

FINAL STUDY NOTES - *GENESIS CHAPTERS 17 & 18* 6/10-11/2024

CLASSROOM LOCATION AND ZOOM – SIGN IN INFORMATION:

Phil Twente ptwente@gmail.com cell 714 425 9221 www.ptwente.com - Audio & notes - previous studies
PLEASE NOTE WE WILL CONTINUE TO NEED A PASSCODE TO JOIN THE ONLINE (ZOOM) STUDY!

MONDAY 7 PM Bible Study - Time: 07:00 PM DAYLIGHT SAVING Time (US and Canada)
THE MONDAY NIGHT STUDY WILL BE MEETING ON ZOOM ONLY UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE!

MEETING ID# - 87858644763 Passcode: 087484

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TUESDAY 7 AM Bible Study - Time: 07:00 AM DAYLIGHT SAVING Time (US and Canada).

- **Beginning Tuesday, June 4, 2024,** TUES MORNING MTG PLACE:
- **1201 KEY WEST, CORONA DEL MAR** (shown as 1201 KW, Corona del Mar, CA 92625) on Global Positioning System (GPS) in automobiles. For driving directions from your starting point, Suggest using **WAZE** (waze.com/live-map) or **MapQuest** (mapquest.com),
- **AS WELL AS CONTINUING IN ZOOM!**

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OPENING PRAYER

Genesis Chapter 17 – The Sign of the Covenant – Circumcision Instituted; Son (Isaac) Promised, & Names Changed! Genesis Chapter 18 - God's promises to Abraham - The Call of Abraham, His Intercessory Prayer! (Gen 12:1-3) Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. [2] I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. [3] I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

(Gen 15:4,6,13,18) And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." [6] And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it

to him for righteousness. [13] *Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. [14] And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. [18] On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—*

Abraham and the Covenant of Circumcision

Gen 17:1 *When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and _to him, "I am Almighty* (El Shaddai, sufficient) **God; walk before Me and be blameless** (perfect, complete).

- **First, He admonished Abram to be careful to walk in fellowship with Him**, wholly dedicated to performing the will of God. The word translated "*blameless*" means perfect, whole, or complete. These admonitions were not stated as conditions of the covenant, however, but simply as commands.
- **The last time God spoke to Abram was when he was eighty-six years old.** There has now been an intervening time of thirteen years. When he was eighty-six years old, he was complaining to God because though God had blessed him with great wealth, he had no heir to whom to leave his wealth. His chief servant, Eliezer, was the one who would be in line to inherit all of the wealth that God had given to him. Abram was sort of complaining to God, who had said, "I'm going to be your exceeding great reward." And the Lord said, "He will not be your heir, but one who will come out of your own body shall be your heir." Abraham was then asked by God to come outside, look at the stars, and God said, "If you can count them for number, so shall your seed be." So Abraham believed God and it was accounted unto him for righteousness.
- **Now, though we read there that he believed God and his faith was accounted for righteousness**, we see an immediate lapse of faith, for Sarah came to him with a suggestion that he take her handmaid Hagar to raise up an heir, a descendant. And Abram took Hagar! She conceived and bore a son! Immediately when she was pregnant, she began to despise Sarai, who then wanted to get rid of her. Abram said, "Do what you please." She drove her out and the Lord sent her back with a message that she was to submit herself. She was going to have a son, who was to be named Ishmael.
- **Now in (Rom 4:19)** *And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb.* The indication is that he had become impotent. His own body now dead. The deadness of Sarah's womb is the statement of the fact that she had gone beyond the age of a woman bearing children, having gone through the menopause period. God waited until Abram couldn't do anything about the promise himself anymore! He allowed Abram now to get to the place when it was impossible for Abram to do anything concerning the fulfillment of the promise himself. It is going to take an absolute miracle of God for the promise to be fulfilled! He allowed him to get to the place of human impossibility.
- **Now, God, often, as He works with us does this very thing. He allows us to come to the end of ourselves**, to the end of our resources, our ideas. He lets us get to that place of hopelessness before He works. Because God, when He works wants the glory for what He has done! When God works in your life, He doesn't want you boasting that you have done this marvelous work.
- **Paul said, (1Co 4:7) For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?** We're so prone to take credit for God's work. We cry out unto God and we ask God for help and God helps us, and then we go out and tell what we did.
- **So He appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am the Almighty God."** The word *Almighty* is *El Shaddai*. The word *shad* is *breast* in Hebrew, and it is the place of life and nourishment for the babes. So, God is saying to him, "I am the place of your life and of your nourishment. It all comes from Me. You're dependent upon Me for life, for nourishment. I am God Almighty. I am the *El Shaddai* and you've got to look for Me for life."
- **"Walk before Me."** **Now we read earlier that Enoch walked with God.** In Deuteronomy, God said to Israel, "Walk after Me." In (Col 2:6) *As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,*
- **So four different prepositions (before, after, with, in) are used as the walk with God.** Walking before God is walking in His presence, conscious that God is watching me, looking out over me, caring for me. I'm walking before Him as I walk in the presence of God and awareness of that God is watching over me. Walking after God is the position of the servant. Walking after his master when God said to Israel, "Walk after Me." He is actually calling upon them to serve Him. Walking with God, as did Enoch and Noah,

indicates that fellowship that one has as we walk *with* God, that beautiful communion and fellowship. But walking *in Him* signifies that complete oneness and union that is ours with God! Christ *in* me, the hope of glory! Walking in Christ Jesus!

- **"Walk before Me blameless."** How? Blameless or perfect. God's ideal requirement for man is perfection, and you wouldn't really expect anything less from God. I'm not surprised that God would require me to be perfect. In fact, I would be shocked if He did not. Be as you want." That would not be in the keeping with the nature of God. God would not require anything less than perfection. And always know that God's ideal requirement for you is perfection. (*Lev 19:2b*) *You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.*
- **When Jesus finished the Sermon on the Mount, He again required the same thing.** He said, (*Mat 5:48*) *Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.* "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect. When you tell me, "Well, God requires me to be perfect," I'd say, "Thank you, but I'm sorry. I can't. I would love to, I have tried to, but I am far from perfect. How I would love to be perfect. How I would love to fulfill God's divine ideal, but I can't."
- **Does that mean that God is giving up on me then?** You say, "Well, I'll never be perfect." No, walking in Christ, the whole idea of walking *in Christ* is that I might now receive that power of the indwelling Spirit of God to conform me into the image of Christ and to bring me into that ideal requirement!
- **Now, as Paul the apostle said, (*Php 3:13-14*) Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, [14] I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.** That mark of perfection, I'm pressing towards it! That mark of the high calling of God which is in Christ Jesus. So, **"I am Almighty (sufficient) God; walk before Me and be blameless."** The power of walking before Him. Being blameless comes to us through Jesus Christ and walking in Him.
- **How blameless is my Christian walk in Jesus Christ?**

Gen 17:2 And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly."

- **I will make!** Notice, before God said what He was going to do for Abram, that Abram went out and tried to do it for himself, producing the heir in himself, out of the flesh, the work of his flesh! But God said that the work of the flesh would not be the heir of the promise, but that one who would be born after a spiritual sort, he would become the heir. So you find that the flesh and the spirit were fighting together and continue to strive with each other to the present day--the descendants after the flesh and the descendants after the spirit of Abraham.
- **But I will make my covenant.** God said, Now, He is going to talk about what I'm going to do. God said *I will, I will, I will, I will...* eleven times in this chapter!

Gen 17:3 Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying:

- **And Abram fell on his face** - The eastern method of prostration was that the person first went down on his knees (or on knees and elbows), and then lowered his head to his knees, touching the earth with his forehead. A very painful posture, but significant of great humiliation and reverence. (*1Ki 18:42b*) *And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees,*

Gen 17:4 "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations.

- **God also specifically promised that the covenant He originally made with Abram** in (*Gen 12:1-3*) would be passed to his chosen descendants, those not yet born. The covenant was not only for Abram, but it was an everlasting covenant.

Gen 17:5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.

- **Name change for Abram to Abraham!** Now, God, what He did was to insert the Hebrew letter "*H*", which is made with the sound of breath, into the name of Abram. God just put the sound of breath into his name or inserted Himself, you might say. Because the word *ruach*, which is *breath*, is the word for spirit, and so God inserted the spirit into the name of Abram and changed his name from Abram to Abraham, a spirited filled name!
- **As God did this. He made a new covenant with Abraham, the covenant of circumcision**, whereby He then said, no longer after the flesh, the cutting off of the flesh in order that you might be a spiritual man. That the "*H*" might come in reality a real part of you, the spirit and of man, walking after the Spirit and the things of the Spirit. So, the change of the name was very significant! In changing the name of his wife Sarai, He did the very same thing, added the same "*H*" to her name, the breath, the spirit, the air, or the

letter made with the air, and thus the insertion of God's Spirit or God's life into them, bringing them into this new dimension of life, the life after the Spirit!

- ***Does my life truly reflect having God's Spirit in it?***

Gen 17:6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.

- This promise highlights the reality of more than one people group, or nation in its own right, coming from Abraham.

Gen 17:7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to _and your descendants after you.

- This relationship was set up at God's initiative and also designated as an "everlasting covenant," thus applying to Abraham's posterity with equal force and bringing forth the declaration "I will be their God!"

Gen 17:8 Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

- God's reaffirmation of His covenant promises of the land being deeded by divine right to him and to his descendants "as an everlasting possession."
- *I will! I will! I will! I will!* God is telling them all that He is going to do!

Gen 17:9 And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

- God now changes and calls him Abraham, no longer Abram!

Gen 17:10 This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised;

Gen 17:11 and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.

- *A sign of the covenant. As the rainbow encircling the whole earth was a sign, a token, of God's covenant with all men (Gen 9:17), so circumcision, encircling the channel by which the human seed is preserved and transmitted, especially the promised Seed in the line of Abraham, is the sign of God's covenant with His chosen nation!* It was not a sign to be seen of all men, as was the rainbow, but a sign to be seen only by a man's parents and his wife, reminding them of their faith commitment to the God of Abraham, and His promise to them!

Gen 17:12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.

- An amazing eighth day! Vitamin K, a clotting element in the blood, is not formed until the 5th day to the 7th day! Prothrombin, a protein made by the liver, is also necessary for clotting. On the 3rd day, Prothrombin is 30% of normal. The 8th day it peaks at 110%, then levels off!

Gen 17:13 He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

Gen 17:14 And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

- God established then this covenant with Abraham. The covenant was to be marked by circumcision, which again signified not to live or walk after the flesh! The cutting off of the life of the flesh in order that you might live the life of the Spirit! God said that if they would not have the rite of circumcision then they were to be cut off from being the people of God. In other words, you cannot be a man of God and walk after the flesh! If you are to be a man of God it is only as you walk after the Spirit that you are truly a man of God! In time to come, the child that was born was not considered a Jew until he was circumcised, because if they are not circumcised they're to be cut off from the people of God. You weren't born a Jew. You weren't a Jew by natural birth. You became a Jew the day you were circumcised. That was the rite by which you entered into the national life, indicating that I am to walk after the Spirit!
- The Apostle Paul said, "circumcision of the heart," evidences salvation and fellowship with God! (*Rom 2:28-29*) *For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; [29] but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.* Paul says it is ridiculous to think that you are a Jew just because you've been circumcised. For it is not the circumcision of the flesh, but the circumcision of the heart that God was talking about. That is the thing that God is interested in, that your heart is not after the flesh, but your heart is after the Spirit! Circumcision doesn't really avail a man anything if he is not

really walking and living after the Spirit! So if God counts the walk after the Spirit as true circumcision, then it isn't the fleshly rite that does anything, and therefore, the Gentiles who are not circumcised are considered the people of God because in the heart there is that circumcision, the "not walking after the flesh" but walking after the Spirit and the things of the Spirit! So it is a rite of the Jews by which they became a Jew, entered into the national life.

- **The Circumcision of the Heart is what is needed!** *Moses:* God would "circumcise the hearts" of His people so that they might be devoted to Him. (*Deu 30:8*) *And you will again obey the voice of the LORD and do all His commandments which I command you today.*
- **Unbelief: Having an uncircumcised heart.** (*Jer 9:26*) *Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all who are in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart."* (*Eze 44:9*) *Thus says the Lord GOD: "No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart or uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter My sanctuary, including any foreigner who is among the children of Israel.*
- ***As I consider my life in the spirit as opposed to my life in the flesh, how circumcised is my heart?***
- **In the New Testament, circumcision's sequel is water baptism** and the significance is exactly the same thing. **Water baptism signifies the death of the life after the flesh,** a life governed by the flesh. There is the burying of everything that was done in that life of the flesh and the beginning of the new life in the Spirit. The resurrection and the newness of life in Christ Jesus to walk now after the Spirit as you come up out of the water or out of the grave. And so again, it is a spiritual thing. It is not the washing away of the filth of the flesh, as Peter said, (*1Pe 3:21b*) *Baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

Isaac's Birth Promised

Gen 17:15 Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.

- **Sarah.** Fittingly, since Sarai ("my princess") would be the ancestress of the promised nations and kings, God changed her name to Sarah, taking away the personal pronoun my, and calling her "princess"

Gen 17:16 And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her."

- ***I will bless her and also give you a son by her!*** Ninety-nine years old, his body now dead and Sarah having passed through the time of child bearing.
- ***She shall be a mother of nations.*** Actually, from Sarah, of course, Isaac was born. From Isaac, Jacob, and Esau. Esau became the nation, the Edomites, also, of course, Israel, from Jacob.

Gen 17:17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"

- **Now this was not the laugh of doubt or unbelief,** but just the laugh of being overwhelmed with what God is now saying is going to happen. If it were the laugh of unbelief, then God would have rebuked him as later on Sarah's laugh was of unbelief as she was standing in the tent listening to what the angel of the Lord was telling her husband and she was in the tent laughing, and He said, "How come Sarah laughed?" She said, "Oh, no I didn't." "Oh, but you did." But hers was the laugh of unbelief.

Gen 17:18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!"

- **Ishmael is now thirteen years old. Abraham is attached to him. He is Abraham's son.** God is now promising another heir through Sarah. But his attachment for Ishmael, he asks God that Ishmael might also live before the Lord. And God said no, the promised seed is to come through Isaac, not Ishmael!

Gen 17:19 Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.

- **He was laughing.** It's just sort of a laughing thing to think that at their age they should have a little baby and Sarah nursing a child when she is ninety years old. So you shall call his name *Isaac* (laughter).
- ***I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant!*** This is the answer to the huge debate between as to whom God's covenanted line is going be confirmed - Through Isaac or through Ishmael? Between the Bible and the Koran. Note the clarity of God here! It shall be through Isaac, not Ishmael!

Gen 17:20 And as for Ishmael (God hears), I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great

nation.

- In chapter 25, we will read of the descendants of Ishmael. Out of them there are twelve princes. So there are twelve tribes of Ishmael even as there are twelve tribes of Israel.

Gen 17:21 But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.

- God affirms that *Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear* would be the heir of the "everlasting covenant." For the first time, God named the son.

Gen 17:22 Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

Gen 17:23 So Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day, as God had said to him.

- That very same day. Without delay, Abraham did not let the sun go down! He fully carried out God's command on himself, on "every male," and on "all the men of his house!"

Gen 17:24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

Gen 17:25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

Gen 17:26 That very same day Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael;

Gen 17:27 and all the men of his house, born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

- Note Abraham's tremendous obedience here! The very same day, he circumcised himself, then his son, then his servants, *every male among the men of his house*! So they established then, this covenant with God! We will be people who will live after the Spirit! God, we will walk after the Spirit! We will deny ourselves, to follow You! To deny the flesh!
- ***How obedient am I in denying the flesh? Same day? Willing to undergo the pain of circumcision? Partial or full commitment to denying the flesh and pursuing the Spirit?***

The Son of Promise

Gen 18:1 Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day.

Gen 18:2 So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground,

- It doesn't say that they walked up or whatever. They probably just suddenly appeared there as he was sitting under the tree there in the heat of the day, as Abraham was meditating, and suddenly there were three men standing there.
- When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, evidently realizing these three are some special kind of guests! He bowed, worshipped in Hebrew, himself to the ground!

Gen 18:3 and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant.

Gen 18:4 Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.

Gen 18:5 And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant." They said, "Do as you have said."

- He is showing to them the Middle Eastern unusual courtesy and hospitality. It is the eastern custom, of course, to show hospitality as Abraham did to his guests.

Gen 18:6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead it and make cakes."

- Three measures of meal, is idiomatic of the fellowship offering! This launches a tradition for all the descendants of Abraham.

Gen 18:7 And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it.

Gen 18:8 So he took butter and milk and the calf (notice this is not a Kosher law meal, not operative here) which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.

- These are angels. Notice, they are eating--in case you wonder if angels eat. They are able to take on the form of humans. They appeared to Abraham as three men, but it seems that they suddenly appeared. We are told in (*Heb 13:2*) *Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained*

angels. That we should entertain strangers. You might be entertaining angels unaware. It probably comes back to this scripture.

Gen 18:9 Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" So he said, "Here, in the tent."

- **In those tents there was the compartment for the women and they had to stay in their side.** There was the living room where the man would entertain the guests. It is still that way today in the Bedouin tents. The one area is sort of the place where you entertain guests, first giving them bitter, bitter coffee when they arrive; so bitter you can hardly drink it. The idea is all of the bitterness that you've experienced and all think of all of those bitter things and immediately after the bitter cup of coffee they give you an extremely sweet coffee to wash the bitter taste out of your mouth than all those bitter experiences may just be washed away that we might now have some sweet fellowship together! They go through a whole routine and a whole custom which all is steeped in symbolism as they are entertaining. The women are in their own section of the tent though. They are not allowed to come out while the men are busily engaged in their fellowship together. *Where is Sarah your wife? Right here in the tent.*

Gen 18:10 And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.)

- **Here Sarah is eavesdropping** on the whole thing.

Gen 18:11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing.

- **Literally, she had passed the manner of women.** The manner of women had ceased to be with Sarah. So the menopause, she'd gone through it. .

Gen 18:12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"

- **Not laughing out loud, because she doesn't want them to know she's standing behind the tent flap.** But she laughed within herself,

Gen 18:13 And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh (in unbelief), saying, 'Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?'

- **And now this tremendous question!**

Gen 18:14 Is anything too hard (wonderful) for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."

- **Is anything too hard for God?** Our problems usually stem from our limited concept of God and carrying man's limitations over to God. Here Sarah is laughing, and He said, "Why did Sarah laugh?" "I didn't laugh." "Yes, you did." But *is anything too hard for God?*
- **Ponder that question, and as you really ponder on it, you will have to conclude,** no, there is nothing too hard for God! We need to remember that when we pray! We need to pray with that consciousness there is nothing too hard for God! You can even go one step further; there is nothing hard for God. Take out that word *too*. There is just nothing hard for God, much less too hard!
- **Paul, when he was praying, had asked God to do some pretty far out miraculous things for the Ephesians.** And having concluded his prayer, he said, (*Eph 3:20*) Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.
- **Is anything too hard for God? He is able to do exceeding abundantly above anything you could ask or think!** No, there is nothing too hard for God! He is able to do all things! That is the kind of God that we worship. That's the kind of God we serve. That's the kind of God who reaches out to you right now, that He might have fellowship with you; that you, through that fellowship, might be enhanced and blessed!
- ***Do my prayers reflect a strong belief, that nothing is too hard for the LORD?***

Gen 18:15 But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh!"

- **A rhetorical question (*Is anything too hard?*) and divine declaration (*At the appointed time*), coupled with obvious knowledge of her thoughts (*laughed within herself*), made Sarah fearfully perceive her total misperception of God's working.**
- ***How often do we "laugh in unbelief," regarding the promises of our Lord?***

Gen 18:16 Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way.

Gen 18:17 And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing,

Gen 18:18 since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

- The Lord's reason for permitting Abraham to know of judgment in advance underscored his special role in the plan of God and the certain outcome of His covenant with Abraham—many offspring and great blessing.

Gen 18:19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."

- **For I have known him, in order that he may command.** An expression of divine confidence, which is a tribute to Abraham's faithfulness, obedience, and consistency. What a great testimony of Abraham!
- **How does my testimony compare to that of Abraham's in this regard?**

Gen 18:20 And the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave,

Gen 18:21 I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know."

- **Because the outcry ... is great.** The iniquity of the two cities, by then complete (*Gen 15:16*), had reached the point of no return before the Lord, who demonstrated before Abraham how justly He assessed the time for judgment, *"I will go down now and see"*.
- **According to the outcry. The LORD is going down to Sodom to see the conditions that exist,** the outcry that has come to God because of the unrighteousness. There is an outcry to God made in unrighteousness; something that cries out to God when horrible actions are committed. You remember God said to Cain, (*Gen 4:10*) *And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground."* The outcry against that horrible deed of Cain. Now the horrible deeds of unrighteousness in Sodom crying out to God. God is going down. Of course, He knew exactly what was going on there, but He is now dealing with Abraham, so that Abraham knows that God is just and righteous!

Abraham Intercedes for Sodom

Gen 18:22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD.

- **There were three men, but two of them were angels and the one was the LORD Himself.** It was none other than Jesus Christ, the Yahweh of the Old Testament who was here talking to Abraham. That is the only conclusion you can come to. The word *Yahweh* is used, and Abraham is talking to Him as a man face to face. We read in the New Testament in (*1Jn 4:12*) *No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.* So Jesus Christ is the Yahweh of the Old Testament.
- **And the LORD is talking to Abraham. Then the men turned, the two angels, and they went towards Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD.** Let them go but, I'm going to deal with You on this thing. Abraham is now standing before the LORD!

Gen 18:23 And Abraham came near and said, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?"

- **What a big question from Abraham to the God of the Universe?**
- **Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?** This is the most remarkable passage of intercessory prayer in the Bible, also indicating how vitally important, is the presence of even a tiny, godly minority in an ungodly community. This model intercessory prayer continually appeals both to God's righteous character and His lovingkindness, as the basis for making the request. Abraham thought he knew of ten righteous people in Sodom (Lot and his family of two unmarried sons, two unmarried daughters, two married daughters and their husbands), not realizing that most of Lot's family had been caught up in the city's wickedness, and so stopped his intercession at ten.

Gen 18:24 Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it?

Gen 18:25 Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

- **Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?** It is interesting, this intercession of Abraham and the position from which he comes. "You're the Judge of all the earth, God! Would it be right, would it be fair that

You destroy the righteous people in the city along with the wicked?" This is an extremely interesting proposition that Abraham is making to the LORD, and it has a lot to do with us today. **God is soon going to come and destroy the earth!** We are fast approaching what is known in the scriptures as the Great Tribulation Period, when God is going to judge the wicked.

- **This is the first example of an intercessory prayer recorded in the Bible** and almost certainly is included in such detail in order to serve as our prototype for all such prayers. Several important principles can be seen from the amazing dialogue.
 - ✓ **First, God does not want to bring judgment on any city or person.** He does respond to the prayer of those who intercede, if there is any basis at all, within the framework of His holiness and justice to enable Him to do so.
 - ✓ **Second, the remarkable influence which even a tiny minority may have for good** is noteworthy. Only ten godly people in the corrupt city of Sodom would have been enough to spare it the awful destruction to be experienced shortly. Let no one think his ministry is useless, regardless how small it is!
 - ✓ **Third, Abraham's prayer was highly reverent, never presumptuous at all, yet persistent and definite.**
 - ✓ ***What can I learn about my intercessory praying from this?***
- **There are some Christians today who are taking the position that the church is going to be in the Great Tribulation,** but they are denying the justice of God, the righteousness of God. This very premise that Abraham was pressing: shall not the LORD of the earth do right? If there are fifty righteous people will you spare it for the fifty righteous? It wouldn't be fair that you would judge them with the wicked. Shouldn't the LORD of the earth be right? Shouldn't He be fair? The same is true in the consideration of God's judgment that is going to come in the Great Tribulation. Even as He removed righteous Lot out of Sodom before He judged it, so will He remove the righteous ones in His church out of the earth before He judges it! That is just keeping with the very principle of the righteousness of the just God!

Gen 18:26 So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes."

- **Today, for the moment, the sinners around you** are having a free ride. It's because of you that God's judgment has not already come! Sinners are blessed because Christians are there. For fifty righteous God would have spared Sodom. That's probably a very small percentage of the people if you look at the total population, and for fifty, God would have spared it. How many times God's judgment would have fallen if it had not been for God's people being there.

Gen 18:27 Then Abraham answered and said, "Indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord:

- **What humility and brokenness! Look at Abraham's opinion of himself.** Isn't that great? I like it, saying he is nothing but dust and ashes.
- ***As I read this, how does my level of humility compare? Am I looking at myself as nothing but dust and ashes?***

Gen 18:28 Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for lack of five?" So He said, "If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy it."

- **Would you wipe it out just because you're five short?** Abraham, this is really intercession for the city of Sodom. Taken it upon myself to speak for the Lord. Now he begins this communing with God, bringing God down to ten. And he finally gets down to ten.

Gen 18:29 And he spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose there should be forty found there?" So He said, "I will not do it for the sake of forty."

Gen 18:30 Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?" So He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there."

Gen 18:31 And he said, "Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?" So He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty."

Gen 18:32 Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of ten."

- **God is not offended by what Abraham is doing.** God is dealing with a man who has the same concern for souls that He has. So there's no real negotiation happening here. There's communion happening here, and

what's going on, the Lord is happy to be able to say yes to these things! He's going to do even more than Abraham asked of him!

- **What do you think God would have said, if Abraham had asked if He would destroy Sodom, if just one should be found righteous?** The answer to that question may be found in (Gen 19:22a) *Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there.*"

Gen 18:33 *So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking* (not negotiating, but communing) *with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.*

- **Next week we'll get into Sodom and the conditions that existed there that brought the judgment of God and the destruction of that place.** What was happening in Sodom was the same thing that is happening in most of the big cities in this country today! The same conditions that really brought the judgment of God upon the city of Sodom are the things that are happening around us today!

SUMMARY:

- **Chapter 17 – The Sign of the Covenant – Circumcision Instituted; Son (Isaac) Promised, & Names Changed!** - (Gen 17:5,7,10,11,15,16,19,21,23) *No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. [7] And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. [10] This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; [11b] and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. [15] Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. [16a] And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her. [19] Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. [21b] Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year." [23] So Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day, as God had said to him.*
- **Chapter 18 - God's promises to Abraham - The Call and intercession of Abraham** - (Gen 18:2a,10,14,17,18,23,32) *So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him.... and bowed himself to the ground, [10] And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.) [14] Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." [17] And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, [18] since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? Abraham Intercedes for Sodom – [23] And Abraham came near and said, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? [32] Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of ten."*

CLOSING SONG:

Abram to Abraham; Sarai to Sarah, the change of the name was very significant, adding the same “**H**” to their name, **the breath, the spirit, the air,** or the letter made with the air, and thus the insertion of God’s Spirit or God’s life into them bringing them into this new dimension of life, the life after the Spirit.

BREATHE ON ME, BREATH OF GOD – Edward Hatch – York College Concert Choir (1:56/2:00)

Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew, that I may love what Thou dost love, and do what Thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart is pure, until with Thee I will one will, to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, till I am wholly Thine, till all this earthly part of me glows with Thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, so shall I never die, but live with Thee the perfect life of Thine eternity.

CLOSING PRAYER:

NEXT WEEK: Read and study Genesis Chapters 19 & 20!