



Encountering God
THROUGH PRAYER

September 29th. through October 4th. 2019

Genesis 18:16-21

16 Then the men rose up from there, and looked down toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off. 17 The Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, 18 since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? 19 "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him." 20 And the Lord said, "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave. 21 "I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know."

Genesis 18:22-28

22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the Lord. 23 Abraham came near and said, "Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 24 "Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? 25 "Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" 26 So the Lord said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account." 27 And Abraham replied, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am but dust and ashes. 28 "Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, will You destroy the whole city because of five?" And He said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there."

Genesis 18:29-33

29 He spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose forty are found there?" And He said, "I will not do it on account of the forty." 30 Then he said, "Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?" And He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." 31 And he said, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord; suppose twenty are found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it on account of the twenty." 32 Then he said, "Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it on account of the ten." 33 As soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the Lord departed, and Abraham returned to his place.

- People often think of themselves as being spiritual but not religious. The Pew Research Center did a study on the frequency by which people pray...
 - Nearly half of the people that pray daily said they seldom or never attend a religious service.
 - Of those that pray daily almost half say they seldom or never study their bibles.
 - ▶ 76% of people who pray daily said they experience a feeling of spiritual peace and wellbeing.

How Abraham Prayed

- His prayer is responsive

- vs. 17... God is the one who starts the conversation.
 - ▶ Spirituality isn't throwing our thoughts and wants into space and hoping they find God.
 - ▶ Spirituality is responding to a living God that comes to us. God speaks to us through His word. As we get to know Him we respond by changing into His image (prayer plays a crucial part in our transformation).

- His prayer is extreme

- It's familiar and absent of formalities. Abraham negotiates with God and at times even seems to reprimand God. Some might see this as extremely disrespectful.
- It's filled with fear and unworthiness. He calls himself "dust and ashes" and apologizes throughout the prayer. Some see this as stuffy and uninviting.
- The reason Abraham's prayer is both familiar and reverent is because he had an understanding of God that wasn't made up.

How Abraham Prayed

- His prayer is evangelistic
 - The word for “outcry” in vs. 20 means = Crying and wailings of the distressed. Yelling, screaming; calling out for help.
 - Abraham know the wickedness of these two cities and yet his prayer is that God will spare them. Why?
 - ▶ Maybe it really is for the sake of these “50” righteous people or maybe it’s just for Lot and his family.
 - ▶ Isn’t “spare the righteous” a much easier and natural prayer in that case?
 - Is that the way you pray? Are you praying that the wicked be spared? Are you praying that those who persecute you be saved?

What Allowed Abraham to Pray This Way?

- What makes this prayer what it is is its theological depth. Abraham's prayer for the people is all about his understanding of who God is.
 - Abraham is grasping on to two things he knows about God, pulling them together and reasoning with God about the situation in Sodom.
 - ▶ vs. 25... God is a just God and must do justice. What hope is there for the world if God is not just.
 - ▶ vs. 18-19... God is a God of grace. What hope is there for me if He is not a God of Grace.
 - Here's the argument... God I know that sometimes the righteous get swept up in the judgment of the wicked, is it possible for the righteousness of the righteous to save the wicked?
 - What's amazing is that over and over God says yes, it's possible... 50?... 45?... 40?... 30?... 20?... 10?
 - Don't you expect Abraham go all the way down to one? Why doesn't he? Because he realizes there isn't even one.

How Can We Pray More Like Him?

Hebrews 12:21-24

And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, “I am full of fear and trembling.” But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

2 Peter 3:11-14

Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless