

ABRAHAM MINISTERING BEFORE THE JUDGMENT OF GOD FELL

TEXT: GENESIS 18:1-33

INTRODUCTION:

1. The *Scofield Study Bible* refers to our text as "Abraham, the friend of God."
2. In fact, Abraham is the only man in Scripture referred to as "the friend of God."
3. James 2:23 says, "Abraham...was called the Friend of God."
4. Abraham is also referred to as the friend of God in II Chronicles 20:7 and Isaiah 41:8.
5. Warren Wiersbe, in his commentary on this passage of Scripture, said, "Friendship involves ministry; and in this chapter you will find Abraham ministering in three different areas: to the Lord (Genesis 18:1-8), to his home (verses 9-15), and to a lost world (verses 16-33).

I. ABRAHAM MINISTERED TO THE LORD (18:1-8).

1. The LORD must always come first. The twelve apostles said, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4).
2. Their ministries were effective because they gave themselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."
3. Acts 13:2 says that Barnabas and Saul were ministering to the Lord, and fasting when the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."
4. Before they embarked upon their first missionary journey, "they ministered to the Lord, and fasted."
5. As Genesis 18 begins, Abraham is seen sitting "in the tent door in the heat of the day" (18:1).
6. And it was there that "the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre" (18:1).
7. Abraham looked up and saw "three men" (18:2). One of these men was the LORD, the pre-incarnate Christ. This manifestation of God in visible form is called a Christophany.
8. The other two "men" were angels (cf. 18:22; 19:1).
9. Hebrews 13:2 says, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."
10. Abraham humbly "bowed himself toward the ground" (18:2) and invited his guests to rest and eat (18:3-5).
11. What a wonderful blessing to have the Lord come to your house!

12. Remember when our Lord saw Zacchaeus up in the sycamore tree, He looked up, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house" (Luke 19:5).

13. Well, the LORD came to Abraham's house, and He visited Zacchaeus' house. What if the Lord came to your house?

If Jesus came to your house to spend a day or two -

If He came unexpectedly, I wonder what you'd do.

Oh, I know you'd give your nicest room to such an honored Guest,

And all the food you'd serve to Him would be the very best,

And you would keep assuring Him you're glad to have him there -

That serving Him in your own home is joy beyond compare.

But when you saw Him coming, would you meet Him at the door

With arms outstretched in welcome to your heavenly Visitor?

Or would you have to change your clothes before you let Him in?

Or hide some magazines and put the Bible where they'd been?

Would you turn off the radio and hope He hadn't heard?

And wish you hadn't uttered that last, loud, hasty word?

Would you hide your worldly music and put some hymn books out?

Could you let Jesus walk right in, or would you rush about?

And I wonder - if the Savior spent a day or two with you,

Would you go right on doing the things you always do?

Would you go right on saying the things you always say?

Would life for you continue as it does from day to day?

Would your family conversation keep up it's usual pace?

And would you find it hard each meal to say a table grace?

Would you sing the songs you always sing, and read the books you read,

And let Him know the things on which your mind and spirit feed?

Would you take Jesus with you everywhere you'd planned to go?

Or would you, maybe, change your plans for just a day or so?

Would you be glad to have Him meet your very closest friends?

Or would you hope they'd stay away until His visit ends?

Would you be glad to have Him stay forever on and on?

Or would you sigh with great relief when He at last was gone?

It might be interesting to know the things that you would do

If Jesus Christ in person came to spend some time with you.

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- 14.They say the people of the East are known for their hospitality, and we see that in Abraham's warm reception (18:2-8).
- 15.There is a prominence given to hospitality in the New Testament. Therefore, Christians should always be hospitable.
- 16.Romans 12:3 says we are to be "given to hospitality" (cf. III John 5-8).
- 17.First Peter 4:9 says, "Use hospitality one to another without grudging."
- 18.Titus 1:8 says a bishop must be "a lover of hospitality."
- 19.Abraham's haste is emphasized --
 - "And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal" (18:6).
 - "And Abraham ran...and he hasted to dress it" (18:7).
- 20.It should be remembered that it was "in the heat of the day" (18:1), and Abraham was 99 years old (17:1).

II. ABRAHAM MINISTERED TO HIS WIFE (18:9-15).

1. Abraham's guests asked him, "Where is Sarah thy wife?" (18:9). Here the promise of a son was repeated (18:10).
2. Sarah received this news with the utter astonishment of unbelief. She could not believe it and laughed at the thought of it (18:10-12).
3. Abraham's joyful laugh was the laughter of faith, but Sarah's laugh was the laugh of unbelief (cf. 17:15-17).
4. When questioned by the LORD, Sarah denied laughing (18:12-15). But the LORD said, "Nay; but thou didst laugh" (18:15).
5. When Sarah denied laughing, she was reminded of God's omniscience (18:13-15). Though "Sarah laughed within herself" (18:12), the LORD saw her laugh and knew her thoughts.
6. Sarah was also reminded of God's power -- "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (18:14).
7. Our Lord said in Matthew 17:20, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."
8. Our Lord said in Matthew 19:26, "With God all things are possible."
9. Our Lord said in Mark 9:23, "All things are possible to him that believeth."

10. The angel Gabriel told Mary, that though she was a virgin, she would conceive, and bring forth a son, and would call his name JESUS.
11. Then the angel added that her cousin Elisabeth had also conceived a son. Though she was in her old age and was called barren, she was with child.
12. Then the angel added, "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37).
13. The prophet Jeremiah said, "Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee" (Jeremiah 32:17).
14. Then the LORD answered Jeremiah and said, "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?" (Jeremiah 32:27).

III. ABRAHAM MINISTERED TO A LOST WORLD (18:16-33)

1. After dinner, verse 16 says, "The men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom..."
2. The "men" are the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 18:13, 17, 20, "And the LORD said") and two angels (cf. 18:22; 19:1).
3. Sodom is first mentioned in Genesis 10:19. The second time Sodom is mentioned is in Genesis 13. Genesis 13:13 says, "But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly."
4. This indicates impending judgment upon wicked sinners.
5. John Phillips said, "Sodom...was so debased that it gave its name to the vilest form of perversion known to man" (*Exploring Genesis*).
6. Deuteronomy 23:17 says, "There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel."
7. First Kings 14:24 says, "And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel."
8. The word "sodomite" has long been associated with filthy depravity. The word is so repulsive that sodomites now want to be called "gay."
9. Genesis 18:16 says, "The men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom..." Their day of judgment had arrived (18:20-22).
10. All throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is presented as a warning of God's righteous judgment against wickedness.
11. Lamentations 4:6 says Sodom "was overthrown as in a moment."

12. Isaiah 3:9 says the Sodomites flaunted their sin, just like the modern-day sodomites flaunt their sin.
13. Isaiah 3:9 says, "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."
14. Jeremiah 23:14 says, "I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness; they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah."
15. Romans chapter 1 describes the sins of the Sodomites as unclean, dishonorable, vile, unnatural, unseemly, reprobate, and not convenient.
16. Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13 says their sin is an abomination.
17. Second Peter 2:6 says God turned "the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly."
18. Jude 7 says Sodom and Gomorrha and the cities about them gave themselves over to fornication, and went after strange flesh, and "are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."
19. I hear foolish people claim that the Lord Jesus never spoke about the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah. Our Lord said, "But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:29, 30).
20. Genesis 18:17 and 18 says, "And the LORD said, Shall I hide 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?"
21. In the Bible, Abraham is referred to three times as "the friend of God."
22. As God's friend, the LORD wanted Abraham to know what was about to be done to Sodom and Gomorrah.
23. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15).
24. Psalm 25:14 says, "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant."
25. Amos 3:7 says, "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."
26. The LORD was going to tell Abraham about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

27. Lot lived in Sodom, but God did not go to Lot to tell him about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is the separated believer who is in touch with God.
28. The worldly believer is not in touch with God. Later on, when Lot heard about the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, he went out and spoke to his sons-in-law and he said to them, "Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city."
29. But his sons-in-law did not take him seriously. Genesis 19:14 says, "he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law."
30. We see here a sharp contrast -- Abraham is the friend of God; but Lot was the friend of the world.
31. Abraham was burdened for Lot and Lot's family, as well as all of the wicked sinners living in Sodom and Gomorrah so he pleaded with God on their behalf (18:22-25).
32. Here we see a beautiful picture of Abraham the intercessor.
33. Abraham asked the Lord if the city could be spared if 50 righteous people could be found (18:24). The Lord answered, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes" (18:26).
34. Abraham realized there were not 50 righteous people in Sodom, so he asked the Lord if He would spare the city if He could find 40 righteous people.
35. The Lord agreed to spare the city if 40 righteous people could be found. Then Abraham lowered the figure to 30 and then to 20 (18:27-31).
36. Finally, Abraham said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake" (18:32).
37. Sadly there weren't even ten righteous people in Sodom. If Lot would have won his family there would have been ten righteous people in Sodom, but Lot was so worldly and so backslidden he couldn't even win his own family to the Lord.
38. We know from Genesis 19 that Lot had a wife, and several sons, and daughters, and sons-in-law. If they were saved, God would have spared Sodom and Gomorrah (18:32).
39. George Mueller was a great man of prayer. I read that George Mueller was greatly helped by studying the example of Abraham in Genesis 18. In his great biography of George Muller, A.T. Pierson said George Muller "used argument in prayer" (chapter 10).
40. Another good example of this type of intercessory prayer is found in Matthew 15:21-28, the story of the Syrophenician woman.

41. Consider her importunity, and consider the importunity of Abraham (Gen. 18:23-33).
42. Importunity means urgent, fervent, earnest prayer. Interestingly, *Webster's Dictionary* also says, "which is argued with troublesome frequency or pertinacity."
43. A.T. Pierson said arguing with God is "almost a lost art." Charles Haddon Spurgeon called it a "holy art." It is indeed a holy art, but unfortunately has become a lost art today.
44. John R Rice said, "Let us say reverently that sometimes Christians ought to argue with God in prayer as this (Syrophenician) woman did" (*Matthew*).
45. Spurgeon said, "The ancient saints were wont to argue in prayer."
46. Spurgeon also said, "Why are arguments to be used at all? The reply is, certainly not because God is slow to give, not because God needs to be informed of any circumstance with regard to ourselves or of anything in connection with the mercy asked. The arguments to be used are for our own benefit not for His... The best prayers I have ever heard in our prayer meetings have been those which have been fullest of argument. Sometimes my soul has been fairly melted down when I have listened to brethren who have come before God feeling the mercy to be really needed, and that they must have it, for they first pleaded with God to give it for this reason, and then for a second, and then for a third, and then for a fourth and a fifth, until they have awakened the fervency of the entire assembly" (*Effective Prayer*).

CONCLUSION:

1. May we learn to pray like Abraham!
2. Pray for lost sinners!
3. Pray for wisdom and boldness as we do our best to reach them with the Gospel.
4. Pray for our elected leaders as they blindly lead our nation toward the Battle of Armageddon.
5. The LORD told Abraham of impending judgment, and Abraham prayed.
6. The LORD has told us of impending judgment. It is all recorded here in the Bible. Are we praying as we should?
7. The LORD has given us this blessed and wonderful privilege to be intercessors!
8. Remember the Lord Jesus Himself is seated at the right hand of God the Father interceding for us right now.
9. I will conclude with a quote from A.C. Gaebelain:

"Blessed privilege of all saints the prayer of intercession, which the great Intercessor, the Lord Jesus Christ, loves to hear from the lips of His children, for it is the echo of His own heavenly occupation."

Arno Gaebelein's Annotated Bible