

Genesis

Chapter 18 - God's Merciful Visitation

Shall Not God Do Right (vs. 22-33)

Genesis 18:22-33: Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD. Abraham came near and said, “Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked. Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?” So the LORD said, “If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account.” And Abraham replied, “Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am but dust and ashes. Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, will You

destroy the whole city because of five?” And He said, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.” He spoke to Him yet again and said, “Suppose forty are found there?” And He said, “I will not do it on account of the forty.” Then he said, “Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?” And He said, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.” And he said, “Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord; suppose twenty are found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy it on account of the twenty.” Then he said, “Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy it on account of the ten.” As soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the LORD departed, and Abraham returned to his place.

What an amazing passage this is. A visit from God. Can you imagine? And it started off clearly undefinable in the sense that, “Who are these strangers visiting me as I'm looking out my tent?” But he is receptive, and he is

receptive to the strangers in the sense that he showed hospitality. And Scripture reveals that there was that receptivity of Abraham to be hospitable. Hebrews chapter 13 says, “Don't neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for some have done this and have entertained angels unaware.” And of course, that's exactly what happens within this particular passage. Not only is the Christophanies, that is to say Christ's presence in the Old Testament, but we have two angels there with him as well. And what an interesting, interesting thing. Well, it starts off kind of innocuously in the sense that these are strangers. He entertains them. We see him rushing with great alacrity, with a desire to demonstrate care and love towards these strangers, not knowing where they're from.

Nevertheless, as the conversation begins to go, we begin to find out that maybe these individuals know far more than we could imagine. And as they're eating, they turn to Abraham, and they go, “Let's talk about your wife. You do know that she's going to have a child?” And of course, Sarah in the background hears this. I'm not saying that women eavesdrop, but in this

particular case, I know it's an anomaly, but in this particular case, she was. And so, in the passage, she hears this, and she laughs, but not out loud. Not like Abraham in the earlier text, but she laughs to herself. They say, "We know she laughed." She denies it, "I did not laugh." Of course, obviously not out loud. But they said, "Oh, you did. Oh, you did." That dialogue alone probably changed the dynamics for Abraham, realizing that he's dealing with somebody that's far greater than just strangers. It is interesting that when they first appear, he greets them with a normal greeting of somebody in a respectful way. He would greet them with the word "*'āḏôn*," which makes reference to a kind of respectful greeting of somebody perhaps of superior quality or somebody that you want to demonstrate some kind of kindness to. He will use this word over and over again to address them. So, he'll use the word "*'āḏôn*," which oftentimes is translated perhaps "master". Sarah will actually use it to describe her relationship between her and her husband, and she'll refer to him as "*'āḏôn*," that is to say, "Lord".

Within your Bibles, and once again, I just want to make this distinction, and usually if you have the New American Standard, which we use probably most because of the accuracy of the translation; when you look at that particular Bible, what you'll see is the way that they designate the words. So, once again, when you see a “Lord” that's probably “*’āḏôn*,” which would be that respectful greeting. When the “L” is capitalized, but the other letters are not, that's probably the word “Adonai,” which is interesting because up to this point, that name has not been used. And then when you see the letters capitalized all the way through, that is what we call the Tetragrammaton, that is to say, the name of God proper, which we oftentimes transliterate into “Yahweh” or “Jehovah”. So, this is His name. Of course, that name is not revealed until Moses. Of course, we know that Moses wrote the Pentateuch as well. But it's interjected within the text because Moses is letting us know this is Jehovah. So, he's letting us know that this is God present with man. Interesting enough, He comes in a form that is not recognizable to Abraham. The question arises then, why would God not

show Himself as recognizable to Abraham? I mean, up to this point, He has been talking to him. The word of the Lord has come to him.

And just to make this note, in Genesis 15, we have Abraham actually using the word “Jehovah,” which is probably the only time that he uses it. We're saying, “Where did he even come up with this name?”

Because it's not really defined until Moses. And I'm not going to get into that at this juncture. But the point is that we have literally God present. And within the text, let me just show you the passages that will define this.

If you look in Genesis 18:1, it starts off with all capitals, right? So, we know that this is God visiting. We know who this is.

As you drop on down, you look in verse 3, how does he refer to Him? “Lord”. So, what we see is that there's not a recognition of who He is. Nevertheless, because he is being hospitable, it's opening a door to this.

As you go on within the passage, every time the Lord will speak, the text will let us know that this is God Almighty.

(Genesis 18:13) “And the LORD said to Abraham...”

Once again, all capital, even though Sarah will actually use the lowercase to refer to her relationship with her husband in verse 12.

Then in verse 14,

(Genesis 18:14) “Is anything too difficult for the LORD? ...”

Once again, Jehovah, or Yahweh. So, we see the grandness of God.

This makes this text extremely magnificent in the sense that God is visiting, but not in a way that is recognizable to Abraham. This visit then turns into kind of an adjudication of sorts. We have it going from a visit of strangers and a sense of hospitality into the realm of the forensic. Now, I use that term not to make reference to science, which I think is probably used more that way, but in the fundamental Latin definition, which begins to describe forensic as that adjudication that comes before an open court. And so, we have an interesting picture of open court, because he begins to

then dialogue with what he perceives now to be the judge of all the earth. And there is an interesting moving away from what he had initially said.

So, as you come into the passage and we come to the text, for the first time, Abraham will refer to God as “Adonai”. Now, the reason why that's important is that word, even though “*'āḏôn*,” which is a form of Adonai, is more respectful, “Adonai” is only used in reference to God's name. So, he is recognizing within the passage. Now, the reason why he uses “Adonai” is because the emphasis is, “You possess everything.” “Adonai” makes reference to the fact that He's possessor and owner of everything. So, as he begins a dialogue with what he perceives to be the judge of all the earth. He recognizes, “You own everything. You possess everything. So, whatever You say goes.” Nevertheless, in the midst of this, he's going to be coming before the judge and appealing. Now, what also makes this passage extremely interesting is that it is a picture of intercessory prayer. Even though he's seen this one face to face, I've often thought about,

you know, how does God react to our prayers? Does He marginalize our prayers? Does He laugh at the frivolity of our prayers? How does He see our prayers? And within this passage, you really see this wonderful picture of how God responds. He responds in such a way that Abraham will go from beckoning Him to perhaps spare Sodom and Gomorrah if there are yet 50, that then he goes to 45, and then he goes to 40, and then from there he goes in increments of 10. And I'm going, "Well, that's a pretty big jump." He goes 30, then 20, then 10. So, the point of the matter is that while he's beckoning with the judge, he must realize that there is an acceptance of his dickering with Him in this sort, that if in fact the judge were frowning, if in fact He was responding in such a way as He would angrily come back, we would realize that maybe he would pull back and maybe come with increments of two. Nevertheless, what he does is he actually goes further, and he has a sense of freedom to do this. What Scripture is letting us know is that God is very approachable. And I'm glad to know that, because there are a lot of prayer requests that I have that I look

back and I'm going, "Wow, I'm glad He didn't laugh at me, and I'm glad He didn't make fun of the things that I was asking for, and I'm glad He realized the feebleness of my request." But He doesn't laugh at us. Now, what's interesting is the contrast to this, but we laugh at Him. When Sarah was told that she was going to have a child this time next year, but then she laughs as Abraham had laughed earlier, as God had told him. So, how different is that?

When you go to the Old Testament, the nature is to perceive God as, once again, harsh, but you're not reading it right. Because as you begin to open up Scripture, you realize we're the ones that are harsh, not God. In all of this, the fact that God is coming in a way that is more than innocuous, almost stealth, to visit Abraham, it is strange; we would think that He would perhaps come in all of his glory, but there's a reason for that. And the reason is, I believe, actually described in the Book of Job.

Now, the reason I bring up the Book of Job in this particular context is that Job was a contemporary of

Abraham. One of the reasons why we say that, if you look at the end of the Book of Job, Job 42, it's about somebody that's suffering and perceived to be suffering righteously. He's a righteous man, but he's suffering, perhaps in his own mind, unjustly. And so, he ultimately comes to the court of debate before the God of all the universe, which is a pretty bold thing to do. Scripture itself tells us that Job was the most righteous man that walked on the face of the earth. And we actually believe that Job predates Abraham by a few years. One of the reasons why we believe this, and if you look at Job 42, at the end, it says in verse 16, (Job 42:16) “After this, Job lived 140 years...”

Now, God gives him 140 years more. We understand, and also this is, by the way, Jewish tradition, rabbinical tradition.

(Job 42:10) “The LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the LORD increased all that Job had twofold.”

That includes his age.

So, the sages, of course, understood that meant that when he was tested, he was 70 years old. Therefore, God gave him two more 70s, which is another 140 years, which is actually 210 years that he lived. Now, the reason why we believe that he lived around the time of Abraham, and I don't want to take too much time on this, is because that's how long people were living around Abraham's time. Scripture actually gives you the timetables. Nahor lives 148 years, Terah 205, Abraham 175, Isaac 180. It's in that particular timeline. And we know that the age of people was about the same. Also, if you look in Job 42:12, wealth was actually gauged with livestock. And that was exactly the way wealth was gauged with the time of Abraham. Now, what we understand at the beginning of Job is that Job lived in the city of Uz. I just like saying that word, which is east of Canaan, which is in the realm of Edom or maybe in the Arabian area, but that's where he was living. And Scripture tells us at that time he was the most righteous man on the face of the earth. When he begins to deal with all of the pains that happen in his life, whether it's the loss of his home or his family,

ultimately his sores and the problems that ensue from that, he begins to wrestle with, “Should I talk to God or not? Because this is really unfair.” And let me just show you a couple of passages.

Job 9, I don't know if you've ever felt this way, but have you ever been upset at God? Or more specifically, and I know you guys are way too holy to think that way, so let me just put it another way, have you ever been upset about the things that God is doing in your life? So, if you were honest with yourself, you were really upset at God.

But if you look at the end of Job 8, and if you look at verse 20, Bildad begins to describe this sense of justice of God.

And he says in verse 20,

(Job 8:20) “Lo, God will not reject a man of integrity,
Nor will He support the evildoers.”

Now, in Chapter 9, Job goes, “Yeah, I know that's true, but...” And that's where we all seem to land up.

So, it reads this way in Job 9:1,

“Then Job answered,

(Job 9:2) “In truth I know that this is so;

But how can a man be in the right before God?

(Job 9:3) If one wished to dispute with Him,

He could not answer Him once in a thousand times.”

I mean, how do you argue with God? I mean, you walk up to Him and say, “I'm right. You're wrong”? I mean, how's that going to happen?

(Job 9:4) “Wise in heart and mighty in strength,

Who has defied Him without harm?”

What, are you going to go against Him? And do you think you're going to come out of that?

(Job 9:5) “It is God who removes the mountains, they know not how,

When He overturns them in His anger.”

I'd probably ask, “What did the mountains do? What did the mountains do wrong? Why do You overturn them?” Of course, the mountains can't argue with Him.

(Job 9:6) “Who shakes the earth out of its place,

And its pillars tremble;

(Job 9:7) Who commands the sun not to shine,
And sets a seal upon the stars;

(Job 9:8) Who alone stretches out the heavens
And tramples down the waves of the sea;

(Job 9:9) Who makes the Bear, Orion and the Pleiades,
And the chambers of the south.”

He's going into constellations. You didn't even think that God had constellations in the Bible, but yeah, He invented them.

(Job 9:10) “Who does great things, unfathomable,
And wondrous works without number.”

He actually is describing the greatness of God that goes beyond our imagination. So, how could you argue with God?

(Job 9:11) “Were He to pass by me, I would not see
Him;

Were He to move past me, I would not perceive Him.

(Job 9:12) Were He to snatch away, who could restrain
Him?

Who could say to Him, ‘What are You doing?’

(Job 9:13) God will not turn back His anger;
Beneath Him crouch the helpers of Rahab.”

Actually, the word in the Hebrew, “*rahab*,” which makes reference to the storms of pride.

(Job 9:14) “How then can I answer Him,
And choose my words before Him?”

(Job 9:15) For though I were right, I could not answer;
I would have to implore the mercy of my judge.

(Job 9:16) If I called and He answered me,
I could not believe that He was listening to my voice.

(Job 9:17) For He bruises me with a tempest
And multiplies my wounds without cause.

(Job 9:18) He will not allow me to get my breath,
But saturates me with bitterness.

(Job 9:19) If it is a matter of power, behold, He is the
strong one!

And if it is a matter of justice, who can summon Him?

(Job 9:20) Though I am righteous, my mouth will
condemn me;

Though I am guiltless, He will declare me guilty.

(Job 9:21) I am guiltless;
I do not take notice of myself;
I despise my life.

(Job 9:22) It is all one; therefore I say,
‘He destroys the guiltless and the wicked.’

(Job 9:23) If the scourge kills suddenly,
He mocks the despair of the innocent.

(Job 9:24) The earth is given into the hand of the
wicked;

He covers the faces of its judges.

If it is not He, then who is it?”

You look at the earth, and of course, it kind of reminds of Ecclesiastes, you go, “Everything seems to be pretty unfair across the board. I mean, oftentimes the wicked seem to get away with murder, so to speak. And it just doesn't seem to make any sense.

(Job 9:32) “For He is not a man as I am that I may
answer Him...”

It's interesting. What is Job wanting? He's wanting to talk to somebody on an even keel.

“... That we may go to court together.

(Job 9:33) There is no umpire between us,
Who may lay his hand upon us both.

(Job 9:34) Let Him remove His rod from me,
And let not dread of Him terrify me.

(Job 9:35) Then I would speak...”

You realize that he's wrestling with this whole thing of coming before God. You see it all the way through the book.

If you look in Chapter 13, you'll see it as well,

(Job 13:3) “But I would speak to the Almighty,
And I desire to argue with God.”

Drop on down to verse 18,

(Job 13:18) “Behold now, I have prepared my case;
I know that I will be vindicated.”

“Because I'm a really good guy,” fundamentally is what he's saying. And of course, he'll present his case pretty well.

You come to Job 16, and in verse 21, you can hear him once again just cry out,

“O that a man might plead with God
As a man with his neighbor!”

Why am I bringing all of this up? Because that's exactly what God does in visiting Abraham. He comes as a man, and He lets him plead his case, as a man, man to man. That's amazing, isn't it? You can't help but believe that much of the way that He approaches Abraham was as a result of the beckoning, of course, God had so ordained it to be.

But if you look in Job 23,

(Job 23:1) “Then Job replied,

(Job 23:2) Even today my complaint is rebellion;
His hand is heavy despite my groaning.

(Job 23:3) Oh that I knew where I might find Him,
That I might come to His seat!

(Job 23:4) I would present my case before Him
And fill my mouth with arguments.”

(Job 23:8) “Behold, I go forward but He is not there,
And backward, but I cannot perceive Him;

(Job 23:9) When He acts on the left, I cannot behold
Him;

He turns on the right, I cannot see Him.

(Job 23:10) But He knows the way I take;
When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

(Job 23:11) My foot has held fast to His path;
I have kept His way and not turned aside.

(Job 23:12) I have not departed from the command of
His lips;

I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my
necessary food.

(Job 23:13) But He is unique and who can turn Him?
And what His soul desires, that He does.

(Job 23:14) For He performs what is appointed for
me...”

I guess, in a way, he perceives that it's fate that's
actually ruling his life in an inauspicious way, and he

begins to realize that his fate is both ominous and dark as we look at the passage.

Therefore, he says in verse 15,

(Job 23:15) “Therefore, I would be dismayed at His presence;

When I consider, I am terrified of Him.

(Job 23:16) It is God who has made my heart faint...”

Clearly, he's wrestling with these things.

And as you come to Genesis 18, as Abraham will stand before the Lord and he'll begin to give his requests to the judge of all the earth, as we'll see within the passage, we begin to realize that this is not an easy venture. And probably the longer he talks to Him, the more he realizes this is God Almighty. Because we know that he calls Him “Adonai”.

We pick up in Genesis 18,

(Genesis 18:22) “Then the men (angels) turned...”

We know that they're angels because Genesis 19:1, by the way.

“... the men (angels) turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD.”

That's an interesting picture, isn't it? You see how the narrative is going? There, the Lord is standing and nobody's moving. Abraham's going up. Have you ever had somebody just kind of stick around? You thought the conversation ended, but then they're sort of just staring at you. You go, “You want to talk about something else?” He still remained standing before Him.

(Genesis 18:23) “Abraham came near and said, “Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?”

Once again, I just want to emphasize that it's a forensic case that he's dealing with. So, the righteous are those that are not necessarily perfect, but those that are not unlawful. Whereas, when he deals with the wicked, it would be translated in this particular context, the criminals. “So, would You off the righteous, the person

who is lawful, along with the criminal? Would You actually put them together? You wouldn't do that.”

(Genesis 18:24) “Suppose there are fifty righteous (lawful people) within the city; will You indeed sweep (snatch) it away...”

Now, I just have to have you notice this interesting nuance within the passage. There's nothing within this particular text where God says, “I'm going to sweep away the people.” It's the city. I've thought about this in particular when you come to Revelation 18, and it says that the great city Babylon, which is the cities of the earth, are going to be destroyed. But in Chapter 18, as it states, “Come out from her, so you won't be destroyed.” So, it literally is God giving man a choice, but man can't leave those things that are destructive in his life. He can't forsake those things, even to save his own life.

“Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it?”

(Genesis 18:25) Far be it from You to do such a thing...”

Now, he's going to repeat that phrase again, “Far be it from You.” It's actually one word in the Hebrew. It is the word “*ḥālîlâ*”. Now, that word is significant in the sense that it literally is declaring, “What a profane thing, what a horrible thing that would be for You to do that.” It comes to the root word “*ḥālal*” in the Hebrew, which makes reference to something that, if I could describe it this way, would be a stain, something that would be a wound. It would be like somebody lying. They're not telling the truth, and it becomes a treachery. So, it's a stain. It's something horrible that you could think of. And so, his point is, “What a horrible thought it would be that You make no distinction between a person who is doing right and a person who is doing wrong. What a stain that would be. What a disappointment that would be. How that would pierce my heart.” And actually, “*ḥālal*” has the inference of piercing, it was so painful. So, don't just read over some of these things.

“Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! ...”

Once again, he uses the same word within the text.

“... Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?””

Now, the name “Judge” that he uses as well as “justly” within the text makes reference to setting things right.

The whole purpose of a judge is to make things right.

The world will call evil good, and good, evil, as we read in Isaiah 5. But within this text, the emphasis is, “I

know You'll set things right because that's what a good judge does. You'll make things right.” So, the Lord

responds. And it's the graciousness of God, of course.

God is far more gracious than we are. We come before

God in intercessory prayer, and our perception is that

we're helping save these people, and God says, “You're just doing exactly what I raised you up to do.” You have

to go back and realize that everyone that God chooses,

He chooses for the particular purpose to save. So, that

when you go, in particular in the Old Testament, and

you see people like Moses, why did He choose Moses?

Well, if you remember, Moses goes and kills somebody because he's hurting a brethren. So, he goes in a rescue mission. Now, albeit, he does it wrong. But he has this bent towards rescuing. And Abraham has demonstrated this. It would be erroneous for us to perceive Abraham as somebody unattached to Lot. Because if you remember, I mean, he brought his whole army against those that had kidnapped Lot and went against them, and won and risked his own life. It was Lot that he was willing to say, "Whatever land you want to choose, you choose." So, the attachment to Lot is extremely, very much the center to this whole dialogue within the passage. Because as he comes before the Lord, he's actually saying, "Will You save Lot?" We know that because he continues to go down in increments. And it's not that he's trying to save the whole cities for the city's sake, but he knows that his nephew Lot is there and he's extremely attached. Why would God choose somebody that is extremely attached to people? Why would He choose somebody that is extremely loyal to people? Why would He choose somebody that is unselfish enough to give

somebody and you take seconds? Why would He choose them? Because that's God's heart. And the same thing is true with Moses. In fact, you'll find Moses where the children of Israel go to such a rebellion that God's about ready to take them out. And Moses says, "You take them out, take me too." And God goes, "That's why I chose you. That's why I chose you." You look at David and he is one that can probably be described as in John 10, the good shepherd lays down his life for a sheep. Why did God choose such a person? And all the way through Scripture, even when you consider Judah was chosen, and Judah was chosen not because he was totally righteous, because obviously he had some really bad issues that came into his life. But when all was said and done, and the life of his brethren, was on the line, he says, "Take me. Don't take them." And God goes, "That's why Judah will be the one that I choose."

So, all the way through, we know that the choosing of Abraham, we read this dialogue back and forth, and this debating back and forth, and you know, it almost

seems that what's the need? Why do we go through this? And God is drawing out this individual that loves and that cares for people. And that's what He's doing for us. I have found that in the difficulties that we oftentimes face, I easily become apathetic and strongly lethargic towards the issues of people in my life, but God will sometimes shake up my world. And when He shakes up my world, guess what? I pray a whole lot more. But something else happens. My heart begins to be softer, towards others, more caring. And that's exactly what He's wanting us to do. So, the whole process of this is God working in the heart of Abraham. Because the initial, “Shall I not tell this one that I have chosen what I'm about to do?” What's the debate of this? “I've actually called him to bless and to be a blessing.”

So, we come into the passage,

(Genesis 18:26) “So the LORD said, “If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account.”

(Genesis 18:27) And Abraham replied, “Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord...”

That's “Adonai,” by the way. It's the first time that he recognizes Him as God, according to the text.

“...although I am but dust and ashes.”

We can almost see a little bit of Job in this, the realization. How do you talk to God? You know, “He's great. I'm dirt that you throw away.” It'd be one thing to have good soil. But dust is not good soil. It's just something that's discarded. And ashes are something that blows away. So, the insignificance of his life before God. And he comes before Him, and he says, “I'm but dust and ashes.”

But with that being said,

(Genesis 18:28) “Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, will You destroy the whole city because of five?” And He said, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.”

(Genesis 18:29) He spoke to Him yet again...”

The picture is one of adding upon. So, you can almost feel, according to the Hebrew text, the weightiness of what he's doing. It's like pushing a judge. “You sure you want to do that? You know, up to this point, He's been nice to you.”

“He spoke to Him yet again and said, “Suppose forty are found there?” And He said, “I will not do it on account of the forty.”

(Genesis 18:30) Then he said, “Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?” And He said, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”

(Genesis 18:31) And he said, “Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord...”

To the possessor, to the owner of all things, to the master that controls all things.

“... suppose twenty are found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy it on account of the twenty.”

(Genesis 18:32) Then he said, “Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?””

Now, the way I count it is there are basically 4 total with Lot, his wife, and his two daughters. However, as we read a little bit further in Chapter 19, they're engaged to be married. So, there are two men, so that would make it 6. So, you just need to find four more, right?

The passage says,

“... and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy it on account of the ten.”

(Genesis 18:33) As soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham...

Because Abraham said, “This is the last request I have.” So, God says, “You done?”

“... the LORD departed, and Abraham returned to his place.”

There is an underlying magnificence of this passage. I don't know if you caught it or not. It really lies within the question of Abraham, “Surely, You wouldn't take the righteous and make them even with the wicked?” God doesn't answer back within the text. We would say, “Well, that would be so horrible for God to do that; for God not to make a distinction between the righteous and the wicked. It would pierce my heart to know that He would be that unjust.” But He is that unjust. Because our Lord and Savior, Who was the “Righteous One,” died for the unrighteous, and was put right alongside of a criminal, and they died the same. How piercing that is. How profane that is. That one righteous, who knew no sin, would become sin for us, that we might have the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. How unfair that is. Romans 3 says that the just died for the unjust, and that He became both the just and the justifier through that. What a magnificent truth that God is actually showing in this interesting picture, yes, that would be so unfair. We would all be on board with that. That would be so unfair for the righteous to die. And God would have us see that and show it to us

so that we would look at the cross and go, “It is so unfair that He would die for my sins.” That we would feel the depth of despair in the horribleness of that, how horrific that is, that He would do that, and that we would then turn to repentance because of that. Only God would work something like this, right? It's the graciousness of God.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You, and we give You thanks that You loved us so much, that You would do the profane thing, something unimaginable. The just would die for the unjust. That You would take upon Yourself our sins. How unfair that is. When we come to You with our prayer request and we ask You to work on our behalf, it's hard for us to imagine that Your love for us would be superior to Your judgment upon us. That we could actually come boldly before the throne of grace and realize that our sins, though we deserve to be punished, had been forever dealt with because of Your

love. Will not the Judge of all the earth do right? He'll do more than right. He'll do loving.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed, a passage like this is written so that we might realize that we could come to Him and find forgiveness. That beyond what we perceive would be fair, He goes into the realm of mercy. And I know there are things in your life that you feel like are just unforgivable, irreversible. But if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away; all things become new. And if you'll confess your sins, He is faithful and just, He'll forgive you. And He'll cleanse you from all unrighteousness. And you could do that today.