**A Heart for the Wicked**

**1-10-2016**

*Gen 18:20-33*

*Then the Lord said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, 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."*

*So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord. Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are 50 righteous within the city.*

*Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the 50 righteous who are in it? 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?" And the Lord said, "If I find at Sodom 50 righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake."*

*Abraham answered and said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. Suppose 5 of the 50 righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of 5?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find 45 there." Again he spoke to him and said, "Suppose 40 are found there." He answered, "For the sake of 40 I will not do it."*

*Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose 30 are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find 30 there." He said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Suppose 20 are found there." He answered, "For the sake of 20 I will not destroy it." Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose 10 are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it." And the Lord went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.*

God’s judgment always comes suddenly, but never without ample warning.

* 15 years before he received mercy but yet did not repent but continued in sin.
* Sodom was sexually depraved & no had human rights. *Gen 18:20-21, Ps 147:5*

God was not “going down” to learn facts; omniscient.

* “going down” is figurative: God’s judgment is based on His perfect knowledge & justice.
* God *always* does what is right, no matter how it appears to sinful men.
  + To question God’s justice/love/mercy, or any other attribute, is to suggest we would be more just/loving, etc.= This is a defective view of God.

Abraham accurately knew God’s character & what the wicked deserved so GOD moved his heart to intercede for wicked in Sodom & Gommorah. *Gen 18:22-26*

* intercede: to plead the case of another person.
* This is the first intercessory prayer recorded in the Bible and is a model of reverence, awe & humility: dust in origin, ashes at end. *Gen 18:27, 30, 32-33, Eph 3:20-21*

Abraham is not questioning God, but rather defending God’s honor.

* He appeals on the basis of God’s justice, mercy & reputation.
* This is not to simply spare relatives, but a whole wicked city because of the righteous.
  + Stopped at 10: no longer pleading according to God’s will, Lord’s tone, sure of 10 righteous, confident Lot & family safe from wrath of God.
    - God’s grace always exceeds our expectations. There were only three righteous in Sodom. [Eph 3:20](javascript:%7b%7d)
* Lot and his family were spared ultimately because God decided to show mercy.

Prayer doesn’t bend God to our will, it bends us toward His will so that His name is exalted, glorified, and hallowed. *Mt 6:9-10, Ez 33:11*

* Abraham’s prayer did not to save the city, but it revealed how the Lord sanctified Abraham to be more selfless, merciful, and compassionate = Christ-like.
  + Only the love of God in his heart could have brought about a burden for people Abraham had little in common with.
    - There is no hint that Abraham thought of himself as better than those in Sodom.
* Do you have a love/burden for the lost who are totally different from you OR do you have self-righteous disgust. *Mt 7:5, LK 6:43-45*

If Sodom and Gomorrah’s wickedness merited God’s attention, then our culture deserves the same. *2 Pet 2:6, Jude 7, Leupold*, “A man who has himself received mercy seeks to secure mercy for others”

* Prayer is a huge part of God’s divine system of bringing to earth His heavenly will. Col 4:2-4, 1 Cor 3:7, 2 Cor. 5:20
  + Pray: for God’s mercy, for evil to be exposed, for the wicked to repent & find salvation, for justice, to spare/deliver Christians who are reluctant to let go of worldly things (like Lot).
    - Intercessory prayer for the lost is only fervent if we are convinced there is a literal, eternal punishment.
* Just as with Abraham, God wants His friends to co-laborer with Him through prayer & evangelism (LEFC core values) and to be a blessing to the nations.
  + Be a friend of God, who is also a true friend of men through intercessory prayer.