**WHAT IF ONLY TEN CAN BE FOUND THERE?**

Genesis 18:16-33 (Key verse 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."”*

In today’s passage we are going to learn from Abraham who interceded for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah after God revealed to him his plan to judge the two cities whose sin was so grievous causing a great outcry. From the passage we will learn how Abraham could intercede for the people in the cities, his attitude in his intercession and what his motive was. Abraham began his intercession for the people before God saying: “*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?*” From there he went further until the key verse making his final request saying: “*What if only ten can be found there?”* and the Lord said: *"For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.”* How could Abraham make such requests to God who had made up his mind about Sodom and Gomorrah?

Do you have a prayer topic that feels like God has already decided and it cannot be changed? A prayer topic that seems impossible or unreasonable? Are you in a situation that you feel it is unreasonable to ask God to change? Perhaps you feel you are where you are because of your own doing, your own sin and mistakes? In today’s passage Abraham will intercede for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, for the Lord to save the cities if only 10 righteous people are found in the cities. Just a drop in the ocean, and the Lord said I will not destroy it. I pray that the Lord may have mercy on us today to receive one word, learn the character and nature of God, learn from Abraham’s faith so that we too can pray like him, even if our prayer topics may seem like a no brainer.

The passage today begins with Abraham walking out his guests, which he welcomed with great hospitality, fresh bread, great steak and comfortable bedding with a fresh lavender smell. Now walking guests when they leave one’s home was the norm during those times. As Abraham was walking the men, the man looked down to Sodom and thereafter something interesting happened. Let us look at **verse 17-19**: “***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.”*

Here we can learn that the three men that visited Abraham, two of the were God’s angels and the third was God himself. As they headed out God asked a question, saying: “*Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?*” This was not a question that needed to be answered, it was also not a question that was said out loud, it was a thought that God had. And the Bible recorded this for us to make a point. It was a rhetorical question. This question was meant to reveal something about the relationship that Abraham had with God. Basically, through this question, God revealed his deep relationship with Abraham. In **Isaiah 41:8** it says: “*But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend*” The relationship that God had with Abraham was that of friendship, and so God could not hide anything from Abraham, it gave him joy and satisfaction to share everything with Abraham and Abraham alike, whether bad news and or good news.

How could Abraham become a friend of God? First it was God’s grace and mercy, and because of Abraham’s obedience. When God called Abraham as we studied earlier in the book of Genesis, saying leave your country, your people and go to the land I will show you, Abaraham obeyed God. When God promised Abraham who was in his old age with a barren wife, that he will make him into a great nation Abraham believed God. Abraham believed God, he obeyed God and trusted God, and that is what made him a friend of God, and God wanted to reveal everything to him. How about us today? God also wants to reveal things to us, he wants to reveal his plans to us. Just like Abraham if we obey God’s word, believe his words and put our trust in him he will reveal things to us, we will become friends of God.

Furthermore, God wanted to reveal to Abraham his plans because he will become a great and powerful nation, all nations on earth will be blessed through him. God says, 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. Because Abraham will be used by God as his instrument, God revealed to him what he wants to do. When we accept the mission of God, as his servants, God reveals his plans to us, to co-work with him and to participate in his salvation plan. When we accept God’s mission, God reveals to us his plans, by the help of the holy spirit he reveals to us how we should raise our sheep, our family and friends, how we should guard them from danger. Most importantly God has chosen us to raise our family, sheep, friends and the world to do what is right and just. God says this is how he is to bring about what he has promised Abraham. When we obey God, trust God, depend on God and raise our sheep, family and friends to do what is just, God will reveal to us his incredible plans and he will bless us.

Now what is it that God wanted to reveal to Abraham? Let us look at **verse 20-21**: “***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.”* What God wanted to reveal to Abraham was his decision to judge the people in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, their sin has become so grievous, it has become so great. In the past when Lot chose to live in Sodom, we were told about how sinful the people were, and now we are told that the outcry to the Lord has become so great. From whom is this outcry from, this is from the people in Sodom, who were affected, oppressed, tormented by the sin of the cities. The sin was so great in Sodom and Gomorrah to an extent that one may ask where the Lord is. Today as well, as we see what is happening in our communities, in our country, in the world we live in, corruption, child abuse, gender-based abuse, child/human trafficking and many others. We may wonder where God is. But from today’s passage we can learn that God hears and sees everything, he heard the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah.

What did God do when he heard the outcry? Did he strike down Sodom and Gomorrah at once? Did he just ignore it, since they are sinful people, deserving everything that is happening to them? No, rather. God said… *I go will down...* God knew everything, he did not have to come down to see what was happening. Why did he say I will go down? He wanted to go down, to help the people repent, he wanted to go down to show the people mercy, to have compassion unto them and help them to overcome their sin problem. This is why Jesus also came down, born in the manger, to live among sinners, to love them, to have compassion unto them. God wanted to come down, to help the people repent, he said I will know, whether the are willing to repent or have their hearts hardened.

 How did Abraham respond to God who revealed to him his plans to judge the people in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? Let us look at **verse 23-25**: “***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?”* When God revealed to Abraham what he was about to, Abraham did not just accept what God had said, but he interceded for the people of Gomorrah. He said will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?

Perhaps one may think Abaraham was talking for his nephew Lot, but in fact Abraham was talking also for the people of Gomorrah, he had compassion on them. If it was just for Lot, he would have prayed to God in that manner. Just as God considered Abraham as his friend and revealed what was in his heart to him, Abraham also had the same attitude towards God, pouring out his heart to God. In **Genesis 17:17-18** we saw how he poured out his heart to God it says: “*Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?” 18 And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!””*

Furthermore, Abraham interceded for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, not according to his own ideas, but according to the nature of who God is, he prayed in line with the will of God. It is not in the nature of God to judge the righteous with the wicked alike. And so, based on this, Abraham prayed to God saying: “*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?”*” Because Abraham was a friend of God, who dedicated his life to obey God, to trust God, he prayed in this way. He could pray in this way because he knew who God is, he spent time with God and had the will of God engraved in his heart. Instead of just leaving things, he prayed to God according to his will and character, and the Lord responded to him saying: *“If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.”*

Because Abraham knew who God is, he had relationship with him, obeyed him and trusted him, he could have courage to come to God and intercede. We also may be in situations where it may seem like it is done, nothing else can be done, but from Abraham we can learn that it is never done, we can learn that God is willing to hear us and can hear and change situations or circumstances that are unreasonable, done or irreversible. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah were very sinful, they were a hopeless case one may say, irreversible, done, but because Abaraham was a friend of God, he knew the character of God, he had compassion on them, he thought about them and came to the Lord, what if they are fifty righteous people in the city, will you not spare the place for their sake. And the Lord said I will spare the whole place for their sake.

After God had granted Abraham’s request, Abraham went further and said: *“Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five people?”* Here we see Abraham who is not just pushing limits, but exercising his faith in God, he is demonstrating the character of God, who was merciful to him, a sinner, who is nothing but the dust and ashes of the ground. The God who called him from a sinful directionless life, to be a father of many nations, with offsprings as numerous as the sand on the seashore. Abraham was moved deeply by who God is, and what he has done in his life, what he is able to do, the God Almighty. And he was indeed convinced that God can also save Sodom and Gomorrah if forty-five righteous people were found there. Thinking deeply about it, Abraham was convinced further that God Almighty can spare the cities even if much less righteous people are found there. In the **key verse 32** it says: ***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.”*

Because of who God is, Abraham could be courageous, he could be persistant in his intercession for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. This intercession was not just for Abraham, it was not just for Lot, but it was for the people of Gomorrah and Sodom. Through these events Abraham could grow into a leader that God wanted to raise for the world. In order to be a father of many nations, Abaraham had to think and act beyond his own personal or family needs, he needed to speak on behalf of the world, on behalf of the sinful people of Sodom and Gomorrah. To be used by God we need not focus on our own individual needs, our immediate family, and friends, but we need to focus on the people of God who are tormented by the power of sin and death, pray to God to have mercy on them, pray that they may repent and come back to God, reveal the truth to them. Yes, there are people that may seem they have crossed the line, hopeless and irrecoverable, but God is urging you and me to intercede for them, we also might we have crossed the line, no hope, God is urging us to pray to him according to his nature and character. Sodom and Gomorrah’s sin was so great, that it needed divine intervention, but Abraham prayed to God, and God agreed that if ten righteous people were found there, he will not destroy it.

 **Conclusion:**

From today’s passage we have learnt what having a deep relationship with God looks like and how we can have a deep relationship with God. Abaraham had a deep relationship with God because he obeyed his command, he trusted God and because of that he became a friend of God, and God revealed to him his plans. We have also learnt that because Abraham was a friend of God, and God revealed to him what he was about to do, Abraham could intercede for the people Sodom and Gomorrah, he could intercede for them because of who God is, he could intercede for them according to the will of God. To the world it seemed like it was over for them, it was done, irreversible, but to God it was not over, it was not done, God desired to save them through repentance. When we do not have a relationship with God and know who God is, we cannot intercede for our sheep, our family, our friends, even ourselves. We will see things as done, irreversible; we will just be the same as the non-believers in the world. Abraham had a relationship with God, he was a friend of God and hence he could intercede for the people in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. You and me can be like Abraham, we can be a friend of God, all we need to do is obey God’s commands, study his word by faith, trust him, have a relationship, spend time with him and like Abraham we will be used by God, we will be blessed by God to be fathers and mothers of many nations.