

OVERCOMING THE DYSFUNCTIONS OF ISRAEL'S PATRIARCHS

VII. Praying For Unholy Relatives

(Genesis 18:16-33)

I. Introduction

- A. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Israel's patriarchs and their respective wives and families, though blessed of God, were imperfect people who at times made huge mistakes that led to serious marital and family dysfunction.
- B. Thankfully, Romans 15:4 states that we can learn from whatsoever things were written in the Old Testament for our edification, and that includes our learning how to overcome the dysfunctions of Israel's patriarchs.
- C. We view Genesis 18:16-33 on praying for unholy relatives for our insight, application and edification:

II. Praying For Unholy Relatives, Genesis 18:16-33.

- A. Abraham's nephew Lot was basically a righteous man, but he lived in unholy alliance with worldly Sodom:
 - 1. Peter called Lot righteous in 2 Peter 2:7-8, and Abraham called him righteous in Genesis 18:23 et al.
 - 2. However, the fact that Lot chose to settle in Sodom reveals that "in spite of his denunciation of their lifestyle, he liked the good life of Sodom's society." (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 60)
- B. In grace, the Preincarnate Christ as the "Angel of the Lord" and two other angels visited Abraham and they ate a meal in fellowship with him, Genesis 18:1-15. A key purpose for this meeting as seen in Genesis 18:16-22 was for the Lord to inform Abraham that He was about to destroy Sodom for its wickedness, and God knew that this news would elicit Abraham's appeal that God might deliver Lot and his family from destruction.
- C. Abraham predictably responded to the Lord's revelation of His plan to destroy Sodom by asking God not to destroy the city if fifty righteous people were in it, and the Lord agreed to Abraham's request, Gen. 18:23-25.
- D. Abraham made another appeal, asking God not to destroy Sodom if there were forty-five righteous people in it, and God offered not to destroy that city were just forty-five righteous people in it, Genesis 18:26-28.
- E. Abraham kept repeating this request for forty, then thirty, then twenty and then ten righteous people, and each time God offered not to destroy Sodom if only that number of righteous people were in it, Genesis 18:29-32.
- F. After God had said He would not destroy Sodom if just ten righteous people were in it, the Lord left Abraham, and Abraham returned to his home in the plains of Mamre near Hebron, Genesis 18:33, 1.
- G. Remarkably, though the Lord did not let Abraham keep appealing further about not destroying Sodom were there fewer people in it than even ten, the actual number of people whom God delivered was just three:
 - 1. Though the Preincarnate Christ disappeared from the other two angels, those two angels traveled down to Sodom and interacted with Abraham's nephew Lot, Genesis 19:1.
 - 2. The angels accepted Lot's hospitality (Genesis 19:2-3), but they tried to get Lot, his wife, his daughters and their husbands, six people in all, to flee from Sodom before they could destroy it, Genesis 19:12-14.
 - 3. Lot's two sons-in-law refused to believe that they needed to flee from the city, so the angels tried to get Lot's immediate family of four to get out of Sodom, but when Lot's family lingered, the angels took them by the hand and pulled them out of Sodom to escape certain death in divine judgment, Genesis 19:15-16.
 - 4. The angels then told Lot and his family to flee to the mountain and not even look back at Sodom, but Lot tried to get permission for his family to stay in the little nearby city of Zoar. The angels finally graciously gave him permission to stay in Zoar, Genesis 19:17-22.
 - 5. When Lot entered Zoar at sunrise, God rained down fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah, totally destroying those cities, Genesis 19:23-25. Significantly, "(d)eposits of sulphur (brimstone) and asphalt (cf. 14:10) have been found in this area . . .," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Genesis 19:24.
 - 6. However, as Lot's family was heading to Zoar, Lot's wife disobeyed the angels by looking back longingly at Sodom, so God punished her by turning her into a pillar of salt, Genesis 19:26. (cf. Luke 17:31-32)
 - 7. Thus, by God's grace, only Lot and his two daughters survived God's judgment, seven less people than the number Abraham had pleaded with God to save were they still to have remained in Sodom!

Lesson: *When Abraham pleaded with God to preserve his righteous but unholy nephew and nine other people from God's destruction on Sodom, God went so far in His grace as to preserve only Lot and his two daughters from destruction, taking them out of Sodom before destroying the ungodly people there.*

Application: *(1) If God makes us aware of the need of our unholy relatives, may we like Abraham pray for them! (2) When we pray for our unholy relatives, may we be sure that God cares about them and is more gracious toward them than we can even plead, that we then rest in God's grace, mercy and justice regarding our unholy relatives.*