

# The Power of Intercession

by Jim Cymbala

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*The sermon highlights the transformative power of intercessory prayer through the story of Abraham and Lot, showcasing God's mercy and faithfulness in delivering those we pray for.*

**Duration:** 25:43

**Scripture:** Genesis 19:16

**Topics:** "Intercession"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Lot and the visitation of three angelic beings. These angels warn Lot to flee from the city of Sodom before it is destroyed. Despite hesitation, the angels show mercy and physically guide Lot and his family out of the city. The preacher emphasizes the importance of salvation, judgment, and God's mercy in this story.

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## Transcript

I want to read to you a rather long story. This is just a few chapters after God chose Abraham, I'm gonna call him Abraham, and Abraham is God's chosen one in the Old Testament to leave where he was, to head straight west and go to the land of promise, the land of Canaan. He's there and he's moving about, but he's not allowed to build a house or settle.

He's living in tents and he is waiting and waiting for the promise, he's waiting for a son. He's got all these promises from God and none of them seem to be materializing, but by fate, he's waiting, he's waiting. When you have faith in God and you pray, you have to learn how to wait, amen? Waiting is part of the faith walk.

One day when he's just outside his tent, three men, very unusual men, approach him. They are angelic creatures who are dressed and look like men, but he picks up that they're not men, men, they're sent from heaven. And one of them, he addresses as Lord, and it seems to be, for sure, an appearance of what the Bible calls in the Old Testament the angel of the Lord, not an angel of the Lord like Michael or one of the other ones that are named in the Bible, but the angel of the Lord is either God in some angelic form coming to earth for some purpose or, some people believe, the son of God before he's born of a virgin, appearing on earth in an angelic form, carrying out something that is the purpose of God.

So there's three angels and they start to talk to him and so on and so forth. And then he feeds them, he's very hospitable. And when the men got up to leave, they looked down towards Sodom.

Sodom was a town or city that his nephew Lot had gone to and settled in, Abraham's nephew, and was living there, and it was notorious for its wickedness. And Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way and then the Lord said, one of the three, shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation and all nations on earth will be blessed through him, not only through the Jewish people, but through Jesus Christ who was born of the lineage of Abraham. For I have chosen him so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.

Then the Lord said, the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin is so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know. So now the Bible indicates that the wickedness and whatever's going on in Sodom has caused some kind of cry of what? Of victims, of victimization, of people being abused and ground into the dirt or whatever, or just the cry that has come up to God from the foulness of their behavior.

The men, two of them, turned away and went towards Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the Lord. Then Abraham approached him and said, will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? He's thinking of his nephew and his family. Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are 50 righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of 50 righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike.

Far be it from you. Will not the judge of all the earth do right? And the Lord said, if I find 50 righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake. Then Abraham spoke up again.

Now that I have been as bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, what if the number of the righteous is five less than 50? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people? If I find 45 there, he said, I will not destroy it. Once again, Abraham spoke to him. What if only 40 are found there? He said, for the sake of 40, I will not do it.

Then he said, may the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only 30 can be found there? He answered, I will not do it if I find 30 there. Abraham said, now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only 20 can be found there? He said, for the sake of 20, I will not destroy it.

Notice his argument in prayer. He's praying, he's talking to the Lord, that's prayer. But notice his perseverance and his argument, shall we say.

Then he said, may the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only 10 can be found there? The Lord answered, for the sake of 10, I will not destroy it, Sodom. When the Lord had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.

The two angels, the other two, arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting, his nephew, in the gate of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them, and he bowed down with his face to the ground. My lords, he said, please turn aside to your servant's house, come with me.

You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning. No, they answered. We will spend the night in the town square, and Lot must have known what obviously was going on in that city.

But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate. Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom, both young and old, surrounded the house.

They called to Lot, where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them. Lot went outside to meet them, and this is one of the hardest verses for me to read, and it's in the Old Testament, and Lot is mentioned as someone who is a person of faith. But boy, are we weak even when we have faith in God.

Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him and said, no, my friends, don't do this wicked thing. Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you and you can do what you like with them.

But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof. Get out of our way, they replied, and they said, this fellow came here as an alien, he's Abraham's nephew, and now he wants to play the judge. We'll treat you worse than them.

They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door, but the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. Then they struck the men outside who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness, so they could not find the door. The two men said to Lot, do you have anyone else here, sons-in-laws, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of here, because we are gonna destroy this place.

The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it. So Lot went and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were either engaged or married already to his two daughters, the Hebrew is not clear here, and he said, hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city. But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.

They said, that's a joke. What are you, crazy, crazy old man? They thought he was joking. With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot.

Now listen, I end. Hurry, take your wife and your two daughters, who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished. When he hesitated, the men grabbed his hand and the hands of his wife and his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them.

As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, flee for your lives, don't look back, and don't stop anywhere in the plain. Flee to the mountains, or you will be swept away. And then there's more to the story.

What struck me is that simplifies life, doesn't it? There's a thing called salvation, the Lord delivering people. There's a thing called judgment. There comes a time where, in the case of Sodom, God says, enough is enough.

Now I'm gonna act. Only those who have heeded the Lord's call and believe in him will be saved. Everyone else is gonna come under the judgment of God.

Lest you think that I am reading something harsh and judgmental and whatever, I wanna remind you that if you read Luke chapter 17 carefully, you will hear the word of the Lord, where Jesus, God in the flesh, the perfect man of love, he said, I'm gonna return. He's talking about his return. He said, it'll come like a flash,

like lightning striking the sky.

And they said, when, when will you come? When will you return? And he said, as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be when I return. As it was in the days of Noah, people were marrying, given in marriage, making a living, so on and so forth. And then the door was shut on the ark, and the rest is history.

There came a point when it was too late. Then he said, right after that, even as it was in the days of Sodom, when Lot left, then the judgment came. Many people see this as a picture of prophecy of the coming of the Lord, that he will rapture and take his people out, and then the judgment, it's a picture of the judgment that will come on the world who mocks God and rejects Christ and the salvation that God is offering at such a great cost.

So basically, if you look at that, we are living in the time now, and Jesus said, how was it in the days of Lot? Everybody was doing their thing. They were partying, eating, going out, making money, as if there was no end to this. And then Lot was taken out.

They mocked what Lot stood for. Then it was too late for them. So now I wanna apply this, first of all, to all of us.

I trust, I pray, listen, if you're not a Christian here today, if you're not born again, don't leave the building without receiving Jesus as your Savior. How you could be in a prayer meeting tonight like this and not be a born-again Christian, I don't know, but I'm not talking about going to church, joining the Brooklyn Tabernacle. If you don't have a relationship with Jesus and know him as your Savior, you need to have that tonight.

Congregation, can we clap our hands and say amen to that? And the Lord will do that, and the Lord will do that. I will personally pray with you. I will personally pray.

If you're not a Christian here tonight, you can receive Christ just like a child. It's so very simple. Here's the gist of this.

The lesson of this story is how did Lot get out of Sodom? Only one way. Abraham prayed him out of Sodom. His uncle prayed him out, argued with God.

50, 45, 40, 30. How'd you like to buy a used car from a guy that's talking like that? 40, 30, 20, then down to 10. The Bible says at the very end of that story, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out.

He brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived. Listen again. But when God destroyed the cities of the plain, P-L-A-I-N, flat ground, he remembered Abraham.

What'd he remember about Abraham? He remembered his prayers, and he delivered Lot. Intercession prayer is where three are involved. One talks to God for a third person.

In the Bible, there's actually intercession where someone tries to pray negative things on the third person. That's not what we do. We talk to God for a third person, and God delivered Lot because he remembered Abraham.

What happened when Abraham prayed? Because this is what I want for the person pastors that we're praying for, and then for some family members I have and some other people I'm concerned about. And

anyone else God gives me tonight? What happened? Abraham prayed, and there was a divine visitation to the person he prayed for. An angel came to Lot and talked to him.

We can pray tonight, God, for that person who's out there. God, send somebody, an angel, whatever. A dream, a nightmare, an accident, a person, a voice, a message, whatever, God, send something from heaven to the person I'm praying for because they don't know what's coming.

Lot had no idea what was coming. Notice, we pray, we can pray that God will visit them. How many have some people you love that you would love God to visit them? Come on, lift your hand up, visit them.

Our words haven't done it, our words haven't done it, but we planted a seed, but right now they're rebellious, they're just out there, okay. Number two, the angel gave him a warning. They gave him a warning.

The angel said to Lot, Lot, get out, no joke. Don't play with this, or you'll be swept away. So there not only was a visitation, but there was a warning in such a way that it shook Lot.

He knew, this is from heaven, this is a warning for me and my family, I gotta get out. Or in our cases, I gotta get right with God for that person we're praying for. So there was a visitation, everyone say visitation.

There was a warning, everyone say warning. Now notice the third very tender thing. The first time I saw this a few years ago, I remember just weeping over my Bible, putting it on my desk and putting my head on the Bible and on the desk and crying because I never saw it, how merciful God is.

Even with the warning, this guy Lot is slow on the draw. And he's fumbling around and not moving. And the angel's already told him, hey, hey, wake up.

Don't you get this? I'm sent to give you a warning. Some old man somewhere has been praying for you and I'm here because of him. And Lot falters and doesn't move.

And then the Bible says so tenderly that the two men put their hands on his arms and his wife and the two daughters and actually dragged him out. Isn't God merciful? What kind of power is there in prayer where because of Abraham, they not only visited, they not only gave a warning, they actually pulled him out of the fire, shall we say. Pulled him out, pulled him out.

Because some people are so stubborn, so lost, God has to actually pull them out. But remember this, God remembered Abraham and thus he delivered Lot. He didn't deliver Lot because of Lot, he delivered Lot because of Abraham.

That prayer meant so much to him that he said, I'm gonna do that for you. That's how my daughter's serving the Lord now and is a pastor's wife. I'll say it again for someone that's visiting.

Maybe there's some woman here who has a wayward child. Listen, I tried everything. I tried yelling.

How about screaming? I tried money, I tried manipulation. I tried to protect her. I tried to put guards around her.

I tried to get a situation where she wouldn't go off the rails. I tried, listen, when you love your child, you're gonna do everything. Am I right or wrong? Guess what? She'd go worse.

Because when rebellion and sin gets in somebody, a team of horses can't stop them. Did she know the truth? Yep. Did she know her mom and dad loved her? Yep.

Did she know what she was doing that was wrong? Yeah, although she tried to justify it. It needed a divine intervention and that's what it came to. God delivered her without me talking to her.

In fact, to prove that to me, God, I felt, led me to stop talking to her in the month of October or November and it wasn't until February. I hadn't talked to her for four months by the time I finally saw her. Hadn't talked to my own child.

Did you hear what I said? I hadn't talked to my own daughter because I realized everything I was trying to do was actually not doing it. I had to get desperate and say, God, it's too big for me. I put it in your hands.

You gotta do this for me. Come on, isn't that God faithful? Not wonderful? This is not melodramatic and this is no fancy sermon but I'm gonna give you this verse again. Listen again.

So God remembered Abraham and delivered Lot. Listen again. God remembered Abraham and delivered, not Abraham, delivered Lot because of Abraham's intercession.

He prayed Lot out of a fiery furnace. Now, if we knew Jesus was coming a week from now, two weeks from now, or if we knew some loved one was gonna die, how would we pray tonight? We couldn't lock the doors. Some of you would just stay in and say, I ain't leaving, I'm not leaving.

No, I'm not leaving. No, no, no, I'm gonna see that person come. I gotta pray and pour out my soul and only until we pray through would we feel the peace to leave.

So God remembered Abraham and delivered Lot. Lot. What kind of power does prayer have? You know, if you tell me, Jim, pray and God will help you, I got that, I understand that.

I think most people could possibly believe in that but no, Jim Cimbala prayed for another person and God will do something that's a visitation, a warning, and then if he has to, he'll grab them by the hands. Oh, I thank God for that. All right, how many are happy God will drag people out? He has to pick up their hands and pull them out, right? We gotta see people come to God and I remember here in the other building praying and crying tears.

I used to see him on the, we had benches then, tears for my dad, 22 years, drinking, drinking, drinking, drinking, and now I'm in the ministry. Just drinking, drinking, drinking. Young in the ministry.

My wife knew, wherever we are, if a call comes from my mother and she's crying, I'm leaving Carol, wherever she is, someone will have to take her home, I gotta get to my mom because she's catching who knows what kind of beating. Nothing, nothing could help. He was a deacon in a church at one time.

Nothing, and then God visited him. You can't quit. You can't quit, you gotta keep praying.

Close your eyes with me. Close your eyes and you gotta ask God for the fervency and the faith. Anybody got somebody they really love that they just wanna stand before the Lord for a while here and just bring them to the Lord and talk to the Lord about them? Not about yourself, just talk.

You don't have to do if they're 50 or 40 or 30, that's not the case for us in this situation. But tell them, tell them how much you love the person. Tell them how you see that person locked in, closed, hard, bring it to

God.

So God remembered Abraham and delivered Lot. Anybody here have somebody they wanna just bring with me? Just get out of your seat and come up to the altar and stand here. If you wanna stay in your seat and pray for that person, stay in your seat, but I want those who wanna come up here with me.

Don't focus on 10 if you can't avoid it, just get one or two here that you really can bring to the Lord. We're not gonna have anyone lead out in prayer. It might get real quiet as we pray, but that's okay.

The main thing is our hearts talk to God. I don't know if you know this. You know Karen, she sang, Lord, I Believe in You, right? As a teenager, someone talked her mother and dad into dedicating her to Satan.

So as a young person, part of some Santeria ceremony, she was dedicated to Satan. Didn't know God, liked music, but didn't know God at all. Her sister got saved.

She didn't wanna know about Church Karen. She didn't wanna know about Jesus. She was doing her own thing.

Her sister got saved and prayed her into the kingdom. Her sister, you ask Karen, stop Karen anytime and said, how did you become a Christian? Who prayed, who brought you into the kingdom? She'll tell you it was her sister. Her sister would not let go.

No matter how she laughed and invited her to church, she wouldn't wanna go. Her sister would not give up. Come on, everybody, lift up your hands right now and begin to pray right now for that person, those people that you're burdened about.

Pray for a visitation from God. Pray for a warning from God. Pray for God grabbing their arms and pulling them out if he has to.

Fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, sons, daughters, everybody pray, whether you're sitting or standing, pray. Lift your voice up and pray. Lord, we thank you tonight for the promise and God remembered Abraham and delivered Lot.

Not because of Lot, but because of the prayer of Abraham and his faith, his tenacity, his concern. So God, right now, send angels, send a word, send a dream, send a person, send a song, send a warning. Send something from heaven that the people we're praying for will know God is after me, God is after me.

Let them know that God is after me. He sends someone after me. Let there be a warning, even if it has to shake people to their roots.

Better to be shaken than lost. Let them be shaken, shaken, and then Lord, in your love, in your mercy, put your arms around them, put your hands on their arms and if you have to drag them out, drag them out, lead them out, carry them out, just get them out and we will praise you. Oh God, we will praise you, we'll shout to you, we'll honor you, we'll bless you, we do it now by faith, Lord.

God remembered Abraham and delivered Lot. We stand on that tonight. Get everyone home safely, give us a blessed week, a blessed tomorrow should we wake up that we can talk to people, pray for people, love people, make us a blessing to someone today, Lord.

We pray all this in Jesus' name and everyone said.

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