

Genesis 18:16-33 The Justice and The Mercy of God

I. The Message of Impending Judgment On Sodom (16-22)

A. God's Purposes To Reveal His Justice (16-19)

1. The Lord Looks Toward Sodom (16)
2. The Lord Intends To Reveal His Purpose to Abraham Because of Who Abraham is (17-19)

a. Because He is the Covenant Bearer (17-18)

- i. Part of God's Covenant is that His people will walk in His ways
- ii. Abraham needs to learn what this means
- iii. God is bringing judgment and using it to equip Abraham to be His man and raise up His people.

b. Because He is To Instruct His People in the Lord's Way (19a)

- i. He must understand the justice of God in order to instruct his people to follow God's ways

- God says "I know (Yada) Him"
- This doesn't mean "I know Abraham is a good person and will teach His children and household..."
- It means "I know Him, and because I know Him (i.e. in covenant with) He will teach His children and household..."

- ii. Till now, Abraham has been treated with grace and mercy. Even when Abraham sinned, he suffered consequences, but never experienced the judgment of God.

- Abraham has been guilty of doubt, lies, sexual misconduct, etc.

- iii. God has repeatedly given blessing and mercy to Abraham

- iv. Abraham must learn the consequences of rebelling against God and walking in one's own way

- v. Abraham must learn that walking in God's way involves a life that extends justice and righteousness to other people – (See Micah 6:8)

c. Because He is To Receive the Promises of God (19b)

- i. God will bring His blessings upon His People because they walk in His ways
- ii. God's people will know what it means to walk in His ways because Abraham will instruct them

B. God's Intent To Dispense Justice (20-22)

1. God Heard the Cries of Sodom's Sin (20)

a. The Outcry of Sin

- i. The word “cry” (outcry) is always used to speak of those suffering injustice, oppression, affliction, or being brutalized.
 - ii. Just as the blood of Abel cried out to God for justice
 - b. The Sin of Sodom
 - i. Of course we will see that homosexuality was one of the grievous sins Sodom is guilty of
 - ii. Sodom’s sin is much deeper. The wickedness of the city extended to every part
 - Eze. 16:49 - Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.
 - Isa. 3:9 - The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.
 - iii. Sodom brutalized the poor and needy. The people fulfilled their own desires and the city was filled with all corruption and wickedness.
 - iv. God says the sin is “grievous” – the Hebrew word means “Heavy, Weighty”
 - c. As the time of the flood, God has been pushed to the limit and must now bring justice to Sodom.
2. God Is Headed to Investigate Sodom’s Sin (21)
 - a. God is Going Down to See If Sodom’s Sin is as grievous as the outcry
 - i. Did God not know whether it was true or not?
 - ii. Why does He need to investigate?
 - b. God’s Point is to Teach Abraham About Living in Justice
 - i. God Himself is demonstrating to Abraham that True Justice is Always Based on Accurate Information
 - ii. God’s judgments may sometimes seem severe to us, but they are always right and proper
 - Abraham will learn that living justly requires accurate evidence and information
 - Raining fire down on the city without interacting with Abraham would not teach him
3. God’s “men” Head Down To Sodom (22)

- a. Why Does God send “two” to investigate the city?
- b. Deut. 17:6 - At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.

II. The Intercession For Sodom (23-33)

A. Abraham Inquires About God’s Justice (23-25)

- 1. Will God Judge The Righteous With the Wicked? (23)
 - a. Abraham sees an insurmountable problem – If God destroys the city, the righteous will suffer judgment. If God spares the city, the wicked will escape justice.
 - b. Abraham doesn’t understand how God can destroy a city in judgment if there are righteous people in it.
 - i. What is Abraham assuming?
 - ii. Who do you think Abraham is thinking of?
- 2. Will God Spare the Wicked For The Sake of 50 Righteous? (24)
 - a. “Righteous” here is not sinless people or people who are declared justified before the Lord
 - b. “Righteous” here is speaking of those who are trusting in the true God and following the way of the Lord
- 3. Will Not The Judge of The Earth Act Justly? (25)
 - a. Abraham presupposes that God is the judge of all the earth...and He is
 - b. Abraham rightly observes that the righteous should not experience God’s judgment
 - i. NOTE: We are not talking about physical suffering or even death – the righteous experience suffering in this life just like everyone else. What they don’t experience is judgment. Judgment is poured out on Christ and though suffering may come to the righteous, it is always redemptive in its purpose.

B. Abraham Presses God For Mercy (26-33)

- 1. The Lord Agrees To Spare The City For 50 Righteous (26)
 - a. God will spare the entire city (wicked and righteous alike) if 50 people are found there following after His ways.
 - b. God’s mercy and grace are demonstrated here. He is willing to withhold judgment on the wicked if His people will be caught in the crossfire.
 - c. Believers are the salt of the earth – salt is used as a preservative for spoiling meat. God withholds all out judgment for the sake of His people.
- 2. The Lord Eventually Agrees To Spare the City for 10 Righteous (27-32)

- a. Abraham persistently (but humbly) intercedes for the people of Sodom
 - b. Earlier Abraham took up arms and went to war to save Sodom (because Lot was taken) – but there is no salvation from God’s justice – Abraham can only plead for mercy.
 - c. Abraham is a model for us – He is interceding for the wicked that they would be spared by the mercy of God.
 - i. We are to intercede for the lost
 - ii. We are to intercede for people persistently
 - iii. God loves to be pestered with our prayers
- C. Abraham Returns To His Place (33)
- 1. Abraham has prayed and interceded
 - 2. Abraham is no doubt worried about His Nephew Lot, but God is the judge and His will is always right
 - 3. Abraham can only simply go back to his tent and trust that God will do what is right.

Interestingly, we will see that God neither destroys the righteous with the wicked, nor lets the wicked go because of the righteous. And of course, there are not even 10 people who are righteous in the city.