

Genesis 18: 16-33; “I Will Not Hide From Abraham”, Sermon # 53
in the series – “Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on September 9th, 2012, in the Morning Worship Service.

Our God, the God that we have come to worship here this morning, is a God who has secrets. In fact in Deuteronomy 29: 29 it says, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” God’s secrets are related to 2 things usually; His secret purposes in Salvation and His secret purpose in Judgment. Oh, it is true that He has secrets in how He has put things together in this world and this physical universe. But all of those things that He has created physically, are put there in relation to His eternal purposes with regard to His creature man.

There is so much that we do not know, that only God knows. And all that we do know is that which God has chosen and willed to reveal to us. Although God may hide His great purposes from all the other sinful and unbelieving men of that generation, He will reveal them to Abraham. So we should ask ourselves this morning, “Why does God reveal these great purposes and plans to Abraham alone, and hide what He intends to do, from others?” For it is obvious that Abraham alone had the knowledge of God’s purpose ahead of the actual event, in a way that God took counsel with him, as it were. He did not do this with even Lot, who is also described in the Bible as a righteous man.

Here in this passage God’s compassion and His judgment are revealed to Abraham alone. And I think that there are 3 reasons given to us by the text itself which show us why God revealed His great heart of compassion, and His intended judgment, which He would bring upon Sodom and Gomorrah, to Abraham alone. The 1st is this.

1st – Because God knew that Abraham was His friend. (verse 18)

In James Chapter 2, verse 23 it says that “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” “And he was called the friend of God.” Now it is only to those who are His close friends that God reveals His secrets. In Psalm 25: 14 it says, “The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.” You are God’s friend if you do what He commands you. The reason that He could tell Abraham His secrets was because he feared Him. All believers who would be God’s friends will have a proper regard, a proper respect for His majesty, wisdom, and holiness.

They have also a true sense of their own sinfulness and what they are apart from His grace. They know that the Lord is righteous in all His judgments; He is just in all His ways. (Psalm 145: 17) The wicked person does not consider that God is a great judge. Listen to Psalm 10 verses 4-6 - “The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts. His ways are always prospering; Your judgments are far above out of his sight; as for all his enemies, he sneers at them.” This is not someone who God can reveal His secrets to. If you turn to the book of Isaiah, Chapter 26 you can see the difference between the Lord’s friends and His enemies.

Verses 7-11 show it well. “The way of the just is uprightness; O Most Upright, You weigh the path of the just. Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O Lord, we have waited for You; the desire of our soul is for Your name and for the remembrance of You. With my soul I have desired You in the night, yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early; For when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” This is how the prophet speaks of those who are the Lord’s friends. These are people of faith, people who love God and the righteousness of His ways. They know that He weighs their path. They wait for Him in the path of His judgments.

They want to know His will in everything, both in His precepts and His ordering and governing of all things. That is, they know that He will act in accordance with His Word, which

is true and in accordance with His Eternal Purpose which will not fail. Their desire is to learn from Him and to pray to Him and to learn from His wonderful works. His judgments as well as His mercies are what they consider good. Now listen to what His enemies are like. Verse 10 - "Let grace be shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. Lord, when Your hand is lifted up, they will not see." But they will see and be ashamed for their envy of people; Yes the fire of Your enemies shall devour them." The NAS says, "Thy hand is lifted up yet they do not see it. They see Thy zeal for the people and are put to shame; Indeed, fire will devour Thine enemies."

I think that this is better. God is zealous for His people in the way of preserving His people in righteousness and putting all unrighteousness to shame. This is the way of His judgments. When he decides that the wickedness of men is great enough then He comes in judgment. But He will not leave His friend in the dark. God knew that since Abraham was His friend that His purpose toward Abraham was also very great. Verse 18 says, "...since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him." It is for this reason, God thinks, that it will be wise to reveal this to Abraham.

He can take counsel with him as one who will not only be heir of the land, and will be affected by these judgments of the Lord upon the inhabitants of the land. But he can take counsel with Him as the heir of the world, as he is called in Romans 4: 13. "All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him," and since this is the case, since My purpose toward him is this great, God thinks, I will make known to him what I intend to do. Listen to 2 Chronicles 20: 7 - "Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever?"

And also Isaiah 41: 8 which says, "But you Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the descendants of Abraham My friend." "You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest regions, and said to you, You are my servant, I have chosen you and have not cast you away: Fear not, for I am with you." "Be not dismayed, for I am your God." "I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." All of what God was about to do in judgment upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah he was doing because without this judgment His own purpose and promise to Abraham His friend could not be fulfilled.

Think together with me of how this applies to you who believe in Jesus Christ today, or even those who would believe in Jesus Christ today. If you would be saved from your sins you must understand that God's judgments upon us as a society, and His chastisements of His own people, are most necessary if we would be saved. In 1 Peter 4: 17 it says, "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?" All the great sins of our nation God knows and at points, He "comes down to see."

He sees our pride, our sensuality, our foolishness, our love of money and ease. He will deal with it as He sees fit. He will cut at the root of it, and yet He will not leave us, His servants, in the dark. We search His Word and pray to find the answers. And if true Christians get caught up in these same sins, He will chasten them until they come to know the truth of Jeremiah 2: 19 which says, "Your own wickedness will correct you, and your backslidings will rebuke you. Know therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing that you have forsaken the Lord your God, and the fear of Me is not in you, says the Lord God of hosts." But all of us this morning should know and understand that God is the friend of the one who fears him and he will show them His secrets and fulfill all His purpose concerning you who believe.

2nd – God could reveal these great purposes because He knew that Abraham would use this knowledge wisely. (verse 19)

God says, "For I have known him in order that he may command his children and his

household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.” The Lord knew that He could trust Abraham with this knowledge that He would give him. He would use it wisely. The way that it would be used by Abraham is listed here for us. God knew that Abraham would “command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice.” Abraham would take the revelation of God and His truth and rule his children and his household with it.

This is something very needful for us in this church and something very needful for us as a society to observe and understand. It is the duty of parents to “command their children that they keep the way of the Lord.” And keeping the way of the Lord is described for us here as “doing righteousness and judgment.” To keep the way of the Lord means that the parents themselves must know the Lord themselves and be able to communicate to them both in word and deed what the right thing to do is, in every situation of life that they find themselves. They must not only teach them the Ten Commandments and show them the righteousness of the Law and the spirituality of God’s Holy Law, but they must address the conscience of their children where they think that the child is sinning against God or against others.

They must show the child the spirituality of God’s Law, that what God expects and requires of us goes beyond an outward compliance to a commandment, to the heart issues of the command; that God is looking for a heart obedience, to love Him first and foremost with all the heart, soul mind and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. The children must be told over and over again that not one commandment can be kept in a way that is pleasing and acceptable to God without faith in Jesus Christ. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes,” it says in Romans 10: 4.

They must understand that being one who knows God means to go beyond being outwardly compliant with what we as parents would have them to do. It means that each one of them must seek and find the Lord for themselves and until they do so, that they will only be trying to righteous in order that they might justify themselves in God’s sight and in their parents sight. Every child must understand that they must be born again to enter the kingdom of God, they must be converted and turn from their sins and pray to God often and frequently to be forgiven and to be given grace to live a righteous life in God’s sight.

They must be told that this ability does not come from themselves. They must be told and commanded what their duty to God is, and yet they must not be exasperated by the parent standing over them continually to point it out. Instead the parents themselves must set the good example of faith, hope, love, patience, kindness, joy, and themselves steadfastly persevere in the Word and prayer and good deeds toward others born out of love. God knew that Abraham would use the knowledge of the coming judgment on Sodom wisely. Let us ask ourselves if we as parents will use our knowledge of the coming judgment of the world wisely?

It is the wise thing for us to do as parents, to speak to our children about the shortness of life and the judgment that we all will shortly appear at. Our life is but a vapor and then it is past. Man is as the grass which flourishes for a time and then is gone. We should often be reminding ourselves and our children that it is so. There will be enough proofs of that in God’s providential ordering of events to establish this great and awful truth. All people do not die at an old age. But it is not simply that the parent needs to create fear in the heart of the child that death and the judgment are coming.

It is true that “It has been appointed unto men once to die and then comes the judgment.” (Hebrews 9: 27) It is true that all of us need to prepare ourselves by coming to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and truly be saved from the wrath that is coming and which we really will experience and never be delivered from, unless we repent, and unless we have Christ by faith. But there must also be the cultivation in our own hearts, and in the minds of our children, the

truth of verse 28 as well. It says there, “So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many”. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.” You and I must command our children and show them that we ourselves are expectantly looking forward to the time when we shall see our Lord, when our earthly race is finished. We must show them that we are living the life of righteousness, building something with our life and strength, by faith, which will be rewarded by our Savior.

They must see that we are willing to learn the lessons of faith and perseverance ourselves. They are watching to see how we run the race. They are watching to see whether we will pray, whether we will come to thorough repentance, whether we will continue to trust when things do not go the way that we wanted them to. They are looking at us when we grow old and our strength is failing and they ask will our heart fail also? Or is God the strength of our heart and our portion forever?

Will we command them to keep the faith after we are gone, and to remember the example that we have set for them? This is what Abraham did. It is what you and I as believing parents are called to. The proof that Abraham was known by God in this way is what he does in verses 20-33 and it is the basis of my last point.

3rd – God revealed these great purposes because He knew that Abraham would pray and intercede.

I want to save this section for a whole sermon next week, but let me stimulate your thinking this morning by giving you some thoughts about prayer in closing. I think that we can see the truth about what a person is really like by whether they pray, what they pray for, and how they approach God in their prayers. You see it in Abraham. But let me ask you whether you see it in yourself? God had revealed this secret of the judgment of Sodom to Abraham. Now what does he do with it? He takes the matter in prayer. He draws near to reason with God.

He knows that God is set upon the destruction of the cities, but he will plead with God for mercy, not only for the righteous who might be in them to be preserved, but also for mercy for those who were at that point wicked if it is possible. If God will reveal His secrets to him, then he will reveal his own thoughts in secret to God. God sees in secret, but He will reward openly it says in Matthew 6: 6. “But you when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to the Father who is in secret; and Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”

Listen to Thomas Brooks, in his treatise *The Privy Key of Heaven*, “Nothing is more sweet, delightful, and welcome to Christ than the secret services of his people. Their secret breathings are like lovely songs to Him, their secret prayers in the clefts of the rock or under the stairs, are as sweet incense to Jesus. The spouse retires to the secret places of the stairs not only for security, but also for secrecy, so that she might the more freely, without suspicion of hypocrisy, pour out her soul into the bosom of her beloved. The great delight that parents take in the secret lispings and whisperings of their children is no delight at all in comparison to that which Christ takes in the secret prayers of his people. And therefore, as you would be friends and furtherers of Christ’s delight, be much in secret prayer.” (Vol. 2, Page 185)

God knew that Abraham was His friend. God knew that Abraham would use the knowledge that He gave to him wisely. Does He know this of you? Does He know this of me? We can know by whether we pray, and what we pray for, and how we approach Him in prayer, whether we truly are His friends who He can trust with His secrets. We will speak more about this next week.