

Life Group Lesson

State of the Church • Week of January 8

Introduction

Each year, Christ Church's Lead Pastor, Pastor Charles, gives a "state of the Church" address – much like our nation's annual "State of the Union" address. As a church, we acknowledge where we have been, celebrate accomplishments and goals achieved, then assesses where we need to be in the coming year if we are to stay strong. Yet, this year, Pastor Charles shares a conviction God placed on his heart through the reading of the One Year Bible. Before giving a "State of the Church" address, we first need to take a "State of Our Home" assessment. Since the Church is the Body of Christ, and we are all members of One Body, one life affects another. We cannot assess the church without first assessing the health and viability of ourselves – our own individual lives, the members of our families, our household. In Genesis 18 – 19, we read of the remarkable account of Abraham interceding on behalf of his nephew Lot.

Background

Abraham and Lot were extremely wealthy with large flocks and herds, and soon after entering the land of Canaan, they realized the land could not support them both. Thus, they parted ways. Because Abraham did not want the conflict to escalate into hard feelings toward one another (and their herdsmen) Abraham asked Lot to choose between the 'land to the left' or the 'land on the right'. Whatever Lot chose, Abraham was willing to take the other. Lot chose the fertile plain to the right; not realizing the horrific wickedness of the cities there (see Genesis 13:1-13). In time, Lot not only lost his wealth when war broke out between four kings of the east who conquered the five kings of the plain (where Lot moved) capturing their families and plundering the wealth (Genesis 14:1-16); but Lot's values had become compromised as he lived among sanctioned wickedness and sin.

Meanwhile, in Genesis chapter 18, Abraham is visited by three men (it is the LORD along with two angels). Abraham runs to welcome them and invites them to refresh themselves as he and Sarah prepare a meal for them. (The three men promise Sarah that 'by this time next year' she will have a son.) After the meal, the LORD tells Abraham: "I have heard a great outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah, because their sin is so flagrant. I am going down to see if their actions are as wicked as I have heard. If not, I want to know" (Genesis 18:20-21). The LORD sends the two angels to assess the condition of Sodom. Abraham is again concerned about his nephew Lot. Will Lot and his family be swept away along with the sinful people of the plain?

Read Genesis 18:16-33

So, what if the angel of the LORD came to visit your home today? Would the Lord find 'one' righteous person in your house? Abraham demonstrated his love for Lot more than once. Abraham valued his nephew when He gave him first choice of land in Genesis 13; Abraham risked his life when he mustered a small army from his own household and rescued Lot in Genesis 14; now Abraham goes before the LORD and pleads: "Will you sweep away both the righteous and the wicked?" Will you destroy the city if you find fifty righteous persons? What about forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty, ten righteous persons living there? The two angels could not find even ten righteous individuals in Sodom and Gomorrah. Three lives were spared (Lot and his two daughters) yet, as we read the account of incest in Genesis 19:30-38, we wonder if God even sparing Lot at all was because of Abraham's intervention and intercession.

Read Genesis 19:1-29

(format questions for both Genesis 18:16-33 and Genesis 19:1-29)

1. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

2. What are you going to do about it?

3. How can we help you?

Reflection

Your spiritual viability matters. You may have had a vital relationship with the Lord, but living among wicked and sinful people has caused your heart to grow indifferent to values you once held. There is hope. Today is a new day. Your righteousness impacts the people around you. Choose today to be rightly related with the Lord and the people around you. Being righteous does not mean a 'holier-than-thou' attitude (that is pride). No one is perfect (Romans 2:23). Yet, Christ calls us to be perfect (Matthew 5:48) – to take the high road and forgive, to love our enemies, to intercede on behalf of others, and to be humble and gracious in our dealings with difficult people.

The faithfulness you live out before others can actually inspire them to turn from sin and turn to God. If the LORD came to your house, along with two angels, looking for righteousness within the walls of your home, would He find it? Even though Lot had digressed in his faith living among such wickedness and sin, we

read these words regarding Abraham's nephew –

“But God also rescued Lot out of Sodom because he was a righteous man who was sick of the shameful immorality of the wicked people around him. Yes, Lot was a righteous man who was tormented in his soul by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day. So you see, the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials, even while keeping the wicked under punishment until the day of final judgment” (2 Peter 2:7-9)

In Closing—

Ask the Lord to make your home a place where Jesus is more than a name. Spend some time in prayer and intercede for family members. Call out the names of each person in your household and pray they accept Jesus into their hearts (personally) and make Him both Savior *and* Lord. Pray for Christ Church. Make ‘church’ for you and your family more than something you *go and do* every now and then. Ask the Lord to help you see yourself as a viable part of the church (His body) connected with all members of the Body of Christ. Perhaps you have never surrendered to Christ. You can do that today! Invite the Person of Jesus into your heart and into *all* areas of your life. Begin to talk with God not only in your time of need, but throughout the day. Make God your ultimate joy, your reason for existence. Living for Jesus is challenging, but it is also rewarding.

“And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: ‘Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.’ He was even called the friend of God” (James 2:23).

One Year Bible Readings

January 08: Genesis 18:16-19:38 Matthew 6:25-7:14 Psalm 8:1-9 Proverbs 2:6-15
January 09: Genesis 20:1-22:24 Matthew 7:15-29 Psalm 9:1-12 Proverbs 2:16-22
January 10: Genesis 23:1-24:51 Matthew 8:1-17 Psalm 9:13-20 Proverbs 3:1-6
January 11: Genesis 24:52-26:16 Matthew 8:18-34 Psalm 10:1-15 Proverbs 3:7-8
January 12: Genesis 26:17-27:46 Matthew 9:1-17 Psalm 10:16-18 Proverbs 3:9-10
January 13: Genesis 28:1-29:35 Matthew 9:18-38 Psalm 11:1-7 Proverbs 3:11-12
January 14: Genesis 30:1-31:16 Matthew 10:1-23 Psalm 12:1-8 Proverbs 3:13-15

State of the Church

Text: Matthew 6:25-7:14

Plain Truth:

Living for Jesus is both _____
and _____.

1. _____ Anxiety, Scarcity and Stress to Jesus by _____ Jesus.
2. _____ your life before _____ others lest you live in _____.
3. Practice _____ so your relationships can _____.
4. Pray for _____ of the _____ and pray _____.
5. Accept that living for Jesus is both _____ and _____.

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