

# Living In God's Favor

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 24 May 2026

Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[ 0 : 00 ] All right, friends, let's look into this passage together that I want to talk about.! Am I up here? That's me, living in God's favor.

We're in Genesis chapter 18. I hope you've been able to follow along with the last couple of messages and be up to date about what we're dealing with in this passage.

We are working our way verse by verse through the book of Genesis. I've told you last time, my plan right now, and I think it'll hold unless the Lord makes it different, is I'll preach probably through the death of Abraham, which will take us up to about Genesis 25, which is half the book.

And once I get there, I'll probably stop, and then we'll switch over to a book in the New Testament that I've already decided on. No, I will not tell you right now. And we'll begin working our way verse by verse through that book of the Bible.

So today, living in God's favor is the second or third installment that I'm bringing you from this Genesis 18 passage. Let's begin in verse 1 of that chapter.

[ 1 : 05 ] I want to read through it so that you see the entire context of what we'll be dealing with. So follow along, and I'd like for you to do this. As I read, please hold this in your minds and think about this.

Why is this chapter in the Bible? Why is it necessary for us to know what's going on in the interchange between Abraham and God? Why do you as a Christian this morning need to know this, hear this, read this, and contemplate this?

Why would this be important to your walk with Jesus Christ? All right, let's think about that together as I read. Now, the Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day.

When Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him. And when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth. Now, I want you to keep in mind at this particular juncture, our friend Abraham is 99 years old doing all this in the heat of the day.

He ran and bowed down before them. Then he said, My Lord. Immediately, Abraham recognized who he was speaking to. My Lord, if now I found favor in your sight, please do not pass your servant by.

[ 2 : 21 ] Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will bring a piece of bread that you may refresh yourselves. After that, you may go on since you visited your servant.

And they said, Well, so do as you have said. So Abraham hurried. He hurried into the tent to Sarah and said quickly, Prepare three measures of fine flour and knead it and make bread cakes.

Abraham also ran to the herd and took a tender and choice calf and gave it to the servant. And he hurried to prepare it. He took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared and placed it before them.

And he was standing by them under the tree as they ate. Now then they said to him, Where is Sarah, your wife? And Abraham replied, There in the tent. He said, I will surely return to you at this time next year.

And behold, Sarah, your wife, will have a son. And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old. They were advanced in age.

[ 3 : 25 ] And Sarah was past childbearing. She was about 89 years old, about 10 years behind Abraham. Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I've become old, shall I have pleasure, my Lord being old also?

And the Lord said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I indeed bear a child when I'm so old? Is anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time, I will return to you at this time next year.

And Sarah will have a son. Sarah denied it, however, saying, Oh, I did not laugh, for she was afraid. And he, that is the Lord, said, No, but you did laugh.

We pick it up in verse 16, and that's where we'll start this morning for the message. Then the men rose up from there and looked down towards Sodom, and Abraham was walking with them to send them off.

The Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham what I'm about to do? Since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed. For I have chosen him, so 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 upon Abraham what he has spoken about him.

[ 4 : 43 ] And the Lord said, The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave. In his talk this morning that Jeremy gave before in his precedent for the call to worship, Jeremy used the word terrible, terrible sin that David had done.

Here, the Bible is using the word exceedingly grave. Grave, same concept. He said, I will go down now and see. Now, this is the Lord speaking. I will go down now and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to me.

And if not, I will know. Now, 16 through 21 is what I'll bite off this morning. Let's see what happens right after that, so you'll know how this is sandwiched in between.

Well, so then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the Lord. So the two men left to go down toward Sodom, and the Lord is still standing there with Abraham.

Abraham came near and said, Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Well, suppose there are 50 righteous people within the city. Will you indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the 50 righteous who are in it?

[ 6 : 00 ] 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?

I told you in the last time I preached through this, that shall not the judge of all the earth deal justly shows that Abraham knew who he was speaking with. Capital J.

Alright? Now in verse 26, So the Lord replied, If I find in Sodom 50 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 50 righteous are lacking five, will you destroy the whole city because of five?

What an argument he's making here. And he said, I will not destroy it if I find 45 there. So he spoke to him again and said, Suppose 40 are found there.

[ 7 : 05 ] And he said, I will not do it on account of the 40. Then Abraham said, Oh may the Lord not be angry and I shall speak. Suppose 30 are found there.

Do you notice how he was going in increments of five? Now he jumped to 10. Okay, yeah. And he said, I will not do it if I find 30. Then Abraham said, Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord.

Suppose 20 are found there. And he said, I will not destroy it on account of the 20. Then he said, Oh may the Lord not be angry, you know, and I shall speak only this once.

Right, Abraham. Suppose 10 are found there. And the Lord replied this way. I will not destroy it on account of the 10. As soon as he had finished speaking to Abraham, the Lord departed.

And Abraham returned to his place. There's some enigma here, some mystery here, isn't there? Again, why is this in the Bible? And why is this important to your Christian walk?

[ 8 : 07 ] What does this have to say to you today? As someone who's walking with the Lord and trying to deal with sin, how do we understand the concept of all of this? Well, in this passage, we have what is truly a remarkable exchange between friends.

Between friends. And the astonishing bit for me is that one of those friends is God. God himself talking with a man as if, just like if I came down and started a conversation with Mark.

It's just like that. Now, God created us as relational beings. And so it shouldn't be too surprising to us that we have an interchange, something like this.

It just surprises us, maybe even astonishes us, that God himself would come down in this form and engage in conversation with a man and then so patiently deal with a man who is asking God these questions in a way that shows, Abraham, you know so little.

And you're talking to the God of the universe who's got all of this firm in hand. And yet, Abraham, now what if, far be it from you, you wouldn't do that, would you?

[ 9 : 19 ] What do you think Abraham has in mind as he's getting the Lord down and down and down on the number? What do you think he has in mind? Who's he thinking of? Lot. And who is Lot to Abraham?

His what? His nephew. That's right. And you'll remember that at one point, Abraham had to take the male servants of his household and go off and fight a battle against Keter-Lammer in order to release Lot from what they had been taken as prisoner by this invading army.

Abraham had to go and fight these guys to get Lot back and all the people that the Keter-Lammer had taken into captivity. And so now he's entreating the Lord.

Now you wouldn't destroy it. Let's get it down. Ten. Because he feels like, okay, ten, I'm safe. I got Lot. I got his daughters. I got his wife. I got four. So I got six to spare.

We're good. Right? Isn't that amazing how we can do this bargain thing with God? Have you ever, you know, God, if you'll just heal me, then I'll.

[ 10 : 26 ] God, if you'll just give me this or make this then. Hmm. We're almost talking to God like he doesn't know the outcome.

He doesn't know what's going to happen, you know, two days from now or two weeks from now. Nevertheless, think of this. When you think of your many, many relationships, think about that. You have many relationships, varied relationships with people, relationships at different levels, right? When you think about that, you realize that those relationships require actions and responses from you and from the people you relate to.

In fact, friends, most of the trouble that we get into in relationships has to do with our perceptions about those actions and those responses that are coming from other people and from us.

For example, we might get into trouble with someone we relate to because we perceive that they are not acting enough toward us in some way. They need to be more grateful and show it.

[ 11 : 37 ] They need to be more patient and show it. They need to be more loving and kind. And so we're saying your actions are not up to snuff here.

You need to get your act together or some type of response. I'm not getting the response from you based on my actions toward you.

I did this and said this and provided this and look, you didn't even fill in the blank. Do you see what I'm saying? Actions and responses. That's just how relationships work.

And so a lack of that action and response leaves you feeling lonely. It can leave you feeling betrayed. Is that not true?

It can leave you feeling like you've been in some way left out in that relationship. This is just how God made us.

[ 12 : 34 ] Abraham is no different as he has this interchange, this communication with God friend to friend. If you listen to last week's message, I made a big deal out of Abraham being the friend of God.

Now here's what happens in our passage. God acts to initiate. That's very important. God is taking the initiative. Who was sitting in the tent in the heat of the day, right, at 99 years old, sitting in the shade, and he looked up and there's three men standing in front of him.

He never saw them approach, they just appeared. Boop! And there they are. And he runs to meet them to fall down at their feet. But who's taking the initiative to show up and talk with Abraham?

God. God takes the initiative to come to Abraham and that sets off a series of interchanges between God and Abraham. We also have some people in this passage and they are acting, but they are acting wickedly.

And God responds to counter that wickedness with his judgment. So the judgment of God is in response to the wickedness of some people, a group of people, cities of people in their sin.

[ 13 : 54 ] Abraham acts to entreat the Lord according to God's sense of justice. And God responds to Abraham's appeals with his promise that he will treat the righteous with his favor and he will not

inflict punishment of the wicked on the righteous.

He will not treat the righteous and the wicked the same way. That is a promise that he makes to Abraham. Now, look, folks, there are foundational relational truths in this passage about having a relationship with God as Israel, the people of Israel, and Moses who penned this as the people of Israel are hearing this for the first time and thinking back as they are looking back on this interchange between the founder of their faith, Abraham, our father, is how they refer to him, and the God they trust in as they see that interchange happening.

They need to cement these relational truths in their own hearts so that this isn't wasted on them. We need to do the same thing in our walk with the Lord because we serve a God who doesn't change.

And so while the Lord's not coming down to walk with me literally side by side as in the form of a human being, the Lord walks with you and walks with me in the power of the Spirit, as we look to His Word, as we bow our hearts in obedience to His Word and as we offer worship to Him out of a gratitude, out of a sense of not only gratitude but love, a deep love for the Lord.

These are the things that bring us to do what Abraham did, to fall at the feet of the Lord as it were and say to Him, here is your servant. Do with me as you will.

[ 15 : 47 ] That's the heart that we bring to God. That's the way that we want to respond to God initiating His love in our lives. Now, I want to put some things up here on the screen for you to follow with.

God is just. Now we're rehearsing some of these relational truths that we need to hold on to. First of all, God is just.

So God punishes sin. Another one, God is good. So He rewards righteousness. He doesn't have to do that but He does do that because it's His nature to do that.

The Lord has positioned us, if you notice on the screen, as His children to have relationships grounded in His goodness. That is what defines us as Christians is the goodness and love of God working through our life as we relate to our world.

that's who we are. The spiritual friendship we enjoy with God and with one another as we celebrate in this room together is defined and empowered by the goodness of Jesus Christ working in our lives.

[ 16 : 59 ] Now, what does that mean and look like as we relate to God and to each other? What does all this that I just wrote up here for you, the grounded in His goodness, having this spiritual friendship with God and how that defines the way that we are empowered in relating to other people, how we should be thinking about how that should define us as we relate to our world because our world is going to slam us.

Things are going to happen. Our health is going to decline, etc., etc. We're going to face financial tension. We're going to face very important decisions about our future.

We wonder, should I zig or should I zag? All of this has to do with the way we relate to our God.

Why? Because He owns you. Because God owns your life.

Why wouldn't you go to the God who owns you and ask Him? Seek Him. Honor Him. Bow to Him.

And make whatever decision you're facing about serving Him.

Lord, whatever track this takes, I want to make sure that my heart is set to serve you in it, through it. That keeps you like this.

[ 18 : 16 ] It keeps you centered. You with me? It keeps you centered. Now that's what I want us to see in our passage today. As Abraham talks to God, God is, you know, He knows the whole story and so I wonder if God had this wry kind of smile on His face as Abraham's trying to talk Him down.

It's just like, Abraham, I know exactly what you're doing and I know who you're concerned about.

Everything's going to be fine. Not so much with Lot's wife, but Lot's going to be fine. Right?

The Lord knows the whole deal. So what does this mean and look like as we relate to God and each other? Well, I told you at one time months ago when I talked about this, God wants us to live by these things.

He wants us to live by His heavenly certainties. Folks, as Christians, we're not people who live in the gaps of life. Like, you know, we're so undone because we just don't know how this is going to turn out.

Well, okay. No, we don't. We don't know when we're going to die, but we have heavenly certainties to live by. And what this means is we help each other live with perseverance and hope.

[ 19 : 25 ] The fact that I have heavenly certainties to live by as the Scripture teaches me means I can help you and you can help me to live with a persevering hope. The hope of the Bible in Christianity is the hope of certainty.

Not the hope of, I hope it doesn't rain. It's the hope of, I know who's in charge. And so, I can hope in Him. You with me on that? I can hope in Him.

We want to live by that. Another one that God wants us to live by in this relational issue is His objective truth. That helps steady our relationship with God and with other people so that I want to speak the truth in love into your life.

Listen, and you want to speak the truth in love into my life. That's how we help each other live in obedience to His commands. Whatever it is you're struggling with or rejoicing in, I want to come alongside of you and I want the truth to bear on that relationship in that moment and situation. The best thing I can do is minister God's truth to you with love. Which means I'm patient, kind, gentle. Right?

[ 20 : 41 ] This is especially true in our marriage relationships because this is where we're modeling the goodness of God as God condescends to be with us.

And then finally, we want to talk about His grace through faith. We want to live by God's powering, God's favoring in our life as we have a faith walk with the Lord.

What does the Bible say? I walk by faith, not by sight. We're heavenly minded, not earthly minded. We have to live on the earth, but we live on the earth with a heavenly mindedness that guides our life.

We interpret life through the lens of heaven, through His promises, His truths, His certainties. And so we help each other to love and serve in the Lord as we do this.

Now I hope you see some of that, how that connects dots and relates to each other. But now here's the reality. The day-to-day wear and tear of life tempts us to doubt God's goodness and to doubt these very things.

[ 21 : 44 ] It tempts us to waver in our certainty that the Lord always, always acts as our best friend to do what is best for us. Always. Even when I suffer, even when I have pain, even when I see things happening to the people I love and I feel a helplessness to do for them.

The world, the flesh, your own flesh, and the devil, they all conspire to work against your heart living in a God-is-good-to-me perspective on life.

God-is-always-good-to-me perspective on life. No matter what, God doesn't change. He isn't fickle. He is steady in His walk and relationship with me even when I'm faltering and unsteady.

That's why David called Him His rock in the Psalms. The psalmist, in fact, declares this, look, you are good and do good.

The psalmist in Psalm 119 stated this about God Himself. You are good and you do good. Now, in that same chapter of Psalm 119, the psalmist tells you, tells me, how to live in response to God's goodness.

[ 23 : 01 ] And here's what he says. Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. His loving kindness is everlasting. So we are called on by the Lord Himself to give thanks as an appropriate spiritual worship response to God being good and ministering His goodness to us.

We don't do that on the basis of feelings, do we? We don't fall out of Christianity just because we wake up and we don't feel like it today.

Or I've had a hard time and now so I want to be grumpy and I don't want to be kind and patient and gentle. Hmm. I've got something I want to tell you and I want to get it across to you and I want you to see my point of view and I want you to come around and make life better for me.

Because I've decided in this moment I'm God. We can get very, very prideful about this stuff.

I'm going to talk about that in just a moment and what that does to our relationship with the Lord and with other people. Now look, let me bring it back around. This is all in the way of helping you just get in the juice of this thing.

[ 24 : 18 ] I want you to get right down in the middle of it. Our passage this morning, have it up on the screen, our passage this morning shows us the care God Himself is taking to reassure Abraham of God's goodness.

Both in keeping His promise to His chosen ones, God's made a promise to Abraham. More than a decade ago He told him, you're going to have a child. You're going to have a son.

He's going to be your heir. You know, with Sarah. Now he's 99 years old. Years have gone by. They got all this working against them. You know?

And also in God's execution of His judgment against sin. That's what this is showing us. God is executing His judgment against sin. He's also keeping His promise.

Now here's how I've outlined this message in this passage so far. Here's what I've done. I talked about God's friendship with you last time in verses 1-8. And you see the verse from James here that kind of sums this passage up.

[ 25 : 21 ] And the scripture was fulfilled which says, And Abraham believed God, speaking about this, and it was reckoned or accounted, credited by God to him as righteousness. And he was called the friend of God.

They were friends. That's amazing. Then we saw this, God's faithfulness in Genesis 18, 9-15. By faith, even Sarah herself, the one who's laughing in doubt behind the tent door, received ability to conceive.

She received it. Who'd she receive it from? God. Even beyond the proper time of life, even at 89, way past menopause, she's been barren all her adult life since she considered Him faithful who had promised.

promised. Now, she may be laughing behind the tent door in our passage, but she quickly comes to the point out of conviction that God keeps His promises. And if He says, I'm going to have a baby by this time next year with old Abraham, He's going to make it work.

Right? That's what the Lord does. That's where we've been. Now, what I want to talk to you about this morning is this third aspect of the outline, and then I'll, God willing, I'll do the fourth one next week, God's favor in 16-21, His favor.

[ 26 : 48 ] He asked the question in verse 16, Shall I hide from Abraham what I'm about to do? Do you see that? Now, this is how we know God's will and His purposes for us in our walk with Him.

God must reveal, He must demonstrate, show, open up His will to us. or the things of God remain unsearchable and unknowable to us.

We cannot in any way in our own strength and power as human beings get to the place of opening up the will of God and knowing we can't obligate God. We can't say things to God that put Him in a corner or in a box and make Him do what we want Him to do.

You tell me about this. You're facing things in your life you need answers for. You need direction for. That direction comes through the power of the Spirit as you search the Word and as you operate within the principles and within the boundaries of what God's Word tells you about how to walk with Jesus.

Whatever it is, folks, it doesn't matter what it is. All of that comes under the purview of a great and mighty God who will guide your life and help you make decisions that are wise.

[ 28 : 03 ] You won't find in Scripture where it says, well, go to this college or buy this car or take this job or move to this place or whatever. You have to search that out in the Lord by acting in wisdom, by seeking wise counsel, and by operating within the principles of Scripture.

I could give you example after example of how this has worked out in ministry as I've served people as a pastor and they face these things, but I want to go on and help you with some of this other.

Now listen, folks, why does God favor the righteous with the knowledge of His will?

Why does the Lord choose to reveal to Abraham what He's purposed for Sodom and Gomorrah? He doesn't have to do this. He could just say, okay, Abraham, we're out of here and go away and then go down to Sodom and Gomorrah and do His thing and leave Abraham up in the higher elevation to look down on the valley and watch all of this happen.

But that's not what God does. And He tells us why. He answers this question. And so this becomes now about five points that I want to bring out to you as to why the Lord in this passage has chosen to reveal His secret will to Abraham, to bring it out into the open and discuss it with His friend.

Only to have His friend come back and say, well, hey, wait a minute. I hear that plan and I'm a little concerned with that plan. Can you and I just talk about that plan for just a minute, guys?

[ 29 : 39 ] Can we just have a little discussion here about this plan? I see a little bit here that troubles me. I'm thinking about somebody, you know, in my mind. And so maybe we could just work it out where you could just do it if this were the case.

Far be it from you, right? Far be it from you to do something like, you know, kind of mess up your reputation. We don't want that. Come on, I'm doing us.

I'm doing us up here. Isn't this what we do? I'll bargain with you a little bit. I want to tweak a little bit about what I see happening here because I'm not really comfortable with my situation.

So let's change that up a bit. Let's get it a little bit less uncomfortable. A little bit less scary. A little bit less lonely.

Because that can't be your will because I'm suffering. And that just can't be your will. Folks, he's getting ready to wipe multiple cities off the face of the earth.

[ 30 : 41 ] Not just Sodom and Gomorrah. There are many cities in the valley and they're all going to be wiped out because of sin. I watched a program, a documentary type program with Suzanne the other day.

I kind of made her watch it a little bit. I kind of guilted her a little bit. You don't want to sit here and be with me and watch this? Because it's kind of not her thing. So we sat and we watched this guy using LIDAR, I think is what he's called.

Radar, the ground penetrating radar from space. And it strips away everything and shows you like it can show you all these frames and foundations and all from ancient civilizations.

We're watching that and guess what he was looking for? Evidence of Sodom and Gomorrah. And so I watched that whole thing and turned it off and kind of looked at her and went, yeah, probably should have watched something else.

She was right. they can't find it. They thought they found it. Do you know why they can't find it? Because it was obliterated. Because God didn't leave any evidence.

[ 31 : 44 ] He obliterated the place. As in, taking great swaths of land and turning it on its head upside down, if you can imagine this happening.

It's just like the place left the earth. This is the power of Almighty God in the judgment of sin. It's one of the reasons that he told Lot and his family and probably told Abraham, this isn't something that I want you watching.

Because I don't think the human soul can handle what you're going to see. But this is what I do with sin. Now when you and I think about what God had to do with his own son to overcome our sin, we see something of the power of the judgment of God but also the mercy.

What did God's own son have to suffer so that you and I could have our sin overcome by heaven so that God would overcome what had overcome us and guaranteed us a devil's hell?

This is the work of the Lord. It's always been this way. So let me give you real quickly this first answer here. Why does God favor the righteous with the knowledge of his will? The first thing that I want to point out to you that I see because God wants us to trust him and his ways.

[ 33 : 07 ] That's where we start. Look at verse 18 with me. Well I'll read 16 and walk you into it.

Then the men rose up from there and looked down towards Sodom and Abraham was walking with them to send them off.

So the three guys are walking towards Sodom and Abraham's walking with them. He's just being neighborly and the Lord said shall I hide from Abraham what I'm about to do?

And that probably piqued his interest, right? Say what? What's going on? Since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation. You see that in verse 18. And in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

Did you see? In him all the nations of the earth will be blessed. Boy, what a statement. So what we're seeing here Abraham will be blessed and he will become a great and mighty nation.

Nations will be blessed through his life. In him all the nations of the earth in fact will be. But wait a minute now. Wait a minute. Here's where the rub comes in because the people of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the valley they're not going to be blessed surely.

[ 34 : 12 ] They're not going to be great. They're not going to be a blessing to anyone. They're going to be obliterated. So how can the Lord say that all the nations of the earth will be blessed through Abraham when we have this reality of Sodom and Gomorrah?

Ah, I'm glad you asked that question. That's the rub. That's why this passage is in the Bible. That's the dilemma. Is God fair when he has to judge sin?

Is God fair when people suffer because of sin? Is God still fair is he still good? Does he know what's going on or did he take a lunch break?

And we were like hey, hey come back. You see what's happening here. You're going to do something about this, right? Right? How can the Lord say this?

That all the nations are going to be blessed when he's getting ready to wipe these people off the face of the map. How are we to understand this difference in the way God treats the wicked and the righteous?

[ 35 : 17 ] This is answered for us very early in the Bible and it's necessary. Is God unfair in the way he chooses to deal with people in their sin? Well, what does God say about all of this?

I think there's lessons here for Israel about what I'm going to call spiritual focus. Now, this is where it really starts to narrow for us. Spiritual focus. What are you talking about?

Well, I think a wrong view, a wrong view, that is a man-centered view. You start with man in order to make or develop your perspective on the things that are happening around you.

If you put you at the center and use you as the interpretive measure for what's happening, you're going to be in trouble, aren't you? Because you're so limited and you're so self-favoring and self-focused.

Do you know this about you? I'll say it again just to make sure that you get it. You are self-favoring and you are self-focused. You are self-centered people. I'm pointing in everything this morning.

[ 36 : 22 ] And so am I. And so we as a family in the Lord need Christ and His wisdom and His mercy and His grace and His love and His kindness to help us work through that reality with each other.

There's no sense in hiding it. The elephant in the room is we are wicked-hearted people and we need the cross of Jesus to help us. That's the truth. Isn't it?

We live in a world of wicked-hearted people and some of them do some of the most heinous things. You step back and think about it and think what kind of level of depravity do you have to sink to do that?

To a child or whatever it is. If these people, if we take a man-centered view of God's favor, if Israel does that, then what can happen is we can foster pride, fear, and apathy against the Lord.

I just chose those three because in my experience in life, those three seem to rise to the surface most often. Pride, fear, and I'm talking about a fear like a fear of man, a fear of circumstances, a fear of life, a fear of situations.

[ 37 : 36 ] You're just full of phobias. You're just scared of life. You're scared to fail. You're scared of being made to look foolish. You're scared of saying something that people will think is not very intelligent.

You're scared of outcomes. You're scared of the unknown. So you live in fear. Pride, fear, and apathy. Because you come to the place where you say, you know what, I don't care anymore. Let's take these in turn. Pride. Say a couple things about them. For Israel, this would be this kind of idea. You know what? We are chosen and you are not. So I look down my nose at all the other nations.

We're God's chosen people and that's exactly what Israel did do. They did do. And Jesus upbraided them for it. They could say, we have special privileges and you don't.

We're God's favorites and so we're better than you as a nation. Israel did that and God took care of it. Now, this kind of pride, folks, could lead you to make, take matters into your own hands.

[ 38 : 43 ] Just like, now think about it. You have this kind of pride. It's easy for you to just kind of take life into your own hands and do what you want to do. And that's very dangerous.

Remember when Abraham did this? I'll just say it real quickly. Back in Genesis chapter 16, Abraham took matters into his own hands, didn't he? God had made the promise, I'm going to give you a son through your wife.

I'm going to give you a son. He's going to be your heir, not Eleazar of Damascus. I'm going to give you a son. You just be patient. And it wasn't long before Sarah came to him and said, hey, I figured out a way we can have a kid.

You just go into my maid, Hagar, and have relations with her and when the baby's born, born on my lap, give it to me. That becomes my child. And so they did that. How'd that work out for them? Terrible. Terrible. And it got so bad in the household, Sarah came to complain to Abraham about what he did. Like, woman, it was your idea.

[ 39 : 44 ] I just said yes. There's no saying no to you. And so now she wants Abraham to do something about it. And so what does he say? You do what you want to do. Your maid's in your hands and in your power.

You go do what you want to do. And so Sarah went out and sinned and mistreated Hagar and treated her terribly out of pride. Out of pride. Folks, as a Christian, it becomes a Jesus plus kind of plan for my life.

A Jesus plus idea. A Jesus plus desire. Jesus isn't enough. I got to add to it because I want my circumstances to change.

I want to manipulate the situation. That's exactly what Abraham and his wife did and it really, really was a bad thing. How do we combat this, Jeff? Look, you need to remember who you used to be. Not to put you down in the doldrums or discourage or depress you. No. You need to remember that one time in your life you were an unforgiven enemy of God separated from Him in your sin.

[ 40 : 48 ] You just need to remember what God had to do to bring you to Himself. Right? What did He have to do? And that will help with your pride.

It will put us right where we need to be. Humbly saying thank you to God for Jesus. And then saying, God, how could I ever try to run out ahead of you? That's impossible. Please forgive me for complaining.

Please forgive me for grumbling. Please forgive me for being all downcast about this as if there's no hope in the world. I took my eyes off of you for a little while. Please forgive me and help me to love you with all my heart, soul, and strength.

This is how we live. What about fear? God is not fair with me. Now this is what happens. Because I'm full of this fear about my own life and about where this is going, God's not helping me enough in my situation or in my suffering.

God's not doing what I want Him to do. I don't want to keep going on like this. Now guys, as you look at me right now and you think, do you understand I'm preaching right out of my life?

[ 41 : 57 ] Can you all understand this? For those of you who know what has happened to me since January, your pastor is speaking to you right now right out of where I've lived. I face the same temptations you do in all of this.

I have the same answers before me that you do. I didn't know if I would live or die. At its worst, when they told me the diagnosis, I didn't know if I'd make it.

They didn't either. When I started that IV antibiotic treatment for those six weeks, they didn't know what was going to happen with me. I've had since then several nurses tell me, Jeff, you understand how high octane that stuff was, right?

I said, yeah, I sure do. Now, because it wiped me out. They're pumping that stuff into my body to go deep to fight the infection so that I don't go septic.

You know, did you hear about Kyle Busch, you guys that are NASCAR fans? Kyle Busch died of sepsis. He got an infection in his blood and it took him out. Like within 48 hours or so, he was gone.

[ 43 : 01 ] This is exactly what life is like. And so, what do we say? Well, God isn't fair because I'm suffering and I'm not getting out of it the way I want to.

I'm not being able to extricate myself from this. It's not fair. You could get to the point where Israel is saying, God punishes the righteous with the wicked.

My life doesn't look any different from anybody else. Why isn't God showing up to help me? We can never really truly trust or know God's mood or His mind on things.

So, we become scared of God and we learn to resent Him. We're just a step away from learning to resent God because God isn't showing up and doing the things that we think need to be done.

It's not fair. Not to me. Folks, that's fear. You are living in fear. How do we combat that? Remember whose you are. God gave His Son for you.

[ 44 : 00 ] He's good. He's gracious. He's kind. He's long-suffering. He's not changing. And we're not so special that God's going to bend what He is and who He is. Isn't it enough that He gave His Son?

We tend to just discount that in our pain. Finally, apathy. God does what He does. We can't do anything about it.

We're pawns for Him to use as His whims dictate so we learn to make life what we want it to be. Fine. God, You're going to do that. I'm just going to go out and I'm going to do what I need to do what I want to do.

I'm going to take care of it. I'm going to do my plan. How do we combat that? Remember who you are. Remember who you are. You belong to somebody.

You're not your own. You were bought with the blood of Jesus Christ. You're God's child forever. So, folks, being heavenly-minded is essential for godliness.

[ 44 : 59 ] Since Abraham is going to be a blessing to the nations, that is, what that means is, he's going to be a blessing to people. groups from all over the world are going to be blessed through Abraham. The Lord has kindly elected to tell Abraham about one group of people who will not be allowed to share in any part of that blessing.

And that's the wicked people of the valley that God will destroy. And those people represent all people who remain unbelieving, trying to chart their own course through life, and basically telling God, look, if I need you, I'll call you.

Otherwise, I'm doing my thing. That's how most people live. That's how I used to live. Now, let me give you another reason here that God favors us with the knowledge of His will.

The first one was He wants us to trust Him and His ways and not get all caught up in ourselves, which we can do. Another reason God favors us with the knowledge of His will, He wants us to be encouraged, and He wants us to remain faithful.

Remain faithful. I want you to notice verse 19. For I have chosen Him. For I have chosen Him.

That's what it says. Chosen here literally means to know or to become known.

[ 46 : 21 ] To know or to become known. Now, follow with me. So, the beginning of verse 19 could just as accurately read this way. For I have known Abraham.

That is exactly how the New King James version translates it. If you have the New King James, that's what it says. God knows Abraham. In other words, friends, this is important because it's an intimate relational knowledge that reaches into the depths of Abraham's very soul.

This is what we all have as God's children saved and forgiven by faith in Jesus Christ. We have a God who knows us in the depths of our souls. You can't get any deeper than that.

He is the friend of friends. He knows you better than you know yourself. So, we might pull all this together. These two ideas of chosen and know.

And we might say it this way. The Lord chose to know Abraham in a saving way. And that meant to know Abraham through the righteousness of God's Son.

[ 47 : 31 ] How do we know that? Because the Bible tells us in Genesis 15 that Abraham was counted as righteous. Right? Why? Because of his faith. Because he believed God.

We're the same way. We believe God's testimony about the Messiah. We believe God's testimony about our only hope being in Jesus Christ. And so, as we turn to him, then we receive the righteousness that Jesus purchased for us by his blood.

What is that righteousness? We get to live in the sight of God as if we had lived the sinless life of Jesus. That's righteousness.

That's what we get. He gives that to us as a gift. I don't see you. I don't count you. I don't reckon you.

I don't credit to you the sin that you live. Because of your faith in my Son, I have given you His life of sinlessness and counted it to you in your spiritual bank account.

[ 48 : 38 ] And that's how I look at you. Forever. Forever. You can't change it and I can't change it and nothing in the universe can change it.

That's who you are now. That's your nature. You've been made righteous in the blood of the Son of God. Pretty good deal.

And yet, what do we do? We run and play with mud pies when we have the King of Kings to serve. we turn to ourselves and to the world and we get ourselves in a lot of trouble.

So Abraham, he needs to listen up. Well friends, God chose you. Look up on the screen here. God chose you.

God chose to know you in His Son to be one of those made alive and raised up in Jesus. And I quote now from Ephesians, so that, purpose, in the ages to come God might show the surpassing riches of His grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

[ 49 : 44 ] That's why. Say, why was I saved? Why did God do that for me? So that He could show the riches of His grace through your life. So much of Abraham's encouragement, much of his faithfulness in life is because Abraham knows this God.

and not only, not only, that He's chosen, but also to what purpose God chose him. He knows, Abraham knows, God chose me.

God's favoring me. But then you step back and you say, why? What does God want to do with me? This is Abraham. Well, God's going to use Abraham to establish the nation of Israel.

Jews that come to believe on the Lord and walk with the Lord, they're going to have to believe just like Abraham did. They're going to have to share in the same faith that Abraham had in God.

On one side of the cross, before the cross happened, God promised a Messiah to come and deliver His people. The people He chose for Himself. Abraham believes that promise of God.

[ 50 : 50 ] So Abraham is looking forward to whatever it is that God's going to do to keep that promise. He doesn't know it's going to be the cross, but he believes God will send the Deliverer, the one who will set His people free, the one who will establish His people as a nation.

That's what he said. Nations will be blessed in you, Abraham, because many, many, many people are going to come to have the same faith in me that you have. And you'll be the foundation of that. Abraham is in the bloodline of Jesus Christ. And so Jesus is going to be born down the road within the bloodline of Abraham. I will bring from your own loins.

That's why this next son being born to Abraham is so important. This is how the Lord has chosen to do it. And Abraham is going to be this kind of blessing to the nation of Israel.

And there will remain a remnant of believing Jews even to this day. To this day, there are Jews in Israel, who are looking to Jesus Christ.

[ 51 : 56 ] They are believing God because God is saving His remnant. But God will also use Abraham to bring millions of other people to saving faith, and that's you and me. That's Gentiles.

We believe on God with the same saving faith that Abraham had. Let me give you real quickly a third reason that God wants us to know His will and makes it known to us in the Scriptures.

This is how we know God's will. Right here. Alright? Because He wants us to teach others His ways. He wants us to teach other people His ways.

Again, look with me. Verse 19. For I have chosen Him. That's very encouraging. So that Abraham may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice.

Remember, righteousness and justice are the theme of this chapter of the Bible. the righteousness of God as it is set aside, set alongside the justice of God.

[ 52 : 59 ] Does God stop being righteous when He has to execute justice on sin? Does He just set aside His righteousness and become a bad guy? When God does righteousness, does He stop thinking about His justice and say, oh well, that's okay.

I know that you sinned and I know you really don't believe in my son, but everybody's going to go to heaven in the end because I'm a good guy. No. The righteousness of God rewards saving faith.

The justice of God judges sin and unbelief and that's never going to change. That's the God that we serve. For I have chosen Him that He may command His children.

Notice where that all starts in His life? With His kids, with His household, with His wife. To keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice.

Now look, He's saying I've chosen you to pass on my ways to others, Abraham. This is very important that you do this. This will go through the book of Deuteronomy.

[ 54 : 11 ] You'll see this over and over again as Moses tells the people, do in the ways of the Lord. Don't turn your heart away from the Lord. Do what God has commanded you. He's preparing the next generation for faithful service.

Look, Christians share in God's righteousness and justice. Living righteously means that we live in conformity, obedience to God's will. Living out God's justice means that we're able to make the right decisions based on His will.

We don't choose sin. We choose to live for the Lord. We discern right from wrong. Alright, now folks, one of our most profound blessings and privileges is that we're used of God to teach other people the way of God's grace in Jesus Christ.

We teach them to walk with God. Now, isn't this what we're doing at Grace Church? At Grace Church, we're teaching and helping and supporting each other in walking closely with the Lord and being obedient to Him.

Because if you don't, God will not bless the works of your life. You hear me? Please don't think that you can live in secret or unconfessed sin and manipulate God and lie to yourself and other people and expect God to lead you in the blessing of Christian life.

[ 55 : 28 ] That will not happen. Those are two extreme opposite things. As Jeremy pointed out, when David was confronted in his sin after trying to keep it secret for months, he fell on his face and he repented before the Lord and the Lord forgave him in that instant, right?

An unconditional forgiveness based on the repentance that David had. But what did it take for David to get there? Nathan had to come and confront him in love and say, you're the man. You're the man that has cheated God and lied to yourself and to your people.

And the people were paying the price for it. For David's sin. And David repented. This is how we live. I don't love you if you have sin in your life and you're struggling with some issue in your life that you're not becoming obedient to the Lord.

I do not love you by sitting next to you and saying, well, that's okay. God understands. Just do what you got to do. And I just let you go do what you want to do.

And I don't confront you. Now, I want to do that in love with patience and gentleness. But if you think I'm ever going to tell you your sin is okay, you're in the wrong church. I will never do that to you because I love you.

[ 56 : 49 ] I love Jesus. I love what it took God to do to bring you to the point where you could believe the truth and live it out in your life.

And I will never cheapen that intentionally by trying to be the good guy and not get you upset with me. If it upsets you for me to tell you the truth in love, we'll just have to live with that and figure it out down the road.

But I won't compromise that, you guys. Not intentionally, I won't. And if God forbid I ever did, I have Greg Garrison in my life and he would sniff it out in a heartbeat because we're very close and we talk about our lives together.

And I have a couple of other guys in this congregation who I think would see it and go, hey dude, something going on here, let's talk. Teach people to walk with God, to live for God.

Here's what I want to say on that. Dream big, be obedient and love well. Dream big. You have a big God. What did He say?

[ 58 : 03 ] Is anything too difficult for the Lord? No. And then, a fourth reason, just real quickly, God makes us mindful of His will is this, because He wants us to be blessed in His love.

To walk in the truth of the Lord is to be blessed in the Lord's love and to be loved by Him in it. Again, this is verse 19 and it's this phrase. So that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.

There's the promise. Why does God want Abraham to know this about His will? So that Abraham will. And so that I can bring about what I promised him.

Again, very simply put, living a righteous, obedient life of faith brings God's blessings, things, but you living in the wicked disobedience and making self center in your life will bring God's, at least in a Christian's life, chastisement and discipline and in an unbeliever, it will bring judgment.

So live in the goodness of God. Let your heart be kept warm by the reality that God is good and does good. Obey Jesus. Live in the gratitude and love of the Lord and repent.

[ 59 : 22 ] Alright? The fifth and final reason that I want to tell you this about God's will, that you are blessed to know the will of God as He reveals it to you, is that you would know His goodness.

And this is verses 20 and 21. Look at it with me there. And the Lord said, The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave. I will go down now and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to me.

And if not, I will know. Now listen to this, folks. Verse 20 for me is a chilling condemnation from the Lord. Here's why.

It's the word outcry. The word outcry. If you were to do a word study here, it would be fascinating for you. The word outcry has the idea of this. A loud utterance against someone or against a group for the reason of their wrongdoing.

That's what the biblical sense of outcry is. I have heard the outcry. There is this great, loud, deafening utterance coming to me based on the wrongdoing of these people, and I cannot ignore it.

[ 60 : 37 ] It is deafening. This is the idea. So God has come now to expose and confirm His judgment against Sodom and Gomorrah because their sin is exceedingly grave.

Do you see that in your text? I hope it says that. And the Lord said the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great. Their sin is exceedingly grave.

Exceedingly grave. Again, I ask the question, how far do you need to sink down into depravity to have the Lord Jesus Christ say that your sin is exceedingly grave?

Do you want to hear that from Jesus about you? Your sin is exceedingly grave. Who wants to hear that from the God of the universe?

This is a strong, powerful indictment. And that's why God's saying it. In verse 21, we see how God cares for what He's made.

[ 61 : 36 ] His decisions about how He deals with what He's made, those decisions are not capricious. Here's what that means. They're not impulsive. They're not fickle. They're not unreliable.

Those words apply to us, not God. So how does God show this in these final verses? How does He show that He's not fickle?

He's not rushing into things. How does He demonstrate that He has a full and certain knowledge of exactly what's going on? How's Abraham supposed to know that? If God just shows up and wipes them out, it's like, whoa, whoa!

What's going on? So God's bringing him in on it. Look what the text says. I will go down now and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to me.

And if not, what does it say? I will know. Now this is the interesting part. Did the Lord not already know what the truth was about the condition of Sodom and Gomorrah?

[ 62 : 39 ] Did He already know? Absolutely. Did He really have to go down and see because He just wasn't sure what was really going on down there?

No. I want to show you some verses that test this out. God knew exactly. If you go back up into verse 20, you get your answers to those questions. I see that the sin or the outcry is indeed great and their sin is exceedingly grave.

God's already made the decision about what's going on. He already knows. It's grave. Grave means deadly. Death producing.

Isn't that what a grave is? We don't put live people in graves. It's all about death in the cemetery. And this is what He's talking about. Look at these verses that affirm God's knowledge of all things. For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may what? Strongly support those whose heart is completely His. Whose heart is completely...

[ 63 : 45 ] He knows the hearts of all people and He supports the heart of those who belong to Him. The eye of the Lord moves across the earth. He knows all things. He sees nothing escapes.

No detail escapes. It's the eye of the Lord. Now for people who are living in secret sin and in unbelief and rebellion or people who are wanting to do their own thing or Christians who aren't being obedient to the Lord and trying to play games with God, that's a terrifying reality because God sees their heart and sees everything going on.

For those of us who are trying to live in obedience to God, we know that God is merciful and kind and gracious toward us. He sees it all, but God is merciful toward us. So we don't run in terror from Him and shrink back from Him.

We run to Him and let Him embrace us and forgive us and help us. The Lord looks from heaven. Same idea. What does He see? He sees all the sons of men from His dwelling place.

He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth. He who fashions the hearts of them all. He who understands all their works. Boy, isn't that verse telling?

[ 64 : 52 ] That's a wonderful verse of Scripture from the Psalms. Jeremy, just one Psalm away from where you were this morning, brother. And then finally, there is no creature hidden from God's sight.

All things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. That's pretty a slam dunk case, isn't it? For God knowing our hearts and knowing who we are and knowing all that's going on in His world.

He already knows in perfect terms that the sin in Sodom and Gomorrah is exceedingly grave. So why would He have to go down and see? Here's the answer.

By what God shows us in His relationship with Abraham as He judges Sodom and Gomorrah, God wants Israel. Remember, the original readers of this text were Israel. It was written for them.

God wants Israel and every believer to be confident in God's goodness in His just dealings with mankind to include you. God never deals with you in an unjust, unfair, slow way.

[ 66 : 01 ] His timing is always perfect. Your responsibility is to stay patient in what God's doing. To be attuned in your heart to what God's doing and let the time that God keeps you in the situation

have its effect on you.

And it may not be pleasant, folks, physically, emotionally. God always judges sin. He doesn't play games with people's lives. His actions are always grounded in His goodness and in His full knowledge of every situation and circumstance of your life. Now, here's some takeaways for you as I conclude.

Look at this first one. You are favored by God with the knowledge of His will in Christ in Scripture. That is a blessing and a gift to you, to me. By the ministry of the Holy Spirit, you have the mind of Christ to know God's will for you in living to please Jesus.

You don't have to guess. You can read the Scriptures, read the life of Jesus, read the truths of the letters that we have in the New Testament particularly and know the will of God for how He wants you to live in situations with other people in different contexts.

[ 67 : 13 ] Wonderful. Here's another one. Your suffering, your pain, your hardship, they matter to God. Please don't ever let yourself think that God is some distant thing and He's taken a break from you.

But I want you to understand that your pain and suffering and hardship, they're not more important to Jesus than His work of using those things to conform you to His image. Those are just tools. The important thing is what God's wanting to work in you in Jesus Christ. Another one, the Lord is graciously working in you to see that you don't waste the gift of the knowledge of His will in Scripture.

Don't waste it. Don't set it aside. Don't treat it like, well, whatever, I'm going to do my thing. Discipline yourself in godliness to be a faithful steward with what God is doing in you now and with what He's teaching you now.

You can't know the future. So don't try to go there. How's this going to turn out? Worrying about all that. Getting all anxious about it. Live in the now. Live in the light of what He provides.

[ 68 : 20 ] Take the next step where the light's being shown by the Lord. Take that step. And when you're ready, He'll light and then take the next one. God is preparing you for the next outworking of His purposes in you, for you, and through you.

And then finally, friends, go big for God. You see that up there? Go big for God. Trust Him with a dream that only He can fulfill through your life. I've tried to live that way since I came to understand these principles.

And I told the Lord many, many years ago, I said, Lord, I want to live my life in a way that the only explanation for it is Jesus working in me. I want to dream big.

I want to live big. I want to serve a big God in a big way. And I want to dream a dream of living for You that only You can fulfill through my life.

You ready to do that? Now, I'm asking you to take the Christian life and run with it. Just be faithful. Just be faithful. Just be faithful.

[ 69 : 36 ] Will you pray with me? Father, we thank You for the glories of serving Jesus, for knowing You. We thank You for the opportunities that You provide for us to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus to include the trials, the physical trials, the emotional trials, the trials that we face in our relationships, whether it be our marriage or our workplace or with other relatives.

Whatever it is, we pray that You will help us to look to You and make it about Jesus by simply saying to our own hearts, this is about how I serve Jesus in this trial.

It's not even about the outcome of the trial. It's about how I serve Jesus in it and through it. So, Father, help me to be faithful and to keep my eyes on You. Help me to remember the cross and all that You have done to purchase me away from sin and death.

And now help me to live in the privilege of knowing Your will as You open the eyes of my heart by the power of the Holy Spirit to see these truths in the Bible and then order my life by them.

We pray that for each of our own hearts, Lord. And we thank You for Jesus, for His cross and His Gospel. And we ask You, God, to work in our hearts so that we make the most and dream big so that You will work Your work in our hearts and do a great and mighty and big thing.

[ 71 : 04 ] In Jesus' name we pray and for His glory. Amen.