

ABRAHAM BARGAINS WITH GOD (vv. 23-31)

²³ Then Abraham approached him and said: “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴ What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? ²⁵ Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” ²⁶ The Lord said, “If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.”

²⁷ Then Abraham spoke up again: “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, ²⁸ what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five people?” “If I find forty-five there,” he said, “I will not destroy it.”

²⁹ Once again he spoke to him, “What if only forty are found there?” He said, “For the sake of forty, I will not do it.”

³⁰ Then he said, “May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?” He answered, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”

³¹ Abraham said, “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?” He said, “For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it.”

³² Then he said, “May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?” He answered, “For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.”

³³ When the Lord had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.

1. Abram expects there may be at least a handful of righteous people in Sodom. The Lord knows there are not. Why do you think the LORD allows Abraham to engage him on this level?
2. What does this passage reveal about the heart and character of Abraham?
3. What does this passage reveal about the heart and character of God?
4. Some people relish the thought that God will destroy the wicked; others are horrified. Read the following passages and consider how we should feel and respond to the harsh reality of God’s judgment: Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11; Matthew 22:37; 1 Timothy 2:3-6; 2 Peter 3:9.



As we make our way into Genesis 18, God reaffirms the promise he has already made to Abraham. “By this time next year, Sarah will have a son.” The news seems to take Sarah by surprise. Maybe we can write it off as one of those monumental things a husband forgets to tell his wife. Perhaps Abraham had told Sarah, but it didn’t sink in until she heard it from the lips of a stranger. Maybe Sarah’s hopes had been dashed so often and so completely, she wouldn’t even allow herself to entertain the thought.

Sarah responds to the news the same way Abraham did. She laughs. Their son would be called Isaac, which means “and they laughed.” Everyone was laughing at the prospect of Abraham and Sarah having a child, except God. Make no mistake about it, Sarah’s laugh is incredulous. She has a hard time believing God has not forgotten her. But her doubt will soon give way to joy because God has not forgotten her, and “nothing is too difficult for him.”

ABRAHAM RECEIVES THREE VISITORS (vv. 1-8)

^{18:1} The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. ² Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

³ He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. ⁴ Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. ⁵ Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant.”

“Very well,” they answered, “do as you say.”

⁶ So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.”

⁷ Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. ⁸ He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

1. The LORD appears to Abraham on other occasions, but we are not told exactly how he appears. On this particular occasion, the LORD appears as one of three visitors who sit down to share a meal with Abraham. While Abraham may not be fully aware that he is entertaining the LORD, he does receive his guests in royal fashion. What are some indications that Abraham senses there may be something extraordinary about his guests?
2. Why do you think the LORD chose to appear to Abraham in this way?
3. The passage emphasizes Abraham's "urgency" and "extravagance." Read through the text and take note of the words or phrases that highlight Abraham's sense of urgency. What are they and what do they convey?
4. How does the passage highlight Abraham's extravagance?
5. How should "urgency" and "extravagance" characterize our hospitality (the way we receive strangers and each other)?
6. How should "urgency" and "extravagance" characterize our response to the Lord?

THE LORD REASSURES ABRAHAM THAT SARAH WILL HAVE A SON (vv. 9-15)

⁹ "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "There, in the tent," he said.

¹⁰ Then one of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son."

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.

¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?"

¹³ Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

¹⁵ Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh." But he said, "Yes, you did laugh."

1. Notice the transition from "they asked (v. 9)" and "one of them said (v. 10)" to "the LORD said (v. 13)." This may be the moment Abraham realizes he is speaking with the LORD. What are some indications that this is no ordinary traveler?
2. How should we process the fact that the LORD knows our thoughts (whether reverent or irreverent), insecurities, and doubts?

3. How does the narrator describe Abraham and Sarah?
4. How does Sarah think of herself and Abraham?
5. Here's a fun one. Take a quick peek at Romans 4:19. How does Paul describe Abraham and Sarah at this point in their life?
6. Why do you think the LORD waits until this moment to fulfill his promise?
7. Why was it important for Sarah to ask and answer, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?"
8. Why is it essential for us to ask and answer, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?"
9. What evidence do we have that "nothing is too hard for the LORD?"
10. What are some areas in your life where you need to remember, "nothing is too hard for the Lord?"

THE LORD TAKES ABRAHAM INTO HIS CONFIDENCE (vv. 16-22)

¹⁶ When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. ¹⁷ Then the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? ¹⁸ Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. ¹⁹ For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."

²⁰ Then the Lord said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous ²¹ that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know." ²² The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the Lord.

1. Why does the Lord choose to take Abraham into his confidence?
2. Jesus does the same thing with his disciples (see John 15:15). How does this apply to us?
3. What are some ways the Lord has taken us into his confidence?
4. According to verse 19, why has God chosen Abraham?
5. How does this apply to us?
6. Does the Lord need to go down to Sodom and Gomorrah to "see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me?"
7. Why do you think he chooses to make a personal appearance in this particular instance?