

SERMON GUIDE

The Righteous for the Wicked

Genesis 18:16-33



SERMON NOTES

One of the doctrines of Scripture recovered through the Protestant Reformation was the depravity of man. The doctrine of sin is so important to our overall worldview. When we understand man's condition and problem you understand not only the world around you, but yourself.

We are not born neutral. We are not innocent. We are born sinners. We are offspring of Adam, guilty by birth, nature, and headship. Everyone is born into Adam; therefore, born into guilt. We have a sin nature. That means that our sin is done by nature. You get hungry by nature. You blink your eyes by nature. You go to the bathroom by nature. These are instinctual things you do without having to consciously decide to them. Sin works the same way. We are corrupt by nature. We sin naturally. We don't have to be taught how to do it. It springs forth naturally from us.

This sin nature and original guilt lead us to practical sin actions. We commit sins against God and His commands. We violate His design. We rebel against His ways. This is a guilt that leaves us labeled as unrighteous. This sin even rightfully labels us as wicked.

Understanding this is crucial for recognizing your need for the gospel. We can't simply clean up and start obeying. Our guilt condemns us. We need help from the outside. We need a Savior and Redeemer. We need someone else to represent us before God.

How is this related to our passage today? Everything!

Exegesis:

VS 16-21 -- *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.”

The men (the LORD and two angels) head to look at Sodom and Abraham goes with them. The LORD speaks, presumably to the two angels with Abraham there listening, about whether to hide from Abraham what is about to happen...which is they are going to bring judgment down on Sodom and Gomorrah for the great sin happening there. Why is the LORD considering letting Abraham in on these plans? And why does He ultimately do it? This is one of the most important passages in Scripture rarely discussed. God has made a covenant to Abraham. He's building a nation from Him. It is Abraham and his offspring that will be the people of God. All nations of the earth will be blessed through Abraham (and his offspring, Jesus). Abraham's offspring are expected to keep the way of the LORD and do righteousness and justice. But Sodom and Gomorrah are the opposite of righteousness and justice.

VS 22 -- So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord.

So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham stood still before the LORD. The two angels go (on the mission and purpose the LORD has for them). Abraham and the LORD are there.

VS 23-33 -- 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.” Abraham answered and said, “Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?” And he said, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.” Again he spoke to him and said, “Suppose forty are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of forty I will not do it.” Then he said, “Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there.” He answered, “I will not do it, if I find thirty there.”

He said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." 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 the Lord went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.

Abraham begins a series of questions to the LORD. He is interceding on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah. They don't know what is about to happen, but Abraham is a type of Christ, going before the LORD on behalf of the people, interceding for them. He begins by asking if there are 50 righteous people in the city, would God spare the city. He would. He then goes to 45, then 40, then 30, then 20, and then 10. Each time the LORD says He will relent from His wrath if there is one righteous person.

What is the point of this exercise? First, Abraham knows the LORD is righteous and just. If God wipes out the innocent because of the wicked, God could be accused of being unjust. So Abraham intercedes on their behalf. God keeps agreeing as Abraham lowers the number to see the extent of God's mercy and grace. Now I want you to catch the implications of this. If there are 50, 35, 15 righteous people, God will spare the entire city for the sake of the righteous. Second, Abraham is seeing how many righteous would be required for God to spare the wicked. He begins at 50 and goes all the way to 10, then stops. Now let me ask you a question...what do you think would have happened if Abraham would have kept going? Do you think God would spare the wicked for the sake of 9 righteous? What about 5? What about 3? Here's the real question...it's the one we've been driving toward the whole time...would God spare the wicked for the sake of 1 righteous person? And we don't have to guess, because God has done it.

You see, friends, the LORD has spared the wicked for the sake of one righteous one: Jesus. Jesus is the perfectly righteous, sinless man. Though He was God in the flesh, He was fully man. He lived a perfectly righteous life and then died a substitutionary death (meaning, for the sake of others). The righteous one died for the unrighteous (1 Peter 3:18). The righteous one spared the wicked by giving Himself in their place. The wicked become recipients of this grace by faith. We trust what Christ has done in His perfect obedient life and His sacrificial death. We receive it as done in our place and we become inheritors of its blessings.

We don't have to wonder if God would spare the wicked for the sake of one righteous man because He did so through Jesus the Christ. However, if you know how this story goes, and we will see it over the next few weeks...Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed. Judgment and wrath fall for the greatness of their sin. Why? Because there are no righteous. No one is righteous. No one is without sin. All have sin and fall short of the glory of God. We all deserve judgment. We all deserve damnation.

This is why the gift of Christ is so unbelievable. This is why we marvel at the gospel. God sent His Son into the world to die for sinners. The one righteous who saves the wicked.

Today's passage reminds us of several important things:

- God is holy, just, and righteous
- His standard is perfection and righteousness
- No one meets the standard
- All deserve wrath, judgment, and condemnation
- Christ came into the world to save and rescue sinners through His life and death
- All who by faith trust in Christ are are spared from the wrath of God



- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?
- What is a sin you have been struggling with that you need to repent of?



- **REVIEW**
 - Read **Genesis 18:16-33** from the sermon and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
 - Additional Scripture:
 - 2 Corinthians 5:21

- What big takeaways did you have from the sermon?
 - What did this teach you about God?
 - What did this teach you about man?
 - What did this teach you about salvation?

- **REFLECT**

- How does Abraham's dialogue with God in this passage illustrate the role of intercession?
- What can we learn about God's character from His willingness to engage with Abraham's requests and His response to the possibility of sparing the city for the sake of a few righteous people?
- How do you interpret the balance between God's justice (in punishing sin) and His mercy (in considering sparing the city for the righteous)?
- Abraham seems concerned not only for the righteous individuals but for the entire city. How does this reflect the idea that the righteous bear some responsibility for their wider community?

- **RESPOND**

- Are there times when we hesitate to approach God with our concerns? What might this story teach us about God's openness to hearing our prayers?
- Have there been times in your life when you felt like you were "negotiating" with God? What does this passage teach us about that?
- What is a practical step you can take as a result of this sermon?

- **MEMORIZE**

- Psalm 139:9-10 – If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.



- **BUILD UP:** How will you follow Jesus this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him? We have several discipleship opportunities for you to participate in.
 - **MDWK** is a time of education and growth in order to build up the Journey Church body. We offer a handful of intentionally chosen classes that cover a broad range of topics and are taught by quality teachers from within our congregation. Classes are at 6:30p every Wednesday. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Women** seeks to equip women to be rooted in the Word of God and bold in their faith. Our events and small groups focus on letting the gospel shape all spheres of our lives. Gather is the first Saturday of every month. Contact Laura DiLeonardi (laura@tjclive.com) for more information.

- **TJC Men** exists to build up men for the glory of God, the growth of the Kingdom, and the good of the world. The men's ministry meets on the 2nd Saturday of every month at 8:00a. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **TJC Students** is passionate to see every parent equipped, every leader developed, and every student disciplined into baptized, self-feeding, disciple making followers of Jesus who are letting the gospel shape every sphere of their lives. Our student ministry meets on Wednesday nights from 6:00p-7:30p for MDWK worship and Sunday mornings at 8:30a and 10:00a for small group. Contact Larry Davis (larry@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **TJC Young Adults** exists to equip young adults ages 18 to 29 in becoming passionate followers of Jesus who enter their life in Christ. We do this through intentional relationships, fellowship, and worship centered around the gospel. The Fount meets Tuesdays at 7:00p. Contact Hunter Christian (hunter@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **SEND OUT:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story, your story, or the gospel? We have several opportunities for local and overseas missions.
 - **For the City:** Serving international students at Cumberland University, serving the homeless at Compassionate Hands, supporting our local missions – Reach out to Jeff Long (jeff@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **For the Nations:** 2025 trips to the Philippines, Turkey, Rome, Indonesia, London, and Israel are open for applications now – Reach out to Shawn Casto (shawn@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **PRAYER**
 - Pray over any request from your group members.
 - **Pray for our church staff:** Jackie Cornett (Kids Ministry Assistant)
 - **Pray for our long-term units on the field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
 - **Pray for our short-term teams**
 - Central Asia Team departing on March 7, 2025
 - Southeast Asia Team departing on March 7, 2025
 - Europe Team departing on March 21, 2025
 - Southeast Asia Team #2 departing on April 25, 2025
 - **Pray for the unreached.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>