

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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THE THREE VISITORS

Genesis 18:1-15

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INTRODUCTION: We are moving right along in our study about Abraham. Some of you have told me you've been studying ahead of me and that's great. It means a lot to know that the messages are hitting home.

I have two points to my message today:

- The Lord appeared as three men.
- Abraham's sense of urgency was timely.

SCRIPTURE Genesis 18:1-2

The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. ² Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

This is our first notice of Abraham's sense of urgency.

SCRIPTURE Genesis 18:3-6

He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. ⁴ Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. ⁵ 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."

"Very well," they answered, "do as you say."

⁶ So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread."

"Quick" is our second notice of Abraham's sense of urgency.

SCRIPTURE Genesis 18:7-15

Then he ran [our third notice] to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried [fourth notice of urgency] to prepare it. ⁸ He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

⁹ *“Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him.*

“There, in the tent,” he said.

¹⁰ *Then one of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.”*

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.

¹¹ *Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”*

¹³ *Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”*

¹⁵ *Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I did not laugh.”*

But he said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

THE LORD APPEARED AS THREE MEN

EXPLANATION: The Lord appeared as three men. Your translation might say “angels”. Notice we have the singular word “Lord” referring to “three”. One appearing as three. Three appearing as one. I believe here we have the earliest manifestation, or at least a representation, of the Trinity - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Some would disagree with me, and that’s fine, I’d say it’s open to interpretation. Other than the scripture telling us the Lord appeared, how do we know it was the Lord?

- Something about their appearance brought a sense of urgency and reverence from Abraham. He hurried to meet them and bowed. He had had visitors before, but these were different.
- Next, they asked about his wife, even though they had not met her. Not only that, but they asked about her by her new name. They were obviously not mortals. They demonstrated their omniscience, which means all-knowing.

Had they asked for “Sarai”, they would have exposed themselves as just people.

- Next, one of them prophesied about the son that would be born, even though Abraham had not told them of the promise. Again, they demonstrated their all-knowing power. And then they make the confident prophecy that she would have a child.
- They knew Sarah laughed to herself even though she denied doing it. Again, they showed their omniscience by knowing the heart of Sarah and her secret laugh.

But I believe the main reason Abraham recognized them as the Lord is because he had seen the Lord before. Do you remember the covenant where the Lord appeared as a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch? If you think a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch don't look like three men, you are correct. But there was something special about how the Lord appeared to him the first time that conditioned him to be sensitive to another appearance of the Lord. Had Abraham missed God move the first time, he would have likely missed it the second time.

Another reason he recognized the three men as the Lord is because he had experienced the Lord before. The Lord called him and was faithful to him. The Lord helped him win a battle against seemingly impossible odds. The Lord forgave him when he messed up. And numerous times, the Lord restated his promise to him.

APPLICATION: When we see the Lord move, when we experience it, then we'll be sensitive and recognize when he moves again. God's moves are fluid, ever changing. He doesn't change, but the way he moves in our lives changes. If we aren't in tune with him, we'll miss it when he moves. If we miss it the first time, we'll likely miss it the next time.

There are times when I see certain patterns happening, and I believe God is about to move. Sometimes he does, sometimes he does not – or perhaps I miss it.

ABRAHAM'S SENSE OF URGENCY WAS TIMELY

EXPLANATION: Abraham had waited on the Lord for a very long time, at least in human terms. He had become impatient on at least two occasions, first when he took his estate to Egypt for food and second when he had Ishmael by Hagar. He had learned to wait on the Lord. He had learned that faith in God's timing was everything. God had reminded Abraham of his promise so many times that Abraham had no doubt that God would move when he was ready.

Well, now, God was ready. And what was Abraham's response? He moved quickly.

- Verse 2: He hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet the Lord.
- Verse 6: He told Sarah to get the finest grain quickly and start baking.
- Verse 7: He ran to the herd to pick out a calf.
- Verse 7 again: His servant hurried to prepare the calf for food.

Let's look at where Abraham was in life at the point the Lord appeared to him. He was waiting on the Lord. That doesn't mean he was loafing around, just chillin', waiting on God to do something "one-of-these-days". No! He was being faithful in the daily grind. How do we know? Because he had grain – "fine grain", a calf ready for slaughter, and curds and milk. Do you know where these things come from? They come from the daily grind of being a farmer. What if Abraham had been unprepared? What if he didn't ration the grain or the meat or the labor to prepare them? Being prepared is called good management. It's also called good strategy.

APPLICATION: This past week, one of you told someone who does not attend church here about my message on waiting on the Lord. That person said to me, "Waiting is not easy, is it?" No, it is not, but the sooner we can accept the fact that God does not work on our timetable, the better our lives will be!

I want you to hear this. Life in the daily grind... management in the daily grind... is of the Lord. Being faithful in the daily grind demonstrates that you are not looking for the easy way out. Being faithful in the daily grind builds character. It teaches you to do without now so you can have later. So, while you are waiting on the Lord, keep doing what you know needs to be done and leave the timetable to him.

EXPLANATION: But, (too bad I don't have the sound of thunder to enhance my point here) when God is ready to move, he moves with those who have the sense of

urgency. Abraham had waited long enough and when God showed up, he moved as fast as he could. At 99 years old! I'd like to have seen the almost 100-year-old Abraham telling his 90-year-old wife to get with it and make some bread quickly. I'd like to have seen the 100-year-old Abraham running to the herd and choosing a calf.

- Look at Noah – he waited and waited and then one day the rain came.
- Look at Moses and the Israelites – In Deuteronomy, God told them they had circled a mountain long enough and it was time to move.
- Look at Moses' successor and the Israelites – In the book of Joshua, they crossed the Jordan River into the land God gave them after a forty-year wait!

There was another motivator for Abraham. The time clock was ticking for this elderly couple and Sarah pretty well summed it. Her thought in verse 12 was exposed to us by the all-knowing Lord who appeared as three men. "*After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?*" They knew the utter impossibilities because of their physical limitations. Abraham had missed the Lord the first time when he had a son by the servant. He didn't want to miss the Lord this time. He waited, he waited, he waited, he waited, he waited, he waited...all the while being faithful in his everyday life. And then one day the Lord showed up and said, "It's time."

ILLUSTRATION: In the trench warfare of World War I, war was described as "months of boredom punctuated by moments of extreme terror." I am sure that was a very true statement and that all the training in the world would not have prepared the soldiers for those moments of terror. But no training at all would have made those moments of terror even worse. An army can never become lethargic and apathetic. An army must always be prepared.

CONCLUSION: And so must we always be prepared. We must be faithful. We must be ready so that when God wants to make a move, he can count on us. As a body of Christ, we must be prepared as well. We must take care of business so we won't hinder his movement. If we aren't prepared, I fully believe God will move on to the congregation that's ready – and the congregation he was going to use will completely miss the blessing as the Lord leaves them behind to wallow in their own

lack of preparation.

It's interesting how there are really two sets of people. The naysayers who say it can't be done and stand there scratching their heads. And those who know it can be done. A 100-year-old man and a 90-year-old woman having a child. All things are possible with God.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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