

## **A Burden for the Undone**

Genesis 18: 16-33

Our text today continues to deal with the miraculous encounter Abraham had with the LORD. Following a time of fellowship, and the affirmation of the promised son, Abraham walked and talked with the LORD as He was departing. The LORD had stopped by to visit with Abraham on His way to examine and judge the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah. He will reveal His plan to judge their sin to Abraham, and this stirred Abraham to plead for mercy for the cities. Apparently Abraham knew that Lot was now dwelling in Sodom, and Abraham pled for the righteous who inhabited the city. He was concerned for those whose hearts were not right with the Lord.

Likely our text is familiar to many here today. It is a passage I have read and heard dealt with many times over the years. Abraham sought to intercede for those who had strayed from the Lord and those who had yet to come to faith in Him. We need the same passion and commitment when it comes to those around us who are not where they should be regarding their relationship with Christ. As we look at the [details](#) revealed within the text, I want to consider: [A Burden for the Undone](#).

**I. A Declaration concerning Abraham (16-22)** – The verses deal with a declaration the LORD made concerning Abraham. Abraham was the friend of God, and He wanted to discuss the plans He had made with Abraham. (Are we close enough to the Lord that He would desire to reveal His plans for our community with us?) Consider:

**A. The Question (17)** – [And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?](#) It seems apparent that the LORD is speaking with the angels who were with Him. He is speaking in reference to the coming judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah; and He questioned whether He should keep those plans hidden from Abraham. God knew the heart of Abraham, the burden he had for Lot, and all who walked apart from Him. He knew Abraham would have been concerned with the coming judgment. It appears that God did not want to keep this from Abraham.

- As I considered this question, it brought conviction to my heart. As I asked a moment ago, are we close enough to the Lord that He would desire to reveal His plans to us? Many times we moan and complain about the perceived difficulty in knowing the will of God. We often spend extended periods of time without hearing from the Lord. I know He doesn't speak today as He did with the prophets of old, but it is possible to hear from the Lord. He speaks through His Word, in our prayer time, through the guidance of the Spirit, and even through fellow believers. Are we walking with the Lord, close enough to Him, to hear what He has said? Is our relationship with Him such that He would desire to reveal His plans unto us? Would we respond to Him if He did?

**B. The Devotion** (18-19) – The LORD wondered about sharing His plans with Abraham because He knew Abraham was committed to walking with Him, completely surrendered unto the LORD. The LORD revealed the devotion of Abraham as He talked with the angels. It was known:

**1. Publicly** (18) – *Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?* God had a plan for Abraham. He had promised a son through which a mighty nation would come. All the nations of the earth would be blessed through the faithfulness and devotion of Abraham. Through his obedience to the Lord, a people would be born through which Christ would come. The Savior of humanity would be born through the descendants of Abraham. His devotion to God would have a profound impact on the world.

- None will ever have an opportunity like Abraham's. Christ did come through his lineage, providing atonement for sin and the means of salvation. There will never be a need for another sacrifice. However, we can live our lives in such a way that we impact those around us. We can be faithful unto the Lord as Abraham was and impact the world with the Gospel. We need to develop a similar devotion unto the Lord, desiring to impact the world for Christ! *Acts 1:8 – But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

**2. Privately** (19) – *For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.* Abraham would become a public influence through his commitment to God among his family. He would instill the truth of God in the life of his son, and that truth would be passed on to the generations to come. Abraham would be the father of a mighty nation, but he would be the father of his family first. His private life would match the life betrayed before others. Abraham's influence would continue to guide his family long after his departure from this life. He would leave a lasting, godly heritage behind.

- This attribute is much needed in our day. We need those who will live for God at home, seeking to instill righteousness in their families, leading in the ways of God. Many are devoted to their public lives, to the neglect of their private lives. We must ensure that our children and grandchildren know the truth of the Gospel. We must live in such a way that they would desire to serve the Lord. Like Abraham, we need to leave a lasting, godly heritage.

**C. The Corruption** (20-21) – *And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; <sup>[21]</sup> I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.* God was well aware of the sin

and iniquity in the cities of the plain. Their sin was very grievous, very heavy and burdensome, causing a great cry for justice before the Lord. We know according to the following chapter that Sodom and Gomorrah were known for their homosexual indulgence and depravity. The world today claims this was written in the context of ancient times, but God has not changed His mind regarding sin. Our world may have embraced homosexuality as normal, but it is still sin in the eyes of a holy God. While that was the primary sin Sodom was known for, it wasn't the only sin they had committed. [Ezek.16:49 – Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.](#) They were an arrogant people, well to do with abundance. Those who were blessed with material wealth neglected the needs of the less fortunate. America bears a striking resemblance to Sodom in more ways than one!

- Notice verse 21 – [I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.](#) I don't want this to cause confusion for anyone. This does not imply that the Lord had to physically go to Sodom in order to see exactly what was taking place. He was well aware of their grievous sin and depravity. This was done for the benefit of humanity. As the LORD came, with His angels, to inspect the depravity of Sodom, there could be no excuse when judgment came. None could claim the LORD was unfair in His judgment. His assessment of their sin would be accurate, without debate; and His judgment would be administered with righteous justice. (God sees and knows the sin of our day. He will deal with it according to His righteous nature. It is foolish to ignore the judgment of God.)

**II. The Supplication of Abraham (23-33)** – In the remaining verses we discover the compassionate supplication of Abraham for those in Sodom. Consider:

**A. The Problem (23)** – [And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?](#) In the midst of his concern for Lot, and those who walked with the Lord, Abraham also admitted the wickedness of Sodom. He knew the sin being committed there was contrary to the ways of God, and would result in divine judgment if it continued. Clearly Abraham was concerned with the lack of concern for the Lord and the utter wickedness that permeated Sodom.

- Before a problem can find a solution, one must first admit there is a problem. There can be no doubt that we have a sin problem today, but few are willing to admit it, much less step up and address it. We cannot ignore the pressing need of our day. We live in a world dominated and dictated by the flesh. There is no concern for the ways of God or any desire to please Him. Our modern culture operates with an attitude very similar to the one in Sodom. Before we can see profitable change in our land, we must first acknowledge we have a problem.

**B. The Petition** (24-32) – On five different occasions Abraham pleaded with God to spare the city. He first asked if God would spare Sodom if only fifty were found righteous there. Fearing there might not be hardly that many, he asked if God would be gracious if only forty five righteous people were found. Again considering his request, Abraham asked for mercy if only thirty were found righteous. He then asked regarding twenty, and finally Abraham begged the Lord to spare the city if only ten were found righteous among the masses that lived there.

- There is much we could discuss regarding Abraham's request. While it is sad that he worried there might be only ten righteous within the city, we cannot overlook his concern for those who lived there. Abraham was making intercession for those who dwelt in Sodom. He was hopeful that enough righteous people would be found in order to spare the entire city. While it was a city committed to grievous sin, Abraham desired mercy for them. No doubt he wanted them to know the Lord as he did, having a fulfilling relationship with Him.
- Abraham's petition is convicting in our day. Many are willing to condemn sin in others, particularly the sin of homosexuality, but few are willing to intercede on their behalf for salvation. We are not called upon to condone their sin, but we must show compassion for their eternal state. Those who die without Christ as destined for eternity in hell. We must do all we can to reach the unsaved, regardless of the sin they are engaged in.

**C. The Promise** (24-32) – Each time Abraham asked for mercy regarding a specific number to spare judgment, God promised to honor his request. God had given His word, and if there had been only ten righteous people in Sodom, He would have withheld judgment. In His wrath, God showed mercy and grace. He would have withheld judgment although it was deserved.

- I am thankful we serve a gracious and merciful Lord. We were guilty of sin and worthy of death because of our sin. God would have been just to have left us in sin and forced us to face the consequences for our sin. However, long before God created man, He had a plan to provide for our salvation. God promised the Savior would come and He kept His word. Christ came to earth as the sacrificial atonement for sin. He died in our place, bearing our sin and enduring the judgment we deserved. We can be forgiven of sin and reconciled to God through the finished work of Christ on the cross!

**Conclusion:** This is a familiar passage that reminds us of the great need of humanity. All stand in need of Christ to escape the judgment of God. Are we concerned for those who have yet to be saved? Are will actively interceding for their salvation? Does it bother us that many do not know Christ and are in danger of divine judgment? Do you know Christ in the free pardon of sin? Have you been saved by His grace? I pray we will be sensitive to the Spirit and respond to Him.