

Genesis 18:1–19:38 – “Engage Intercession’s Power”

Text: Genesis 18:1–19:38 (CSB)

18:1–3 The LORD appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of his tent during the heat of the day. Abraham looked up, and he saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to meet them and bowed to the ground.

18:10, 12–14 “I will certainly come back to you in about a year’s time, and your wife Sarah will have a son!”... So Sarah laughed to herself: “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I have delight?” But the LORD asked Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh?... Is anything impossible for the LORD?”

18:20–21 Then the LORD said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is immense, and their sin is extremely serious. I will go down to see if what they have done justifies the cry that has come up to me. If not, I will find out.”

18:23–26 Abraham stepped forward and said, “Will you really sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away instead of sparing the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people who are in it? You would never do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. You would never do that! Won’t the Judge of all the earth do what is just?” The LORD said, “If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.”

19:15–17, 29 At dawn the angels urged Lot on: “Get up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city.”... “Flee for your life! Don’t look back and don’t stop anywhere on the plain. Run to the mountains or you will be swept away!”... So when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and brought Lot out of the middle of the destruction.

Key Background

- **Hospitality as Holy Encounter:** Abraham’s response to three strangers at midday—running to greet them, bowing, offering water and a full meal—reflects a culture of radical hospitality. He does not yet know he is entertaining the LORD and two angels (Hebrews 13:2). His generosity is habitual, not staged. How we treat those who appear before us may be more significant than we realize.
- **Sarah’s Laughter:** Sarah overhears the promise that she will bear a son within the year and laughs to herself (v. 12). When confronted, she denies it out of fear. Her laughter is understandable—she is ninety years old. God’s response is not harsh condemnation but a redirecting question: “Is anything impossible for the LORD?” (v. 14). This question is not rhetorical—it is an invitation to recalibrate her faith.
- **God Discloses His Plans to Abraham:** Before moving toward Sodom, God pauses and deliberates: “Should I hide what I am about to do from Abraham?” (v. 17). God’s reasoning is significant: Abraham has been chosen so that he will direct his household in

righteousness (v. 19). Intimacy with God carries responsibility. Those who walk closely with God are brought into His concerns, not just His blessings.

- **Abraham's Intercession:** Abraham's prayer for Sodom is one of the most remarkable intercessions in Scripture. He steps forward—a phrase that signals bold, deliberate action—and appeals to God's justice: "Won't the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" (v. 25). He is not manipulating God; he is appealing to who God is. True intercession is grounded in God's own character.
- **The Negotiation of Mercy:** Abraham bargains from fifty righteous down to ten (vv. 24–32). God agrees at every step. This is not Abraham wearing God down—it is Abraham learning the extent of God's mercy. God's willingness to spare a city of tens of thousands for the sake of ten righteous people reveals staggering grace. The intercession does not change God's heart; it draws out what is already in it.
- **The Wickedness of Sodom:** The events of Genesis 19 make plain why the outcry against Sodom had reached God. When the angels arrive, the men of the city demand to assault them (19:4–5). Lot's compromised position—living inside the city, his daughters engaged to Sodomite men—shows how deeply he had accommodated himself to the city's culture. Gradual compromise leads to profound captivity.
- **Lot's Hesitation:** Even with angels urging him to flee, "Lot hesitated" (19:16). The men who were to marry his daughters thought he was joking (19:14). His family did not take his spiritual leadership seriously—a consequence of the way he had lived among them. The angels seize his hand and physically lead him out. Sometimes God's rescue comes despite our reluctance.
- **God Remembered Abraham:** The summary verse is profound: "God remembered Abraham and brought Lot out of the middle of the destruction" (19:29). Lot is saved not because of his own righteousness but because of Abraham's intercession. This prefigures how the righteous prayers of God's people bring deliverance to those connected to them.
- **Lot's Wife and the Cost of Looking Back:** Lot's wife looks back and becomes a pillar of salt (19:26). Jesus references her in Luke 17:32 as a warning about attachment to the world we are called to leave. She escaped the city physically but her heart never left it. Salvation requires more than physical exit—it requires the turning of the whole person.

Questions from the Story

1. How does Abraham respond to the three visitors (18:1–3)? What does his hospitality reveal about his character?
2. What is the renewed promise given to Abraham in verse 10? Why is this reminder significant at this point in the story?
3. How does Sarah respond to overhearing the promise (vv. 12–13)? Is her laughter similar to or different from Abraham's laughter in Genesis 17:17?
4. What does God's question "Is anything impossible for the LORD?" (v. 14) demand of Sarah—and of us?
5. Why does God choose to tell Abraham about His plans for Sodom (vv. 17–19)? What does this reveal about the nature of their relationship?
6. What is the basis of Abraham's appeal to God in his intercession (v. 25)? How does he ground his prayer in God's character?

7. How does Abraham approach the negotiation, and how does God respond at each stage? What does this tell us about the nature of prayer?
8. Why does Abraham stop at ten righteous people rather than continuing to one? What might this tell us about his own assessment of Sodom?
9. How does the scene in Genesis 19:4–5 confirm what God said about Sodom's wickedness? What is the significance of the whole city being involved?
10. Why did Lot's future sons-in-law not take his warning seriously (19:14)? What had Lot's life among them communicated?
11. What does Lot's hesitation in verse 16 reveal about his spiritual state? What does God's gracious compulsion tell us about His mercy?
12. Why does Lot's wife look back (19:26)? What does her fate warn us about our attachment to what God has called us out of?
13. What does verse 29 reveal about why Lot was spared? How does Abraham's intercession connect to Lot's deliverance?
14. How does Abraham's bold intercession challenge us in our own prayer lives? What holds us back from this kind of bold, persistent prayer?
15. What does this passage teach about the difference between physical escape from danger and genuine spiritual transformation?
16. How does Lot's gradual accommodation to Sodom serve as a warning about the process of cultural compromise?
17. What does it mean that God "remembered" Abraham when He delivered Lot? How does the intercession of the righteous affect those around them?
18. How does the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah speak to God's justice, and how does the sparing of Lot speak to His mercy?