

Friend of God

Grace Fellowship | Carlton Weathers | Genesis **18:1–15**

If you have your Bibles, open them to Genesis chapter 18. We're going to be looking at verses 1 through 15 this morning. Over the last few weeks, we've seen God's promise to Abraham begin to take shape. We've seen the covenant clarified, we've seen the name change from Abram to Abraham, we've seen the sign of the covenant in circumcision. And today, we see an incredible scene as the Lord appears to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre.

Beginning in verse 1: "And the Lord appeared to him 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 front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, 'O Lord, if I have found favor in Your sight, do not pass by Your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.' So they said, 'Do as you have said.'

And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, 'Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes.' And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

They said to him, 'Where is Sarah your wife?' And he said, 'She is in the tent.' The Lord said, 'I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.' And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?'

The Lord said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh and say, "Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?" Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.' But Sarah denied it, saying, 'I did not laugh,' for she was afraid. He said, 'No, but you did laugh.'"

I want us to see three things in this beautiful and somewhat humorous text this morning. First, I want us to see the hospitality of the friend. Abraham is sitting in his tent door in the heat of the day. Now, if you know anything about that part of the world, that is the time when everything stops. It's too hot to work, it's too hot to move. You sit in the shade and you try to survive the heat. And yet, when Abraham looks up and sees these three men, he doesn't just wave at them from his chair. The text says he ran to meet them.

Think about that. Abraham is ninety-nine years old. And he runs to meet these strangers. He bows before them. He begs them to stay. He offers them water for their feet and the best meal he can provide. He tells Sarah to get the fine flour—not the regular stuff, but the fine flour—to make cakes. He picks out a tender calf. He serves them curds and milk. This is extravagant hospitality.

And why does he do it? Is it just middle eastern culture? Well, that's part of it, but there's something deeper here. Abraham is a man who has been befriended by God. In James chapter 2 and in Isaiah 41, Abraham is called the friend of God. And because he knows the hospitality and the grace of the Lord, he reflects that to others. He sees it as a privilege to serve. He stands by them under the tree while they eat, like a servant waiting on his master. Church, may we be a people of that kind of hospitality, knowing that as we serve others, we are reflecting the heart of our Father.

Secondly, I want us to see the promise to the friend. After they eat, the Lord—because we know now that one of these men is Yahweh Himself appearing in human form—asks, "Where is Sarah your wife?" He already knows where she is, but He's bringing her into the conversation. And He makes the promise explicit: "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son."

This is the moment they have been waiting for for twenty-five years. God had promised a son back in chapter 12. He clarified it in chapter 15 and chapter 17. But now, He gives a date. "This time next year." God is so personal with His friends. He doesn't just leave us with vague ideas; He comes to us in our reality and says, "I am going to do this." He wants Abraham and Sarah to know that their waiting is coming to an end.

Finally, I want us to see the rebuke of the friend. Sarah is listening behind the tent door, and when she hears this, she laughs. And we can understand why. She's thinking about her own body. She's thinking about Abraham's body. She's ninety years old. She says, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" It's a laugh of "this is impossible."

But look at the Lord's response. He says to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh?" He heard her heart. And then He asks the question that should be the foundation of our lives: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

That is a rebuke, but it's a gracious one. He's calling her to look away from the "way of women" that had ceased and to look at the "way of the Lord" which never ceases. He's reminding her that the One who created the universe, the One who made the stars, the One who spoke life into existence, is not limited by a ninety-year-old womb. And when Sarah tries to deny it because she's afraid, He doesn't let her off the hook. He says, "No, but you did laugh."

Why does He do that? Because a true friend tells you the truth. He wants her to face her unbelief so that she can see His faithfulness. He wants her to know that her laughter of doubt will soon be turned into a laughter of joy.

As we look at this text, we see the amazing reality that the God of the universe wants to be our friend. He comes to us, He eats with us, He promises us great things, and He corrects us when we stray. And we know this friendship most fully through Jesus Christ, who said to His disciples, "No longer do I call you servants... but I have called you friends." He is the one who came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life for us.

Let's pray. Father, we thank Thee for Thy word. We thank Thee for the hospitality, the promise, and even the rebuke we see in this text. Help us to live as Thy friends, trusting in Thy power and resting in Thy grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.