

# Abraham: The Father of the Faithful

## Lesson 7: Bold Before God: Interceding for Sodom -- Genesis 18:16–33

The meal is over. Three visitors had appeared at Abraham's tent in the heat of the day, and he had run to serve them, and one of them turned out to be the LORD Himself, come to announce that Sarah would have a son within the year. Now the visitors rise to leave, turning their faces toward Sodom, and Abraham walks with them a way to see them off. And then God says something astonishing, almost as if thinking out loud: "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?"

Stop and feel the weight of that question. The God of all the earth pauses on the road and decides He will not keep His plans secret from this man. Why? Because, He says, "I have known him." This is the language of friendship, of intimacy, of a relationship so real that God will not act in Abraham's world without taking Abraham into His confidence. Centuries later, the Bible will give Abraham a title that grows directly out of this moment: the friend of God. And friends, God seems to be saying, do not keep secrets from one another.

So God tells him. The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great; their sin is grave; judgment is coming. And here is where Abraham does something we might never have expected. He does not nod and step aside. He does not say, "They had it coming." He draws near. He plants himself before the Judge of all the earth and begins, with a mix of staggering boldness and deep humility, to plead for a wicked city where his nephew lives. "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"

And then comes the most remarkable prayer meeting in Genesis. Fifty righteous, Abraham asks, would you spare it for fifty? Then forty-five. Then forty, thirty, twenty, ten. Each time he presses further, and each time God says yes. "I who am but dust and ashes," Abraham says, and still he keeps asking. This is what it looks like when a friend of God stands in the gap for people who cannot pray for themselves. This chapter invites us to discover the same astonishing privilege: that God draws near to His friends, and that His friends can draw near to plead for a world under judgment.

**Group Discussion:** God chose not to hide His plans from Abraham, calling him in effect His friend, and Abraham responded by boldly interceding for an entire city. Why do you think so many believers relate to God more as a distant authority than as a friend who shares His heart? What might change in our prayers if we truly believed God welcomed that kind of closeness and boldness?

**Personal Reflection:** Abraham used his closeness with God not to ask for himself but to plead for others, even for the undeserving. When you pray, how much of your praying is for yourself compared to standing in the gap for others? Whose name has God laid on your heart that you have not been faithfully bringing before Him?

## **Study Questions**

1. Before announcing judgment, God said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?” and explained, “I have known him” (vv. 17–19). What does it reveal about the relationship God offers, the kind of friendship later named in James 2:23, that He takes Abraham into His confidence, and why does God share His purposes with those who walk closely with Him?
2. God related to Abraham as a friend who shares His heart, not merely as a distant ruler. Be honest about how you relate to God: as a friend you walk and talk with, or as a distant authority you approach only when you need something? What is one way you could cultivate real closeness with Him this week?
3. Rather than stepping back from the coming judgment, Abraham “drew near” and began to intercede, appealing to God’s own justice (vv. 22–25). What does this teach about the privilege of intercessory prayer, and about the right posture for it, a boldness that comes near combined with a humility that knows its place before God?
4. Abraham’s closeness with God overflowed into bold prayer for others, even for a wicked city where his nephew lived. Who are the people, including difficult or undeserving ones, that God is calling you to intercede for? What holds you back from praying for them boldly and persistently?
5. At the heart of Abraham’s plea is the question, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?” (v. 25). What does this reveal about God as the righteous Judge who will never sweep away the righteous with the wicked, and how does His justice actually give us confidence rather than fear?
6. Abraham rested his whole appeal on his confidence that God always does what is right. When life feels unfair, or when you see the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, do you trust that the Judge of all the earth will do right? Where do you most need to rest in God’s perfect justice rather than your own sense of fairness?
7. Abraham kept pressing his request, from fifty down to ten, yet always humbly: “I who am but dust and ashes,” “let not the Lord be angry” (vv. 27–32). What does this persistent yet humble bargaining teach about God’s patience, His willingness to be entreated, and the kind of persevering prayer Jesus later commends (Luke 18:1–8)?
8. Most of us give up praying about something long before God has finished answering. What is a prayer you have abandoned too soon, or a person you stopped interceding for because it seemed to make no difference? How does Abraham’s persistence challenge you to keep coming back to God?
9. Abraham appealed to God to spare a whole city for the sake of a righteous few, yet not even ten righteous were found, and judgment came (though God still rescued Lot, Genesis 19:29). How does this passage hold together God’s perfect justice and His abundant mercy, what does it teach about the value of the righteous in a sinful world, and how does it point us to the one truly Righteous One, Christ, who ever lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25) and for whose sake God justly spares sinners?

10. Look back across the whole passage. You have seen God befriend Abraham and share His heart, and you have seen Abraham draw near to plead boldly, humbly, and persistently for others. Name one specific way Jesus is forming you through this part of Abraham's story. Where is He calling you into deeper friendship with God and into faithful intercession for others this week?

### **Now or Later**

Reflect on these passages: Genesis 19:29, God remembered Abraham and brought Lot out of the catastrophe, showing that his intercession was not in vain; Hebrews 7:25, Christ always lives to make intercession for those who draw near to God through Him; James 5:16–18, the prayer of a righteous person has great power, as Elijah's did; 1 Timothy 2:1–4, intercession is to be made for all people, for God desires all to be saved; Luke 18:1–8, the parable about the need to pray always and not lose heart