

Genesis 18

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Tonight is built as a coming judgment. I assure you, I don't want to speak about judgment all night.

So I think everything that works will be itself a judgment, and then we'll move on to something more positive and positive.

This chapter divides itself into two sections. One dealing with the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the other, God's information of Abram, Sarah, and Abram's household.

If you like, simply those who earn the purpose of God, and those who steadfastly refuse to obey God and answer to His righteous order.

[00:01:07] Just a few moments to speak about the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Peter and Jude in that epistle to the New Testament tell us that the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah is a picture or example of the judgment that is to fall on this Godless world.

Judgment is a very solemn matter, and is going to be visited by this world because of its opposition to God, its refusal of His Son, and its steadfastness in refusing the rights of God, its attempt to thwart the purpose and might of God. This is seen clearly in Sodom and Gomorrah.

[00:02:06] The first chapter of Romans tells us what happened then. They gave up the right use of their bodies. God created them, man and woman, for each other, to be used in a right way, a dignified way, for the continuance of the race on earth.

They had turned away from this, and degraded this use, this dignified way, and reduced themselves to the level of beasts. They continued in this. It wasn't just a chance happening. It was something that they desired, they sought after, they continued in it. And there was no attempt at any time to turn aside from this evil practice. God heard of this, and He came down to see for Himself just how wicked Sodom and Gomorrah were.

[00:03:13] And so, when there was no hope of them altering their ways, in perfect righteousness, He dealt with their sins and punished them for their wickedness.

I want to point out that the judgment that Sodom and Gomorrah experience in the book of Genesis is

not the final judgment. It was a temporary judgment passed upon that wicked place, as if God would desire to remove its influence from the earth, that His things might be given the opportunity to express themselves. Do you remember when the Lord Jesus, in the 11th chapter of Matthew, was referring to the city that had experienced His wonderful power and blessing, and yet had not repented? He said it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for them. [00:04:20] And we find this all through the scriptures, and we know it through the secular history, that God does visit places in His judgment, and yet this will be nothing. To the awful judgment that is still to come, when the dead, small and great, stand before God at the great white throne, to experience the final judgment, I want to say this, that that judgment is just as righteous as the blessing that we possess through the death of Jesus.

[00:05:04] God is perfectly justified in all that He does towards those who refuse His things.

This is the way of the world today. We've heard it so often in these meetings. This way of liberty. Let us do as we please. We don't want to be shackled by convention. We don't want to be governed by old ideas.

We've sinned by society's convention, its tolerance, its tenderness. Let us please ourselves. Anyway, what does it matter? This is the attitude. Unfortunately, those who speak in this way have nothing worth finding a substitute for the old-fashioned, empty conventions that they speak in. [00:06:01] I remember a young lad reading a history book. The period was the French Revolution. And there was a picture there of a woman ascending the scaffold about to be killed again. And the picture shows her pointing her finger to the Sceptre of Liberty. And the exclamation was this, at the picture, O Liberty, what crimes have committed in my name?

Is this not true of the present day? All the excesses that we find in the name of liberty today are excesses which are in front of the dignity of God.

It might be man's revolt, but it's a serious matter when man throws overboard the rights of God and seeks to do his own will. We are living in a world with a rightful judgment.

[00:07:05] And we speak about the coming of the Lord. That coming is very near. Thank God for that. Let us remember that whenever the Lord comes for his judgment, then immediately set into motion all the things that we read of in the book of Revelation. When succeeding judgment calls judgment. Eventually coming to the great white floor where man is judged because of his wants. This is the coming judgment. Are we all free from the fear of this coming judgment?

Have we all accepted the law of Jesus Christ as our Savior? Have we all the assurance that when this judgment comes, it won't strike us? Do you remember the Thessalonians? They heard the preaching of the gospel concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. [00:08:04] They heard the wonderful news that God had provided the Savior. Man's sins and guilt could be removed. And all the idolatrous practices and all the erties that went with them could all be removed through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And hearing this wonderful news, they accepted the Savior. They come to God through idols. To serve the living and the true God. And to wait for his Son to come, even Jesus, to deliver us from the coming wrath. Oh how thankful we should be that we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. How profoundly thankful we should be that we are right with God. This whole theme of our Bible reading.

How to get right with God. What a wonderful thing it is to get to be right with God. [00:09:09] Don't worry about our sins and our guilt. Don't worry about the coming wrath. Just that calm, quiet assurance that everything is alright. Christ has satisfied God in connection with our guilt and shame and sin.

And we are righteous before him in Christ Jesus. And God sees us just as he sees his own perfect Son before him who is right and in love. How wonderful. Now this is what God says can be the portion of every person. Everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ can have this wonderful assurance. And if there should be any here this evening who have this assurance, we would urge you to flee from the wrath to come. [00:10:04] We would urge you to get right with God. We would urge you to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior. Just as Noah made an act and went into it with his family, directed by God, and was saved when that deluge came upon the earth. So you too can be saved if you accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. And you can be saved from the coming wrath of the Lord Jesus Christ. In connection with this, we think about the attitude of Abraham, the wonderful man that he was. His heart full of compassion, yearning for the loss. As we were reminded in the past evening, ready to gather together all that he had in his household and use it for the salvation of the world. [00:11:04] And here he is, screaming to God, crying to God, interceding, asking God to save those cities that were so wicked. Weeping with God. Step by step he went down until he came to 10.

And I believe there is a deathly significance in this. He would go no further. 10 in scripture represents responsibility. God can never step below this. Man is responsible for him. God cannot pass by man's sin. He must take account of it. And so we don't find him going below 10. See, having arrived at this day, there are 10 commandments. This is placed on man as a responsibility. In the New Testament, there are 10 letters of repentance. 9 failed in their responsibility to God. 9 failed in their response to God. So I think from the Old Testament and the New Testament, we can see that the number 10 belongs to responsibility.

[00:12:24] There are other scriptures that confirm this. So we see that there is wisdom in stopping at this number. There is another thing that we must face dear brethren. There are prayers that cannot be answered. We might gather together in prayer this evening. Cry out to God. He will save the whole world. Thank God he can do this because provision has been made for it in the death of Christ. This is the propitiatory work of Christ. [00:13:02] That there is a meeting place where God and men, every man and woman on earth can be saved. But they must repent. They must come and repent before God. God can't as it were present a blank check and say the whole world is saved. They must come and repent of this. They must express their sorrow and concern for their guilt against the Holy and Righteous God. And when you do this, they will be saved. We must face prayer and prayers that cannot be answered. Indeed we find in the Old Testament, in some pages of religious history, God says this nation has even prayed to me. I won't listen to their prayers. I won't answer their prayers because of their sinful wicked condition. I was thankful to our brother Mr. Blackburn this morning for the stress and necessity of a life that is characteristically devoted to God. It's not something that you just come to God in a moment about and you think God should answer you. It's that your whole life is devoted to God. [00:14:20] This is your life. You want to live your life for God. And when difficulties come about, you can expect an answer because this is the whole end of your life. But if your life is just pleasing yourself, how can you expect God to come in and answer quickly? How can you expect God to come in and answer quickly? How soft? This prayer of Abraham's wasn't that. He could fight death, sit in, and judge. And receive the righteous judgment of God because of his wickedness.

[00:15:14] Before I do, I would just like to make this final appeal. If there is any doubt in your mind about being right with God, don't waste any more time. Because I don't know when the Lord's coming. Only God knows.

Please, get right with God and don't waste any more time. Make sure that you won't be in a comic book.

What a man he was. What a rich experience he had with God. He knew God. We find as we go down this chapter that God says, I know Abraham. It wasn't a surprise that God was aware of his existence.

[00:16:12] It was something more than this. God knew him. He had the utmost confidence in him. He knew the kind of man he was. That is why he texted him so often. But Abraham knew God and in this final appearing, this third appearing of God, Abraham, we find Abraham immediately recognizes the presence of God and reacts in this wonderful manner.

I'm not going to engage you with any speculation about the presence of God here. I just want to point out one or two facts and draw your own conclusions. I think they are clear enough. Three persons come to Abraham and visit him. And Abraham speaks to them, three of them, and speaks about the Lord. And then we find that he bows himself down.

[00:17:12] We find that he is on seeking with God. And it says that two of them left and they went on their way to Sodom and Gomorrah. We find that one was left. This was a manifestation of God with Abraham and he knew it.

And this is the reason why he acted in the way he did. Now if you ask me, how can God eat a meal with a man like Abraham? My answer is, I don't know. I can ask, how can we explain how the Lord Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, could have a meal with his disciples? We just don't know. There are things in the Bible that we can't explain. We accept them in praise and here we have Abraham being visited by God and acting in a way that becomes such a visitation. [00:18:16] Now all that I want to draw from this first section is this, that Abraham and God were in the happiest possible relationship. There was no question of Abraham being adjusted or corrected or reproofed. We find God is going to judge Sodom and Gomorrah and before he does this, he visits this faithful servant Abraham. This is all I want to say about this. A happy relationship that existed between God and Abraham. And from this, I want to press some features that we find in the Epistle to the Romans. [00:19:02] I think we would do the Epistle to the Romans a great injustice if we imagine that it's only a collection of truths that set us right, that meet us in our need, that help us in connection with sin and the law and the flesh and all these things. Thank God it is that, but there is much more in the Epistle to the Romans. And we find throughout this wonderful epistle continual references of response to God in worship, in praise and in thanksgiving.

Four times we find the Apostle praying out in worship to God, or I should say three times, and once to Christ when it's a question of his deity. Numerous occasions we find Paul referring to thanksgiving. We also find him referring to praise. You remember, I think it's in chapter 15, that the Gentiles should praise God for his mercy. [00:20:15] Now, this is on the return side, isn't it? All that we've been occupied with in these readings in the morning is the question of our guilt, our need, our condition. Thank God our blessing. We've been on the receiving side. Now, once this has been established, God would desire that there should be a happier relationship existing between us and God. That is, a

responsive relationship. What a wonderful thing this is. We know even in the things of men, what a poor business it is, always to be receivable, always to be receivable, and never able to give. [00:21:02] This is so divine. God would desire that if we are set up before him in perfect righteousness, no quarrel between us, no fear existing, perfect reconciliation having taken place.

If this exists, thank God it does, then there should be a responsive role to our guilt. Worship. Oh, what a wonderful thing it is to be a worshiper. I'm not suggesting that Abraham would worship him here. I'm just drawing this from the incident, the response of the heart of God because of the relationship that exists. Worship. Worshiping God for who he is, in the greatness and glory of his person, that such a God, the eternal God, as we find in the last chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, [00:22:03] the eternal God should consider us and should bless us and bring us into his own plan for his own glory. Oh, shouldn't there be a response from our hearts? Then at the end of chapter 11, in all the dates of time for the ways of God with Israel and nations, and how he included all of that in that belief that he might have mercy upon all, he breaks into that wonderful expression of worship. How exceptional are his judgments, his ways past finding out, and of him, and through him, and for him, and all things to whom he glory forever. Wonderful expression of praise and worship from the heart of the Apostle as he took account of the ways of our God. We do the things that God desires of us. Thank God he loves us, and in his love and mercy, he brought us to himself through Christ his Son. Thank God for this. Oh, how happy it is that we respond to him in grateful appreciation as we take account of his own personal greatness and glory. [00:23:23] And all that he accomplished for our eternal blessing and for his own glory. I think this is a great manner of our true identification and thinking of God. I know it can be said that we can worship individually. Thank God we can. I would minimize this in the slightest way whatsoever. We can worship God individually. But I do know that in the wisdom of God, he has provided certain moments for us to come together at a certain time, a recognized time. We come together to remember the love of Jesus Christ, and we approve by experience and practice that this has been the happiest moment in these several meetings when we have expressed this worship to God. [00:24:17] We are occupied with his provision in his own beloved Son. We are occupied with his greatness and his thoughts, and this is the reason we worship in our souls. Now, again I say, it's easy to say that we can worship individually. We can.

But just at the end of every 24 hours of each day, just sit down and quietly ask yourself, how often have I worshipped God today? And when you come to the end of the week, you'll be appalled as I have been appalled at the poverty of our response to God. [00:25:05] This is why the coming together of the people of God is so important. It's a recognized state of time when we come together for a specific reason, and by prayer and exercise this function in a wonderful manner. This is why I would impress upon young people to be baptized, to be in the position where we remember the love of Jesus Christ today, and to have a living and diligent part in the worship that is said to God. Now, if you say that you don't need that, well, I would say that you can find the base of all the instruction that is given in this wonderful book. Because in the 12th chapter, I don't want to anticipate this, but in the 12th chapter of Romans, while we are exhorted to present our bodies a living sacrifice, a few verses further down you find this expression that we being married have one body. [00:26:11] I believe the reference to the body of Christ there, where every saint is involved, is just to guard against the idea of independency, that we don't need each other, because we do. We need every believer in the love of Jesus Christ to walk with, to serve with, to worship with, to perform every function that is stated in the love of God. So while the epistle to the Romans states very plainly how individuals can be right with God, it also gives instructions as to how we are to be right with one another and serve and worship and work together with each other. And I don't believe that we can get on right with each other unless, first of all, we are right with God. [00:27:02] So then this first function connected with Abraham

is a happy one. His response to God, how quick he was. First of all we find him sitting at the dead door, restfully enjoying all that he had there, perhaps meditating on the greatness of God. And then the heavenly believers come along and immediately he's in action. And if you notice the verses, you'll find the emphasis upon the speed with which Abraham walked. He arrived, barely had to get things done quickly, no time lost. But I move on. And he provided this meaning. And this is a word to us, every one of us as Christians. And I'm sure those who are a little older will agree with what I said when we get older. Time to pray. Time to gather up the truths that are in the word of God. And it doesn't require time. This is a big book. It deals with many subjects. It requires time to study it. It requires time to get a knowledge of its contents.

[00:28:25] It requires time to work these things out. And if we waste time when we're young, we'll regret it when we're old. Don't waste time. We like Abraham will grasp the opportunity to respond in the way he did. And he responded with all he had. You have the impression of a man who's ready to give his all. He's not going to hold anything back. The best he has is available for God. It was a sad time in Israel's history, in the book of Malachi, when they would bring the golden wreaths, the blemished feasts, the things that were of no value to themselves, no use to themselves, to God. [00:29:13] They brought the worst to God. It's much better to be in a condition that Mark Moses built it up now. When Moses had a priest's nightmare of giving, Moses said, you've brought too much. We've all been requiring more. This was a response of willing partners. Now, you can bet from me that you will regret wasting time when you're old. And I want to advise you to apply yourself to these things now. And don't form it up this way for you if you want to set your sights on a position where you know it is to be justified, reconciled, and into a position of relationship. [00:30:01] Set your sights to be a worshipper. This is the highest function for a preacher. And in order to reach it, you must have gained the highest level. It involves the knowledge of God. It involves a clean mind. It involves many things. And you cannot be a worshipper if you fail in these things. Now, I'm not suggesting that a young Christian can't worship. It would be wrong for me to suggest that all of those who have gained a certain spiritual status are worshippers. This would be wrong. But scripture presents a worshipper as a person who understands God, who knows God, who has a clean mind, and who is in this wonderful position of responding to God in a way that gives him pleasure. And I'm not saying this isn't easy to obtain. And you can all search your hearts, as I have searched mine, how often do we reach this in practice and in enjoyment. [00:31:11] Do you remember when they set up in the tabernacle, in the book of Numbers, a large proportion of the children of Israel with numbers of four or five able men? I just forget the exact number. It was a very large number, I think about 600,000 if my memory serves me correctly. Then we come back to the Levites, those who were responsible for looking after the furniture of the tabernacle. The number is greatly reduced, somewhere about 60,000. When we come to the worshippers, we find five able men and his four sons. Now I believe this really sets out a proportion of warriors, workers, and worshippers that do exist.

[00:32:12] There are far more warriors, I might say, than workers, and less worshippers than workers. I mean in the truest possible sense.

Now, you might disagree with this, but I just ask you in honesty to examine your life and try and arrive at the moments when you actually feel that you're lost in the greatness and glory of God and you worship Him accordingly. How many times do we bend our knees and cry to God for help in the difficulties that we experience and forget to give Him thanks, praise, and worship for all the benefits received? This is a challenge. I see the times going on. When we come to Sarah, just for a few moments, dear brother was reminding us last night about the value of wives. [00:33:14] And it might appear that Sarah was somewhat behind in the matter of intelligence here when she laughed when

God said that she would have a son. Abraham, he had been adjusted with his mother. He, too, very reluctantly had come to his mother and wished she would let him go. And Isaac was supposed to be the man of the house, the man whose son was supposed to be born. But Sarah, dear, she laughed at him. Oh, she said, this can't possibly be. This is so awkward.

We don't take God at His word. We disbelieve God. This is a feature of the natural heart. God says certain things are going to take place. He has a certain purpose in mind.

[00:34:16] And this thing is going to take place. You know how Saturdays are often when our parents have a mad riot and we see her laugh. And not only did she laugh, but she told the lie. And she had to be correct. And so if we do set out in married life, there will be moments when the husband fails. There will be moments when the wife fails.

Thank God that there is always room for adjustment. There is always room for correction. And so we get enlightened into God's minds, into the light of God's purpose, God's mind for us. And then things go on to happen. [00:35:02] And so coming from Sarah, we find God referring to Abraham.

He says, I know Abraham.

Just in the same way as Paul said, I know whom I have believed. And Adam was swearing that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Paul was expressing his utmost confidence in Christ. So I believe God here is saying, I have the utmost confidence in Abraham. He will instruct, he will command his household. If I read correctly, I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him. And they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has sworn of him. Here we find a man who is fully in line with the purpose of God for him, for the will of God for him. [00:36:10] Abraham's mind was, I want to do the things that please God. In the preceding chapter, God instructed him, now he says, I want you to circumcise your household. And Abraham did as he was commanded. Here we find God expressing his pleasure in this wonderful man of faith.

And this is the pathway for us. This scene that is going on together. You will find that from Genesis to Revelation, this principle applies. There are those who are doing the will of God. And beside them, there are those who are going on to judgment. And the very fact that there are those who are doing the will of God, is a testimony to those who will come under judgment. [00:37:04] As God can say to them, in righteousness, look, you had exactly the same opportunity to do as those others did. They obeyed me, they followed my will, you refused my will. My judgment is righteousness. Here we are in the world today, and I think we would all desire to do the will of God. Just as Abraham did the will of God. Step by step he was led along that pathway. Until he eventually came to that supreme moment. When he was tested, as perhaps no other man has been tested. On behalf of the Lord himself. When he was asked to give his only son Isaac. And without hesitation, he obeyed. Here again we find the force of our brothers remarks, this morning in the Bible. That if we fail continually, again and again and again. [00:38:03] God will not commit to us things that are worthwhile and valuable. We have to prove ourselves. The apostle Paul had to prove himself. Didn't he say that he was counted worthy to be given black tidings. He was a proved man. No employee would ever dream of giving responsibility to an employee who was incapable and untrustworthy. And do you think that God will commit to you or to me. Things that are valuable, things that are real, things that are worthwhile. If we don't prove ourselves worthy. So it was with Abraham. Step by step he proved himself. As a man of obedience to faith. When the supreme moment came for that sacrifice, he was ready.

Know how wonderful to be in an atmosphere like this. [00:39:04] To be under the teaching of such a man as Abraham. Think of his children being brought up in this atmosphere. Being taught about God, the will of God. How God can come in. As we heard last evening, the almighty God. Come in and help in moments of difficulty. A God who blesses as only God can bless. To be brought up in this atmosphere must be something very wonderful. So it was in Abraham's household. He instructed his household, his children in the way of the Lord. And this is the way of blessing. Oh that we knew more about it. The way of the Lord. The way of the Lord is perfect in spiritual sense. Perfect.

The way of the Lord is spoken of again and again and again. In scripture. As something most desirable. [00:40:01] Standing in contrast to the way of men. Oh what a sorry business it is to follow the way of men. Where does it lead us? In judgment. Or the way of righteousness. The way of life. The way of everlasting. How many ways there are in scripture that speak of the wonder of God's blessing upon us. And Abraham instructed his children and his household in these things. That we might follow righteousness and justice. Things that please God. This is the supreme test in our lives. Do we follow the way of our own minds? Satisfy our own appetites? Or are we following God? Are we doing the will of God? You can see this in our next Bible reading. And how important it is. To be thankful at least that in some way. There is a desire in our lives to please God. [00:41:04] I am not going to mention anything specific. But the question is in our lives. Do we please Him? Are we following His will? Can it be said of us. As it was said a few ago. I know Him. I have confidence in Him. I can leave things in His hands. He will look after them. He is trustworthy. He is worthy to be given things to do for my pleasure. I know Him through them. He is capable. He is perfectly trustworthy. We think of the Savior. God committed everything in His hands. Those capable hands.

All of us did the will of God. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands. And He wants our hands to be capable. And trustworthy to do. He wants our hands. [00:42:02] He wants our legs. Our feet.

He wants our members to be members of righteousness. He wants us to be once saved. Himself.

And once saved. As it all will be so. All of you might know this more and more in our lives. You might take on pictures indeed of this wonderful man. A friend of God. And one who is His faithful servant. One who is His happy relation with Him. One who is deathly happy in the presence of God. One whose whole life is governed by His knowledge of God. And His desire for peace.