

Bargaining With God?

Scripture Reading — Genesis 18:16-33

Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but ... What if only ten can be found there?" Genesis 18:32

Can we ever bargain with God? In this passage God tells Abraham about his plans for Sodom and Gomorrah. Maybe Abraham is concerned about his nephew Lot, who has moved with his family into Sodom (see Genesis 13:12; 19:1-2). Abraham's heart likely beats faster as he thinks about God's possible judgment. What if there are righteous people there?

Abraham asks God if he will spare the city if there are fifty righteous people there. Then he lowers the number to forty-five and then to forty, thirty, twenty, and ten. It sounds a lot like bargaining that was commonly done in the marketplace--and yet God answers patiently without changing his plans to check things out (see 18:21).

Why is Abraham so bold to talk this way to God? Because he trusts God. Abraham asks, "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Abraham's questions are based on his trust that God will do right.

Do we ever try to bargain with God? If so, is it based on trust in the Lord, or on our own perception of what's right? Note that Abraham not only makes his requests from the foundation of trust; he also makes these requests for others. Are there any situations today that are like Sodom's? Let's remember that sinners can still repent and become righteous through Jesus. Are we ready to ask for their salvation?

Prayer

God of justice and love, may our world turn to you. Help us to see others with compassion and to ask for their salvation. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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