Studies in Genesis - 20

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Studies In Genesis

(Leaflet 20)

ABRAHAM—"FRIEND OF GOD"—INTERCESSING AND

GOD'S ANSWER TO HIS PRAYER

Genesis 18:1—19:38

In a former lesson, which has been printed in leaflet number fifteen of this series, we considered Abraham's relationship to Lot, studying portions of chapter eighteen and chapter nineteen in some detail. Today we want to think especially of Abraham's relationship to God, as set forth in his intercession for Sodom, and God's answer to his prayer. It is the story of how the Lord talked to His child as to a friend. Indeed, because of this and similar incidents in the life of the patriarch, Abraham has been called by the Holy Spirit "The Friend of God." (See II Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23.)

It is a very practical lesson which we have before us today, a lesson on the importance of intercession, which is praying for others. May the Lord write it upon our hearts, that we, like Abraham of old, may know the blessedness of fellowship with God in the ministry of interceding for a Christ-rejecting world, as well as for His blood-bought children who, like Lot, have pitched their tents toward Sodom.

In our last lesson we saw that Abraham was "in the plains of Mamre," which was in Hebron; and "Hebron" means "fellowship," or "communion"—it was there that "the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day" (18:1). Walking before the Lord, with a perfect heart, he was prepared for yet another manifestation of His presence, and for the important ministry of interceding for Sodom and Lot. In spite of all his failures, in spite of all the things in his life
that must have displeased God; yet God was still appearing to Abraham, because Abraham sincerely loved His Lord.

**DID ABRAHAM ENTERTAIN "ANGELS UNAWARES"?**

Before the three heavenly guests had finished talking to Abraham, he certainly knew that one of them was the Lord; but we wonder if at first he realized who the "three men" were. In Old Testament times God often appeared to men in human form as "the angel of the Lord." And angels, His "ministering spirits," also talked to men in human form. That was before God was manifested in the flesh in the person of the only begotten Son of God. Our Lord Jesus came to reveal God unto us; He was "Immanuel," which being interpreted means "God with us." But before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, God often spoke to His children through angels, who appeared in the form of men. Doubtless it was to such manifestations that the Holy Spirit referred when He said in Heb. 13:2:

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

Whether Abraham realized at first that one of these three was the Lord, he assuredly did before the conversation was over. At first, however, he addressed one of the three as "Lord," using the word that means "master," or "leader." It was the same term, by which Sarah addressed Abraham. He did not use the word meaning "Jehovah" or "Elohim." Evidently one of the three seemed to be more important than the other two; for to that one Abraham used this term of respect.

"And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said" (18:2-5).
Possibly, if Abraham had realized at first that one of the three was the Lord, he would have brought unto Him an offering instead of a meal. However that may be, we are exhorted in the New Testament to “entertain strangers” in the name of the Lord.

Some years ago most Christian people considered it a privilege to open their homes to missionaries and ministers; but now it is often difficult to find a home for a visiting minister or evangelist or missionary. A friend of mine went to Michigan to preach. The pastor of the church, in which he expected to minister, had a hard time finding someone to entertain him. Finally one woman said, “Bring him around in the daytime.” She took him in; and her husband, one of the worst men in the neighborhood, was soundly converted. Surely that woman will be glad for all eternity that she received God’s servant into her home!

Moreover, the Lord Jesus said to His disciples,

“He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me” (Matt. 10:40).

My Christian friend, you would like to have the Lord Jesus in your home, I know. If He went to your door, and you knew Him as the Lord, you would never turn Him away! And yet we have His own promise that, when we receive His servants in His name, we receive Him and the Father.

Let us note the details given by the Holy Spirit to Abraham’s hospitality:

“And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat” (18:6-8).

And then the Lord announced to Abraham another promise concerning the coming of Isaac. In so doing, He referred to Himself as “LORD” (verses 13, 14), not as
“Lord,” as in verse 3, where Abraham had addressed Him as “Master.” (Note the use of capitals in verses 13, 14.)

“IS ANY THING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD?”

This time it was Sarah who “laughed” at the promise of a son in her old age. And how patiently the Lord dealt with her, reassuring Abraham that nothing is too hard for Him to do!

The heavenly messengers said unto him:

“What is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life, and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him” (18:9, 10).

Evidently Sarah was hiding behind the door to hear what these men talked about.

“He is Sarah thy wife? And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life: and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh” (verses 11-15).

Thus Sarah added a falsehood to unbelief. And what had God just done for her? He had made her a princess! Is that not grace? If it is not grace, then I do not know what is. My friend, do you not see that people are just the same in every age? You and I make mistakes, just as Abraham and Sarah did; but God does not give us up on that account. When God saved you, He knew all about you. When God saved you, He knew everything you would do; and yet He saved you in spite of all this. He knows everything now that
you will do, right down to the end. He made Sarah a princess, and He knew that very soon she would tell a falsehood because she did not fully believe. But she did believe finally, by the grace of God; for in Heb. 11:11 we read the Holy Spirit's testimony to her faith—there is no mention of her unbelief:

"Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised."

She came to it finally. She got by all of that doubt; she got by that laughter. And when Isaac was born, she and Abraham named him "Isaac," and that means "Laughter." God gave him that name before he was born. Abraham laughed when he heard it; Sarah laughed when she heard it; and when the child was born, they named him, by the command of God, Isaac, which means "Laughter." But the coming of that child proved to be a source of joy, in fulfillment of the promises of God—joy to his parents and to all believers of all ages, even throughout eternity.

Somewhere Sarah got victory; she got to the place where she "judged him faithful who had promised." When Abraham believed fully, and when Sarah believed fully, the thing was done and God's promises were fulfilled.

My Christian friend, are you troubled and perplexed? Does the burden press heavily upon you? Remember God's word to Abraham, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" He is the same God today and forever! He loves you; and He longs for you to trust Him utterly!

ABRAHAM—"THE FRIEND OF GOD"

In verses 16-21 we see the beautiful fellowship between The Lord and His redeemed child; for God talked to Abraham as Friend to friend, revealing unto him His plans:

"And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way" (verse 16).

Now one of the three was the Lord. He was on His way
to Sodom, and He stopped to speak to Abraham by the way. It was just as though the Lord had said, "Now I have to make a journey to Sodom, but Abraham is out there, and I am going to stop and see him on My journey." That is exactly what the Lord did. He was on His way to Sodom. Sodom was to be destroyed. God had a purpose in Sodom. Sodom was evil, filled with sin. Abraham went on the way with him; and as they went, the Lord said,

"Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?"

(verse 17).

Another thing Abraham was about to have. He was to have the revelation of God's purpose. With all his failures, Abraham, now in touch with God, was going to know the secrets of God. For God told Abraham something that no one in the world in that day knew. Abraham got it from God. What was it? It was about Sodom. What about Sodom? Sodom was to be destroyed. Suppose Abraham had wanted to know about Sodom and had gone down to Sodom to find out. Nobody there knew what the future held.

The newspapers of our own land today are not publishing the news that they get from this Book, the only sure things that are coming to pass. They are going to publish many things tomorrow morning, about which nobody knows anything. If the Los Angeles papers tomorrow morning should want to publish the real news for America, it would be: "The climax is near! Jesus is coming!" What is in store for the world? Why, God has written the world's doom, and that is sure. No one but God knows Germany's part. He alone knows Mussolini's part. The plans of men go wrong. If Abraham had gone down to Sodom and had gone to the news-headquarters, and said, "Give me the news concerning Sodom. What is going to happen?" he probably would have received some such reply as this: "We have these plans. We are going to have an election, to run this man..." Yet God was there, about to pronounce doom on the city, and no one in Sodom knew it.

But one man knew it, and he was a man who lived apart from the city. It is ever so. Those who really know the plans of God for this world and for Israel and for the church are
those who are not living in the world, but are separated from the world. The Lord Jesus said, “I have saved you out of the world.” Then He sent us back into the world to preach. Though we are in it, we are not of it. God has revealed to us, as He revealed to Abraham, His plans.

“And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?” (verses 17, 18).

God’s plan was to reveal to Abraham His purposes. And that is a plan that God has followed in all the ages. That is one reason why we have the Bible. God has, in His infinite wisdom, decided to tell His people beforehand what He is going to do.

I do not know whether we have appreciated what a great privilege it is to know what God is going to do. I admit that the world will not appreciate it; neither will the world appreciate your talk about prophecy, but prophecy ought to be very precious to the Lord’s people. Men are wondering today about the final issues of things that are now coming to pass. We should not be wondering. God has told us the final outcome. There may be some question in our minds as to the exact place in which we stand in God’s calendar, and just how far away the end may be; for God does not reveal to us the time in days and weeks and years, as He did to Israel, and as He will to Israel when they are regathered, but God has definitely spoken to us about how the end shall be. He said in Amos 3:7,

“Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he reveal­
eth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”

So God has adopted the plan of revealing to us, His people, what He is about to do, and that ought to be very wonderful to us.

Suppose our President should call a conference of his cabinet and the leaders of these different departments that have come into being, men whose names form the headlines of our papers. Then suppose you should get a special delivery letter, asking you to sit in council with the President
and his cabinet and the heads of all these great movements, to help decide how to spend those nearly five billions of dollars. You would wonder at it; you would “dress up” a little; maybe you would get “puffed up” a little.

Now the eternal God calls us into His councils! You can enter into His council chambers, and He will tell you what He is going to do. That is more important than what President Roosevelt is going to do. The fact of the matter is, I do not know whether any ruler today knows what he is going to do, or what he can do. That is not a criticism of our President, but just a criticism of the times; for even a president does not know what will happen before tomorrow comes. He does not know what may happen in Europe or in the Mediterranean tomorrow to change the whole complexion of things. He does not know what movement may arise here in America under some great leader to make him change some of his plans. No human being knows. But “known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:18).

It is a wonderful thing to get into some of God’s plans, to enter into the council chambers of the Lord. One of the prophetic teachers of England some years ago was sitting in a great auditorium, listening to Handel’s “Messiah” being rendered by an orchestra and a choir. He had been sitting nearly two hours, listening to that wonderful music, Handel’s supreme work. This man had often heard it before, and he had the music himself. The man who sat beside him, evidently growing tired, asked how much longer this was going on. In reply the prophetic student turned to him and said, “It is nearly finished, just five minutes more.” The man said, “How do you know it is nearly finished? It has been going on for about two hours, and is at its height now.” But the teacher said, “We just heard a wonderful solo, and now the orchestra is playing ‘The Hallelujah Chorus,’ and that is the last part. I happen to know, because I have the program.”

Well, we have God’s program. My friend, if you will read the program that God has given us, you will know when you are nearing the end. There must be the rise of the Roman Empire—and Mussolini has said that it is his
great work to revive the Roman Empire to its ancient glory. That must be in the end-time, according to prophecy. Mussolini must be greatly discouraged, as he witnesses Italian reverses in Albania and Northern Africa, during these closing weeks of 1940! But somehow the old Roman Empire will be revived, if not under Mussolini’s leadership, then under that of some other man; for God’s Word can not be broken!

The regathering of Israel in her home; persecuted in every land, and fleeing back to Palestine—that must occur at the end. The church is to become utterly worldly, until those who know the Lord must leave; and in many of the churches that has already come to pass. We have the program. We know we are near the end. That is our privilege, and that is our great responsibility, to make known God’s program to a sinful, groping world; for God has made known to us His prophetic Word, even as He made known to Abraham the impending judgment that was to fall upon Sodom.

Let us note the beautiful testimony God gave to Abraham’s life of service, as recorded in verse 19 of our chapter:

“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”

That could not have been said of Lot. It can not be said of all Christian parents today. May God help us to “command” our children and our households, that “they shall keep the way of the Lord.”

“And 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 altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. And the men (evidently, the two angels of 19:1) turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the Lord” (verses 20-22).
"Abraham stood before the Lord" in intercession for wicked Sodom, because Lot was there. And the Lord tarried to listen to the pleading of His "friend"—to listen and to grant his petition.

**Abraham—The Intercessor**

But you may ask, "Did God not destroy Sodom?" To be sure; but each time Abraham prayed—first for the city if fifty righteous could be found there; then for forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty, and ten—each time he made his request, God answered his prayer. We wonder if he did not stop interceding too soon? Perhaps not, as evidently it was necessary for God to wipe out the terrible sin and corruption of those wicked cities, in order to give His obedient children a chance to serve Him, uncontaminated by a wicked people who would not turn to Him and be saved.

Moreover, God answered Abraham's prayer, in that He saved Lot out of Sodom before He destroyed that city. Yes; Abraham “stood yet before the Lord,” and the Lord hearkened unto his cry.

1. *Abraham Prayed because Lot Was in Sodom.*

   "And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?" (18:23, 24).

Now there is this one wonderful thing about Abraham in this incident. The moment he knew that Sodom was in danger, that God was about to judge that city, at once he began interceding. But it was not for himself. Abraham was not in any danger. He was outside of Sodom.

My Christian friend, it is not you that is in danger. But it may be that your friends are in danger. Who was in Sodom? Lot was in Sodom; and while Abraham had been led to separate himself from Lot, yet Lot was very precious to Abraham. And when he knew that this city was to be destroyed, he at once began interceding.

2. *We Should Pray because This World Faces Judgment.*

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If ever the world needed prayer, surely that time is now! God has commissioned us to tell the lost world of our Saviour; and He has told us of the judgment that will surely come upon this God-defying world. Things will not be any better. How can we expect things to be better when the world is going on without God? God sent this world's King nearly two thousand years ago; and yet men said, "We have no king but Caesar." They have been choosing their own rulers ever since, and the world is about tired of its rulers. Now, whether it likes it or not, the world is having dictators, men who are not chosen at all, men who simply step into power. Things will not be any better until Jesus comes.

God has told us that scoffing and unbelief would mark the end of this age; for one of many such prophecies tells us plainly:

"There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" (II Peter 3:3, 4).

Now we know that the scoffers have come and are turning people away from the Word of God.

"But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (II Peter 3:7).


"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:8, 9).

The reason God is prolonging the terrible days that now are is that more might be saved. God is not willing that they perish." The great climax must come. Sin is lifting its head toward God in a shameless way, and God will visit with judgment; but God is holding it off. It is as though God by His hand were delaying the time of reckoning, but
some day God will withdraw His hand that is holding back the fires of judgment which will sweep over the earth.

That day must come; and in the meantime, what? Why, God's people in intercession. Christ is in intercession. I believe that if we intercede as we go before the Lord, and spend time in prayer, we are nearer to the life of Christ than in any other way. If anybody should ask me what the Christ-life is, I should say, "It is a life of intercession." For in that secret place we shall grow like Him more than in any other place, because we shall have to be separated from the world. All the plans of men to become like Christ are as nothing compared with this, that we spend much time alone with Him, in intercessory prayer. And as we remember that Christ standing between God and His sinning world is the only reason why this world now is not suffering its final judgment; as we remember that "He has no other plan" for bringing the lost to Calvary other than through the witness of His blood-bought children; then we shall be constrained to spend much time in intercession, even as we bear witness to His grace.

4. God Calls Us to Fellowship with Christ through Intercession. In the sixteenth chapter of Numbers we have an illustration of how we may have fellowship with our Lord through intercessory prayer. Israel had sinned. It was a crucial time in her history, and she knew not what to do. But Moses and Aaron went to the Lord with Israel's sin.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces" (Num. 16:44, 45).

The people had sinned; God was angry; and Moses was there with Aaron in the tabernacle in worship. "And they fell upon their faces." That is a good place for us to be, down on our faces before the Lord. That is the best place in the world. You know, in Christianity if you want to get up, you have to get down.

"And they fell upon their faces. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from
off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the con­gregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation..." (Num. 16:45-47).

I think that is the only time you hear of Aaron's running. What did Moses do? He stayed on his face. I think Moses said, "Aaron, I will stay here on my face before the Lord. You make atonement for the people. Get your incense; get your censer; and run among the people, after making atone­ment for them. It may be that God will hear, and the plague will be stayed." Moses was on his face in the power of atonement. Aaron was the high priest, and he made atone­ment by offering the sacrifice. Moses praying and Aaron making atonement—these two give us a picture of Christ. For Christ, the One who is in intercession before God, is also the One who is our Great High Priest, who made atone­ment for sin "once for all." This is a marvelous picture! The plague was stayed, because between the sinning people and an angry God there was a man on his face; and there was a smoking altar, a victim consumed. Christ is in interces­sion at God's right hand in the power of Calvary. And what is He doing? He is calling to us to have fellowship in that glorious work. There is nothing so wonderful as that, to go alone and be in intercession with Christ.

5. God Tells Us to Pray for the World. In our Lord's great, intercessory prayer He asked the Father that, through our testimony, the world might believe in Him. (See John 17:21, 23).

And to the Son the Father said,

"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psalm 2:8).

That is the Father's glorious promise to the Lord Jesus, that in answer to His intercession, He will give Him this world to cover it with His glory. So then we are to pray for the world.
6. God Tells Us to Pray for Israel.

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee" (Psalm 122:6).

If you want God’s blessing, my friend, if you want God’s prosperity, put Israel in your prayer. Pray for Jerusalem. Turn, please, to Isa. 62:6, another promise and word of instruction about how we are to pray:

"I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of (or ‘to’) the Lord, keep not silence . . . ."

"Ye that make mention to the Lord, keep not silence." Thus God bids us pray for Israel. "Ye that are the Lord’s remembrancers," going to the Lord, continually reminding Him of something, "keep not silence." But people say, "Is that right?" Yes, my friends, that is right. "Ye that are the Lord’s remembrancers," "keep not silence, and give him no rest." Give whom no rest? Give God no rest day or night.

"Ye that make mention to the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isa. 62:6, 7).

That is praying for Israel. Give that a large place in your intercession every day. Pray for Israel; pray for God’s people. They have a wonderful place in God’s plan, and still they suffer. Remember that Israel gave you your Bible; remember that Israel gave you your Saviour; and Jesus said, "Salvation is of the Jews." When you rejoice in salvation, do not forget that.

7. God Tells Us to Pray for More Laborers in His Harvest.

"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2).

Some man who broadcasts, who ought to have known better, said he believed there were too many people doing Christian work. Now it depends on what he means by that;
he should have explained. If he means all these people who
think they are doing Christian work, in all sorts of social
uplift, while rejecting the Christ of the Bible, that may be
ture; but there are not too many people doing the Lord’s
work, not while there are a thousand million people in this
world who do not know the Gospel. It is not true while two
millions of Jews are crowded into New York City, and not
one hundred thousand dof them could get into all the missions
of that metropolis. Then what shall we do? The Lord Jesus
said, “Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he would send
forth labourers into his harvest.”

8. *God Tells Us to “Pray One for Another.”* How we
need to pray for our fellow-Christians, “one for another”!
(James 5:16). We need not dwell on this here, but repeate-
dly we are exhorted to pray for those who represent Christ
in the world. Surely our own hearts tell us how much we
need the prayers of God’s children!

5:17). In Luke 18:1-7 our Lord taught the importance of
unceasing prayer:

“And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that
men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying,
There was in a city a judge, which feared not God,
neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that
city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine
adversary. And he would not for a while: but after-
ward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor
regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will
avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.
And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.
And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day
and night unto him, though he bear long with them?”

My friends, God will answer intercession. The woman
in this parable, by her importunity, obtained from the un-
just judge the thing she sought. How much more shall we
receive the answer to our prayers; for our Lord is just, as
well as merciful! He is longing to give, and is only waiting
for the time to come when He can pour out upon all His

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people everything for which they have prayed. Let us believe that.

10. "Before They Call, I Will Answer," God tells us; "and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isa. 65:24). While you are praying, my Christian friend, God is listening; but before you called upon God, He had the answer on the way. Do you believe that? It is in The Book. "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

This life of intercession is the life of Christ. Then

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34).

Christ not only died, but He arose in victory. Not only did He arise, but He is seated at the right hand of God, where He maketh intercession for us. That is our security. You are safe, and I am safe in the death of Christ, in the resurrection of Christ, in the intercession of Christ at God's right hand. And we need not think about ourselves.

But some may ask, "What has all this to do with the Genesis story, which is our lesson for today?" It has very much to do with the eighteenth chapter of Genesis; for God uses Abraham's intercession for Sodom to teach us a deeply spiritual truth, His will for us in intercessory prayer. When Abraham prayed for that wicked city, was it for himself? No, he was outside of Sodom. Likewise, we are outside of the world. We do not die with the wicked. God has judgment in store for the wicked; but God calls us to intercession with Christ. And while He is in intercession for us as our Great High Priest, we are to be in intercession for others as we go boldly unto "the throne of grace."

You will remember perhaps the story I have told you before, taken from the experience of Dr. C. I. Scofield. He was in the South; on his way to a meeting. He was riding horseback, and met a friend, another minister, whom he knew well. They went along together for some time, before they separated, each to go his own way. Some time afterwards, Dr. Scofield received a letter from that man, saying,
"Dr. Scofield, I want to thank you for praying for me. I was under a heavy burden that day when I met you; and after I left you, the burden left me. I was filled with joy and happiness, and I went to the Lord's work prepared." To this Dr. Scofield replied, "I am very sorry, but I forgot all about you after I left you. I did not notice that you were under a heavy burden. But I want you to remember this, that there is One who never forgets to pray for you at the right hand of God." He is there in intercession for His own!

May we learn well the lesson God has for us in the story of Abraham's intercession for Sodom! As we read on to the end of the chapter, we note also Abraham's humility and his recognition of the absolute justice of "the Judge of all the earth" (verse 25).

"And the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place" (verse 33).

**God's Answer to Abraham's Prayer**

Not only did God answer each petition of His pleading child, but He also saved Lot from the wicked city before He destroyed it. Not finding even ten righteous souls there, He had to rid the land of the awful defilement thereof. But He "remembered Abraham," and brought his loved one out before the judgment of fire fell.

Just here let us read again all of chapter nineteen, which tells the story of Lot's deliverance, Sodom's doom, and the sorrow and shame of the nephew Abraham loved. We studied all this in detail in a former lesson, in considering Abraham's relationship to Lot. It might be helpful to read again the printed leaflet dealing with this subject (No. 15, pages 11-15). It is not necessary to go further into this discussion now, except to summarize a few striking truths, by way of review:

Although Lot "sat in the gate of Sodom," as one in authority; yet he had no testimony for God in that wicked city.

Even though Abraham had delivered Lot and the king of Sodom from the enemy on a former occasion, yet Lot
went right back to live in that wicked city. Having chosen it in the beginning for mercenary reasons, he would not learn the lesson God was trying to teach him.

Lot was willing to sacrifice his children's spiritual welfare for material gain. And what a sad end was theirs!

Lot was justified by faith in the God of Abraham. Surely he had no works, of which to boast!

Lot was not happy in Sodom; he was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." Neither can the redeemed child of God be happy, seeking to find satisfaction in a godless world.

God sent two angels to deliver Lot. He sent them in answer to Abraham's prayer; for we read that "God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out..." (verse 29). The angels are "ministering spirits," sent forth to minister unto God's children. How often they have saved us from harm, we shall know only when we get to heaven!

Lot was saved, "yet so as by fire" (I Cor. 3:15). He lost his wife, his sons-in-law, his property, his reputation; and, with his daughters, lived in a cave, in shame and disgrace.

My Christian friend, it is possible for a redeemed soul to be disapproved by God to such an extent that God can not use him in His service. God forbid that such should be your experience or mine! May we, rather, like Abraham, be on our knees, interceding for a world lost in sin; for God's ancient people, Israel; for one another—for God's glory in and through all we think and say and do. Then, as "God's remembrancers," we shall bear fruit that shall abide for all eternity. And think of what it will mean to have led one never-dying soul to the Lord Jesus!

"He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:20).