

January 18-Genesis 18

Genesis 18 begins the account of God's judgment and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Both of these cities have become synonymous with sinful behavior and for good reason. As we will see in the next few chapters, the citizens of these cities routinely participate in and affirm vile behavior, consequently God comes down to "see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me."

In the process of God going to see about Sodom, Abraham gets a visit one day as he sits outside of his tent. Verse 1 states that "The Lord appeared to him (Abraham) by the oaks of Mamre." There is some debate about the identity of Abraham's three visitors. The Scriptures seem to indicate that one of these men is in fact God (see verse 13). Our best guess is that one of the visitors is Jesus Christ while the other two are angels of God. This passage could certainly be part of what is referenced in Hebrews 13:2 when the author instructs believers saying "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unaware." Regardless of the exact identity of the visitors, what is clear is that they are sent by God the Father to judge Sodom and Gomorrah.

Abraham is informed of the purpose of their visit while entertaining the messengers over dinner. Now, as Abraham hears about this impending judgment, he does something very noble and in his actions we see his heart and the heart we should have for those who are lost. As God details what is getting ready to take place, Abraham pleads with God that He might reconsider destroying the city if he could only find righteous people that live there. Abraham begins by asking if God would destroy the city if 50 righteous people are found and he works his way all the way down to 10 righteous people. God agrees that if 10 righteous people could be found He would not destroy the city. Apparently, the city of Sodom was so evil that not even 10 people could be found (showing its wickedness).

Let's talk a minute though about Abraham and his actions. Here is a group of people who are known for their wickedness. They are categorically evil (as proven by God's inability to find even 10 righteous people in their midst) and yet Abraham is pleading for their existence. Obviously, he is doing this in part because his nephew, Lot, lives there. But he is also showing concern for everyone else in this town. It would have been just as simple for Abraham to beg God to save Lot and not concern himself with the others but he did not do this. We see in his begging for the preservation of this city a heart that loves people and desires to see them saved.

Abraham never makes the argument that the people of Sodom don't deserve destruction. He never states that they have done "some good things" or that they "deserve" protection. Rather, he passionately pleads with God to spare them in spite of their faults. Our prayer should be that we are that type of Christian. When was the last time that we pled with God for the salvation of a person who is currently lost and wicked? Abraham understood that unless God chose to save the people of Sodom and Gomorrah they would be destroyed which caused him to plead for their salvation. The Scriptures teach us that all mankind is headed for destruction apart from the saving work of Christ in their lives. Furthermore, the Bible teaches that we are to pray for the salvation of the lost. The Scriptures do not hide the reality that these lost people are incredibly wicked, but it teaches us that we should pray for their salvation anyway. May we reflect the heart of our Savior who prayed on behalf of those who were actively torturing and mocking Him "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).