

## Di122 Essentials of Christianity

### *Lesson Di122-13 Prayer: Intercession*

Have you ever imagined what it would be like to meet a really important person? And also, someone who could do for you what you could never do for yourself? Would you ask them for help, or feel embarrassed and unworthy of help? Our story today is about a day when Abraham unexpectedly met just such a person.

The Bible tells us about a day in the life of Abraham that was like none other. Little did he realize that he was about to meet God face to face. Nor did he realize that lives would depend on his pleading with God that day.

Abraham was seated at the entrance to his tent during the heat of the day. Suddenly he noticed three men standing nearby near a grove of trees. Abraham hurried to meet them. There was something about them that made Abraham bow to the ground. These were no ordinary men. As a man of faith, Abraham felt a deep desire to be with them as long as possible. He begged them, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant" (Gen 18:3-5).

Abraham was so excited when the men accepted his invitation. He hurried into the tent to Sarah and then to a servant to make sure that the meal was being prepared. He still wondered who these men were and their purpose for visiting his tent. While they ate Abraham stood near them under a tree. He wasn't going to let them out of his sight. He would wait close by until they addressed him. Then a question came. "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him.

"There, in the tent," he answered.

Then one of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son"(Gen 18:9-10). For a long time Abraham had been asking God for a son, he had not given up hope. He knew that God had promised him a son years before. He had just kept praying. Now it was going to happen! He was speaking face to face with Yahweh himself. It was almost more than Abraham could believe.

But now the men were preparing to leave. Something was definitely on their minds. Abraham walked with them as they began to reveal what was about to happen. What Abraham heard frightened him. God was about to go down to the city of Sodom, where Abraham's nephew Lot and his family lived. God had seen from heaven the awful sin committed in Sodom and the time for its destruction had come. Abraham was sick at this news, for it meant his nephew would perish. What could he possibly do to change God's mind? Was it possible to intercede for his people with the Creator of all things? If there was a chance that God would change his mind, Abraham had to ask.

With his nerves on edge, Abraham approached the Lord. Choosing his words carefully he asked, "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake

of the fifty righteous people in it? ... Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen 18:23-25). Abraham took his chance to make intercession before God.

As Abraham pleaded, God honored his request. He said that if there were 50 righteous people, he would spare the city. But this was not the end of the conversation. Abraham asked again, saying, "What if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five people?" God is such a wonderful Father to his people. He patiently listened to his servant. "If there are forty-five there, I will not destroy it."

Can you imagine how Abraham was jumping up and down inside? Yet he was not done asking for his family's safety. He asked about 40 and then 30 righteous people. By now he would have understood if God had gotten angry with him, but God did not. He was actually listening to his servant. He stood patiently while Abraham interceded for the people that he knew in Sodom, asking this time about 20 righteous people. With all his courage he went on. Would God spare the city if there were only 10 righteous? God answered, "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it" (Gen 18:26-32).

Persistence had paid off. Abraham had talked with God and had his promise that Lot and his family would be delivered. Somehow they would escape the judgment of God. Abraham's prayer had brought change in his life and in the lives of those he loved.

Jesus said, "Everyone who asks receives, the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened" (Luke 11:10). Those words mean we must keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking. In God's time, persistence in intercessory prayer will reap a spiritual harvest in your life and the lives of those around you!

Paul urged his young friend Timothy, "that petitions, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all people.... This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1Tim 2:1, 3). Paul also encouraged the Galatian Christians: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

This lesson is **important** because each believer must realize that God wants them to persist in prayer to God on behalf of those around them.

The **main point** of this lesson is that Abraham interceded before God for his nephew Lot and family to be spared from God's destruction. Today God may spare those for whom we intercede, as he did when Abraham prayed for Lot.

Your **review** questions are:

1. Why was Abraham excited to see the three men standing close to him? [Pause]  
A. If you said, "Abraham was excited, because he realized they were not ordinary men and that he was in the presence of God," you answered correctly.
2. What mission was the Lord was going to accomplish once he left Abraham? [Pause]  
A. If you answered, "The Lord's mission that day was to assess the situation in sinful Sodom," you have answered correctly.

3. What was Abraham's response, once he realized the Lord's mission to Sodom? [Pause]
  - A. If you answered, "Abraham became very troubled and asked God to change his mind concerning the total destruction of the people of Sodom," you are correct.
  
4. Did God listen to Abraham's pleas for his family members living in Sodom? [Pause]
  - A. If you answered, "Yes, God assured Abraham that if even 10 righteous people were found in Sodom, it would not be destroyed," you are right.

Your **assignment** is to listen to the Bible story until you have an understanding of what happened. Share the account of Abraham's bold prayer with at least three people today. Tell the result of Abraham's intercession for his nephew's deliverance. Then begin praying for a need that is in someone's life, taking note of when God answers your intercessory prayer.

Memorize Paul's advice to Timothy: "I urge ... that petitions, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all people.... This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (First Timothy 2:1, 3).

Also memorize Paul's advice to the Galatian Christians: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).