

Genesis 18:20-33 Interference or Intercession?

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[0 : 0 0] Lord, we pray that you would anoint the teaching of your word. We just offer it up to you, Lord. We recognize that the words that you have put in front of us, Lord, are words that have been in your heart for eternity. And then you have penned them to paper, Lord, to parchment, to scrolls, to books, to pages that we now hold today, Lord.

And it's not these printings, Lord. It's not the ink. It's not the paper. It's the thoughts and the truth conveyed to us by it. That is the word of God.

And Jesus, you are the word made flesh who dwells among us still to this day. You are here with us as we gather in your name. We pray that you would speak to us through the spirit, that we would have ears to hear and eyes to see what you would say to us this morning.

We love you, and we just want to sit with you and commune with you. In Jesus' name, amen. All right, so my theme for today is interference or intercession.

Is it interference or is it intercession when Abraham is pressing into some business that really isn't his own, right?

[1 : 0 6] If we back up into chapter 18 a little bit, if we look at verse 16, this is after the Lord comes and talks with Abraham about the promise, and he talks with Sarah and kind of redirects her into that life of faith that she's doubting, because we know Hebrews told us that Sarah believed by faith, and yet the first part of chapter 18, she doesn't really seem to be there.

So it seems like the Lord corrects her, and in that moment of correction and chastisement, she says, yes, I believe. But verse 16 says, And the men rose up from thence and looked towards Sodom.

And Abram went with them to bring them on the way. And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? And then he kind of gives his reason for almost telling Abraham what's coming.

And then this is then, verse 20, what he's going to do. He's going to begin to tell Abraham now what's coming next. And we saw last week that Abraham found out what was next in God's time clock, not by watching the news, not by keeping his pulse on politics, not by looking at the world around him, but by being close to the Lord, by being near the Lord, by being, shall we say, in the Word, as the Word of God was speaking to him.

And we have the same promise. No man knows the day or the hour, but we are to know the season. Scripture tells us that it should not overtake us as those unaware. We are to know the seasons we're in.

[2 : 3 5] We can know, and we should know. And so the Lord then begins to speak after he says why he's going to essentially speak to Abraham. And he then is going to begin in verse 20 to talk about his reasons.

But I wanted to give a little context of where they are. So I found this image. It's kind of distorted, but you get the idea. If you look in the bottom right corner, it says Hebron.

Well, that's the plains of Mamre or the tree, the forest, or whatever, the grove of oaks or the terebinth tree in Mamre. That's the area of Hebron.

And then you look down towards the Dead Sea, where Sodom and Gomorrah is believed to have been. And you can see there an elevation change, where the Dead Sea is 1,400 feet below sea level, and Hebron is 3,000 feet above it.

And so you think, okay, how far away are they? How far away? Because Abraham is going to look towards Sodom. Eventually, when the Lord rains down fire and brimstone on Sodom, it's going to tell us this one little verse in the middle of chapter 19, that Abraham got up early in the morning and stood and saw the smoke ascending.

[3 : 39] So he can see this. And it's because he's up so high, and he can see down into the plain below where Sodom and Gomorrah are. So you can kind of get the idea. If he's bringing the Lord on his way, they're walking and journeying in that direction, heading towards the Dead Sea, towards Sodom and Gomorrah.

And in verse 20, the Lord said, because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see whether they have done all together according to the cry, and according to the cry of it, which has come unto me.

And if not, I will know it. So the Lord is telling Abraham, hey, I've heard their cry. Remember, well, not remember. We will remember, but we haven't got to it yet.

In Exodus, we will remember how the Lord hears the cry of his people in Israel, or his people Israel in Egypt. And he says, hey, I've heard their cry, and I have come down to deliver.

And he sends Moses. So the word here, where it says that the Lord has come down, he's heard their cry, the idea is a cry of sorrow and distress, right there.

[4 : 53] That is the first use of the word cry in the scriptures of this word. And it's used in context of the cry that is a result of Sodom, which means burning, and Gomorrah, which means submersion.

So the Lord says, because of the sorrow and distress that has come unto me, the noise of that sorrow and distress because of this place of burning and submersion. He says, because of that, because their sin is very grievous, or literally, the idea is it's heavy.

It's exceedingly heavy. And God feels that. God feels the weight of that. Remember, we looked at last time how God feels our service to him.

It comforts his heart, where Abraham said, hey, stay here, let me comfort you with this food, with this service. Well, God also feels the weight of sin. He does, doesn't he?

First Peter tells us in chapter two, who his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree. Felt the weight of that, carried that, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness by whose stripes we are healed.

[5 : 59] God came down not for his own sake, but he came down for the sake of the cry of sin. And that's what he's coming down to Sodom and Gomorrah for the same reason. And it's the same reason he heard our cry.

You know, what was the cry? Was it the cry of the innocent, you know, against the sin in Sodom and Gomorrah? Was it the cry of the sinners in their delight and their revelry? Well, I think it was the cry of all souls being affected by sin.

There's no good sin. There's no like, yeah, I'm having a good time. Yeah. And God's like, oh, you know, the soul in sin is always under this weight.

And God sees that and he hears that. And so he comes down to take care of that. The other thing that's interesting I find here is God is personally interested in the greatest of rejecters. This is Sodom and Gomorrah, right?

There's nothing worse than Sodom and Gomorrah, except maybe 2023 America. But there's nothing otherwise worse than Sodom and Gomorrah, right? This sin and the debauchery, what we're going to see next week, off the charts.

[7 : 01] I mean, hospitality. You look at the hospitality Abraham offers to the Lord when he comes to his tent and he says, oh, let me take care of you. The hospitality in Sodom and Gomorrah, hey, a new person, let me take care of you, right?

It's just horrible. But the Lord is personally interested in this. He says, I'm going to come down. It's interesting because later we're going to see at the end of the chapter how, well, not the end of the chapter, the middle here, where the two men will turn and head towards Sodom.

And at the end of the chapter, it'll say the Lord went his way. Where was the Lord going? He was going where he said he was going. He was going to Sodom and Gomorrah. We don't see him there, but he's there because Lot's there, because there's righteous there.

And so God has gone and he's going to go into Sodom and Gomorrah. And those two angels are there, but the Lord's there too because he said he's going to go. He's in the worst of places. And so what does Abraham do?

The Lord reveals this to him. And so then verse 22, and the men turned their faces from fence and went toward Sodom. But Abraham stood yet before the Lord.

[8 : 10] Remember in verse 16, it says, Abraham went with them to bring them on their way. So we're going to see three things Abraham's going to do through last week and this week. He goes with the Lord and then he's going to stand yet, or literally to tarry continually with the Lord.

And then he's going to draw near to the Lord. These three steps. But the word there where it says that Abraham stood yet before the Lord is literally to tarry continually. Or in the New Testament, what is tarrying continually?

In John 15, to abide. Jesus says, abide in me, tarry continually in me, same meaning, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it tarry continually in the vine, no more can you except you abide in me.

If you jump down to verse 7, there is a result that happens from tarrying in the vine, from abiding in Christ. It's not just I feel good, it's not just the peace that passes understanding.

That is fantastic. Don't get me wrong. Desiring God's presence and being in God's presence. But he says, if you abide in me, if you tarry continually, if you're here with me, and my words abide in you, you shall do what?

[9 : 21] You shall ask. You shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. See, abiding will lead to intercession. And this is what we're going to see with Abraham. As Abraham has journeyed with the Lord, as he has tarried still with the Lord, it leads to this place of intercession.

And I think that bears that out in the New Testament. Amen. Because what is intercession? Oswald Chambers quote here. People describe intercession by saying, it is putting yourself in someone else's place.

That is not true. Intercession is putting yourself in God's place. It's having his mind and his perspective. So Abraham, as he abides with the Lord, is able to gain God's perspective.

Intercede literally means to move or pass between, to come between someone. Two guys are fighting. Boom, boom, boom, boom. You get in between them and say, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. You've come between.

But it has a further meaning. Not just to come in between, but to bring reconciliation. So it's like, hey guys, stop fighting. Think of Moses when he goes to the two Israelites who are arguing with each other.

[10 : 28] He's like, brethren, why do you argue? They reject him. But he's trying to reconcile them. And then a further meaning, the idea is in favor of one. So usually you're going to intercede on the one who's getting whooped on.

Right? Someone's got to beat someone else. Like, hey, hey, let me help him. What's going on? Let's reconcile. Why are you taking advantage of? And it's the same as the Lord gives us a place of intercession.

It's in favor of one. Who is that one? Well, yes, there's going to be that one who's like, Lord, I just want to pray for my cousin who doesn't know you. But ultimately, it's in favor of the Holy One of the Lord.

This intercession. So abiding in God's presence will lead to intercession. Then it goes on. So Abraham stood yet before the Lord.

This is response to what? The Word of God. This is Abraham's response to the Word of God in his life. God speaking to him of what's to come. The Word of God revealing things to come. Abraham then, he says, I'm going to abide here.

[11 : 31] And then what does he do in verse 23? And he drew near and said, will thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? He's going to go into this back and forth conversation between the Lord and between Abraham.

But he drew near. How do we get an idea of what that word means? I think the best place to see it is if you remember when Jacob, Israel, is dying. He's in Egypt and he brings all his sons in and he blesses them.

Some of them probably wish they could give their blessing back. It's more of a curse. And then he has Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and he brings them near. And it says this in Genesis 48, verse 10.

It says, Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age that he could not see. So cataracts or whatever, it was dirty. If you remember, he can't see. And he brought them near unto him and he kissed them and embraced them.

How near do you have to be to kiss someone, to embrace them? You know, we were watching something the other night and I said, look it, that's so, we're used to seeing that like in TV, but it's so unrealistic.

[12 : 33] Nobody talks that close to each other, but they have to get in the frame, you know, but nobody, you know, just in a normal conversation, you know, we get here to church, we're about three to four feet, it's comfortable.

You know, nobody's like right here talking to each other, but they are in TV. But to draw near, to be close to someone, close enough to kiss or embrace them, that's the idea here.

Abraham drew near, he's with the Lord, but now he's kind of coming right alongside. And there's a comfortability there. We quote it all the time, James 4, 8, draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you.

Psalms 91, 1, he that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. How close do you have to be to something to be under its shadow? Now if it's a, you know, 200-story building, but to be under the shadow of a person, how close do you have to be to them?

So Abraham's tarrying in God's presence, his desire to be in God's presence, it led to an opportunity not just for intercession, but to draw even nearer to his God. So when Jesus says to us, abide in me, draw near, tarry in my presence, he wants us to draw near.

[13 : 46] Even closer. And you know what? That never stops. That's the amazing thing. The nearer you draw to God, that verse in James 4, 8, draw nigh to God and he'll draw near to you, it doesn't stop.

Well, I drew near to God and he drew near to me and well, that was good. You know, I'll do that again sometime. Like this idea with a person, we can only get so close to them, right? The person you love, your spouse, right?

You get closer to them than anybody else. But to the Lord, it just continues. You can get closer every time you choose to draw near. He'll draw near. He'll closer and take you in closer and deeper and deeper into this relationship.

And as Abraham draws nearer and nearer to God, the interesting thing is his focus doesn't become inward. His focus becomes outward. The Lord, as he draws him near, he begins to get God's heart and his mind about things and he begins to intercede.

And we said what intercession meant. So what's the Lord's heart in this? What does the Lord think about the wicked? Okay? We talk a lot about where our nation's at and what do we want to see?

[14 : 54] We want to see righteousness, right? We want to see God take care of this. We want to see him bring judgment, maybe. Well, Ezekiel tells us, Ezekiel 33 verse 11 says, God's heart, when he looks at Sodom and Gomorrah, he says, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked would turn from his way and live.

I do not delight in judgment on the wicked. New Testament counterpart to that, 2 Peter 3, 9, the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish.

But what about, and what about that guy? What about the one who's brought all the trouble on my nation? What about the one who's a jerk to my family? What about, he's not willing that any should perish, but that all should stay in their sin and he just accepts them, come to repentance, right?

To turn. What is Jesus doing now in his role at the right hand of the Father? Hebrews 7, 25 says, wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost.

Why? Because he's entered through the veil, the veil of his own flesh, taking the sacrifice of himself, acceptable to God, and is seated at the right hand of the Father where he ever lives to make intercession.

[16 : 21] Seeing he ever lived to make intercession for them. That's God's desire. He's living, he's making intercession for us constantly. He doesn't want to bring judgment. That's hard to hear.

I can understand smoking Sodom and Gomorrah. I think in my Sunday school mind, right, growing up in the church, the flannel graph, the Sunday school, the lessons, Sodom and Gomorrah, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

And then you put the smoke up there where it used to be and there's nothing left. And you get to this chapter and you think, yeah, God's coming down to judge Sodom and Gomorrah. That's what he's coming to do. God's desire is repentance.

So what is intercession? Well, I think we just got a little picture of it. If you look at Abraham's progression, Abraham, what did he do first? He stood yet before the Lord.

He waited, he abided, he was still. Psalm 46:10, be still. Know that I am God. Know that I am God. Get an understanding of who I am. Get my heart, get my thought on this matter.

[17 : 22] Be still. And then being in God's presence just draws us in more and more. It draws us even closer. In John 6, 44, no man can come to me except the Father which has sent me.

Draw him. So whenever we are drawing near to God, we're just responding, guys. We're just responding to the fact that God's drawing us. Sometimes we think, oh man, I'm drawing near to God.

Remember at the end of last week's message, I kind of said, hey, you know, take some time this week. Just sit with the Lord. Set a 10 minute timer. Well, I can't say things like that and then not do it myself, right?

So I was like, it'd be whatever time of day and sometimes it was in the morning. I spent time with the Lord but I was purposely trying to like, okay, just some time to sit with the Lord quietly.

Not praying about whatever but just to sit in his presence. And it's funny because there's a few different times where I hadn't that day and I kind of sensed the Lord just all of a sudden out of the blue just kind of get that thought like, hey, come sit with me.

[18 : 21] Oh, now? I really wanted to hang out with the family or I was going to go do this. All right. And then you do it and you think, wow, that was pretty good.

That was good. I did that. It's like, no, I didn't. The Lord was calling me. I was just responding. I didn't draw near to him. He drew me near. He drew me near. And there's a, and you know, you don't always see the fruit of that right away because we reap a lot later than we sow.

We want to sow and then get results. But I found as I was responding to his still small voice saying, come and sit with me, I heard him on some other things. They're just like, Lord, is that your voice?

At other times, like, hey, okay, I'm going to go and respond to that. So it's drawing near. And then lastly, what does Abraham do there in verse 23?

After he's abided, after he's stood yet in his presence, after he's drawn near and responding to God's word to him, he then begins to ask. He asks these questions. And in John 5, sorry, John 15, we just saw it in verse 7.

[19 : 26] And then into verse 8, he says, if you abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. We just read that. But look what is the purpose here. Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, so shall you be my disciples.

So what are we asking? We're saying, Lord, would you allow your disciples to bear fruit? Lord, I'm going to intercede on behalf of this person as I abide in you to see that fruit would come from their life.

Now, will God judge the wicked? Yes. Psalm 7, verse 11 through 13. God judges the righteous and God is angry with the wicked every day. In other words, God can see and know he judges righteously.

He knows what the righteous is doing. He says, yes, I judge that righteous. But he's angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will wet his sword. He has bent his bow and made it ready.

He's also prepared for him the instruments of death. He ordains his arrows against the persecutors. Think of that scripture in light of where God does not have pleasure in the death of any man.

[20 : 30] He has also prepared for him the instruments of death. I don't think he wants to do that. And what is right there in the middle of that? Repentance, verse 12. If he turn not. So what's the idea?

Please turn. Turn. Sodom, Gomorrah, turn. Isaiah 59. It's a long section. You can read along with me or just read on the screen.

This first part of it sounds like, yeah. Verse 12 of chapter 59 of Isaiah. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us.

For our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them. In transgressing and lying against the Lord and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood, and judgment is turned away backward, and justice stands afar off.

For truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Is that our nation? Is that Sodom and Gomorrah? I think so. Truth has fallen in the street. Yea, truth fails, and he that departs from evil makes himself a prey.

[21 : 44] That is our nation. If you turn from evil, you're like putting a target on you for this world to come after you. You're a prey to the world if you dare to stand against them. And the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.

Get him, Lord. And he saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor. Therefore, his arm brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness is sustained him.

The Lord looked down at this wicked nation, and he said, I'm so surprised there's nobody interceding for them. I'm going to have to go and save them. I'll go rescue them.

That is not my mindset. The only way I'm going to get that mindset is by drawing near to the Lord. I can read that and say, yeah, okay, Lord, I understand what you're saying there. But then when I come against a situation that is where truth has failed and there's wickedness and unrighteousness prevailing, my first thought isn't, oh, Lord, how can we help this situation?

Lord, I intercede for that person, that big, dumb jerk. Would you help them? Right? No, Lord, get rid of that. Get rid of that. Make a way for righteousness. Jeremiah 29, 12 says, Then shall you call upon me, and you shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

[22 : 58] What a promise. If we intercede and if we pray. God says, hey, if you call upon me, and if you pray unto me, I'm going to hearken unto that. That's my desire. And so God's seeming hesitancy in judgment.

It seems at times like God's hesitating in judgment. Why do you do that, Lord? Well, I think one is to leave room for mercy because God delights in mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

And then two, as we're looking at today, is to draw out faith into intercession, is to draw out our faith into a place of intercession where we get beyond just thinking about ourselves or the situation, and we can see as God's heart sees.

So that's the setup. That's the setup of this conversation we're going to dive into with Abraham and the Lord as we work through this here. So Abraham says, will they also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

Per adventure, there'll be 50 righteous within the city. Will they also destroy and not spare the place for the 50 righteous that are therein? Now Abraham says the righteous, not those that do righteous, but those that are righteous.

[24 : 03] It's a state of being. Are they righteous? And he uses this word, he's going to use it six times, per adventure. Adventure is out there. Well, it doesn't really mean adventure. It's what if, suppose.

But it has tucked within it the idea of hope. So he's like, well, suppose, I'm hoping, I expect this. You know, not, well, I hope so, but God, I expect this.

And so he's saying, what if, God, I'm hopeful in that your mercy will respond to this question. He's going to repeat this six times. Matthew says something interesting about repetition.

It says, Matthew in chapter six, verses seven and eight says, when you pray, use not vain repetitions. Abraham is here interceding. He's kind of repeating himself. As the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Be not you therefore alike unto them. For your father knows what things you have need of before you ask him. Does that mean we don't repeat anything? Not at all. There is a repetition that is not vain.

[25 : 12] Because by definition, if he says, use not vain repetition, that means there must be repetition that is not vain. But Matthew seven, as he's continuing through the Sermon on the Mount, he tells the disciples, he says, ask and it shall be given unto you.

Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you. And the wording is, ask and continue to ask. Seek and continue to seek. Knock and continue to knock. Repeat, repeat, repeat. For everyone that asks receives and he that seeks finds.

And him that knocks, it shall be opened. Man, if you know that when you ask, you're going to receive. That when you seek, you're going to find. And when you knock, it'll be opened. You're going to come back and do it again and again.

And again. So as Abraham says, peradventure, God answers his prayer with yes. So he's like, oh, I want to pray again because God answered my prayer with yes.

And so he says, that 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 be right?

[26 : 17] We could sit all day on this verse. We won't, promise. Only a couple more hours. But he tucks in here this knowledge he has of God's character where he says, would you slay the righteous with the wicked?

Be far from you. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? It is not right of you, Lord, to treat the righteous as the wicked. And so Abraham has trapped God, in a sense, with knowledge of God's own character.

As we read through this, as I was reading through this, and Abraham's like, oh, I'm gonna ask one more time. I think the Lord's like, yeah, okay. Yeah, I'll do that. Come on, come on. Ask again. Ask again. Yes, yes, yes. He asked again.

The Lord, I think, is so excited about this, this interchange with Abraham. But Abraham essentially kind of traps God with knowledge of his character, and I think the Lord's like, yes, you got me. Ha!

Yes, you're right. I can't do that. Thank you. Micah 7, 18 says, Who is a God like unto thee that pardons iniquity, passes by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage, for he retains not his anger forever, because he delights in mercy.

[27 : 25] He loves being merciful. He will not put the righteous in with the wicked. Revelation 6, verse 16 through 17, He said to the mountain, and they said to the mountains and rocks fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?

God's wrath is gonna come. It will, but who's it for? 1 Thessalonians 5, 9, For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

So there's a wrath that's coming, but we're still here in a place of intercession. Intercession. And what is God's response? This is mind-blowing. Verse 26, The Lord said, If I find in Sodom 50 righteous within the city, then I will spare them.

Did he say that? Nope. He says, I will spare all the place for their sakes. For the presence of one small body of righteous, God would forestall judgment on an entire city.

Where do you get down to 10 people? God's not gonna say, I'll rescue them. Now when he gets there, there's not 10. And he's like, no, I've gotta bring judgment. And I'm just gonna get you out of here instead. And that's the world we're in.

[28 : 39] Right now, guys, we're that small body of righteous. And God hasn't removed us. So judgment's not come. And that means we're still in a place of intercession. We're still to get God's heart about the world we're in.

And we're to seek and to save the lost because that's God's desire. He's not brought judgment yet. The wrath of the Lamb. How often we get caught up in desiring the judgment of God instead of recognizing that we're in this world to intercede for the mercy of God.

Abraham, he had a front row opportunity to see God's judgment, didn't he? He had a front row seat. He's like, yes, I'm right here with the Lord. The Lord has told me he's gonna bring judgment.

So, okay, God, yes, your will be done. Let's do that. And instead, he totally interferes with God's plans here, doesn't he? He just sticks himself right in the middle of it. And he's like, well, can I change your mind a little?

Can we bargain a bit? But what did he do instead? He chose to intercede instead for mercy. And God responds and says, yes, if there's 50, I'll spare the entire place for your sakes.

[29 : 45] I wouldn't have prayed that. I'm like, no, no, no, Lord. I don't want you to spare the whole place. Just get the righteous out. You can judge the bad guys. But he's gonna spare the whole place. For this small body of righteous.

And in verse 27, and Abraham answered and said, behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which in but dust and ashes, peradventure, there shall lack five of the 50 righteous.

Wilt thou destroy all the city for the lack of five? He said, if I will find there 40 in five, I will not destroy it. So Abraham uses this phrase here in verse 27.

He says, I've taken it upon me to speak. I've taken it upon me to speak to you. Who am but dust and ashes? He's not just being poetic there. It's like, oh yeah, you know, I repent in dust and ashes.

It's an Old Testament thing they do. He's not just being poetic or overly dramatic. I think he's acknowledging that true value, his true value and worth, only comes from the Lord.

[30 : 44] He's recognizing, I have nothing and I am nothing. The only value I have is the fact that my God has allowed me to draw near, that I have a relationship with him, that he's given me blessings and promises and the value God must place on us, that he would listen to us.

God had a plan and Abraham's totally goofing it all up. God was going to go down and judge this place. And here's Abraham recognizing the value God places upon their relationship, that he would listen to him.

Matthew chapter 12 verses 18 through 20 says, Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased.

I will put my spirit upon him and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. And then what does verse 20 say? A bruised reed shall he not break and a smoking flax he shall not quench.

Worthless items, what are you going to do with a bruised reed? It has no structure left. A smoking flax. You can't burn it anymore. It's just charred.

[31 : 56] He won't quench it until he's sent forth judgment and victory. And that's God's heart. God loves to add eternal value to temporal castoffs. He loves to take the things that this temporary world casts off.

I'm going to give eternal value to that. I'm going to give this value something beyond what this world has. And here's Abraham sitting here recognizing, God, you've listened to me and I'm nothing.

And how does the Lord respond? The Lord didn't say, oh no, Abraham, that's not true. No. He said, that is true. And yet I'll respond to you. He said, yes, peradventure.

And he said at the end of verse 28, if I find there 40 and five, I will not destroy it. And he spake unto him yet again and said, peradventure, there shall be 40 found there.

He said, I will not do it for 40's sake. And he said unto him, oh, let not the Lord be angry and I will speak. Peradventure, there shall be 30 found there.

[32 : 56] And he said, I will not do it if I find 30 there. He said, behold, now I've taken upon me to speak unto the Lord. Peradventure, there shall be 20 found there. He said, I will not do it for 20's sake.

He said, oh, let not the Lord be angry and I'll speak yet but this once. Peradventure, 10 shall be found there. He said, I will not do it for 10's sake. What does he mean there when he says, oh Lord, let not the Lord be angry.

Do you think the Lord was angry with him? Do you think as he's asking him, the Lord's going, fine. Okay, if there's 50, 45, 45. Okay, I got to go now, Abraham. 40, buddy, come on, we got things to do.

No way. I don't think so at all. I think Abraham is so overawed by the fact that God listened to him, responding to him, that he's like, oh boy, I'm pushing this. But we need to be careful.

We must be careful not to project our own tendencies in nature upon God. Is God angry anywhere in this chapter? Does anger come out in any place? No. Abraham's going to stop interceding at the end of verse 32.

[34 : 04] He's going to stop there because it seemed like a reasonable place and a reasonable request in his eyes. He thought, hey, there's Lot, there's his wife, he's got two unmarried daughters, he's got a couple other daughters that are married, so that means there's some son-in-laws, maybe there's some other kids.

So he's thinking 10, there's 10 righteous, Lot's got to, there's Lot's family, I'm sure. So he stopped at what seemed a very reasonable place in his eyes. However, we should never cease interceding until we know the Lord has ceased listening.

The Lord's still there. What if he had said, okay, but what if there's five? What if there's one? What if it's just Lot? But he stopped. Now God's will be done and God has his plans and his purposes as we see when he gets to Sodom and the amazing picture of removing the righteous before judgment that's going to be there.

But I think we can also learn that just because we have a perception of God, it doesn't mean that's actually God's heart and what God is doing. How do we gain greater knowledge of God's heart?

We continue to spend time in his presence just like Abraham did. But God delights in prayer. Did you know that? Proverbs 15, 8 says, the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

[35 : 17] God delights when you pray to him. He's not angry, he's not upset, he's not like, I don't have time for this. It's his delight. And God wants us to delight in prayer as well. Isaiah 56, verses 6 and 7 says, also the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord to serve him and to love the name of the Lord to be his servants, everyone that keeps the Sabbath from polluting it and takes hold of my covenant, even them will I bring to my holy mountain and I'll make them joyful in my house of prayer.

God wants us to delight, delight in prayer, to have joy in his house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar. And this is what Jesus quotes, right, when he cleanses the temple.

For mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. And that prayer is what? It's his delight. And he says here that he will make them joyful in his house. So this house of prayer to all people is a joyful place.

Our prayers to God are never a burden or bother to him. They are a treasure he collects and stores up. He stores it up for a very special occasion. Revelation chapter 8, verses 3 and 4.

And another angel came and stood at the altar having a golden censer and there was given unto him much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne.

[36 : 40] And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angels' hands. God stores up the prayers of his saints for a very special purpose.

They ascend before him with the incense. We are to delight in prayer and we're to delight in intercession. 1 John tells us that if any man see a brother sin of sin which is not unto death he shall ask and he shall give him life for them but sin not unto death.

If there is a sin unto death I do not say that you shall pray for it. That's in the Lord's heart to tell us when that is. But what does he say here? If we see a brother sin of sin which is unto death what do we do? We ask God's judgment on him.

We say, Lord, get him. He shall ask. He shall ask the Lord on his behalf and what will the Lord do? He will give him life for them. For that, not because of that guy who's the one sinning a sin that's not unto death but because you decide to intercede God says, oh, I'll give him life.

Boy, that's hard, isn't it? Sometimes I don't want God to just like give him life. I want him to give him a spanking and then life. When the Lord shows his mercy to me, it's a glorious thing.

[37 : 53] When the Lord shows his mercy to you, I got to think about it. Not you, but other places and other people. That's just our hearts. I think there's a little of that here with Abraham. He's like, oh, Lord, don't be angry at me.

I'm not angry. This is why I came, Abraham. This is why I'm revealing to you what's to come for the point of intercession. Then Abraham ceased speaking and it says in verse 33, and the Lord went his way.

As soon as he had left communing with Abraham, Abraham returned unto his place. Interesting. Abraham did not continue. What was Abraham's place? Abraham's place was not judgment.

It was intercession. Guys, you know what our place is? It's not judgment. It's intercession. Remember when Jesus says to the disciples, he said, you know, don't take any money for your bag.

Don't take a coat. Don't take a sword. Nothing. Like, okay. And then he's getting closer to the end before the cross. He's like, all right, remember when I told you that? Well, now it's time. At this time, I want you to take something. You need to be ready because you're going to be scattered.

[38 : 53] I'm not going to be here. It's going to be a little time of transition before the Holy Spirit's sent after the resurrection. He says, do you have a sword? We got a sword. They had a sword.

He goes, that's enough. You know who it was with the sword, right? It's Peter. Because later, he's going to cut the guy's ear off. And Jesus says to Peter, he says, Peter, put up your sword. He also said to Peter, remember, he said, Peter, when Peter said that you are the Christ, the son of the living God, he says, flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you, but my father, which is in heaven.

He said, upon this rock, I'll build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. He's not talking about Peter, but he tells Peter that. And many times we see as we move through Acts, Peter very much represents the church.

And he says to Peter, put up your sword. When's the next time we see any form of the church with a sword? You know when it is? When Jesus returns, we have the sword, which is the word of God.

That's the only sword spiritually in Ephesians. But the next time we see a sword is when it's coming out of Jesus' mouth, when he returns. So the only sword I have authority in is this one.

[39 : 58] And it's not for judgment. It's for intercession. It's for mercy. It's for salvation. And so the Lord continues on into judgment, but Abraham, he returned to his place. It was not time for him.

Only the Lord knows the heart. This is why we're not in a place of judgment. Jeremiah 17, 10, and I, the Lord, search the heart. I try the reins even to give every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doing.

The Lord knows the fruit that needs to be reaped in a life. And then he gives us opportunity to intercede that that fruit would not be judgment.

So what does Abraham have? Abraham had an opportunity for communion, which led to intercession, which then forestalled God's judgment. Because it says, the Lord went his way as soon as he left communion.

And so the Lord comes to Abraham to his tent for the purpose of fellowship, communion, to speak to Abraham, to be in his life. And that led directly to this place of intercession, which then forestalled God's judgment.

[41 : 01] If God had not come to Abraham's tent, what would have happened? Where would Lot be? Where would his family be? But because of Abraham's intercession, because he cornered God according to his character, his nature, he was able then to intercede.

So intercession or interference? God will never view intercession as interference. Intercession means that I have taken time in God's presence to gain God's perspective so that I then might gain God's ear.

I have God's ear. He's listening to me because I have his perspective. I have his view. When I don't take time in his presence, I'm just like, Lord, this and this, and can you see what they're doing?

He's like, that's not my heart. My heart is mercy. And oh, you're just yelling at him in judgment. And yes, I know America's a mess. But I hear their cry.

I see the weight of their sin and I want to bring the same salvation that I brought to you. I want to bring it to them. God came with promise and blessing when he came to the tent of Abraham, didn't he, and Sarah.

[42 : 09] That led to communion and intercession. But where did all that take place? All of this, chapter 18, took place where? In the very presence of God. The whole thing took place in God's presence.

God came in his presence. He came to Abraham and this whole thing was in his presence. Guys, we live in his presence. Scripture tells us that in him we live and move and have our being. Do you feel his presence?

I don't always feel his presence. So what? I'm in his presence. We're not to live in the light of the feeling of God's presence. We're to live in the light of the truth and the fact of God's presence.

I can live every moment of my life knowing I'm in God's presence. And that's amazing. I thought this was a good scripture kind of indicating God's heart. It's the prodigal son.

It's when he has that repentance, that change of heart. And in Luke 15, verse 18 and 20, to 20, he says, I will arise and go to my father and will say unto my father, I've sinned against heaven and before thee.

[43 : 09] I'm no more worthy to be called thy son. Abraham saying, don't be angry. Will you spare them? The prodigal son saying, oh, I know I'm, my perspective, he's going to be mad at me.

I'm not worthy to be his son. And he arose and came to his father. He drew near, didn't he? He came into his presence. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion.

Not judgment, not a lecture, he had compassion. As we dwell in God's presence, the reality of God's presence every day, it's not just for us, it's for him to give us his perspective and his view.

And that then gives us eyes for more than just ourselves, for those around us, to intercede on behalf of those who I probably never would, honestly. I wouldn't have interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah unless I had spent time in God's presence and got his heart about that situation.

And then we can turn and say, Lord, I wouldn't usually say this, but would you spare them? And he's like, yes! I will because of that.

[44 : 14] Father, we love you so much. greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. And Lord, you tell us, I have no longer call you servants, but I call you friends, for I have told you all things that the Father has spoken to me.

Lord, friendship is openness, friendship is sacrifice, and you're the greatest friend we've ever had, and you lay down your life for us. And then, Lord, you're so willing just to tell us everything, Lord, just to spill it all, to tell us all about your Father, all that he's spoken to you, your heart, your perspective, how you want to work in this world.

Lord, we don't do that. We try and hold some things back to keep some information back from others, to kind of be in the know, to name drop, to whatever, Lord, to make ourselves feel important. But Lord, not you.

You're so good, Lord. So I pray that you would draw near now, draw near, and speak to those areas of our hearts, Lord, that we couldn't hear your voice, except, Lord, we are in communion with you.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Amen.