

Turn in your Bible tonight to Genesis Chapter 18. We will be looking at verses 22 to 33. Last week we saw where Abraham was sitting at the opening of his tent and when he looked up, three men were standing in front of him. Evidently there was something very special about these men, because when Abraham saw them, he got up ran toward them and bowed himself to the earth. This bowing could even mean that he was prostrate, flat out on the ground, in showing honor to these men.

As Matthew taught, and the Scripture shows, the three men before him was, God himself and two angels. They came to report to Abraham that Sarah was to have a son, but there was something more. As it was looking that the three men were about to leave, they looked toward Sodom and paused. There was something else that they were there to do.

You probably have done this before also. You aren't sure whether you would share something with someone or not. Well, you know you are going to share the information, you are just not sure of the timing. You are there with another person and you look over to them and say, "Well, should we tell them?"

The Lord, I would say, speaking to the two angels, said this back in verse 17 and 18, ***"Shall I hide 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?"***

As God speaks, God goes on and says he chose Abraham to command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness so he could bring Abraham what he has promised. Out of one man and one woman a great nation, a generational obedience to the Lord. Is that not our call as families also?

Ultimately what was it that God promised through Abraham and Sarah? Jesus Christ! The Messiah, Savior of the World, who would take our sins upon his body, die for our sin, buried in a tomb but three days later rose again and is alive today.

It is this relationship that God had with Abraham that he felt it necessary to share this news with Abraham. In Scripture we see that God called Abraham his friend. 2 Chronicles Chapter 20, King Jehoshaphat is crying out to God because there was a great army coming against Judah. King Jehoshaphat brings the people of Judah together and King Jehoshaphat makes his plea for God's help in the middle of this plea Jehoshaphat says these words.

***2 Chronicles 20:7***

***<sup>7</sup> Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?***

This shows us the relationship between God and Abraham. The intimacy that takes place when like in the book of James, when James wrote, ***"Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness and he was called a friend of God."*** Also, this shows us the relationship that in our repentance of our sin, faith in God, and obedience to his Word, we too can be called a friend of God. What a thought!

God shares with Abraham there has been an outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah because their sin is and has been very grave. Their sin was so grievous that the description God used with Noah of the people of his time before God brought the flood could be said about them as well. "Every intention of their thoughts of their hearts were evil continually." God said I am going down to see if this is true.

The two angels head towards Sodom and that leaves Abraham with God. Abraham begins to have a conversation with God. Let's read our verses.

### ***Genesis 18:22-33***

***<sup>22</sup> So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord. <sup>23</sup> Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? <sup>24</sup> Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? <sup>25</sup> Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" <sup>26</sup> And the Lord said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake." <sup>27</sup> Abraham answered and said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. <sup>28</sup> Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." <sup>29</sup> Again he spoke to him and said, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it." <sup>30</sup> Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there." <sup>31</sup> He said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." <sup>32</sup> Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it." <sup>33</sup> And the Lord went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.***

It is obvious that God told Abraham he was planning to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. I believe it would be wise to look at why God saw that the just thing to do is to destroy both of those cities. The two angels went to Sodom on a fact-finding mission. What were they going to find there? Let's look to Scripture.

First, there are consequences to sin. Every culture in the world has a sense of right and wrong, good and bad, righteousness and evil. Now mankind definitely gets in wrong when we try to determine right and wrong off our own intellect and emotions. There is a standard that is set that tells us all what sin is and what sin is not, and that truth resides in the authority of God's Word!

We get a good indication of what the angels were going to find in Sodom from what we had learned earlier in Chapter 13. After Abraham and Lot came out of Egypt back to the land of Canaan, there was not sufficient land to support both their herds of livestock. Abraham felt they should separate, and Abraham gave Lot the first choice of what land Lot wanted to take his livestock and family to. Lot chose to live in the Jordan Valley which was towards Sodom and verse 13 of Chapter 13 described the inhabitants of Sodom in this way.

### ***Genesis 13:13***

***<sup>13</sup> Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.***

The optimum wording here is, "Sinners against the Lord!" Showing us what first of all? God sets the rules! May I remind us that when God says, "Thou shall not!" It is for our good. It is for what is best for us upon this earth, and it is best in preparing us for eternal life in heaven with the Lord Jesus. When we sin, it may be towards a person, but all of our sin is ultimately against God. David said in Psalm 51 these words:

### ***Pslam 51:3-4***

***<sup>3</sup> For I know my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. <sup>4</sup> Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.***

We may think we are getting away with sin but there is always someone watching! We do not get away with any sin though we think nobody knows. God always see and always knows. In Hebrews 4 verses 12 and 13 we read this.

### **Hebrews 4:12-13**

***<sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. <sup>13</sup> And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.***

Let's go to the basic definition of sin. It is disobedience to God's Word. Because the Bible is the authority for all truth and is what all people are judged against whether it is a saved person or an unsaved person at the final judgment.

### **John 12:48**

***<sup>48</sup> The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.***

The people of Sodom were great sinners against the Lord. Meaning they were disobeying God's Word; they were being obstinate and prideful in their sin. Let's see the specifics of their sin.

Turn over a few pages to Genesis 19. Of course, we will be studying this passage in a few weeks, but we must look at this to see why God's hand of mercy is to be lifted from Sodom and Gomorrah.

### **Genesis 19:4-11**

***<sup>4</sup> But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. <sup>5</sup> And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." <sup>6</sup> Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, <sup>7</sup> and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. <sup>8</sup> Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." <sup>9</sup> But they said, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door down. <sup>10</sup> But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door. <sup>11</sup> And they struck with blindness the men who were at the entrance of the house, both small and great, so that they wore themselves out groping for the door.***

What do we see here? The sexual sin of homosexuality, we also see the intent to rape. We see nothing new here. Sexual sin is often at the precipice, the top, of what brings a nation, a leader, an individual to a place of disgrace and to a place that judgment must be enacted. Was this the only sin that the people of Sodom committed? Of course not. I, like most people that study these passages of Scripture, do adhere to the understanding that this is the most prevalent sin that was recognized by God to pass judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

We can see more as Sodom is referred to in several instances when it came to sins of other people and other nations. Look at what Isaiah said in Chapter 3 verse 9 as he compares the Israelites that were living in Judah and Jerusalem to the people of Sodom.

### **Isaiah 3:9**

***<sup>9</sup> For the look on their faces bears witness against them; they proclaim their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves.***

They do not hide their sin! Wow! Does that sound familiar in these days? We have whole months set aside for celebration of sin, we have parades, we have marches, we pass laws to legitimize what God calls sin.

Once again, we see from Jeremiah 23:14 Israel is being compared to Sodom and Gomorrah that there is no conviction, no desire to repent of their sin.

### ***Jeremiah 23:14***

***14 But in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery and walk in lies; they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his evil; all of them have become like Sodom to me, and its inhabitants like Gomorrah.”***

Therefore, God is just in his judgment and his punishment against sin. Not only do we see this in Scripture, we ourselves should understand that God is longsuffering and patient, but it is our pride and hardness of heart that we arrogantly show God we have no desire for his mercy. 2 Peter 3:9 tells us about God’s longsuffering towards us.

### ***2 Peter 3:9***

***9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.***

May we never look at an event when we see God’s judgment on sin and never, never, ever look at the situation and not reflect on the mercy that had been extended. May we realize that each sunrise is a day that God’s mercy is extended to each person on this earth, lost or saved. May we realize each breath we take we experience the grace and love of God and once again his mercy extended to each of us in every day we live.

The point is, do we recognize that and come to a point of repentance or do we, like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, flaunt our sin in the face of God. Romans 1 verses 18 to 32 describes very well what we see when people, like us at one point in our lives, cities like Sodom and Gomorrah, refuse to acknowledge God as sovereign, as holy, as our savior.

In verses 18 to 22 it talks about how the wicked suppress the truth about God. It is through the general revelation of creation we know God exists but, in our intelligence, our pride we do not honor or give thanks to God for who he is. We claim to be wise ourselves, but it makes us fools and futile in our thinking and it darkens our heart or hardens our heart. Beginning with Verse 24 it shows us that eventually God stays his hand extending that mercy to that person and justice must be served.

### ***Romans 1:24-28***

***24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. 28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.***

Sounds like Sodom and Gomorrah to me! Can we ourselves determine who may have been given over to a reprobate mind? I would say we can’t dogmatically say we can , but when we talk to people, we may think they are getting pretty close.

The Lord shares this news with Abraham about Sodom and Gomorrah. The two men, the angels, went toward Sodom and Abraham was left there with the Lord. What was Abraham's recourse here. Lot and his family are still in Sodom, and he just heard that God was going to destroy the city! Abraham did what we all should do in any situation in our lives and in general each and every day as often as we can. Look at verse 23 again.

### **Genesis 18:23**

***Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"***

Abraham drew near. We learn this ourselves in a very familiar verse from James 4:8, ***Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.***

Hebrews 4:14-16 is a beautiful portion of Scripture that should give us motivation to draw near to God.

### **Hebrews 4:14-16**

***<sup>14</sup> Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***

We can draw near to God knowing his character, knowing God will keep his promise and we can come boldly knowing God will act according to his will and we can have peace and comfort in that knowledge.

Abraham drew near because the news he had received had to be shocking. It is like one of those situations you are in, and someone says something that is just shocking to you, and you go, "Did I hear what I just heard?" You may even ask the person, "Can you repeat yourself; I don't think I quite understand what you just said? You are going to do what, you believe what?" In verse 23, Abraham asks, ***"Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"***

What we see here is the first intercessory prayer for the lost! I picture it this way! The two angels have left and here is the Lord and Abraham. The Lord is looking towards Sodom and Abraham is behind him and Abraham walks up beside the Lord and they both are staring straight ahead and here begins the conversation and Abraham interceding for the people of Sodom.

What we see here is Abraham's persistence and God's patience!

Again, Abraham asked, ***"Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"*** In verses 24-26 he says,

### **Genesis 18:24-26**

***<sup>24</sup> Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? <sup>25</sup> Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" <sup>26</sup> And the Lord said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake."***

Here Abraham petitions on behalf of God's character! Yes, God is loving, merciful, full of grace, but he is just and the Judge of all the earth and he will judge according to his righteous character and by his word and by his truth sin will be judged. Abraham is calling on the justice of God!

Abraham mentions will you destroy the righteous. Who is Abraham thinking about? Lot! Believe it or not and we will get to this later in this study, but Lot is described as being righteous. Were there more than Lot in the city that were righteous? The Lord said, "If I find 50, I will spare the whole place.

Let us remember that Abraham with his army of 312 men rescued the people of Sodom in the great battle some time earlier and brought them all the way back from Hobah above Damascus. These people saw the power and the greatness of the Lord. From all indications what did the people of Sodom do? They went back to Sodom and went right back to their sin!

Abraham was in no way justifying the fact that the wicked did not deserve their due punishment, but Abraham also knew the outcome if they did not repent and surrender their life to the Lord. What is that end people? Hell, lost in their sins forever! Abraham himself is considered a righteous man! Or in our terms we can say saved!

What saved person would not intercede for the lost? What saved person would not have a burden for the lost? What saved person would not beg God to spare those that are lost, even knowing that they may never call on the Lord in repentance and be saved?

Abraham continues his petition before the Lord in verse 27. Abraham has started and it is like, well I have started I might as well go all in know.

### ***Genesis 18:27***

***<sup>27</sup> Abraham answered and said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes.***

Abraham shows us the difference between the Lord and ourselves. Also, shares what a great privilege prayer is. Here is the created, having direct access to the Creator. How did God create Adam? Out of the dust and breathed the breath of life into him. Where is the Lord right now with Abraham? He is right beside him. We read from Hebrews earlier that because of Jesus, we can draw near the throne room of grace to God by prayer.

Just as Abraham is interceding for Lot and the people of Sodom, we see in Romans that Jesus is interceding for us. Romans 8:34 says, "***Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died – more than that, who was raised – who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.***" Is that not a magnificent thought? Anytime, anywhere, in any circumstance we can bring everything to the Lord.

As I said earlier, Abraham continues he requests, his prayer before the Lord. Let's look at the rest of our verses again from verse 28 up to verse 32.

### ***Genesis 18:28-32***

***<sup>28</sup> Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." <sup>29</sup> Again he spoke to him and said, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it." <sup>30</sup> Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there." <sup>31</sup> He said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." <sup>32</sup> Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it."***

Through this intercession we see what that covenant relationship between God and a true believer looks like. Abraham is able to bring each request to the Lord not only expecting an answer but getting an answer. In John 15:15 Jesus tells his disciples that he calls them no longer servants but friends. What we see is that we can be persistent in our prayers. What we also see is the outcome to our prayers is not based off what we want, but what is best, and just according to the will of God.

There will be times in our lives that the answer we get is not the answer we were wanting. God is sovereign, he knows best, and he answers according to his character and his will that will grow us the most.

The conversation is over and God has given his final answer to Abraham and then he goes away as we read in verse 33.

### ***Genesis 18:33***

***<sup>33</sup> And the Lord went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.***

After that last request from Abraham that if ten righteous were found the Lord goes away and Abraham goes back to his home there in Mamre. What we will see in a few weeks, there wasn't ten righteous! We will see though there are a few saved. Showing us that many will not receive the salvation of the Lord. We do not know ourselves who will be saved or not so that should motivate us more to intercede for the lost. In fact, in Romans 10:1, the Apostle Paul says this about his fellow Jews.

### ***Romans 10:1***

***<sup>1</sup> Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.***

***Is that our heart?***

### ***1 Timothy 2:1-4***

***<sup>1</sup> First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, <sup>2</sup> for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. <sup>3</sup> This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.***

So, we intercede for the lost. May I say, yes, we pray, and prayer is powerful, but also may our prayers be backed up by action and we use the words of God and proclaim the Gospel to the lost. People may react with disdain towards the Gospel. They may react with vile words expressed towards you, as we look around the world, we see that persecution through violence comes towards those that stand on the truth of the Gospel.

They may not react in anyway at all. It may be like you are speaking to a brick wall. That does not change the fact that we should be interceding for the lost. They may rebuff your words, but they can't stop your prayers.

Just as Abraham knew the outcome for the people of Sodoma and Gomorrah, we know the outcome for all those that do not repent of their sins and truly love Jesus in obedience to his Word. Jesus is coming back again! Here's the question! Do we have a burden for the lost?