

Genesis 18

God of Justice and Mercy

What is the relationship between justice and mercy? How do we understand God's heart of mercy and how does that character inform our actions, our obedience, our walk and talk of faith? Where does the Justice of God come into play? How are we to think about His eternal justice and the terrible reality, that Hell is for all who pursue evil? And most importantly how are we to reconcile these seemingly conflicting attributes without diminishing either? For both are scripturally true, and both are present in this one passage.

I. HOSPITALITY'S BLESSING –

Here we have God's visit to Abraham. There is a lot going on here and we need to consider the flow of the passage to understand it properly. Three men show up and receive hospitality from Abram and Sarai. Two of them go on towards Sodom and Gomorrah one remains -

and it is at this time that the third visitor is actually named for us. The act of hospitality and the continuation and refinement of the promise is background to the heart of this message, but it is important so we will address it.

- a. Entertain angels (and even God Himself) unaware

Hebrews 13:2 (NKJV)

2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.

- b. Spiritual minds receive spiritual blessing

Abram at some point recognized who was with him.

1 Corinthians 2:14

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

c. God delights to bless us with His presence

i. Jesus Calls us friends –

John 15:15

No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

ii. Jesus shows us His nature in ways the world cannot comprehend

John 14.19-24

d. He condescends to be among us –

i. No greater demonstration of this than in the incarnation itself...

Philippians 2:5–8

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form

of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

- ii. He even condescends to be refreshed by us - consider that Abraham fed GOD!!!

Psalm 50:12–15 (NKJV)

12 “If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world is Mine, and all its fullness. 13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, Or drink the blood of goats? 14 Offer to God thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High. 15 Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”

II. PROMISE CONTINUED

a. God's intention to use Abraham

- i. **Genesis 12.1-3** initial calling and promise to make him a nation that would bless the earth
- ii. **Genesis 15.1-6** - promise of a son, relationship further cemented with the actual sacrifice of covenant between God and Abram
- iii. **Genesis 17**, the sign of circumcision and Abram's name changed to Abraham. The promise renewed that a son would be born to Abraham through Sarah his wife who would be the descent of God's promise to redeem His own.

b. Promise to continue despite Abraham's frailty - too old and too filled with doubt, although he believed God and it was counted as righteousness, in Genesis 16 he failed to believe and took matters into his own hands.

c. Despite Sarah's sin

i. Unbelief

ii. Lied

d. God's faithfulness in the face of our falsehood –

2 Timothy 2:13

If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

III. Revelation of Redemption

God's redeeming intention - His covenant of mercy....

a. God's promise has been unwavering, Abraham would be the physical source of the Messiah, God's promised redeemer for His own chosen people.

i. Redemption has always been the plan

- ii. Mercy and grace are the sole property of God
 - iii. Justice is not the cry of God in a longing manner, it is the stated intention, the sure promise of God in the fullness of time.
 - iv. So it is incredibly important that we really understand what is going on here.
- b. God demonstrates that He is going to include Abraham (and us) in the work that He is going to do. It is NOT about God having need, but about His determination to bless us with the purpose He brings. He states, because of our relationship I will not hide from Him what is coming. The relationship has been forming for a long time.
- c. God commanded that Abraham know Him and teach His children
- i. The law of God
 - ii. of the character of their God

- iii. to know and obey God
- iv. Of consequences of disobedience - it is important for us to understand that justice is always there, even in the face of mercy, Justice and mercy are not enemies, the mercy of God has free reign among his children because justice has been satisfied in the death of Christ. When we will not walk with God, we are walking to our own destruction. This is always about the relationship between God and man. Those who belong to God want to walk in His ways.

IV. Teaching Tools

While God calls us to teach others, God Himself will teach us, He will teach us in many ways and over many years. He will teach us with everything that comes into our lives. If our eyes are open, we will see the hand of God for He is always teaching, always speaking.

a. by the evil of the cities... for there is a long history of evil

- i. Homosexuality
- ii. Shedding innocent blood
- iii. Oppressing the righteous
- iv. Withholding payment when due
- v. Pride, fullness of food, idleness

Ezekiel 16.48-50

- vi. Unwilling to help the needy
- vii. Haughty
- viii. Refusal to submit to God - worse for us than them -

Matthew 11.23-24

- b. By the response in us
- i. Wickedness should break our hearts
 - ii. But it should also instruct us
 - iii. It should never be permitted to discourage us

iv. It should never be seen as something desirable

c. By the purpose in the heart and mind of the leaders of families to raise and lead them in the way of the Lord.

- i. To dedicate them unto God
- ii. To instruct them in the things of God
- iii. To restrain their wickedness
- iv. To prepare them for righteousness
- v. To intervene when they go astray

V. Taught by Prayer

We are perhaps taught the most by the work of prayer itself

a. Our prayers indicate what we believe about God

- i. He is infinitely great
- ii. He is transcendentally holy
- iii. He is incomprehensibly glorious

- iv. He is unboundedly good and gracious

- b. Our prayers reveal what we believe about ourselves as well
 - i. Dust and ashes...
 - ii. Depraved ourselves...
 - iii. Objects of mercy...
 - iv. Recipients of grace...

- c. God was willing to listen and grant the request
 - 1. Abram knew that God was righteous, but He also knew that God was merciful
 - 2. Whatever God did was in the end OK with him, but he was comfortable enough in the relationship to ask for more...
 - 3. I have always thought that Abraham stopped too soon (but all is as it should be) - there was not any

indication that God was tiring of his pleas...

4. perhaps Abraham didn't think largely enough about the great mercy of God

5. Perhaps he thought too much of sin and its due punishment

a. This is all well enough, but how great was our sin and how great the mercy that saves us?

b. We must never cease interceding even for this ruined nation and the sin sick wretches that lead it further and further into abomination

c.

d. God delights when His children ask large blessings and cast themselves upon His mercy

God's Spirit intervenes in our prayers and helps us –

Romans 8:26–27

26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

e. By God's response to the prayer of the righteous man

- i. It is not the presence of evil but the absence of good that is the death nell of a society
- ii. When there are still righteous men and women who will intercede and fight for righteousness there is still hope.
- iii. This work of intercession is OUR calling, to plead for mercy on behalf of the foolish sinners who are determined to go their own way and run sin to its fullest

iv. Our refusal to do this based on the crime and heinousness of their offense is simply a confession that we do not understand our own sin, nor do we understand that **WE DID NOT CHOOSE GOD!!!** God chose us, while we still walked in sin and hated Him. Beloved, we must stand in the gap and **BE** the 10 righteous men who will save a nation.