in their lives. And the picture is described here that He actually is going to communicate now with Sarah what she means to Him.

They're on the brink of the fulfillment of the promises that God made.

Now when we get to verse 12 it gets kind of tough.

v. 12 So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"

"So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, 'After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?'"

They didn't talk after the Lord told him that. And so she is hearing the news for the first time.

When she laughed, she probably dropped the crock in the kitchen. Just the impossibility of it was beyond comprehension. She never entertained the thought.

v. 13 Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I

am old?’

“Then the Lord said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh and say, “Will I really have a child, now that I am old?”’”

Now that question could also be, “Why in the world didn’t you communicate with her and prepare her for this encounter of her understanding when I came?”

His failure to do that has led to this situation where she has to lie in the face of His omniscient character. You just can’t get away with that.

And the Lord says:

v. 14 Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son.”

“Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time”

Remember in our last study it was just “I will appear next year about this time.” Now the word is “appointed.”

This is for them to understand that the appointment of our lives and the days and months and years is all on His calendar and He knows exactly how many we have left. And it’s at that “the appointed time” that He’s going to come.

Does that ring a bell?

Galatians 4:4

When the fullness of time has come, God sent forth His Son ...

Ecclesiastes 3:11

He makes all things beautiful in His time.

Not our time. We can beg and we can cry and we can plead and have pity parties, but it's all going to come together in His time.

“Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

Numbers 11:23

The Lord answered Moses, “Is the Lord’s arm too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you.

Jeremiah 32:17

“And the Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

And to Mary:

Luke 1:37

“Nothing will be impossible with God.”

“I will return ... at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son.”

All of this makes us realize what a wonderful God we have. And yet there is nothing beyond what He wants to accomplish. He certainly will fulfill it.

v. 15 Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I did not laugh.” But he said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

“Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, ‘I did not laugh.’ But he said, ‘Yes, you did laugh.’”

That’s the only record of a conversation we have between the Lord and Sarah in the scripture. That’s hard, isn’t it? That in this situation she’s so frightened over the fact that now she has laughed in the face of a promise of God in what’s going to happen.

We can’t be too hard on her. There is another verse of scripture that tells us that she came to faith very quickly. It probably happened right here when the Lord said, “Yes, you did. And you need to deal with the situation.”

The reason we can say that is because in God’s Hall of fame in Hebrews 11, we read:

Hebrews 11:11

By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised;

In other words, she had a turnaround.

At that point she realizes it's going to happen and she considers Him faithful who had made the promise.

We're turning from HOSPITALITY to PRAYER to wrap up.

v. 16 When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way.

“When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way.”

Isn't that rich? The Lord has been there and Abraham is so touched by the communing and the conversation. Have we done that?

When we have hospitality with people and we just love being with them, we walk them to the car. We just love them so much, we just don't want them to go. And we've had so much fun together and so we walk them to the car.

Now “Enoch walked with God and the Lord took him.” (ref. Genesis 5:24) They were walking along together and the Lord said, “It’s closer to My house than it is yours, come on home.” And that’s the way God does things.

Some of us say, “I’ve got to have my devotions in the morning. I’ve got to spend time with the Lord.”

No, we GET TO. And every time we do, it gets richer and richer and longer and longer. And it gets better and better and more and more intimate. And we’re becoming more and more aware of what God does in answering prayer.

So he leaves Sarah sitting back in the tent. And he’s walking these three guys toward Sodom and Gomorrah. We don’t know how far it was, but they walked together.

Now watch what happens when we’re close to the Lord.

v. 17 Then the Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?”

“Then the Lord said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?’”

Many times in our life as a believer we find that God prepares our heart supernaturally for what He’s getting ready to bring into our life. Maybe it’ll be verses of scripture, maybe it will be an awareness in our prayer time that we better crank it up a notch, we better be ready because there’s some things that are

coming on the horizon as part of His plan and we want to be ready.

And God graciously reveals to us, in preparation, so that we can be victorious.

What we're getting ready to see is the final step in Lot's life. He's going to raise his family, his wife is going to be judged, he's going to be stripped of all his possessions in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. That's living in the flesh thinking that we know what's best, and it's living for the here and now that creates the saddest picture in the world—a wasted Christian life.

Obviously Peter tells us that Lot was a righteous man. Therefore, we have to accept the fact that the judgment that's coming on his life is that he never had time to really spend with the Lord.

Here are some verses about giving us the wisdom about what He's getting ready to do. The Lord reveals His secrets to us as we walk with Him.

Psalm 25:14

The Lord confides in those who fear him;
he makes his covenant known to them.

Amos 3:7

Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.

v. 18 Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.

“Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.”

He starts with the man in fellowship. Then He talks about the man who isn't in fellowship and the horrible consequences of what's going to happen in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

But first, before He tells Abraham anything further, He wants to assure him that this is an oath and it's an expansion of the Abrahamic Covenant.

“Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation,”

That's the Jewish nation, right? And what else?

“and all the nations on the earth will be blessed through him.”

That's us—all the Gentile nations that respond to Christ by faith are also part of Abraham's seed.

v. 19 For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so

that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”

Now there’s the reason:

“For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”

That is a complete all-encompassing reaffirmation of the promise that’s been made to him several times through these encounters.

“I have chosen him for this purpose.”

But isn’t it good to know that we’ve been chosen too?

Ephesians 1:4

Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world.

That God knew we were going to make the decision and receive Christ. And here He chose Abraham, from Ur of the Chaldees with no credentials. Nothing—but chooses to bless him.

Notice then verse 20. Now this is going to get sad.

v. 20 Then the Lord said, “The outcry against Sodom

and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous

“Then the Lord said, ‘The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous’”

If we read the record of Genesis 19 and how God felt about the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah and were living in this culture condoning some of the stuff we’re condoning, we would be shaking in our shoes. God hasn’t changed one bit in how He feels about some of these things that are part of a decadent society that makes us sick to even think about it.

“The outcry”

Remember back there it said in one of the previous chapters, “the cup of iniquity has not yet filled for the Amorites”?

Now he’s going to determine whether “the cup of iniquity” has been filled to overflowing so that it triggers the justice of God and the judgment of God upon the cities.

Now he’s aware of it, he’s going down and before the judgment axe falls, he’s going to be convinced in his heart that this is what needs to be done in an act of judgment. And of course it’s verified in chapter 19.

v. 21 that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.”

“that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.”

Is God the same today and does He listen to the outcry of sin, permissiveness, broadmindedness, idolatry and wickedness and all of those things? He’s the same yesterday, today and forever. He’s the Lord God and He changes not. So yes, the outcry of a sick society ascends to His ears and it’s only a matter of time.

v. 22 The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the Lord.

“The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the Lord.”

What a neat place to leave him.

God has the power to accomplish His purpose.

1 Samuel 12:23

As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by not praying for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right.

In Exodus 32, after the golden calf, Moses goes back up and he says as he went back up: “Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of

the book you have written.” (ref. Exodus 32:31-32)

What an awesome God!

“Lord, if it’s not in Your plan to redeem these people who have been involved in idolatrous activity, then go ahead and blot me out of Your book. I love these people. They’re Your people.”

Ezekiel 22:30

“I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none.

The Lord is always looking for a man to accomplish His purpose. And Abraham responded.

This comes from *31 Days of Prayer* by Ruth Myers:

(31 Days of Prayer: Moving God’s Mighty Hand by Warren & Ruth Myers)

*You are coming to a King,
Large petitions with you bring;
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.*
AUTHOR UNKNOWN

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And that’s what he’s going to do now. The familiarity and the

relationship is so beautiful and now he is going to face the Lord.

This is from Joni Eareckson Tada:

(Diamonds in the Dust: 366 Sparkling Devotions by Joni Eareckson Tada)

I've occasionally gone through dry times in prayer when I would swear God wasn't listening—or that he was preoccupied over some global crisis.

Meditations are sometimes barren and seem to yield no fruit. Dryness of soul provides a dangerous climate for sprouting seeds of doubt. We begin to wonder if it's all an illusion. But even Saint Teresa acknowledged that in every fifteen minutes of prayer there are fourteen minutes of distraction.

During such times, please remember that God is not busy or taking a snooze. His love is changeless and constant. His purpose for you is still on course. True, there may be times when he leads you through a stretch of dry wasteland, when his joys aren't as evident, but remember that even the Israelites who wandered in the desert for forty years were—the whole time—actually [were] only a few days' journey from the Promised Land!

Joni Eareckson Tada

(page unknown)

What a delight to see her so honest when it comes to prayer.

Here comes the prayer.

v. 23 Then Abraham approached him and said: “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?”

“Then Abraham approached him and said: ‘Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?’”

Great principle—the righteous protect the wicked while they’re here. And the Lord is there. He’s setting up his prayer.

He said, “Would You destroy some righteous people down there when You destroy those cities of wickedness?”

And so the first question:

v. 24 What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it?

“What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it?”

Now watch it—SIX PETITIONS. They’ll go very fast.

50—45—40—30—20—10 is the way he’s going to pray. And we can see him apologizing every time.

Notice first of all, God makes an inquest before He judges. Secondly, He is accessible to earnest appeal, because he's responding to Abraham. And we discover that a few more righteous can serve as protection of the many, because the Lord says that over and over.

v. 25 Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

“Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you!”

QUESTION:

“Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"”

And the Lord says, “You better believe it!”

v. 26 The Lord said, “If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.”

“The Lord said, ‘If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place those fifty people.’”

v. 27 Then Abraham spoke up again: “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am

nothing but dust and ashes,

“Then Abraham spoke up again: ‘Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes,’”

v. 28 what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?” “If I find forty-five there,” he said, “I will not destroy it.”

“what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?” ‘If I find forty-five there,’ he said, ‘I will not destroy it.’”

The Lord’s good at math there.

v. 29 Once again he spoke to him, “What if only forty are found there?” He said, “For the sake of forty, I will not do it.”

“Once again he spoke to him, ‘What if only forty are found there?’ He said, ‘For the sake of forty, I will not do it.’”

There’s the third request—50—45—40. Almost sounds like an auctioneer, doesn’t it?

v. 30 Then he said, “May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?” He answered, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”

“Then he said, ‘May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?’ He answered, ‘I will not do it if I find thirty there.’”

Fourth petition—30.

v. 31 Abraham said, “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?” He said, “For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it.”

“Abraham said, ‘Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?’ He said, ‘For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it.’”

50—45—40—30—20—and now we’re ready to wrap it up.

v. 32 Then he said, “May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?” He answered, “For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.”

“Then he said, ‘May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?’ He answered, ‘For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.’”

Why did he quit at 10? He probably quit at 10 because he figured that Lot and his wife and the 2 daughters—that’s 4—and the two future sons-in-law would be 6. Surely they made

an impact on at least 4 people in the city who would agree with them and be believers?

We see only 3 came out of that—the 2 daughters and Lot, because Mrs. Lot had to take a peek and that was the end.

We see the tragedy and the futility of living life in the flesh apart from the will of God. His assumption is not valid because we're going to see the smoke rising on those two cities on the plain as we begin our study together.

But there is a blessing. There is a protection for those who are righteous.

v. 33 When the Lord had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.

“When the Lord had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.”

Twelve lessons come out of the text.

Lesson #1: The whole chapter is an illustration of a blessed Christian life and the fellowship that results from obedience.

Lesson #2: We see changes in growth through obedience, as far as Abraham is concerned.

Lesson #3: The Lord knows all about us. The Scripture says that even the very hairs of our head are all numbered. He

manifests this same knowledge in knowing Sarah by name in verse 9.

Lesson #4: The Lord is always faithful to keep His promises.

Lesson #5: Sarah's unbelief and her lie did not affect the promises of the Lord to her.

Lesson #6: Abraham is seen as the great intercessor in Genesis 18.

Lesson #7: The Lord is receptive to the cries of His children.

Lesson #8: "For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7b KJV).

Lesson #9: "How long will you hesitate?" is the question that Elijah asks on Mount Carmel.

Lesson #10: Abraham has learned to be a blessing to others by his sacrificial acts of servanthood.

Lesson #11: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (verse 14).

Lesson #12: Because of the presence of the righteous, many times the wicked are spared.

Here's a great illustration as we close: (The Invisible War: What Every Believer Needs to Know About Satan, Demons, and Spiritual Warfare by Chip Ingram)

The missionary was serving as a medic in Africa. Periodically, he had to travel by bicycle through the jungle to a nearby city for supplies. It was a two-day trip, so he would camp in the jungle overnight. He had always made the trip without incident, but one day when he arrived in the city he saw two men fighting. One was seriously hurt, so he treated the man, shared Christ with him, and went on his way.

The next time the missionary traveled to the city, the man he had treated approached him. “I know you carry money and medicine,” the man said to the missionary. “Some friends and I followed you into the jungle that night after you treated me, knowing you’d have to sleep in the jungle alone. We waited for you to go to sleep, planning to kill you and take your money and drugs. As we started to move into the campsite, we saw twenty-six armed guards surrounding you. There were only six of us, so we knew we couldn’t possibly get near, and we left.”

When he heard this, the missionary laughed. That’s impossible. I assure you, I was alone in the campsite.” But the young man pressed the point. “No, sir. I wasn’t the only one who saw the guards. My friends saw them too, and we all counted [every one of] them [26].”

Several months later, the missionary [was home on furlough. He] attended his home church in Michigan and told of his experience. A man in the congregation interrupted his presentation by jumping to his feet and saying something that left everyone in the church [completely] stunned. With a firm voice, he said, “We were with you in spirit!” The missionary looked perplexed. The man continued. “On that night in Africa

it was morning here. I stopped by the church to get some materials for a ministry trip. But as I was putting my bags in my trunk, I felt the Lord leading me to pray for you. It was an extremely strong urge, so I got on the phone and gathered some other men to come to church and pray for you.” Then the man turned to the rest of the congregation. “Will all of those men who prayed with me that day stand up right now?” And one by one they stood up—all twenty-six of them.
pp. 155-6

Father, we thank You that You are a prayer-answering God, we just mess it up because we walk selfishly and out of fellowship with You so much of the time we’re not really on praying grounds. And then when we are, we’ve got our own agendas and that embarrasses You and keeps us from experiencing the joy of seeing You intervene and do great things. Lord, it’s not hopeless because we’re seeing so many fabulous examples in lives around us. We rejoice in every one of them. Thank You for the divine appointments, thank You for the special things You’re doing with each of us. We love You Lord and we thank You that You taught us that we ought to be servants, given to hospitality and prayerful intercession. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

What You Need to Know About ABRAHAM:

“God Is Faithful to Keep His Promises”

Study Number Six – Genesis 18:1-33

NOTES

v. 1 The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day.

v. 2 Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

v. 3 He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by.

v. 4 Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree.

v. 5 Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant.” “Very well,” they answered, “do as you say.”

v. 6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get three seahs of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread.”

v. 7 Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it.

v. 8 He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

v. 9 “Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him. “There, in the tent,” he said.

v. 10 Then the Lord said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.” Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.

v. 11 Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing.

v. 12 So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?”

v. 13 Then the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’

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v. 14 Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son.”

v. 15 Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I did not laugh.” But he said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

v. 16 When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way.

v. 17 Then the Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?”

v. 18 Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.

v. 19 For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”

v. 20 Then the Lord said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous

v. 21 that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.”

v. 22 The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the Lord.

v. 23 Then Abraham approached him and said: “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?

v. 24 What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it?

v. 25 Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

v. 26 The Lord said, “If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.”

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v. 33 When the Lord had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Genesis 18:1-33 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. When does the Lord next reveal himself to Abraham? Describe the situation.

3. What question do the three visitors ask of Abraham, according to verse 9, and what promise do they give in verse 10?

4. What is the condition of Abraham and Sarah in verse 11, and how does Sarah respond to the promise in verse 12?

5. How does the Lord respond in verses 13 & 14, and what is Sarah's response in verse 15?

6. What does the Lord reveal to Abraham about His future plans for Sodom and Gomorrah?

7. Describe what transpires between Abraham and the Lord in the next verses.

8. How many times does Abraham make a proposal to the Lord to avoid His judgment upon the cities?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The whole chapter is an illustration of a blessed Christian life and the fellowship that results from obedience.

LESSON #2: We see changes in growth through obedience, as far as Abraham is concerned.

LESSON #3: The Lord knows all about us. The Scripture says that even the very hairs of our head are all numbered. He manifests this same knowledge in knowing Sarah by name in verse 9.

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