

Genesis 18 (19:27-29) - Prophet and Priest

Monday, February 17, 2014
7:46 AM

I. Introduction

A. As we go through the story of Abraham, we see a distinct pattern to the stories

1. I introduced this pattern when we did the introduction to Abraham's story
2. In the promise sections, we have:
 - a. First, a promise of God and initial faith
 - b. Then an episode where Abraham fails to act in faith
 - c. After Abraham's failure, there is a return and reaffirmation of the promise
 - d. And finally, as a minor fulfillment of the promise, Abraham is shown to be blessed and a blessing

B. Since we just finished a return and reaffirmation of the promise in Genesis 17, we expect this passage to show Abraham as blessed and a blessing

1. The theme of blessed and a blessing is part of God's covenant promises to Abraham
2. Genesis 12:2-3 - *and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*"
3. Since the themes of blessed and blessing are a fulfillment of the promise and since the promises are all ultimately fulfilled in Christ, when Abraham is shown to be blessed and a blessing this must point us to Christ
4. We call this type of pointing or representation to be typology - what Abraham does is part of a pattern of events that finds its culmination in Christ
5. Typology is very similar to promise or prophecy that are fulfilled in Christ, but we might consider them acted out promise or prophecy
6. So, what Abraham does must be representative of what Christ does, but Christ must do it in a much greater way

C. This morning the title of my message is 'Prophet and Priest'

1. You might wonder about the title as we read the passage because neither of these words are in the passage
2. But, despite the lack of these words, we are going to see Abraham fulfill these two roles
 - a. As a prophet, he is going to receive God's revelation
 - b. As a priest, he is going to intercede for men before God
3. And my goal this morning is to see that Abraham's actions here are developments of a theme that is traced through the Bible and points to Christ
 - a. Christ is going to be the one who perfectly knows God
 - b. Christ is the one who intercedes for men before God
4. My thought is that most of you probably already know those facts, but this morning, in the story of Abraham, I want you to meditate on the glories of these truths and love Christ more

D. Read Genesis 18, 19:27-29

E. Proposition and Outline

1. Proposition: As Abraham receives God's revelation and intercedes for Sodom and Gomorrah he points us to Christ who is the great mediator for God's people
2. Outline:
 - a. Brief overview of Covenant Meal and Covenant Promise
 - b. Blessed: God Reveals His Purpose to Abraham
 - c. Blessing: Abraham Intercedes for Sodom and Lot
 - d. Application: How do the themes of revelation and intercession apply to us?

II. Quick Overview of Covenant Meal and Promise

Genesis 18:1-15 - *And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on ---since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes." And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate. They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "She is in the tent." The LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son." But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you did laugh."*

A. The first two blessings are found in these first fifteen verses, and there is much good material here to study

1. But the themes that appear in these first fifteen verses we have already hit on in other places in Abraham
2. So, for the sake of time this morning, I'm just going to touch on these two paragraphs so we can focus on the rest of the chapter - I'll just give you enough to perhaps guide some personal study and meditation

B. The first blessing is God's appearance to Abraham

1. This whole section is tied very closely to the preceding story in Genesis 17 - renewing the covenant
2. Reading this in light of Genesis 17, the meal that Abraham shares with God is no random occurrence
3. In fact, this meal is the meal of the covenant, where the two parties of the covenant eat together
4. The meal symbolizes many things, but primarily the unity and peace that exists within the covenant
5. God appearing to Abraham and having a meal with him shows that, in covenant, God is Abraham's friend
6. The covenant meal is a repeated theme throughout Scripture tied to God's covenants
 - a. Exodus 24:9-11 - *Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.*
7. And this theme is fulfilled in Christ, who sits with us in a covenant meal
 - a. Matthew 26:26-29 - *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."*
 - b. Revelation 19:9 - *And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."*

C. The second blessing is God's reaffirmation of His promise to Abraham

1. In verse 10, God affirms His promise of chapter 17, saying Sarah will have a son
2. And the text moves towards fulfillment as God promises a son within the year
3. There is a lot we could say about this paragraph as well, looking at Sarah's laughter and God's response
4. Or we could look at the New Testament reference to this passage referring to Sarah as an example of submission in I Peter 3
5. But this morning we are going to skip over that and just remind ourselves that the promise of a son is also fulfilled in Christ
6. The promised son points to the ultimate promised son - the barren woman conceiving points forward to the virgin who will conceive and give birth to a son

III. Blessed: God Reveals His Purpose to Abraham

Genesis 18:16-22 - *Then the men set out from there, and they looked down toward Sodom. And Abraham went with them to set them on their way. The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him." 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."*

A. The third blessing that Abraham receives in Genesis 18 is God's revelation

1. As God reveals His plan to Abraham, Abraham is clearly blessed - He is the one who knows God's purposes
2. Three times in the Bible, Abraham is called God's friend - 2 Chronicles 20:7, Isaiah 41:8, James 2:23
3. Is 41:8 - *But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off"; fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*
4. None of these references are in Genesis, but I think they point back particularly to this story - Abraham is God's friend as God reveals His purpose to Abraham

B. God's revelation becomes a major theme of the Bible

1. We have already seen once character whom God revealed His purposes to - Noah
 - a. Genesis 6:13 - *And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.*
2. God reveals His purpose to His friend, Abraham, in Genesis, starting a pattern of God's revelation
 - a. Genesis 20:7 - *Now then, return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."*
3. In Exodus, Moses becomes the prophet par excellence as God reveals His purposes
 - a. Deuteronomy 34:10 - *And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,*
4. And the line of prophets from Moses to Malachi all were recipients of God's revelation
 - a. 1 Samuel 3:21 - *And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD.*
5. But even the prophets themselves knew that something better must be revealed
 - a. 1 Peter 1:10-12 - *Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*

C. God's self-revelation is perfected in Christ, the one to whom God perfectly reveals Himself

1. Matthew 11:27 - *All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*
2. John 5:19-20 - *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing.*

D. But not only has God perfectly revealed Himself to Christ, through Christ God is perfectly revealed to us

1. Hebrews 1:1-2 - *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son,*

E. Abraham, God's friend, foreshadows or typifies Christ, the true friend of God and the recipient of God's perfect revelation - Abraham is blessed to know God in order to point to Christ, the blessed, who knows God perfectly

IV. Blessing: Abraham Intercedes for Lot

Genesis 18:23-26, 32, 19:27-29 - *Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 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? 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 fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake." ... 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." ... And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD. And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and he looked and, behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace. So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived.*

A. Abraham is blessed by receiving God's revelation, Abraham is a blessing by interceding for the condemned

1. God's revelation to Abraham is a revelation of judgment - God will act to judge the wicked
 - a. As a side note, we see that this fits into the theme of righteousness in this part of Abraham's story
 - b. God promises Abraham a foreign righteousness, but God still upholds justice in destroying the wicked
 - c. God isn't ignoring wickedness when He promises righteousness to Abraham
2. Abraham's response is earnest intercession
 - a. He intercedes for Sodom and Gomorrah based on God's justice - he calls on the Judge of all the earth to do right
 - b. So, He calls on God not to destroy the cities if 50, then 45, then 40, then 30, then 20 and then only 10 righteous are found in the cities
 - c. The repeated intercession shows how earnest Abraham's intercession was, He truly plead for God to show mercy to Sodom and Gomorrah
3. Although Abraham's intercession was not completely effective, we see that it was partially effective
 - a. Genesis 19:27 - *God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow*
 - b. After Abraham intercedes, God does work salvation for Lot because of Abraham
 - c. So Abraham's intercession was effective, even if it didn't save everyone in Sodom and Gomorrah

B. Intercession also becomes a major theme of the Bible

1. While the theme of revelation has already appeared in Genesis, Abraham is the first intercessor in Genesis, but He intercedes several times
 - a. Here in our story, Abraham intercedes for Sodom and Lot
 - b. In Genesis 20, Abraham is going to intercede for Abimelech and his household
2. The theme of intercession continues in Exodus again with the institution of the High Priesthood
 - a. The theme of intercession is represented by two pieces of the High Priest's uniform
 - b. The High Priest represented Israel before God
 - i. Exodus 28:12 - *And you shall set the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel. And Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders for remembrance.*
 - c. And the High Priest interceded for Israel's sins before God
 - i. Exodus 28:29 - *So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment on his heart, when he goes into the Holy Place, to bring them to regular remembrance before the LORD.*
 - d. The priesthood also revealed something new about intercession - it involved the Day of Atonement
 - i. Leviticus 16:15-16 - *"Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses.*

- e. As with most themes in the Bible, the theme builds - Abraham interceded, but the High Priest intercedes with sacrifice
 - i. This is what the intercession of Abraham lacked
 - ii. Abraham could intercede for the people of Sodom, but he had nothing to offer God
 - iii. He had nothing to cover over their sin, so he could only intercede for those who were righteous
 - iv. The High Priest, by bringing a sacrifice, can intercede for those who are sinful before God
- f. Although there are unique instances of intercession, the High Priest becomes the focus of intercession throughout most of the Old Testament Histories
- 3. The Prophets continue to develop the theme of intercession
 - a. And they develop it primarily by looking forward to a better intercessor
 - i. Isaiah 53:12 - *Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.*
 - b. The intercessor must bear the sins of the people and have victory before God, but who could do this but God Himself
 - i. Isaiah 59:16 - *He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him.*
 - c. And in Jeremiah, God specifically says that it will be He Himself who pleads the cause of His people
 - i. Jeremiah 51:36 - *Therefore thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will plead your cause and take vengeance for you.*

C. So, it is no surprise that the theme of intercession is fulfilled in our Great High Priest: Christ

- 1. Romans 8:34 - *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died---more than that, who was raised---who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*
- 2. I Timothy 2:5-6 - *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*
- 3. Hebrews 7:25 - *Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*
- 4. Hebrews 9:13-15 - *For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.*
- 5. As the High Priest added the sacrifice that Abraham lacked, so Christ adds what the High Priest had lacked
 - a. Abraham interceded based on God's justice, but could not make anyone righteous
 - b. The High Priest brought a sacrifice, but it was unable to truly cleanse the people from sin
 - c. But Christ brings an efficacious sacrifice to make atonement and intercession for His people
 - d. He not only intercedes for us, He makes us righteous so that He can appeal to God's justice on our behalf - I John 1:9 makes sense! God is faithful and just to forgive us because of Christ's intercession.

D. Abraham the intercessor points to Christ the intercessor, but Christ is a much greater intercessor than Abraham

E. The two themes are tied together - Christ is a blessing because Christ is blessed

- 1. Abraham the intercessor is able to intercede because Abraham was God's friend - God revealed His purposes to Abraham and thus Abraham was able to intercede based on God's plans
- 2. Revelation and intercession are tied together - the one who knows God's plans can intercede for those under His judgment
- 3. And the one who knows God and His purposes perfectly can make perfect intercession for His people
- 4. Christ is the perfect intercessor because Christ knows God perfectly, revelation and intercession are linked

V. Application (How do the themes of revelation and intercession carry on to us?)

A. God's revelation is ultimately to Christ but, in Christ, He reveals His purposes to us as well

1. We have already previewed God's revelation in Christ - Hebrews 1:1-2 - *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son,*
2. In fact, Jesus calls the disciples His friends, like Abraham was called the friend of God
 - a. John 15:15 - *No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.*
3. And we can see ourselves, in the church, as the recipients of this statement, because God has revealed Christ to us as well
 - a. II Corinthians 4:6 - *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*
 - b. Ephesians 1:9 - *And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,*
4. In fact, one of the main tasks of the apostles, as Christ's friends who knew Him, was to make Him known
 - a. Colossians 2:1-2 - *For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ,*
5. So, in Christ, we also are the recipients of God's revelation of His purposes

B. Faith is expressed in making intercession for others based on Christ's intercession

1. We are called to intercede for all people who don't know Christ, because Christ is the intercessor
 - a. I Timothy 2:1-6 - *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*
 - i. Paul calls us to intercede for those who do not know Christ, because God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth
 - ii. But, Paul bases our intercession on the fact that there is an intercessor - there is one mediator
 - iii. The logic of the passage is: you intercede because there is only one intercessor
 - iv. So, we are called to intercede for others based on Christ's intercession - we intercede because we know there is a perfect intercessor who can effectively intercede for them
2. And we are called to make intercession for our brothers and sisters in Christ
 - a. IJn 5:16-17 - *If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life---to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.*
 - i. This passage brings up perhaps more questions than it answers, but the application is clear
 - ii. We can intercede for each other, especially when we see sin in each other's lives
 - iii. And amazing thing is that the prayer is effective, the questions of the passage come up in qualifications of that promise, but it is promised to be effective!
 - b. James 5:13-18 - *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.*
 - i. James calls us to the same thing - to pray for each other, especially in trial or temptation
 - ii. And again, James emphasizes that prayer is effective citing the example of Elijah!

3. Paul consistently practiced intercession for those he wrote to and called for them to intercede for him
 - a. If you want to know how to make intercession for each other, read Paul's prayers
 - b. Colossians 1:9-11 - *And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy*
 - c. Colossians 4:2-4 - *Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison--- that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.*

C. Rephrase: Faith is believing in the power of the intercessor

1. My application this morning is to call you to intercession for unbelievers and for your brothers and sisters in Christ - but we could make this application in several wrong ways
 - a. I could say, look what Abraham did, he interceded, so you should to
 - b. Or I could try to make you feel guilty, why don't you want to intercede for the unsaved?
 - c. But each of these would be really shallow reasons to intercede
2. My application this morning is really to see Christ for who He is, the intercessor
 - a. My main call this morning is to see Christ and to marvel at His intercession for His people and especially His intercession for you
 - b. And then, as you see His intercession and are found in Him, I want your vision of Christ to overflow in intercession for others
 - i. So, my call to intercede is not really a call to intercede, it's a call to be so enamored of Christ's intercession that it naturally overflows in our lives
 - ii. So, to rephrase my 'faith is' statement - Faith is believing in the power of the intercessor
 - iii. As we believe in the power of the intercessor, His intercession will overflow into our lives
3. In fact, the only reason our intercession could be effective is because we are in Christ, the intercessor
 - a. John 14:13-14 - *Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.*
 - b. John 15:7 - *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*
 - c. I John 5:14-15 - *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.*
 - d. Why can John and James emphasize that our prayers are effective when we pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ? Only because we are in Christ, the perfect intercessor, and because we are asking things according to His will.

D. So, once more, knowledge and intercession are tied together

- a. For our intercession to be effective we must pray according to the will of Christ, which means we must know the will of Christ
- b. And Christ has revealed Himself and His purposes to us - He has called us friends
- c. We know that God desires all people to be saved (I Timothy 2) and we know that God is patient, not desiring that any should perish (II Peter 3), so we can pray confidently and expectantly for salvation to come to unbelievers
- d. We know that God desires for His people to be presented blameless before Him, so we can pray confidently for God to forgive them of sin and to call them back from sin
- e. So we need to strive to grow in the understanding of God's will in Christ (Ephesians 5:17) and then we need to pray according to God's will in Christ in intercession for others
- f. But we only do both of these things because God has perfectly revealed His purposes to Christ and because Christ is the perfect intercessor - He is the one who knows perfectly and He always lives to make intercession for us!