

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #43

Genesis 18:16-33

Sodom and Gomorrah were two cities known for their lush beauty, abundant prosperity and licentious immorality. Sodom and Gomorrah lured people like Lot because of its Eden type atmosphere (Genesis 13:10). The luxurious setting lured many success oriented people and as a result, these two cities became very rich and powerful and very immoral. Josephus says as a result of this wealth and power, the people totally forgot about God and disregarded any advantages they had received from Him. It was this that led to their hating and mistreating others and their love of immorality (*Josephus*, p. 34).

We need to remember that both Sodom and Gomorrah were forced, a few years earlier, to come face-to-face with God's righteousness. They did have knowledge of God. Both of these cities had been looted by Chedorlaomer and Abraham went and retrieved both Lot and their possessions (Genesis 14:9-11, 16). The King of Sodom knew that Abraham was right with the Most High God and that he would not keep anything from Sodom because it was detestable to God (Genesis 14:19-23).

WHEN SIN REACHES A CERTAIN LEVEL, GOD WILL JUDGE IT AND NOT EVEN THE PRAYERS OF A GREAT MAN OF GOD CAN STOP OR PREVENT GOD'S JUDGMENT.

CONT EXTUAL REALITY #1 - God's reasoning in regard to Abraham. 18:16-19

Mamre (18:1) was the place where Abraham had built an altar to the LORD (13:18). It was at this place of worship where the Lord and His two angels first appeared to Abraham. There are three purposes for the appearance: 1) To inform Abraham that he is back in the good graces of God (18:3); 2) To inform Abraham that he and Sarah will have a son (18:9-10); 3) To examine and destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (18:16-19:21).

The word "hide" (18:17) is a Hebrew word that emphasizes hiding something by covering it or concealing it (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 407). So the LORD is thinking and reasoning as to whether or not He should conceal or cover from Abraham the eschatological matters pertaining to Sodom and Gomorrah.

There are two reasons in the context why God was thinking about letting Abraham know:

Reason #1 - The family reason. 18:18

God had promoted Abraham to a very unique level of blessing. Through Him would come the nation Israel and eventually His own Son. Abraham was literally the family of God and God was thinking since he is family, he needs to know.

Reason #2 - The faithfulness reason. 18:19

When God says "I have chosen, literally 'known' him", the word speaks of a high level of

knowledge . God knew that if Abraham had the knowledge of what He was going to do, he would use it to promote righteousness and justice in himself and his family.

That word “righteousness” is one that means Abraham would pursue what is right in the sense of what pleases God. The word “justice” is a forensic term which means to make judgments and give out sentences in accordance with the law of God and word of God.

God’s thinking is the more a man like Abraham understands of My Word, the more he pursues a righteous faithfulness.

CONTEXTUAL REALITY #2 - God’s revelation to Abraham. 18:20-22

God decided to inform Abraham about His plan. These verses are interesting. It is clear from verse 21, that one member of the Godhead was actually going to come down physically to examine things. That member was God the Son . Now the real question of the verse is who is crying out to God from Sodom and Gomorrah? It cannot be the righteous people in the city for there are not even 10 (18:23 -33). The answer is that sin is crying out to God for punishment. The word “outcry” (v. 20) is more than just a sexual word. It was used for oppressed orphans and widows (Exodus 22:22-23); oppressed servants (Deuteronomy 24:15) such as the cries of the Israelites (Exodus 2:23; 3:7-9) so these cries were immoral, brutal, oppressive and insensitive. This principle of sin crying out to God is seen time and time again in Scripture - i.e. Cain killed Abel and his blood cried out to God (Genesis 4:10). John Calvin said, “. . .all our deeds, even those of which we think the memory to be buried, are presented before the bar of God, and that they, even of themselves, demand vengeance, although there should be none to accuse” (John Calvin, *Genesis*, pp. 483-484).

Another question arises from verse 21. We already know that God knows everything, including things people think (i.e. Genesis 18:12-13). Why then does God pay Sodom and Gomorrah a visit? What is the purpose of verse 21? The purpose is to reveal to us that **before God judges He carefully examines all of the facts.** He takes one gracious final look. In other words, God wanted mankind to realize that His judgments are always based on His own Personal, “full and accurate information” (Allen Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, p. 350). People who are God-like get all the facts before they make judgments.

CONTEXTUAL REALITY #3 - Abraham’s request to God. 18:23-33

This text caused George Mueller to learn a very important lesson about his own prayer - use argumentation in prayer to plead your case to God. Abraham has two flaws in his understanding here: 1) God does not ever destroy the righteous when He sends His destruction against the wicked; 2) No one in these cities was righteous , Lot was positionally righteous but his practical righteousness was very questionable (II Peter 2:6-8).

Abraham’s request is that God not destroy the city if He can find 50 (18:24), then 45 (18:28), then 40 (18:29), then 30 (18:30), then 20 (18:31) and then 10 (18:32). This text demonstrates the remarkable influence a small number of godly people can have on a city. God said if He could find 10, He would not destroy the city, but He couldn’t find 10, so the next day He did destroy it but He spared Lot (19:29). The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah lured many away from God and those cities became those people’s tomb.

Dr. James Boice said there are four great lessons of prayer We learn here: 1) Pray modestly; 2) Pray humbly; 3) Pray persistently; 4) Pray persuasively (*Genesis*, Vol. 2, pp. 161-162).

We will never pray fervently for the lost until we literally believe in God's eternal ferocious future judgment. All sin cries out to God for His punishment and there is only one way to escape it - place all of your faith in the One who became sin for us - Jesus Christ!