

Abraham Intercedes for Sodom

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[0:00] Welcome to Built on God's Word, the preaching and teaching ministry of Highland Park Baptist Church in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Willard Lyons teaches on the life of Abraham.

! Sarah. In particular, the last week he was dealing with Sarah because of her unbelief. Remember, God and two others, an angel, angelic beings, showed up in the form of men to speak with Abraham, but more so speak with Sarah. And she laughed at the fact that he had said to Abram, this time next year your wife will have a son.

God dealt with her about that. Remember now, it's different than when Abraham laughed at the same message, if you will.

Abraham's was just kind of a joyous amazement that that could happen to an older couple like that. But knowing it was necessary in order for the covenant promise to be continued on that he had given to Abraham.

[1:22] So he believed God. He knew God's promise was always true. But he was just overwhelmed emotionally with the reality of what he said.

But with Sarah, it was more unbelief. It just can't happen. It's impossible because of my age, his age, everything else.

But remember, it was necessary for God to bring her to that point of recognizing that it's God that's making the promise here.

It's the all-powerful God, sovereign God, that is making the promise. And that what he has promised, he will deliver.

And so she needed to see that. And so he confronts her with reality that she said no. Her thinking that he did not hear her, could not have heard her, say that within herself, under her breath.

[2:24] But he did. She needed to see that faith was necessary for all this to continue on as God had promised. Sarah needed to recognize that whenever human strength, human wisdom, human reasoning, and even when nature itself in the natural scheme of things could not make things happen, that it was impossible for that, that God was always able.

All right? He had it covered. He could do anything that's necessary to complete what he needs to do. That's why I always like the term the Lord of hosts.

You know, the host being a great army, it gives me the picture of the idea that God has everything at his disposal to do whatever he needs to do to make happen whatever he wants to happen.

Amen? And so we need to recognize that in our life as well. I mean, after all, he's God. All right? And he is the one that has set it all into motion.

So, consider that and remember, that's where he has been and that's what he's been doing here in the life of Sarah.

[3:47] When we talk about God having everything at his disposal to do what he needs to do, you look at it. God spoke creation into being. Amen? He just spoke it and it was done.

He moved, commanded whatever by his power, put planets in place, told it to stay there by his own word. In Genesis chapter 1 verse 31, you remember, when God completed all his creative acts.

All right? As far as earth is concerned. What did he do? He looked at his creation and he said, that's very good. Actually, in the Hebrew, the word very there is the idea of the word exceedingly.

It's exceedingly good. Amen? Yeah. I mean, how could it be anything else? God's the one that did the work. Psalm 40 verse 5 says, Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to usward.

They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee. In other words, there's no comparison there. If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

[5:01] There's nobody or anything to be compared to God in what he does and what he can do. Now, verses 16 through 18 of Genesis 18.

So, remember, it's God and the two angels, angelic beings in the form of men that have come and dealt with Abram or Abraham. I've said Abram for so long. When he changed his name to Abraham, I, you know, hadn't gotten there yet.

So, and the men rose up from thence and looked toward Sodom. And Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. And the Lord said, Shall I hide this thing from Abraham, that thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

Now, after the conversation and dealing with Sarah, the visitors rise up, and they turn their face toward Sodom. Just looks at it.

All right? Now, Abraham goes with them a certain distance. I like this idea, or if I'm interested in any way. The common traditional thought was, when Abraham did this, he went as far as the place from which you can see the Dead Sea through a ravine.

[6:22] So, God asks the question, Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I'm going to do? Shall I hide it from him? Shall I keep it from him? Now, the reason God asks that question all lies in what God's design and purpose for Abraham is.

Remember what that is. It's going to be through him that Messiah is going to come. The Redeemer is going to come through his seed. All right?

So, everything God does with Abraham is done on that basis. I've designed this for Abraham. So, what should I do in this case?

Earthly thought. Bring wrath against Sodom and Gomorrah. Should I tell this to Abraham? All right?

Now, why would it be important for Abraham to know what God's going to do in face of what God's design and purpose for him is?

Why would that be important? Verse 19. For I know him, that's Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

[7:44] Interesting. That's got to happen. This has got to happen. So, Abraham can recognize some things. And in recognizing those things, he'll be able to teach his children and his grandchildren.

And it go on down the line. So that all those descendants of Abraham will be living a life as such that God can do whatever the purpose of Abraham and through Abraham is.

And that is to bring the Christ to fruition. All right? To bring him about. Now, he's known Abraham. He's chosen him, commanded him to live a righteous and just life.

That's the kind of life his descendants are going to have to live. To live righteously. Piously before God. Knowing him. Trusting him.

Following him. All right? So that in every aspect of their life, they can be forthright. All right? And righteous. Whether it be in personal relationships.

[8:55] Whether it be in business transactions. Whatever it may be. So they may have, again, the ability to carry on whatever it is God's got through them in this covenant relationship.

All right? Now, all of this done so that God can accomplish through Abraham what he wants to accomplish. So, in spite of the fact there's been a couple of setbacks in Abraham's life, realize, Abraham has been continuing on a life of faith in trusting God and following him in what he is doing. And that's kind of the picture that God paints there when he asks the question. Here's a man that to us seems to be a man of righteousness. God sees him as such. And wants him to continue that living, but also teaching his children that by his life.

Now, verses 20 and 21. The Lord said, Because of the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is coming to me.

And if not, I will know. All right? Notice the phrase. I will go down. I'm going down there now to see if everything's just like it sounds like it is.

[10:36] Now, who is it that's saying that? It's God saying it. The all-knowing, righteous God.

If he's an all-knowing God, why does he have to go down there to check the evidence? There's two or three ideas here and two thoughts that I think are valid.

The one that I think of, first of all, is that down the road, for however long, people are going to recognize what God did.

The skeptics are going to ask, was he just and righteous to do that? Just because he said that's what's happening.

All right? So he comes down on an earthly plane, if you will, for a bit, and goes down so that when that wrath takes place, everybody will be able to know that he was righteous and just to bring that judgment upon those cities.

[11 : 49] Yeah. Yeah. So, to me, that's the reasoning behind that. Plus the idea that this is going to affect Abraham.

Abraham. And if it affects Abraham, then Abraham's going to have to see the reality of it all. And besides that, Abraham needs to see the seriousness of this, the degree of the sin.

And how best to do that than for God to say, I'm going to go down and be sure of it before I do anything. Now, couple that with what's about to happen here.

And we see some tremendous stuff here. So, God discloses this to Abraham about what he was going to do. Because he's the one that God has chosen to be the father of the great nation through which Messiah would come and would be a blessing to the entire world through that.

All right? So, it's necessary for him to lead his descendants, his posterity, into the paths of righteousness. So, they could be partakers of this and not of God's blessings upon Abraham and not be brought unto the wrath of God that they're about to see.

[13 : 11] What better way to do that, yeah? Than for them to see the smoke arise from these cities that God brings destruction upon.

They're to see that. And they'll see it. All right? And get a taste, if you will, from a distance of the wrath of God in his judgment upon the ungodly.

I mean, after all, recognize something here. The birth of Messiah is at stake in all of this. All right? At least through Abraham. That's God's design, God's plan.

So, that's what's at stake here. So, God makes sure every face is touched in what needs to be done so that everything can fit together exactly the way it needs to fit together.

Now, I'll go down, see whether they have all done altogether according to the cry of it. Now, see if they have done altogether, the word altogether, that phrase, done altogether, do you notice the idea of completeness?

[14 : 24] All right? If it's come to the point of an extreme punishment that needs to be doled out. Just the same happened in the day of Noah.

Go back over to Genesis chapter 6 just a moment. Look there. Let's remember something here. In Genesis chapter 6, in verse 1 and 2, It came to pass when men began to multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born unto them that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair.

They took them wives of all which they chose. The Lord, that's Jehovah, said, My spirit shall not always strive with men.

Literally, that is, My spirit shall not always rule. There shall not rule in men forever because he is flesh.

All right? And they're wandering, they are flesh. In other words, talking about the fleshly nature there. Yet his day shall be in 120 years and so forth. Now, run over to verse number 5, if you would.

[15 : 32] God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination, now check that, every imagination or the whole imagination.

In that, in Hebrew goes to express not only the imagination and the thoughts, all right, but the purpose and desires in their thoughts, all right.

Their only evil continually repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him at his heart. Jehovah said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast and the creeping thing and the fowls of the air, for it repenteth me that I have made them.

And so we know the story of Man Noah and what he does through him. Recognize with me that there, we see evident that there is a time when sin comes to its fullness.

All right? In other words, it becomes so wicked and ungodly and vile that nothing can turn that back.

[16 : 48] The only thing that has to take place then is the wrath of God and judgment upon them.

All right? Now, our generation's not there yet, but it's headed there.

Recognize again with me when that is ushered in and it gets worse and worse and it's ushered in to the tribulation period, you see, what takes place there, three and a half years of peace and three and a half years of vile wickedness like the world's never seen.

Picture of sin coming to its fullness, what's going to happen? God brings the seven vials of judgment and other judgments upon it. All right? And whoever had the bumper sticker on the back window of their vehicle said, I've read the book and God wins.

Amen? Yeah. God will win. Righteousness will win and righteousness will rule. So that's the picture that's painted here, if you will.

Now, notice with me, something happens here with Abraham's heart. Not only his mind, but with his heart mostly.

[18:03] All right? Look at verses 22 and 23 of Genesis 18. The men turned their faces from thence, went towards Sodom.

All right? So there they go. But Abraham stood yet before Jehovah. Hmm.

Kind of gives me the idea that there's something else on Abraham's heart here. When he hears, he knows he's dealt with Sarah and he knows basically that's the reason why he's come.

The three men have come to him. Not just passing by, but they had a purpose. But now, Abraham sees something else here. And he's moved.

He's stirred by what God has said to him about that judgment. All right? Now, Abraham stands, therefore, before the Lord.

[19:03] They're headed towards Sodom, but he stands right there and approaches God. All right? God no doubt gets the indication Abraham has something to say to him.

All right? And here's what he said. Abraham drew near and said, will thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

Will you do that? Don't know that Abraham at this point really understands, and there's no way he can, the full severity of what's taking place in Sodom.

But his heart goes out and he's trying to reconcile all that in his mind here with the idea. You know, can a righteous God destroy the righteous with the unrighteous?

That's the picture painted here. Will you also destroy the righteous with the wicked? All right? Now, don't really think that he's got Lot in mind here.

[20:18] Maybe he does. But recognize something with me. Remember the occasion when Abraham had gone and rescued Lot from the kings of the east and brought him back and they stayed together for a while until their herds and herdsmen got so large they couldn't stay together.

And so he gave Lot the choice. You know, they agreed they need to split up here. So Lot is given the choice.

Choose where you want to go. Which direction you want to go in. Remember, the scripture says Lot beheld the plains of Sodom rich, fertile, pasture land.

That's what he chose. So he goes. And of course, when we were going through that whenever we did, we recognized why Abraham, the eldest of the two, gave Lot the choice.

And you remember why that was? Abraham just trusted God to make the decision for Lot.

[21:45] Yeah. Abraham at that juncture just wanted to be where God wants him to be. And so he gave Lot the choice. And Lot chose Sodom.

And now he gets tangled up in all the ungodliness that takes place in Sodom. But I don't really think that's the idea here in Abram's heart.

I think it's just the idea that the righteous, if there are any righteous there, surely the heart of God who is a heart of love will not allow the righteous to perish along with the ungodly.

Now, 632, long passage, but let's look at it here. Per adventure, he's talking to God now, per adventure there be 50 righteous within the city, wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for 50 righteous therein?

He didn't say, will you not let them escape first? The idea is, will you not withhold your wrath if there's 50 people there?

[23:04] Because that's what it says. Wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for 50 righteous therein? That be far from thee to do after this matter, to slay the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee.

Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? right? And the Lord said, if I find in Sodom 50 righteous within the city, then I will spare the place for their sake.

Look at the boldness of Abraham here. All right? He said, be it far from you. Shall the judge of the earth, shall he not do right?

It's kind of like he's calling God up on the carpet here. That's pretty bold. God said, I will spare the place for their sake.

Abraham answered and said, behold, now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes. Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty. Will thou destroy all the city for a lack of five?

[24 : 17] In other words, go down from fifty to forty-five. All right? He said, if I find forty and five, I will not destroy it. And he spake unto him yet again, and said, peradventure there shall be forty found there.

And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake. So he comes down from fifty to forty-five, now to forty. He said unto him, O let not the Lord be angry.

Wow. What a conversation he's having here. Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak.

Peradventure there shall be thirty found there.

All right? Now notice, he goes from dropping it by five to dropping it by ten. All right? If there be thirty found there, he said, I will do it, I will not do it if I find thirty there.

And he said, behold now, I have taken me to speak unto the Lord. Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.

[25 : 25] And he said, O let not the Lord be angry, and I will yet speak that this one, one more time here. Please, Lord, let me just say it one more time.

Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake. now, goes from fifty down to ten.

Do you get the idea that possibly Abraham might be getting the idea here that it's not going to be possible to find righteous people there?

But I want you to notice something here. notice how long-suffering and gentle God is with Abraham. He's patient with him. Why is that? I believe it's because Abraham is expressing here such a strong compassion from his heart for the people of Sodom.

[26 : 43] Yeah. Yeah. And God gently, patiently allows him to express his heart. Isn't that so good that God does that?

Amen. You know, I mean, after all, you look in Paul's letter to the church at Corinth and you see the characteristics of agape love given there.

Long-suffering, gentleness, yeah, that's what God is. And so God deals with him that way. Aren't you glad he is?

Rightfully, he could say, you don't talk to me until you get yourself straightened out. Yeah, I don't want to hear this mess. No. He's very calm, very gentle because of his love for us.

Lord, a lot of that we as soon as he had left communing with Abraham and Abraham returned to his place.

[27 : 53] All right, let's pray together. Father, again, thank you for your loving kindness. We thank you for your goodness to us, your grace to us as well and for the privilege of being back together this evening to look into your word.

Lord, a lot of things that we see in the passage that we went through tonight and what we'll see in the days ahead and a lot of things we see about man, a lot of things we see about you.

And Lord, we thank you that you are just, you are righteous, but you are loving and compassionate as well. And so you deal with everything in that, in all that you are.

And so Father, we're thankful for that, we're grateful for that. Thank you that we can recognize that in our own lives and be giving you praise and love in return for what you've been to us in and through our lives, in all of our lives.

So thank you, Father, for what you've done. Thank you again for these folks that are here, for their love for you and love for your word. We ask your blessings on them that you'll take what we've seen tonight and impress that upon our heart and mind as you design.

[29 : 05] We thank you and praise you for it. We ask you in Jesus' name for his sake. Amen.

Amen. To learn more, visit us in person or see the website at highlandparkbaptist.net.