

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GENESIS 18

OUR LAST LOOK AT GENESIS LEFT US WITH ECHOS OF SARAH'S LAUGHTER ABOUT GOD'S PROMISE FOR HER TO BEAR A SON IN LESS THAN A YEAR'S TIME. ABRAHAM HAD ENTERTAINED ANGELIC VISITORS AND THEY BROUGHT WORD OF THIS COMING ATTRACTION - THE PROMISED CHILD, ISAAC. THESE VISITORS WERE WELCOMED BY ABRAHAM AND WITH THEIR VISIT THEY BROUGHT THE NEWS ABRAHAM AND SARAH HAD BEEN WAITING 24 YEARS FOR. BUT THEY WERE IN TOWN FOR ANOTHER REASON TOO AS WE WILL BEGIN TO SEE IN THE REMAINING VERSES OF GENESIS 18.

GENESIS 18:16-19 - THE LORD'S FAVORABLE VIEW OF ABRAHAM

CAN YOU IMAGINE THE LORD THINKING TO HIMSELF "I WONDER IF I SHOULD INVOLVE _____ (*YOUR NAME HERE*) IN MY PLANS FOR THE UNIVERSE. YEAH, THEY ARE SPECIAL ONE AND I SEE IN THEM THE HEART I LONG FOR, SO YEAH, I'M GOING TO LET THEM IN THE INNER CIRCLE OF UNIVERSAL SOVEREIGN AFFAIRS." THAT'S ESSENTIALLY WHAT HAPPENS HERE FOR ABRAHAM. GOD HAS PLANS REGARDING SODOM AND GOMORRAH (AS WE WILL LEARN IN VERSE 20).

GOD CHOOSES TO INVITE ABRAHAM INTO HIS WILL AND PLANS! IF ONLY WE KNEW ABOUT WHAT GOD HAD PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE OR HAD INSIDE INFORMATION INTO HIS HEART TOWARDS THE WORLD!? (OH WAIT, WE DO TOO! THAT'S KIND OF COOL TO THINK ABOUT ISN'T IT?)

GENESIS 18:20-22 - THE LORD INFORMS ABRAHAM OF HIS PLANS

WHAT IS GOING THROUGH YOUR MIND AFTER HEARING THE LORD TELL YOU THIS NEWS? ABRAHAM SEEMS TO HAVE A ONLY MOMENTS TO PROCESS THIS NEWS. WHAT DOES HE SAY? HOW DOES HE RESPOND? DOES HE EVEN SPEAK?

THE PHRASE "OUTCRY OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH" IMPLIES THEIR EVIL DEEDS CRYING OUT TO THE LORD, PERHAPS IN A PERSONIFIED WAY, OR PERHAPS BECAUSE OF THEIR EVIL AFFLICTION ON OTHER PEOPLE WHO "CRIED OUT" TO TO HEAVEN FOR RESCUE. THE LORD (THROUGH HIS ANGELIC REPRESENTATIVE) IS GOING TO CHECK ON THE CITY TO SEE HOW EVIL IT REALLY IS. THIS SEEMS LIKE AN ODD MOVE FOR THE OMNISCIENT GOD - BUT IT IS THE MANNER HE IS CHOOSING TO ENGAGE WITH THE PEOPLE OF HIS CREATION, SPECIFICALLY THE CITIZENS OF THESE TWO CITIES. (AND REMINDS US OF HOW THE LORD DID THIS IN ANOTHER RECORD OF JUDGMENT, THE TOWER OF BABEL).

WE WON'T READ THIS UNTIL CHAPTER 19, BUT GOD'S DECISION TO SEND THE ANGELS TO THE CITY ITSELF WILL PROVE TO INCITE SOME OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH'S GREATEST EVIL, LEADING TO PUNISHMENT WHICH WILL BE HISTORIC.

GENESIS 18:23-26 - ABRAHAM APPEALS FOR THE CITIES

WE WONDERED ABOVE WHAT WOULD GO THROUGH OUR MINDS IN SUCH AN INSTANCE, AND HERE WE SEE WHAT WAS GOING THROUGH ABRAHAM'S. WOW. ABRAHAM APPEALS TO THE LORD ON BEHALF OF THE CITIES OF SIN. ABRAHAM CONCLUDES THAT JUDGMENT IS COMING TO SODOM AND GOMORRAH AND ASKS THE LORD TO SPARE THE CITIES ON BEHALF OF THE RIGHTEOUS WHO MAY BE DWELLING IN THEIR MIDST.

ABRAHAM MAKES AN INCREDIBLE REQUEST, APPEALING TO YAHWEH AS "THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH" WHO WILL SURELY "DEAL JUSTLY" (18:25). AND THE LORD AGREES! IF GOD CAN FIND 50 PEOPLE IN THE CITY WHO ARE RIGHTEOUS, HE WILL SPARE THE WHOLE CITY!

THIS TEACHES US AN IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE THAT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN GOD WILL WITHHOLD JUDGMENT UPON SIN BECAUSE OF THE LIVES OF THE RIGHTEOUS. THIS IS PART OF THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH DOING WHAT IS JUST. THROUGH ABRAHAM'S REQUEST OF THE LORD, HE WILL LEARN THIS ABOUT THE LORD.

GENESIS 18:27-33 - ABRAHAM CONTINUES HIS APPEAL

Q - WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THIS EXCHANGE BETWEEN ABRAHAM AND THE LORD?

IRONICALLY, PERHAPS ABRAHAM KNOWS ABOUT THE CITIZENS OF SODOM (WE'LL LEARN IN CHAPTER 19 THAT ABRAHAM'S NEPHEW LOT LIVES THERE STILL). AND AS SUCH HE MAKES ADDITIONAL REQUESTS FOR GOD'S MERCY UPON THE CITIES AT GRADUALLY DECREASING NUMBERS OF RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE. FROM 50 TO 45 TO 40 TO 30 TO 20 AND EVENTUALLY RESTING AT 10.

IN THIS ENTIRE EXCHANGE ABRAHAM IS NOT COMING TO GOD WITH A "NAME AND CLAIM IT" ARROGANCE IN HIS REQUEST, BUT IN A HUMILITY THAT IS STILL BOLD ENOUGH TO ASK SUCH THINGS. HIS WORDS LIKE *"I AM DUST AND ASHES"*, *"DON'T BE ANGRY"*, *"I'LL ONLY ASK THIS ONE LAST THING..."* ETC SPEAK TO THIS. AT THE SAME TIME IT SPEAKS TO ABRAHAM'S UNDERSTANDING THAT HE CAN APPROACH THE LORD WITH THESE THINGS. THOUGH GOD HAS DECREED CERTAIN TRUTHS AND DECLARATIONS, THERE ARE MANY TIMES WHEN THERE IS FLEXIBILITY TO GOD'S WAY OR TIMING IN ENACTING HIS WILL. AND OUR PRAYERS CAN MOVE GOD'S HAND AND AFFECT REAL EVENTS IN HISTORY. ABRAHAM KEEPS ASKING, KEEPS SEEKING, KEEP KNOCKING IN THIS ACCOUNT, AND GOD RESPONDS.

ABRAHAM IS CALLED THE FATHER OF FAITH - SURELY FOR HIS TRUST IN THE UNSEEN PROMISES OF GOD OVER THE COURSE OF HIS LIFE - BUT THIS CHAPTER GIVES US GREATER DEPTH INTO WHY ABRAHAM IS HELD UP AS THE PATRIARCH AND MODEL FOR ALL WHO BELIEVE! AND WE FIND MANY LESSONS TO GLEAN FROM THESE VERSES.

FIRST, GOD SAW IN ABRAHAM A MAN WHO WOULD INFLUENCE OTHERS. THE LORD CHOSE HIM "SO THAT HE MAY COMMAND HIS CHILDREN AND HIS HOUSEHOLD AFTER HIM (GENESIS 18:19)." CLEARLY THIS WAS A QUALITY ABRAHAM MODELED AND SO THE LORD KNEW ABRAHAM WOULD INFLUENCE HIS OWN KIDS IN ADDITION TO HIS "HOUSEHOLD." WHAT A QUALITY TO POSSESS. A HEART AND DESIRE TO PASS THE WAYS OF GOD ON TO OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN - BOTH BIOLOGICAL - AND THOSE OF THE "HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH".

WHAT ARE WE PASSING ON TO THE NEXT GENERATION? THINK ABOUT THAT FOR A MOMENT. WHAT ARE WE TRANSFERING TO THE YOUNGER PEOPLE AND CHILDREN IN OUR LIVES? SOME THINGS ARE PASSED ON WITHOUT US KNOWING - OUR LIKES, DISLIKES, PASSIONS, BEHAVIORS.

WE MAY BE PASSING ON OUR WAY OF DEALING WITH CONFLICT, OUR WAY OF HANDLING PRESSURE AND STRESS. OUR COPING MECHANISMS. IS THIS THE LEGACY WE WANT TO LEAVE BEHIND?

WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO HAND TO THE NEXT GENERATION A LEGACY OF TRUTH, FAITH, LOVE. WE SHOULD NOT BE DISCOURAGED AS IF WE CAN ONLY PASS ON PERFECTION - CERTAINLY THAT WAS NOT TRUE OF ABRAHAM. BUT EVEN IN HOW WE DEAL WITH OUR SINS OR FAILURES, WE CAN TEACH OUR "CHILDREN" THE WAY OF THE LORD. DOCTRINAL TRUTH NEEDS TO BE TAUGHT, BUT CHRIST-LIKENESS NEEDS TO BE TAUGHT TOO. BIBLE VERSES MUST BE SHARED, BUT BIBLICAL-CHARACTERISTICS MUST BE MODELED.

GOD SAW IN ABRAHAM A MAN HE COULD COUNT ON TO PASS ON THE WAYS OF GOD TO THE NEXT GENERATION. (GOD DIDN'T JUST THINK IT WAS SARAH'S JOB EITHER). THIS QUALITY IN ABRAHAM WAS OBVIOUS THAT IT INFLUENCED GOD'S DECISION TO SHARE HEAVENLY INSIDER NEWS REGARDING SODOM AND GOMORRAH WHICH ULTIMATELY LEAD TO ABRAHAM'S INTERCESSION FOR THE CITIES. THERE ARE WATCHING EYES AND LISTENING EARS ALL AROUND US. CAN THESE LITTLE ONES LOOK TO YOUR EXAMPLE OR WOULD YOU ENCOURAGE THEM TO FIND ANOTHER? ARE YOU SOMEONE THAT GOD CAN COUNT ON TO TEACH THE NEXT GENERATION TO "KEEP THE WAY OF THE LORD" OR DOES GOD NEED TO LOOK FOR SOMEONE ELSE?

SECOND, ABRAHAM'S HEART FOR SODOM AND GOMORRAH IS REMARKABLE. THESE CITIES ARE HISTORICALLY THE EPITOME OF EVIL AND DARKNESS AND YET WHEN ABRAHAM HEARS THAT THE LORD PLANS TO JUDGE THEM, ABRAHAM HUMBLY APPEALS TO THE LORD FOR THEIR SALVATION. REMEMBER, ABRAHAM'S REQUEST WASN'T JUST TO SPARE THE FEW RIGHTEOUS THAT MIGHT BE IN THE CITY - BUT TO SPARE THE WHOLE CITY!

HE PLEADS WITH GOD FOR THE MOST EVIL OF THE LAND. HE BEGS GOD TO SPARE THE WORST SINNERS. WHAT A HEART! OH THAT THE LORD WOULD GIVE US THE HEART OF ABRAHAM FOR OUR NEIGHBORS AND FOR THE NATIONS! FOR THE UNLOVING SPOUSE - GOD, SHOW THEM YOUR MERCY! FOR THE HURTFUL PARENT - GOD, SHOW THEM YOUR MERCY! FOR THE ANGRY BOSS AND THE LAZY CO-WORKER - GOD, SHOW THEM YOUR MERCY! FOR THE RUDE NEIGHBOR - GOD, SHOW THEM YOUR MERCY! FOR THE DIFFERENT POLITICAL VIEW - GOD, SHOW THEM YOUR MERCY! FOR THE DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS ADHERENT - GOD, SHOW THEM YOUR MERCY! FOR THE LGBT COMMUNITY - GOD SHOW THEM YOUR MERCY! FOR THE IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE - GOD SHOW THEM YOUR MERCY! FOR THE PRISONER, FOR THE STRANGER, FOR THE DIFFERENT, FOR THE RICH, FOR THE POOR - GOD, SHOW THEM YOUR MERCY!

MAY WE NOT JUST REPEAT THAT REFRAIN AND GIVE MENTAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT TO THE COMMAND TO LOVE ENEMIES AND DO GOOD (ACTION) TO THOSE WHO HATE US - LET US HAVE THE HEART OF ABRAHAM WHO GENUINELY PLEADED WITH THE LORD ON THEIR BEHALF WITH A PASSION AND HEART THAT MOVED GOD'S HAND! ABRAHAM HAD A LOVE FOR GOD AND A LOVE FOR PEOPLE (REMEMBER THIS REGION WAS PART OF THE PLACE ABRAHAM HAD RESCUED DURING THE WAR IN CHAPTER 14, EVEN THOUGH THEIR KING WAS RUDE AND UNGRATEFUL FOR ABRAHAM'S HELP).

AND YET WE FIND THIS SUCH A HARD THING TO MODEL IN OUR DAY AS CHRISTIANS. WHY IS THAT SO OFTEN TRUE? CONSIDER THIS: ABRAHAM HAS A HEART FOR GOD AND A HEART FOR PEOPLE YET HE KNOWS NOTHING OF THE SACRIFICIAL LIFE AND DEATH OF JESUS. HE HAS NO IDEA THAT JESUS WENT TO THE CROSS FOR SINNERS AND FORGAVE THOSE WHO HAD DONE EVIL AND REBELLED AGAINST GOD? HE KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT - WORKING SUPERNATURAL LOVE AND GRACE IN THE HEARTS OF THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS. HE KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT THE BOOK OF ROMANS AND ALL THAT CHRIST HAS ACCOMPLISHED. HE KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS AND HOW EVIL HAS BEEN DEFEATED AND EVIL PEOPLE, EVIL FORCES AND SATAN HIMSELF HOLD NO POWER OVER US. AND YET THERE IS IGNORANT, OLD TESTAMENT, HEBREW ABRAHAM LOVING AND ACTING AND PRAYING IN WAYS MOST OF US ONLY SAY "YEAH, I KNOW I SHOULD DO THAT BUT IT'S REALLY **HARD**." WHAT'S *HARD* IS TO IMAGINE ABRAHAM'S ABILITY TO DO THIS IN LIGHT OF WHAT HE LACKED AND HOW WE REFUSE TO DO THIS WITH ALL WE HAVE AT OUR DISPOSAL.

CHILD OF GOD, DON'T SELL YOURSELF SHORT. YOU CAN DO WHAT GOD HAS CALLED YOU TO DO. YOU CAN BE WHAT GOD HAS CALLED YOU TO BE. BUT FAITH IS WHAT WILL DETERMINE THIS BEING TRUE OR NOT. FAITH IN YOURSELF SAYS "THIS IS HARD, I CAN'T". FAITH IN GOD SAYS "THIS IS HARD, I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME." IT IS GOD WHO WANTS TO WORK IN AND THROUGH THE WILLING MAN AND WOMAN OF FAITH. THE PEOPLE OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH WERE INTERCEDED FOR BY ABRAHAM, BUT IT WAS GOD WHO DID THE WORK, *BECAUSE* OF ABRAHAM. THAT'S ALL THAT IT TAKES. AND YOU AND I ARE ALREADY READY FOR OUR TASK.