

The Judge of All the Earth • Genesis 18:1–33

Ryan Perz • March 17, 2024

Some people just seem to have an incredible relationship with God that is genuine. God is first in the way they think and live. You can tell they pray and are guided by the Book.

It's no formal religion, but a fellowship with true joy!

- [Gen. 18](#) is a positive picture showing us the incredible relationship that Abraham has with God.
- Another way to describe it: Friendship with God.

Now if the Bible says something once, it's 100 percent true; if it's repeated 3 different times, It's *very important*.

3 times the Bible refers to Abraham as God's friend.

[James 2:23](#) (ESV)

“Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God.

2 Chronicles 20:7 ESV

Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?

Isaiah 41:8 ESV

But you, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
the offspring of Abraham, my friend;

Abraham is the only person that the OT refers to as God's friend.

We are going to look at what goes into that—what it means to be in friendship with God in this passage.

The narrative is marked by 3 scenes: The LORD appears, announces, approaches.

The LORD appears (1-8)

- The first point is taken from the word of our text: “And the LORD appeared to him”.
- Now living and traveling in the Middle East is not very hospitable...it’s hot and tiresome (1-2).

Now I’m not 100% certain if Abraham immediately knew these were ordinary men, angels, or actually the LORD.

We know, though, that 2 of them are angels (19:1); the 3rd is the LORD—v22 makes that explicit.

—This is referred to as a *theophany: an appearance of God*.

In this case, the LORD takes on human form.

This theophany that turns into a lesson of hospitality.

Calvin: “The Hospitality of a Holy Man”

What goes into Holy Hospitality?

- Notice how Abraham responds to these men who are basically strangers—not in fear, skepticism, rudeness—but moves toward them.
- Abraham moving quickly is key— (v2 runs; v6 quickly gets food; v7 greets them)—the only time he is still is when he watches them eat (v8)

Other elements:

-Greet and respects (v2)

-Invites (v3)

-Supplies (v4)

This scene ends with a royal banquet.

- V5 is very key for the objective (v5): for the purpose of temporal refreshment.

This is a good question to ask in Holy Hospitality. Do the people feel refreshed when they move on? Was the conversation done in a way that is refreshing?

- Also, hospitality is given in such a way it does not expect to be repaid.

How do we know Gen. 18 has a lesson in hospitality?

Hebrews 13:2 ESV

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Holy Hospitality isn't something that you pick up on Pinterest. It's a sign of being God's Friend.

God's friends work a holy hospitality.

The LORD announces (9-15)

- In scene 2, we see the friendship of God theme play out in Sarah's life too....although she needs a bit of fine tuning (like we all do!)

Psalm 25:14 ESV

The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.

- In case you think that Sarah is the perfect portrait of a wife—ready to post her ready-to-go sourdough bread Instagram photojust keep reading.
- Starting in v9 Sarah enters the picture: this gets to the heart of the visit: to announce Isaac's future birth.

—Now Sarah was a bit nosy on this one: had her ear up to the tent door.

—She thinks it's such a stretch for her to bear a child past menopause.

- ((12-13) The scene is almost humorous: Sarah is eavesdropping; she finds humor in getting pregnant at 90 as she processes; the LORD knows this, so asks Abraham why; Sarah blurts out a lie: "I didn't laugh".

(v12) Is actually theological:

Who else can know the thoughts of a person?

Even the most skilled psychologist can't do this.

Who can know the thoughts of a person??

Only God.

Psalm 139:2 ESV

You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.

*It's no small thing that Jesus can do this:

Luke 5:22 ESV

When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts?"

- The correction comes in v15—when Sarah lies.

The Bible shows us heroes/models.... but does not go out of the way to gloss over their faults....and point out their sins!

Sarah has faith...but needs fine tuning!

In one sense, this is the LORD being a friend to Abraham again—and by extension to Sarah.

Proverbs 27:6 ESV

Faithful are the wounds of a friend;
profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

The wounding question is very powerful (v14)

"Is anything too hard for the LORD?"

Sometimes or often our faith can be weak, and we need the faithful words of a friend to correct:

Is this thing too hard, too big for God?

The God who created all the galaxies.

The God who keeps a world with 8 billion people moving.

The God who has always been and will be in control over every key detail.

God's friends know this and believe this.

The LORD approaches (16-33)

- The narrative takes a big turn in v16 as the LORD approaches Sodom as Judge.
- The friendship of God also appears here:

A friend shares secrets. A friend will tell you what he is doing, and why he is doing it!

A guy I knew from high school got to be a background actor in a few movies.

He was in a movie with the actor Matt Damon once. I asked my friend if he got to meet Damon, and said "yes" so cool; down to earth guy.

Cool that you met a famous actor....but,

You can't claim friendship on that....

Or, think of superficial friends on Facebook. Ones you have never met personally; the friendship is superficial "post the best, hide the rest".

- › True friendship is based on revealing your heart.
 - The incredible relationship between Abraham and God is built on what v19: Lit: "I have known him".

The singular basis for everyone who is in relationship is *divine election*.

Yet take note: election comes with responsibility.

Election is not for sitting around becoming religious snobs sneering at others; the outworking is living right—walking in the Light, shining that light!

- › *In other words, as a friend, God is telling Abraham, “If your people are going to maintain an incredible relationship, don’t become like this city; don’t follow this pattern.”*

Merciful Heart

- As the LORD approaches Sodom to bring judgment, we see a certain side of Abraham come out: a merciful heart.
- The narrative here really has all the dynamics of a courtroom.

God’s plan is to go into the city to gather evidence (v21).

The two angelic beings are sent to Sodom (19:1).

Two witnesses have to conform evidence, and are needed for capital punishment.

—V23 The verb, “draw near”, is one that is often used in situations where you would deliver legal pleas.

—Even the word “innocent”—reminds us of the plea one would state in a court setting.

Abraham goes from being host, to interceding prophet—really quick!

- Why? Remember who lives there: Lot, his nephew.

So Abraham begins to plead with the Lord—starting with 50, working down to 10.

Abraham’s main concern: that the righteous not be destroyed with the wicked.

We can learn something here about the heart we should have towards human wickedness—a merciful heart. That God would delay his judgment so that people have an opportunity to turn, repent, escape.

It’s a lesson Jesus had to teach a few disciples:

Luke 9:51–55 ESV

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” But he turned and rebuked them.

- › If all we want is to see God’s crushing judgment and not see him extend mercy, something is off in our heart.
- Abraham’s intercession stopped (v33); he returns and is done.
- Plus, ch. 19 shows that he is not able to save the city by his pleas—the evil is too great and pervasive.

*Yet God’s plan was to send an intercessor, who would not only stand in the gap for a wicked city...but an entire world.

Isaiah 53:12 (ESV)

because he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the transgressors.

- › Jesus’s intercession always has been and always will be utterly effective—because he actually died for the people he prays for.
- › Just as the blood he shed is effective, so is his intercession.

This Chapter in Gen. speaks a central truth of all reality.

There are *only two* categories of people in the world; in this room:

—Friends of God

—Foes of God

*And there is one truth that never changes:

(v25) —The Judge of the whole earth always does what is Just: Punish all sin for all eternity.

- But here is the good news, the saving grace: God has made a way for foes to turn to friends.
- › By the work of the Ultimate Intercessor:

Hebrews 7:25 ESV

Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Jesus offers complete salvation from all sin.

And the best:

We are able to draw near to God today ...because he always intercedes.

Conclusion:

It's a mind-boggling thing that the Judge of the whole earth would come with such grace and kindness, to call us His Friends.

John 15:14–15 ESV

You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

But before we pray and say amen, just remember: with Awesome Friendship comes Awesome responsibility.