

Introduction

[Genesis 16](#) records the story of Hagar and the birth of Ishmael. [Genesis 17](#) makes it known that 13 years have passed since the events of [Genesis 16](#) and the events of [Genesis 17](#).

The transition between [Genesis 17](#) and 18 is much different. [Genesis 18](#) gives the impression that very little time has passed since God appeared to Abraham and gave him the covenant of circumcision.

One of the reasons this may be the case is because we are moving towards something of a climax in the Abraham narrative which is the destruction of Sodom. Ever since Abraham and Lot went separate ways in [Genesis 13](#) there has been a growing tension concerning the destiny of Lot and the civilization of Sodom.

In many ways, [Genesis 18](#) sets the scene for the destruction of Sodom in [Genesis 19](#).

That said, our passage this morning breaks down into three parts:

1. In verses 1-8 we see Abraham practice hospitality.
2. In verses 9-15 we see Sarah embrace the power of God.
3. In verses 16-21 we see how Abraham is to receive the promise of God

Practicing Hospitality (vv. 1-8)

The scene is set in verses 1-2 as ***the LORD appears to Abraham by the Oaks of Mamre as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in from of him.***

The events of [Genesis 18](#) take place soon after those of [Genesis 17](#) and the LORD is appearing to Abraham again. There is a repetition of *vision language* in these first two verses as the LORD ***appears*** and Abraham ***lifts up his eyes and looked and beheld***.

In the Bible, vision is often associated with Judgement. This is a scene of judgement and Abraham is going to pass the test of judgement. The test is one of hospitality.

Up until recent times, the practice of hospitality has been at the heart of society. Our culture is a low-trust culture and very individualistic. This has pushed hospitality further and further to the margins.

What God wants us to see here is how Abraham's hospitality stands in stark relief to the events in Sodom in the next chapter. When the angelic visitors come to Sodom they are not received hospitably and this spells doom for the city that was to come under judgement.

In verses 2-8 ***Abraham runs and bows himself before the guests. He brings them water to wash wash their feet. He has Sarah make cakes and a young man of his house prepare a calf in addition to bringing milk and curds.***

In short, Abraham's hospitality is extravagant.

You may be tempted to think that hospitality is **simply** a good thing to do and no more than that. But it is much more!

God is the ultimate host. Each day He provides His creatures with life and breath and food. The farmer knows he must rely on God to provide rains for his crop. Our temptation is to forget that God provides even when the food seems to magically appear on the shelf at the store.

God not only provides for us in these material ways but he also provides for our spiritual needs. We were dead in our sins and trespasses and God has made a way for our salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Moreover, each week God invites us to His house for a special feast. It is a feast where we are fed, not by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Father. We hear from God and we get to speak back to God as he invites us into His council. Each week our service culminates at God's table. He invites us and He gives us bread and wine to eat in His presence together.

This pattern of hospitality should mark and shape your lives. You should seek to be "Godlike" in this regard.

You should first seek to be hospitable to those children God has put under our care. Parents you are to create a home of hospitality in the same way that God made a world that was hospitable for His creatures.

Next, you should seek to show hospitality to the household of faith. This is a strength of our congregation but reminders are always helpful. Be in one another's homes. It doesn't always have to be perfect. Just send out the invitation and figure things out. If anything is worth doing, it's worth doing poorly at first.

Thirdly, extend hospitality to your neighbors and those outside the household of faith. Invite your physical neighbors or non-Christians that you know so that you can show them what Christ is like.

Abraham practiced hospitality and he sets an example for us!

Embracing the Power of God (vv. 9-15)

In verse 9 there is a transition. The guests ask about Sarah and Abraham tells them that **she is in the tent**. At this point we find that one of these three visitors is none other than the LORD Himself. In verse 10 we see that **The LORD said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.”**

The three guests are: The Angel of the LORD, and two other angels. The Angel of the LORD, or simply “The LORD” tells Abraham again the promise that was given in chapter 17; Sarah will bear a son in a year.

Verses 10-12 reveal that Sarah overheard what the LORD told Abraham and she **laughed to herself and said, “After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?”**

Sarah’s laughter is not unbelief but rather a mixture of surprise and fear. She and Abraham are aware that these are no merely human visitor. Sarah’s laughter is born out of surprise and astonishment.

In many ways, laughter is an appropriate response. [Genesis 17](#) makes it clear that the son to be born to Sarah will be named “laughter” (Isaac means “Laughter”). There is something about what God is doing with Abraham and Sarah and what God will do through Isaac that makes laughter an appropriate response.

When Sarah denies that she laughed the Angel of the LORD challenges her. It is as though the Angel of the LORD is saying that Sarah should not deny the comedy of the situation. Ultimately Sarah does embrace the laughter. She does indeed name her son “Isaac.”

This embrace comes from on the heels of the question that the Angel of the LORD proposes. **“Is anything too hard for the LORD?”**

It can be easy for Christians to fall back into the motions of the Christian life. You can come to church each week and hear the great salvation and power of God. These things can become so familiar that you no longer embrace the **vitality** of the Christian life. God is in the business of **actually changing lives**. God is in the business of **actually doing great things in the world**. God has not ceased to act powerfully in the world just because the stories of the Bible are in the past.

One of the mysteries of the Christian life is that calls you to step out in faith. To step out in faith **and embrace His power**. To believe that He can work in and through you in any number of difficult and trying circumstances. That your life would be, as Paul states to Timothy, like a drink offering that is poured out on the altar arising to God as a pleasing aroma.

We are created by God to spend our lives in loving service to Him and our neighbor. Let us not embrace a form of Christianity while rejecting its power!

Receiving the Promises of God (vv. 16-21)

In our final section the focus turns toward Sodom. In verse 16 Abraham goes on the way with the Angel of the LORD and the angelic visitors and in verses 17-18 the LORD says, “**Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?**”

I’ve mentioned before that Abraham is a prophet. One of the things that is descriptive of a prophet is that they are brought into the divine council. [Amos 3:7](#) states, ““For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.”

In verse 19 there is one of the most significant pronouncements in the account of Abraham’s life from Genesis. God says, “**For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.**”

God states that there is a certain way in which the LORD is going to bring about what He has promised to Abraham. God has chosen Abraham so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice.

The way in which God is going to bring about His promises **is through Abraham ruling over his household in righteousness and justice**. Abraham was to exercise authority in his home so that the promises of God would be brought about to his descendants after him.

Fathers, the Bible gives you great promises and authority over your children and your household.

[Proverbs 22:6](#) says, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

[Acts 2:39](#) states, “For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

The way these promises are brought into being is through commanding your household to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice.

Husbands and fathers, do not grow weary in cultivating and exercising godly authority in your homes. This is the very means by which God has ordained His promises to be fulfilled for your children.

Our passage concludes in verses 20-21 when God discloses to Abraham what He is about to do. Because Sodom's sin is great, God will go down to inspect the city.

Next week we will see how Abraham intercedes for Sodom. But this week we should consider the LORD's inspection of Abraham's household. The LORD showed up and Abraham received Him.

For us there is a similar inspection that occurs each LORD's day in worship. God invites us into His presence but He also inspects us. The primary part of that inspection is our receptivity to it; our hospitality to the inspection of the LORD. Even if your heart is as wicked as Sodom, if you receive the LORD as Abraham does, you can be saved. God is slow to anger and quick to show mercy. Look to Christ and you will be saved and come to Christ as He invites you to His table.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN!