

# GENESIS: Where Grace Begins

## Abraham, The Intercessor – Genesis 18, pt. 2

### Context:

<sup>20</sup> Then the Lord said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, <sup>21</sup> I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know." (Gen. 18:20-21)

Consider first the \_\_\_\_\_ (not *theological*) language ...

Of course we already know that God is \_\_\_\_\_ ...

*Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure. (Psa. 147:5)*

*For whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. (1 Jn 3:20)*

*Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. (Isa. 40:28)*

*Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord. (Jer. 23:23-24)*

*Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? (Isa. 40:13-14)*

*For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. (Job 28:24)*

And we know that God is \_\_\_\_\_ ...

*Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. (Psa. 137:7-10)*

*O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up: you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you. (Psa. 136)*

*Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? (Isa. 66:1)*

## The primary point?

Whatever God does will be based on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

## A few things we need to know:

1. Interpret difficult to understand passages with \_\_\_\_\_ ones.

2. Interpret \_\_\_\_\_ passages with \_\_\_\_\_ ones.

If we do this, we will see that ...

*The Bible is resolutely committed to a view of God's **omniscience** (that he knows everything there is to know) and that he knows it (both in itself and in its relationship to other things) because he creates, sustains, and governs everything. The idea that God knows everything but doesn't control everything is nonsensical. God's plan is perfect and inviolable (Eph. 1:11).*

*(In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will ...)*

God \_\_\_\_\_ what we do not.

God \_\_\_\_\_ according to His will.

## But can our requests change God's sovereign plan?

The answer?

When God sovereignly declares that he is going to do something, all of the prayers in the world aren't going to change God's mind. But God not only ordains ends, he also ordains means to those ends, and part of the process he uses to bring his sovereign will to pass are the prayers of his people. And so we are to pray.

*As Augustine said long ago, "So, too, prayers are useful in obtaining those favors which He foresaw He would bestow on those who should pray for them" (City of God, 5.10). This way, intercessory prayer is not a way of settling the mind of God on what He, as yet, has not decided to do. Rather, they are ways of settling our mind to that which He has already decided to do. The reason, therefore, why God seems to answer some prayers and not others lies in His sovereign will.*

## Abraham's intercession (and what we can learn from it):

<sup>22</sup> So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord.

<sup>23</sup> Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"

<sup>24</sup> Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? <sup>25</sup> Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"

<sup>26</sup> And the Lord said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake."

<sup>27</sup> Abraham answered and said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. <sup>28</sup> Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?"

And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there."

<sup>29</sup> Again he spoke to him and said, "Suppose forty are found there."

He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it."

<sup>30</sup> Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there."

He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there."

<sup>31</sup> He said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there."

He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it."

<sup>32</sup> Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there."

He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it."

<sup>33</sup> And the Lord went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.

He \_\_\_\_\_.

He demonstrated \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_

He acknowledges God's \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_

He \_\_\_\_\_ about the people there (especially \_\_\_\_\_ and his family)

He is \_\_\_\_\_.

But his \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_.

Therefore, he must \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of God as He prays.

Next week: **God and Righteous Judgment**