

Good Men Who Opposed God

Genesis 18:16-23

Genesis 18:16-23 - Then the men rose up from there, and looked down toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off. The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am 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." 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." Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD. Abraham came near and said, "Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"

Introduction:

- A. God came to Abraham for a visit. During this visit, God told Abraham about Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction. Abraham did not like this news and set about to change God's mind.
- B. How often do we want to "change God's mind?" Is it easy for us to rationalize God out of our decisions? Is it easy for us to make excuses when God wants us to act otherwise? Is it easy for us to make exceptions to God's will when we want it? The scriptures tell us about some good people who were opposed to God's will.
- C. Ref. to S, T, P, O, and A.

I. *Abraham*

- A. Consider Genesis 18:23-33

Genesis 18:23-33 - Abraham came near and said, "Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account." And Abraham replied, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am but dust and ashes. Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, will You destroy the whole city because of five?" And He said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." He spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose forty are found there?" And He said, "I will not do it on account of the forty." Then he said, "Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?" And He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." And he said, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord; suppose twenty are found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it on account of the twenty." Then he said, "Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it on account of the ten." As soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the LORD departed, and Abraham returned to his place.

- 1. God's plan was to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.
- 2. Abraham didn't want God to act unjustly and destroy the righteous with the wicked.
- 3. So he negotiated with God for the safety of the cities.
- B. For the sake of the righteous, Abraham opposed what God was going to do.
 - 1. Abraham did not want the cities destroyed because Lot was there.
 - 2. Abraham wanted God to be just.
 - 3. God is just - Isaiah 45:21

Isaiah 45:21 - "Declare and set forth your case; Indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, A righteous God and a Savior; There is none except Me.

- C. God heard Abraham's pleas even though the course was set.
 1. As much as Abraham protested, it was futile.
 2. There were not even 10 righteous people in the city.
 3. God's purposes were to be done.
- D. God knew that Lot was there.
 1. Lot was righteous - 2 Peter 2:7 tells us that.
 2. God provided a way of deliverance for Lot.
 3. Yet, that didn't stop Him from his purposes.

II. *Moses*

- A. Consider Exodus 3:1-4:17
 1. God's plan was to save Israel out of Egyptian captivity and Moses was the chosen leader.
 2. Moses did not think that he could do it.
 3. So he offered excuses as to why he could not.
- B. Moses opposed God's selection of the leader for this task.
 1. In Exodus 3:11 Moses wondered, "Who am I to do this?"
 2. In Exodus 3:13 Moses asked, "What shall I tell them?"
 3. In Exodus 4:1 Moses said, "They won't believe me."
 4. In Exodus 4:10 Moses said, "I'm not a good speaker."
- C. But God answered Moses objections.

1. God told Moses that he would not be alone but that He would be with him - Exodus 3:12

Exodus 3:12 - And He said, "Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."

2. God told Moses to tell them that "I AM" had sent him - Exodus 3:14

Exodus 3:14 - God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

3. God gave Moses the ability to do miracles so that the people would believe the message - Exodus 4:5

Exodus 4:5 - "that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

4. God told Moses that He would be his mouth and then told him to take Aaron as he was a good speaker - Exodus 4:12, 14ff

Exodus 4:12 - "Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say."

Exodus 4:14-17 - Then the anger of the LORD burned against Moses, and He said, "Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently. And moreover, behold, he is coming out to meet you; when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. "You are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I, will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do. "Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you and you will be as God to him. "You shall take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs."

- D. God knew all these things about Moses.
 1. God's purpose was going to be done despite Moses objections.
 2. Ultimately, Moses obeyed the voice of the Lord and did as God commanded.

III. *Zacharias*

- A. Consider Luke 1:5-25 and 57-80

Luke 1:5-25 - In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were

both advanced in years. Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering. And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. "You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. "It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Zacharias said to the angel, "How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years." The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. "And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time." The people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple. But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute. When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home. After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, "This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men."

Luke 1:57-80 - Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her. And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father. But his mother answered and said, "No indeed; but he shall be called John." And they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name." And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called. And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, "His name is John." And they were all astonished. And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he began to speak in praise of God. Fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea. All who heard them kept them in mind, saying, "What then will this child turn out to be?" For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant-- As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old-- Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US; To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to Abraham our father, To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS; To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins, Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, To guide our feet into the way of peace." And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

1. God's plan was for Zacharias and Elizabeth to have John so he could prepare the way for Jesus.
2. God revealed this to Zacharias through the angel Gabriel.
3. But Zacharias did not believe the message - Luke 1:20

Luke 1:20 - "And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."

- B. God proved the truthfulness of the message.
 1. Zacharias was stricken dumb, not able to speak.
 2. Then Elizabeth conceived.
- C. God brought John into the world.
 1. Upon John's birth the family asked Zacharias his name.
 2. He said it would be John.
 3. His tongue was loosed, and he prophesied.
- D. God knew Zacharias doubts.
 1. God worked to convince Zacharias of the truth of His word.
 2. God overcame Zacharias doubts.
 3. Zacharias glorified God and raised John to be God's prophet.

IV. *Saul Of Tarsus*

- A. Consider Acts 9
 1. God's plan was for the church to grow.
 2. Saul was opposed to God's plan.
 3. Saul persecuted the church.
- B. Saul thought he was doing God's work.
 1. Jesus prophesied that some would kill his disciples thinking they were offering service to God - John 16:2

John 16:2 - "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God."

2. Saul said he had lived in all good conscience - Acts 23:1

Acts 23:1 - Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day."

3. Saul said he was a "Hebrew of Hebrews" - Philippians 3:5

Philippians 3:5 - circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;

- C. God proved to Saul that he was not doing His will.
 1. Jesus spoke to Saul on the road to Damascus - Acts 9:5
- Acts 9:5** - And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,"
 2. Jesus told Saul to go into the city and it would be told to him what to do.
- D. God knew Saul's heart.
 1. God was able to take Saul and make him into a great preacher of truth.
 2. He became the apostle to the Gentiles - Romans 11:13

Romans 11:13 - But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,

V. *General Lessons*

- A. Even the best of characters in the Bible had flaws and opposed God at some point - Romans 3:23

Romans 3:23 - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

1. Noah
2. David
3. Peter
4. Thomas, etc.

- B. In the hearts of good men, God's ways will ultimately be respected.

1. It is the characteristic of a good person that regardless of what he has done in the past, he will strive to do God's will in the future.

2. Philippians 3:13-14

Philippians 3:13-14 - Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

C. Man's lack of trust in God does not change God's will.

1. How many thousands did not believe Noah?

2. Yet did that stop the flood?

D. God's purposes are always fulfilled despite opposition - 1 Timothy 1:12-13

1 Timothy 1:12-13 - I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;

E. Man is not wiser than God though sometimes he thinks he is - 1 Corinthians 1:25

1 Corinthians 1:25 - Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

F. God knows how to save the righteous and punish the wicked despite our worries - 2 Peter 2:9

2 Peter 2:9 - then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

G. God knows the heart of those with whom He works - 1 Samuel 16:17

1 Samuel 16:7 - But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

H. We can take comfort in knowing that God will help us as he helped these who opposed him - Romans 8:28

Romans 8:28 - And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Conclusion:

A. Are we opposed to God?

B. There are many more characters that we could discuss. But what we ought to do is put our name in the list. Let us strive to know and to do God's will in our life.