

Lesson 11 – 11 April 2010

Abraham—the Intercession of Faith

Lesson Scope: [Genesis Chapters 18 & 19](#).

Lesson Focus

When Abram and Lot separated, Lot chose the well-watered plains and pitched his tent toward Sodom. In the years following Lot moved into the city and became a respected citizen. During this same period of time Abram lived in tents as a stranger in the land of promise.

When Lot was taken captive, Abram had come to his rescue. Now Lot was in danger again. When the Lord told Abraham that He would visit Sodom to see if it was as wicked as the cry that had come up to Him Abraham immediately remembered Lot and pled for mercy.

Abraham and Lot had both made choices earlier in life. Lot gave priority to material interests, but in the end he fled out of Sodom, leaving everything behind but his two daughters. Abraham's choice to live by faith deepened his relationship with God. This put him in a position to intercede for Lot in his time of danger.

Many Old Testament spiritual giants were outstanding in their intercession. In addition to Abraham, we could think of Moses, Nehemiah, Daniel, and other prophets. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul often mentions his intercession for the various churches and individuals to whom he related. Jesus, our supreme example, continues in intercession presently. Communicate through this lesson the great things that the Lord desires to accomplish through our sacrificial effort in this important ministry.

"The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him." This knowledge drives the righteous to intercede in behalf of those ensnared by the influence of sin.

Lesson Aim: To discover principles for effective intercession.

Theme Verse: [Ezekiel 22:30](#).

And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

Lesson Text

"Abraham Stood Yet Before the LORD

Genesis 18:16-19

And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. ¹⁷And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; ¹⁸Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? ¹⁹For 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.

Genesis 18:22

And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

"Abraham Drew Near"

Genesis 18:23-25

And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that *are* therein? ²⁵That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Genesis 18:32-33

And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy *it* for ten's sake. ³³And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

"God Remembered Abraham"

Genesis 19:15-29

And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. ¹⁶And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.

¹⁷And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. ¹⁸And Lot said unto

them, Oh, not so, my Lord: ¹⁹Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: ²⁰Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (*is it not a little one?*) and my soul shall live. ²¹And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken. ²²Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

²³The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. ²⁴Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; ²⁵And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

²⁶But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

²⁷And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD: ²⁸And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.

²⁹And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.

Questions for Study

"Abraham Stood Yet Before the LORD"

1. What prompted the Lord to tell Abraham about His plans?
2. Why did Abraham conclude, without the Lord's saying so, that He intended to destroy Sodom?

"Abraham Drew Near"

3. Why did Abraham question the Lord about destroying the righteous with the wicked?
4. Explain Abraham's concern about the possibility of angering the Lord (Gen.18:32).

5. What are the requirements to be effective in intercession?

6. Name some people who should benefit from our intercession.

"God Remembered Abraham"

7. What does the fact that Lot lingered in Sodom suggest about Lot and his family?

8. The Bible does not tell us that Abraham learned the results of his intercession. What can we learn from this?

Analyzing the Passage

Abraham's three visitors were likely the two angels who visited Sodom along with the pre-incarnate Christ. The conversation between Abraham and the Lord indicates that Abraham knew His identity and respected Him as Lord.

Abraham did not question that Sodom was wicked, but he questioned the justice of destroying the righteous with the wicked. God chose to spare Lot and his two daughters but to destroy the city.

"But his wife looked back" (Gen.19:26) indicates an attachment to Sodom. Perhaps this explains why Lot lingered (Gen.19:16).

Principles and Applications

"Abraham Stood Yet Before the LORD"

1. An effective intercessor takes an interest in God's work (Gen.18:16).

Because Lot was in Sodom Abraham took an interest in what God was doing there. As the man of God takes an interest in others, he becomes concerned with how God's acts of judgment will affect those in whom he has invested time and effort. He understands that sin must be punished. He understands God's love for man. He loves men because God loves him, not because of their loving personality. Godly love for fellow men motivates the child of God to intercede for others.

2. To be effective an intercessor must maintain his relationship with God (Gen.18:17-19). James says. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Our lesson passage implies that, if Abraham had not maintained his relationship with God, he would not have discovered God's plan to destroy Sodom. Abraham used this opportunity to intercede in behalf of Lot. If we fail to maintain a relationship with God, we might not see the need to intercede for others. Neither will God hear our intercession.

3. Effective intercession requires sacrifice (Gen.18:22). Abraham took time to entertain these guests, or he would never have known the imminent judgment of Sodom. Abraham did not just make a passing request, but he continued to intercede until he thought Lot could be spared.

Intercession may involve years of prayer for a particular need. Sometimes intercession requires that we give of ourselves to receive an answer, to form a friendship, to meet a physical need, or to help with a project.

Moses offered that his name be removed from the Book of Life for the sake of his people (Exodus 32:32).

"Abraham Drew Near"

4. An effective intercessor attempts to understand God's will (Gen.18:23-25). God's thoughts are so much higher than man's. For this reason, we sometimes have trouble understanding how God's acts of Judgment relate to His righteous nature. Abraham did not see how God could destroy the righteous with the wicked and remain just. Habakkuk had trouble understanding how a righteous God could use a wicked nation to punish His own people. The faithful intercessor commits into God's care what he cannot understand.

5. An affective intercessor is humble (Gen.18:32). Abraham realized that God was not obligated to do anything for him. He knew that God could rightfully be angry with him for questioning Him.

When we pray to God, we must remember that God is in heaven and we are on earth. It is not in our place to demand anything of God. Even the most faithful person is an unprofitable servant and a needy creature (Luke 17:10). We must accept God's answers to our prayers.

"God Remembered Abraham"

6. Intercession moves God to act on behalf of the righteous (Gen.19:15-16). God in mercy took hold of Lot and his family and led them out of the city. It seems that, without Abraham's intercession, this might not have happened. Peter and John interceded for the Samaritans, and God sent the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:14-17). The church at Jerusalem prayed for Peter, and God delivered him (Acts 12:5, 11). We never know when our prayers may keep a saint from falling

7. Intercession moves God to provide opportunities for doomed men (Gen.19:18, 20, 22). Strange as it may seem Lot pled for the city of Zoar and God spared it, giving the people there an opportunity to repent. Lot's motivation may have been selfish, but God spared the city anyway. God understood Lot's fear and in mercy granted his request.

8. Effective intercession is rewarded when God extends mercy in the midst of His wrath (Gen.19:27-28). Although God did not spare the city as Abraham requested, He provided another way of escape for Lot. We do not know if Abraham ever found out that God sent Lot out of Sodom before He destroyed it. We are not told Abraham's thoughts as he viewed the smoke of the burning city.

Praying for others may seem like a thankless task, but if souls are spared the torment of hell because we prayed, that is reward enough even if we do not see the results in this life.

Important Teachings

1. An effective intercessor takes an interest in God's work (Gen.18:16).
2. To be effective, an intercessor must maintain his relationship with God (Gen.18:17-19).
3. Effective intercession requires sacrifice (Gen.18:22).
4. An effective intercessor attempts to understand God's will (Gen.18:23-25).
5. An effective intercessor is humble (Gen.18:32).
6. Intercession moves God to act on behalf of the righteous (Gen.19:15, 16).
7. Intercession moves God to provide opportunities for doomed men (Gen.19:18, 20, 22).
8. Effective intercession is rewarded when God extends mercy in the midst of His wrath (Gen.19:27-28).
9. Intercession moves God to provide a way of escape for the righteous (Gen.19:17).
10. An effective intercessor never gives up hope for mercy (Gen.19:27-28).
11. Souls are spared due to effective intercession (Gen.19:29).

Answers to Questions

1. What prompted the Lord to tell Abraham about His plans?

The Lord revealed His plans to Abraham because of Abraham's faithfulness and his commitment to instill the faith in future generations. The Lord also knew Abraham's concern for Lot and was giving him an opportunity to intercede.

2. Why did Abraham conclude, without the Lord's saying so, that He intended to destroy Sodom?

Abraham knew that God is holy and that He hates sin. He knew that the exceeding wickedness of Sodom deserved judgment.

3. Why did Abraham question the Lord about destroying the righteous with the wicked?

To destroy the righteous with the wicked did not seem just to Abraham. God is always just, but to punish the righteous with the wicked seemed like

a contradiction to God's nature. Moses struggled with the same thought (Number 16:22).

4. Explain Abraham's concern about the possibility of angering the Lord (Gen.18:32).

Abraham understood that the Lord was not required to listen to the pleas of mere man. He realized that he was but dust, in contrast to the Lord, who is King and Creator of all.

5. What are the requirements to be effective in intercession?

Effective intercessors must maintain a close relationship with God, live in holiness, and heed the prompting of the Spirit to pray for another. They must persevere in their efforts.

6. Name some people who should benefit from our intercession.

Pray for all men (1 Timothy 2:1), for the sick (James 5:15), for those in government (1 Timothy 2:2), for the saints (Ephesians 6:18), and for enemies (Matthew 5:44).

7. What does the fact that Lot lingered in Sodom suggest about Lot and his family?

They were still very much attached to Sodom. Lot may not have wanted to leave his family behind. They did not sense the urgency of the hour.

8. The Bible does not tell us that Abraham learned the results of his intercession. What can we learn from this?

We must leave the results in God's hands, continuing faithfully in intercession when we see no visible fruit of our effort.

Summarizing the Lesson

This lesson not only shows God's heart of love and compassion toward man in sparing Lot, but it also shows the love and concern that Abraham had for Lot. The love and compassion shown for Lot and his family in this lesson reminds us of Jesus words, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). Can we be followers of Christ and not offer intercessory prayer often? This lesson should inspire us to take a godly interest in those around us and to pray for them.

Research Guide

1. Look up "Intercession of Man with God" in Nave's Topical Bible.
2. Read John 17 for an example of intercessory prayer made for us.