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Abraham's Rapid Obedience (Gen. 17:23-27)

23 So Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day, as God had said to him. 24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 That very same day Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael; 27 and all the men of his house, born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

- Abraham obeyed God in two important ways. First, he obeyed God quickly. Moses says twice that this happened on the same day God commanded him.
- Second, he obeyed God fully, circumcising everyone God commanded.
- We can also see that his entire household was obedient to this.
- The giving of their ages emphasizes that Abraham is unable to procreate, and also that Ishmael may be old enough now to expect to take over for Abraham.

Mysterious Visitors (Gen. 18:1-8)

1 Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. 2 So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, 3 and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. 4 Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. 5 And I

will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant.” They said, “Do as you have said.”

6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, “Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead it and make cakes.” 7 And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. 8 So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.

- Abraham has still chosen not to live in the wicked cities.
- This is an accurate picture of the desert life.
- At 99 years of age, he gets up and runs to greet his mysterious guests.
- He addresses the apparent leader, bows, and calls Him *Adonai*.
- Moses says plainly that this is the LORD (Yahweh) Himself, and so Abraham is probably the first person since Adam to dine with God.

Sarah Laughs At A Birth Announcement (Gen. 18:9-15)

9 Then they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” So he said, “Here, in the tent.”

10 And He said, “I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.” (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.)

11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. 12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, “After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?”

13 And the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?’ 14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”

*15 But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid.
And He said, "No, but you did laugh!"*

- This seems to indicate that Sarah didn't know about the Isaac promise.
- The reference to the *time of life* can mean *the time of reviving*, and so it's possibly a reference to the following spring.
- Eavesdropping Sarah laughs, but God knows what is in her heart.
- Is anything too hard for Yahweh?

Friends and Covenant Partners (Gen. 18:16-21)

16 Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. 17 And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, 18 since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." 20 And the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, 21 I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know."

- The three "men" seem to indicate that they are headed towards Sodom.
- Abraham was the Friend and the covenant partner of Yahweh. He dealt with God as a friend in a way that probably no one had since the time of Adam, or Enoch.
- *"You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. 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.” (John 15:14-15)

- God also wants to teach Abraham and his descendants how He deals with sin.
- God will “go down” to Sodom. What does this mean?
- Because of the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, God says there is an outcry. The implication here is that if the city is found to be as wicked as the outcry has indicated, God will send judgment.

Praying For Sodom (Gen. 18:22-33)

22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD. 23 And Abraham came near and said, “Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? 24 Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? 25 Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

- Abraham draws near to the Lord, with respect and boldness. Because of his friendship with God, he was not afraid to come near and make intercession.
- This is how it is with us. We have reverence for God, but at the same time we come before Him in intercession with a boldness that is not inappropriate.
- Hebrews 4:16 says, *“Let us... come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

Learning From Abraham’s Intercession

- First, Abraham assumes that God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked. But sometimes we are subjected to suffering because we live in a fallen world.

- Jesus talked about this issue in Luke 13:1-5: *There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”*
- Abraham’s question in verse 25 is nearer to the mark. He asked, “*Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?*” Whatever happens, we can have confidence that God is doing the right thing, operating in justice.
- Peter tells us how to behave when we are suffering unjustly: *For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: “Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth”; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously... Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.... Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator. (1 Peter 2:20-23, 4:12-14, 19)*
- So Peter says the key is to commit ourselves to the One who judges righteously, because He is a faithful Creator. I don’t always understand *what* is happening, but I can always trust the One who stands behind it all.

Sparing The City? (Gen. 18:26-33)

26 So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes." 27 Then Abraham answered and said, "Indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: 28 Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for lack of five?" So He said, "If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy it."

29 And he spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose there should be forty found there?" So He said, "I will not do it for the sake of forty."

30 Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?" So He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there."

31 And he said, "Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?" So He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty." 32 Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of ten." 33 So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

- Abraham prays a bargaining type of prayer, like Moses and David after him.
- One of the things we fail to consider in this story is that God knew exactly how many righteous people were there, and apparently there were less than ten.
- When we speak about praying for others, we are dealing with mysteries.
- God invites us to pray concerning some things. Jesus told a parable about prayer *...to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint...* (Luke 18:1)
- When was God amazed? *He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; and His own righteousness, it sustained Him.* (Isa. 59:16)

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