

## 引言 INTRODUCTION

Last time we saw three divine agents pay a visit to Abraham. God and two angels showed up in a human form. After they stopped at Abraham's home, their next mission was to exercise judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. God took the time to reveal His plan to Abraham. He could have gone straight to the two cities without informing the man. It may seem to be a detour of the bigger story about God's promises to Abraham. God talked to Abraham because He wanted the man to know Him more. Just like Abraham, we are on a training course to deepen our faith. God allows us to question as to why He did or did not do certain things. "Don't ask; just believe" is not the right approach to spiritual growth. We can gain wisdom as we wrestle tough questions in our minds. God spoke to Abraham face to face. Today, He speaks to us through His Word. God's purpose is the same in both cases, He discloses His will so that we may desire after His way.

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

### 1. 神的計劃 God's Plan (v. 16-21)

First, we see God's plan for going to Sodom and Gomorrah. Let us read from **verse 16 to 21**. God intended to destroy those cities for their serious sins. I encourage you to read chapter 19 in your free time if you want to know what kind of sins they committed. After finishing their meal at Abraham's home, the three visitors resumed their journey. The two angels headed out first. God stayed and talked to Abraham. Three things in this dialog we should pay attention to. First, why did God speak to Abraham? Verse 17 has a meaningful description: **The Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?"** Notice God did not say: "Let me tell the man what I'm going to do." Instead, He questioned Himself as if it were wrong to keep it a secret. It is like you are eager to tell your best friends a major decision you have made. In fact, the Bible calls Abraham a friend of God. James 2:23 says: **And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"- and he was called a friend of God.** God saw Abraham as a servant and a follower. But He also knew the man as a friend. Similarly, Jesus called the disciples His friends at the Last Supper. (You can refer to John 15:15.) Servants carry out the orders from their masters. They know what to do but they may not know the reason behind the commands. In comparison, friends communicate what is in their hearts because of their close relationship. We address God as our Heavenly Father and Jesus our Lord. God sees us as children, and Jesus sees us as His sheep. But they also treat us as friends. The Bible is not only an instruction manual for our life. It is a personal letter for us to know God. The second thing we need to focus on is what God wanted Abraham to learn from His message. God says in verse 19: **"For I have chosen him, 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 to Abraham what he has promised him."** Remember God intended to bless all nations through Abraham. Those

blessings include population, land and riches. But the biggest blessing is to build an eternal relationship with God. Obedience is the obligation for followers in God's covenant. Blessings will come if they follow Abraham's example to do what God sees as right. God was using Sodom and Gomorrah as an object-lesson to teach Abraham His standards of righteousness and justice. The third thing we will look at is how God would implement His plan. Verse 20-21 is another interesting account: **20 Then the Lord said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, 21 I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know."** God heard the outcry from the two cities. Those cries were quite likely reactions to suffering and injustice, and calls for help and justice. The scene reminds us of the misery the Israelites faced many years later when they were slaves in Egypt. Exodus 2 says God's people cried out to Him when they were oppressed. Then God remembered the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Of course, God was not absent-minded or too busy and He needed a reminder about His plans. The author uses a vivid way to describe God. He would take action and help the defenseless people in Egypt and the two sinful cities. God paid a trip to Sodom and Gomorrah before He exercised judgment. Verse 21 pictures God like a detective who carries out an investigation. It is the principle of "a suspect is presumed innocent until proven guilty." A judge will not come to a verdict before the evidence has been verified. Of course, God is the all-knowing Lord. He sees everything and He hears everything. He did not need to go to two cities to look for proof of their sins. He was using a way that Abraham could understand to communicate with him. God called Abraham His friend. God also treats us as friends. Some people mistakenly think that God is a secret agent who is good at catching us do wrong things, and a harsh judge who cannot wait to punish us. God is in fact a loving and patient Father. He never stops leading us to walk in the right path. That is why He gives us the Bible. It helps us think and do things like God does. Truth does not restrict our so-called rights. Rather, it outlines our freedom in Christ. Those who are in the Lord are free from the bondage of sin, and they can freely live a life that pleases God. All that God requires of us are for our good. It does not matter what your preferences are, because ultimately we must submit to God's righteousness. Obedience is the condition for His blessings. People see God's commands as optional and impractical because they are self-centered. They may argue that we cannot be kind to everyone, lest we may be taken advantage of. They also suggest that we cannot be honest all the time or else people will cheat us. Being simple-minded does not mean we should be naïve. Being wise and cautious go hand in hand. God prepared Abraham to become a model of faith to future generations. Similarly, you are a living Bible to the people around you. Apostle Paul says our lives are like a drama to the outside world. Your kids, relatives, classmates, coworkers, friends and neighbors are watching you. People will connect your faith to your conduct when they know that you are a Christian. Let us be people who do not only know what we should do, but also do what we know.

## 2. 人的懇求 Man's Plea (v. 22-33)

God shared His plan about destroying the two cities. In response, Abraham presented his plea for mercy. Listen to **verse 22 to 33**. Abraham gradually lowered his bottom-line in the

negotiation process. Let us look at a few things. First, the basis of Abraham's argument. Look at verse 25 again: **“Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?”** God has the full right to punish wicked people. No one can deny that. However, it may seem unfair for Him to punish righteous people along with the sinful ones. Those upright people may even be victims of sins. Therefore, Abraham thought that God should spare the two cities for the sake of the righteous people living there. Second, Abraham's courage. He was not shy to bring his request before God. At the same time, he remained respectful. He admitted that he was like dust and ashes before God (v. 27). He asked God twice not to be angry with him (v. 30 and 32). However, Abraham also knew the urgent situation. The whole population would be doomed if he did not raise his concerns. Of course, those citizens had no idea that someone unknown to them was begging for their lives. Third, Abraham's persistence. He reduced the number from 50 to 45, then 40, 30, 20 and finally 10. He repeated his plea six times! Surely, he was not trying to wear God down. He was not like a boy dragging his dad's clothes in Walmart and he will not let go until his father buys him a toy. The scene reminds us of Jesus' parable in Luke 18. A widow filed her case to the court against an opponent. The judge neither feared God nor did he care about people. He simply ignored the woman's request. But the lady kept bugging the official. Finally, the judge reasoned that he should settle the case to stop her from bothering him. Jesus gives the moral of the story in verses 7-8: **7 “And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? 8 I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”** Unlike the judge in the parable, God cares about people in their miseries. He will execute a swift judgment. Pay attention to the end of verse 8. Jesus asked if He can find faith on earth, meaning faithful people. The widow put her faith in even a lousy judge. Will believers put their trust in a loving God? Sometimes there seems to be a delay in God's answer. But God has His own schedule. He judged Sodom and Gomorrah at the right time. One day, Jesus will also judge the world. 2 Peter 3:9 explains why Jesus has not done so yet: **The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.** God is giving us more time to share the gospel so that more people will be saved. While God has unlimited grace, there is a deadline for people's repentance. Abraham stopped his plea at ten people. Perhaps he had Lot's family in mind. They might be the only righteous people in Sodom. Abraham thought it would be fair for God to condemn the two cities if He could not even find ten upright people. God continued His journey after the conversation with Abraham. What can we learn from this story? Let me suggest a few lessons. Number 1, we should plead for God's mercy instead of asking Him for justice. Abraham did not ask God to punish the wicked people because they deserved it. Instead, Abraham begged God to spare everyone for sake of the righteous people. We commit different sins to various degrees of severity. Hell is the only destination we should go. No one is qualified to go to heaven. We are saved by God's grace. We should pray that God will show mercy to other non-believers. Number 2, faithful people pray faithfully. Abraham pleaded on behalf of the people he did not even know. A majority of them were filthy sinners. Similarly, besides praying for the seekers we know, we have the privilege to pray for the fallen world too. We feel helpless about the crimes in this country. We are scared of the threats from overseas enemies. Ultimate peace

can only be found in Jesus. Only God can change people's hearts. People can live peacefully with one another only when they are reconciled with God. Number 3, add repetition to your petitions. God delights in our prayers. He will listen when we talk to Him. Delay does not necessarily mean a denial from God. Therefore, do not give up too soon. Even before God gives us what we ask for, He wants us to know His heart. Prayer is not a shopping list. Prayer is more like a phone call with a good friend. But do not just keep talking. We must learn to listen to God too. He may not speak in an audible voice. More than likely, He will guide our thoughts to relevant Bible verses and reply to us. Prayer is an active way to build a relationship with God. Number 4, God has a final verdict to sin. He resumed His trip to Sodom and Gomorrah after allowing Abraham to present his plea. Jesus will surely come back and exercise judgment. We seldom think about a coming storm when we are in smooth-sailing. You have various insurance policies to cover potential losses. Any financial planner will advise you to set aside some emergency fund for unexpected repairs or accidents. If you care about the current life, should you not care much more about eternal life? The Bible says TODAY is the day of salvation. God's grace is always available to you now. Accept Jesus today. Do not wait!

## 結論 CONCLUSION

God discloses His will so that we may desire after His way. Getting to know Him does not only enrich our knowledge. It should also motivate us to obey Him. Several thousand years have passed since Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. Unfortunately, our world is still full of injustice. Innocent people suffer, some crimes are unsolved and offenders get away. We ask: Where is God when people are hurting? Why does He not do something to stop evil? Two weeks ago Charlie Kirk was assassinated while he was leading a public forum at a college in Utah. A 31-year-old man left with a wife and two young children. Kirk was an outspoken believer. His passion was to blend Christian perspectives with conservative political views. He shared the truth with gentleness but no fear. He was an influential figure to young people. Kirk died what he lived for. He wanted to shed light to those who live in darkness. He hoped that more people would come to know Jesus. In one interview, Kirk admitted that the more he walked with Jesus, the more convinced that he was an absolute sinner. But the Lord showed mercy to him. Then he added: "I pray for every single person to be able to find the same sort of redemption and meaning and connection that I have had, have right now." Kirk knew God's heart. The Lord has all the right to condemn sinners. Yet He hopes to see people return to Him. How can justice and grace coexist? The two virtues intersect at the cross. God laid all the punishments we should receive on His Son. One sinless Child replaced all other sinful children. Jesus died so that those who receive Him will have a new life. You can have an eternal relationship with the Lord today. Confess your sins and accept this free gift of salvation by faith. As for our brothers and sisters: we may lose hope on our world, but do not lose hope on our Lord. Like Abraham did: we must pray for God's mercy on the spiritually lost. Only God can awaken their souls and help them realize that they need Jesus.

## 引言 INTRODUCTION

上次我們看到三位神聖的使者來拜訪亞伯拉罕。神與兩位天使以人的形態出現。他們在亞伯拉罕家中停留之後，下一個任務就是要審判所多瑪與蛾摩拉。神把祂的計劃告訴給亞伯拉罕。神可以直接前往那兩個城市，而不通知亞伯拉罕。這看似偏離了神對亞伯拉罕的應許的主要故事。透過這一段對話，神希望亞伯拉罕更多地認識祂。就像亞伯拉罕一樣，我們也在一條信心成長的道路上。神允許我們提出疑問，思考祂為何這樣做，或為何沒有那樣做。「不要問，只要信」並不是靈命成長的正確態度。當我們在心中掙扎這些深奧的問題時，可以獲得屬天的智慧。神和亞伯拉罕面對面說話，今天，祂透過聖經向我們說話。無論是哪一種方式，神的目的都是一樣的：神顯明祂的目的，是希望我們渴慕追求祂的旨意。

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

### 1. 神的計劃 God's Plan (v. 16-21)

首先，我們看到神前往所多瑪和蛾摩拉的計劃。讓我們來讀創世記 18:16-21。神打算毀滅這兩座城市，因為那裡的居民罪大惡極。如果你想知道他們犯了什麼罪，我鼓勵你在空閒時間閱讀第十九章。三位客人在亞伯拉罕家中吃完飯後便繼續上路。那兩位天使先出發，神卻留下來與亞伯拉罕交談。在這段對話中，我們要注意三件事。第一，神為何要與亞伯拉罕說話？第 17 節的描述很有意思：耶和華說：「我所要做的事豈可瞞著亞伯拉罕呢？」注意，神不是說：「我要告訴他我打算做什麼。」祂是在自問，好像如果祂不說出來，就是不對的。這就像你做了一個重大決定，迫不及待想要告訴你最好的朋友。事實上，聖經稱亞伯拉罕為神的朋友。雅各書 2:23 說：這就應驗經上所說：「亞伯拉罕信神，這就算為他的義。」他又得稱為神的朋友。神看亞伯拉罕是僕人與跟隨者，但也視他為朋友。同樣地，耶穌在最後的晚餐中也稱門徒為祂的朋友（你可以參考約翰福音 15:15）。僕人執行主人的命令，他們知道該做什麼，卻不一定知道命令背後的原因。而朋友之間因為關係密切，會分享內心的想法。我們稱呼神為天父，稱耶穌為主。神看我們為祂的兒女，耶穌看我們為祂的羊。但祂們也把我們當作朋友。聖經不只是人生的使用手冊，也是神寫給我們的私人書信，幫助我們認識祂。第二方面我們要注意的，是神希望亞伯拉罕從祂的信息中學到什麼。第 19 節神說：「我眷顧他，為要叫他吩咐他的眾子和他的眷屬



遵守我的道，秉公行義，使我所應許亞伯拉罕的話都成就了。」記得神原本的計劃，是要藉著亞伯拉罕賜福萬國。這些祝福包括人口、土地和財富。但最大的祝福是與神建立永恆的關係。順服神是與祂立約的人的責任。只要效法亞伯拉罕行神眼中看為正的事，就會得到祂的祝福。神使用所多瑪和蛾摩拉作為教材，來教導亞伯拉罕祂公義與正直的標準。第三點，我們來看神要如何實行祂的計劃。20 到 21 節是另一段很有意思的經文：20 耶和華說：「所多瑪和蛾摩拉的罪惡甚重，聲聞於我。21 我現在要下去，察看他們所行的，果然盡像那達到我耳中的聲音一樣嗎？若是不然，我也必知道。」神聽到了這兩座城呼求的聲音。這些呼聲很可能是受苦與對不公義的反應，也是向神求助與申張正義的呼喊。這個場景讓我們聯想到以色列人在多年後為奴於埃及時所面對的苦難。出埃及記第二章記載，當神的子民在受壓迫中向祂呼求時，神便想起了祂與亞伯拉罕、以撒和雅各所立的約。當然，神不是健忘或太忙碌以致需要被提醒祂的計劃。這是作者以生動的方式描寫神。祂會採取行動，幫助那些無助的人，無論是在埃及的百姓，或是在兩座罪惡之城受苦的人。在施行審判之前，神親自前往所多瑪和蛾摩拉。第 21 節形容神好像一位偵探，要親自調查。這符合現代社會的審訊原則：必須先確立證據，然後才判刑。當然，神是無所不知的主，祂看到也聽到一切事情，祂不需要親自去做調查。祂是用亞伯拉罕能理解的方式與祂溝通。神稱亞伯拉罕為祂的朋友，神也看我們為朋友。有些人誤以為神好像一個秘密警察，在暗中偷看我們有否犯錯，或是像一位嚴厲的法官，迫不及待要懲罰人。其實，神是一位慈愛又有耐心的父親，祂不停地勸告我們要走走在正路上。這也是祂賜下聖經的原因，神的話語幫助我們效法神思考的方式和行為。真理不是限制我們所謂的權利，而是定義我們在基督裡的真正自由。凡屬主的人都從罪的捆綁中得釋放，能夠自由地活出討神喜悅的生命。神對我們的要求，都是為了我們的益處。不論你的個人喜好如何，最終我們都必須順服神的公義。聽從神的吩咐是領受祂祝福的條件。人們常常把神的命令看成可有可無、不切實際的，因為他們以自我為中心。他們可能會說：「我們不可能對每個人都仁慈，否則會被占便宜。」或者說：「我們不能總是誠實，否則會被人欺騙。」但單純並不等於幼稚，智慧與謹慎是可以並存的。神預備亞伯拉罕成為信心的榜樣，影響後世。同樣地，你也是你周圍的人的一本活的聖經。使徒保羅說，我們的生命就像一台戲劇，給世人觀看的。你的孩子、親戚、同事、朋友與鄰居都在觀察你。當他們知道你是基督徒，他們會把你的信仰和你的行為聯繫起來。讓我們不只是知道該做什麼，更要實行我們所知道的事。

## 2. 人的懇求 Man's Plea (v. 22-33)

神與亞伯拉罕分享了祂要毀滅那兩座城市的計劃。亞伯拉罕的回應是向神懇求憐憫。請聆聽創世記 18:22-33 的記載。亞伯拉罕在談判中不斷地降低他的底

線。我們來看看其中幾個重點。第一，亞伯拉罕論點的根據。請再看第 25 節：「將義人與惡人同殺，將義人與惡人一樣看待，這斷不是你所行的。審判全地的主豈不行公義嗎？」神有絕對的權利懲罰惡人，這點無可否認。然而，如果祂將義人與惡人一同毀滅，似乎就顯得不公平。那些正直的人可能甚至是受害者。因此，亞伯拉罕認為，神應該為了那城中義人的緣故而赦免其他人。第二，亞伯拉罕的勇氣。他毫不畏懼地將自己的懇求帶到神面前，同時他保持對神的尊敬。他承認自己在神面前不過是「灰塵」（第 27 節）。他兩次請求神不要向他發怒（第 30 與 32 節）。然而，他也知道情況緊迫。如果他不向神求情，全部居民都將會滅亡。當然，那些人根本不知道有一個陌生人正在為他們的性命向神懇求。第三，亞伯拉罕的堅持。他從 50 人開始，逐步減少至 45 人、40 人、30 人、20 人，最後降到 10 人。他總共懇求了六次！當然，他不是耗神的耐性，好像一個小孩在商店拉著爸爸的衣服不放，求他買玩具。這場景讓我們想起耶穌在路加福音第 18 章所說的比喻。一名寡婦向法官申訴。那位法官不敬畏神，也不尊重人。一開始法官不理會她。但因為她一直糾纏不休，法官終於決定審理案件，只為了讓婦人不再煩他。耶穌在第 7 至 8 節提出這比喻的教訓：7「神的選民晝夜呼籲他，他縱然為他們忍了多時，豈不終久給他們伸冤嗎？8 我告訴你們，要快快的給他們伸冤了。然而，人子來的時候，遇得見世上有信德嗎？」與比喻中的法官不同，神關心祂子民的痛苦，祂會迅速執行審判。注意第 8 節的末尾，耶穌問道：「人子來的時候，遇得見世上有信德嗎？」意思是說，祂會找到有信心的人嗎？寡婦尚且願意相信一個不義的法官，信徒們是否願意信靠一位慈愛的神呢？有時候，神的回應似乎延遲了，但神有祂自己的時間表。祂在最適當的時機審判所多瑪和蛾摩拉。同樣，有一天，耶穌也會審判世界。彼得後書 3:9 解釋為何耶穌還沒有執行審判：主所應許的尚未成就，有人以為他是耽延，其實不是耽延，乃是寬容你們，不願有一人沉淪，乃願人人都悔改。神給我們更多的時間傳福音，讓更多人得救。雖然神的恩典是無限的，但人的悔改卻有期限。亞伯拉罕的懇求停止在十個人，也許他想到羅得一家。他們可能是那城裡唯一的義人。亞伯拉罕認為，如果連十個正直人都找不到，那麼神毀滅那兩座城也是合理的。與亞伯拉罕對話後，神繼續祂的行程。我們可以從這個故事學到什麼？讓我建議幾方面：第一，我們應當懇求神的憐憫，而不是祂的公義。亞伯拉罕並沒有求神懲罰那些罪有應得的人，他是懇求神保護義人。我們每個人都犯了各種不同程度的罪，地獄是我們唯一應得的結局，沒有人配得上天堂。我們得救，是因為神的恩典。因此，我們也應該為還沒信主的人祈求神的憐憫。第二，有信心的人會持續禱告。亞伯拉罕為那些他根本不認識的人懇求，其中大多數是罪大惡極的人。同樣地，除了為我們認識的福音朋友禱告之外，我們也有義務為這個墮落的世界禱告。我們對這個國家的罪案泛濫覺得無助，對海外敵人的威脅感到恐懼。唯有耶穌才能給人真

正的平安。只有神能改變人的心。當人與神和好之時，彼此之間才能和平共處。第三，不斷重複你的懇求。神喜悅我們的禱告，祂願意聽我們向祂傾心吐意。看起來的延遲，並不一定代表神的拒絕。因此，不要太早放棄。在神尚未回應我們的請求之前，祂希望我們在禱告中更明白祂的心意。禱告不是一張購物清單，禱告應該像是和好朋友通電話。你在禱告時不要講個不停，也要學習聆聽神的聲音。祂不一定會用可以聽得見的聲音說話，祂可能用經文引導我們的思想，來向我們回應。禱告其實是一種積極與神建立關係的方式。第四，神對罪有最終的判決。祂讓亞伯拉罕表達懇求之後，就啟程前往所多瑪與蛾摩拉。耶穌也必定會再來，施行審判。當我們風平浪靜之時，很少會想到即將來臨的風暴。你買各種保險來預防損失，財務顧問也會建議你預備緊急基金來應對突發狀況。如果你關心自己今生的幸福，豈不是更應該關心永恆的去向嗎？聖經說：「今天就是得救的日子。」神願意現在就賜給你救恩。今天就接受耶穌，不要再等！

## 結論 CONCLUSION

神顯明祂的目的，是希望我們渴慕追求祂的旨意。認識神不只是增加我們的知識，更應該激發我們去順服祂。自從所多瑪與蛾摩拉被毀滅已經過了幾千年。可惜的是，世界仍然充滿不義。無辜者受苦，有些罪案沒有破案，犯罪者逍遙法外。我們問：人們在受苦之時，神在哪裡？祂為何不阻止罪惡？兩個多星期前，查理·柯克（Charlie Kirk）在猶他州一所大學主持公開論壇時遭刺殺。他年僅 31 歲、有太太和兩個小孩。柯克公開談論他的信仰，他致力於結合基督信仰與保守政治理念。他以溫柔卻不畏懼的態度分享真理。他對年輕人有很大的影響力。柯克為他的信念而犧牲生命。他希望為那些活在黑暗中的人帶來光明。他盼望能有更多人認識耶穌。在一次訪問中，柯克承認，他越認識耶穌，他就越確信自己是個徹底罪人。但主向他施憐憫。接著他說：「我為每一個人禱告，願他們能找到我所享有的救贖、人生意義並與神連結。」柯克明白祂的心意。主有絕對的理由定所有人的罪，然而祂更希望人歸向祂。公義與恩典如何能夠並存？這兩種美德在十字架上交會。神把我們應受的刑罰放在祂的兒子身上。那位無罪的兒子代替所有犯罪的兒女。耶穌的死，是為了讓接納祂的人能夠獲得新生命。今天你可以與主建立永恆的關係。你必須認罪悔改，以信心接受這份恩典之禮物。至於我們的弟兄姐妹：我們可能對這個世界失去希望，但絕不能對我們的主失去盼望。像亞伯拉罕一樣，我們要為屬靈上迷失的人懇求神的憐憫。唯有神能喚醒他們的靈魂，使他們意識到自己需要耶穌。