

Reading: Genesis chapter 18

Key Thought:

Genesis 28 verse 16: Surely the Lord was in this place, and I was not aware of it.

Matthew 28 verse 20: I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Context: In ancient Middle-Eastern culture, the host was obliged to provide the traveller with food, water, and shelter. Abraham welcomed three such "strangers" in our study today. So, in chapter 18 we see that Abraham had this extraordinary meeting with three 'men' who appeared by his tent. Abraham was a very successful and rich man, with a lot of cattle and herds; he would also have dug wells and had a good supply of water. Everyone looked up to Abraham. Now, it would not have been unusual for strangers to rest for refreshment on a long journey. But in this episode, these were no ordinary men.

Content:

Abraham seemed to apprehend that these were no ordinary men and he humbled himself before them – as shown by his actions:

- Verse 2: He bowed low – a sign of reverence
- Verse 3: He asked for favour of "my Lord", (ordinary men would have asked favour of Abraham)
- Verse 4: He washed their feet (the job of a servant) and showed humility
- Verses 6-8: He provided a 'slap-up' meal, far more than custom would require
- Verse 8: He stood in the shade (like a servant) whilst they ate

Abraham understood that he was in the presence of The Lord. Sarah – who was listening by the tent (verse 10) – had not yet come to that place of understanding. When she heard what the Angels told Abraham (verse 10) she laughed through unbelief – after all, she was 89 years old! But she had not recognised that they were messengers from God. So, why did Abraham believe, and Sarah did not? Abraham was in the habit of talking often with The Lord. He knew God's voice, and he was aware of God's presence. This is what keeps our faith alive, this is what helps us to trust in difficult times, and this is how we know God's will for us. Sarah hadn't quite got to that point – perhaps she had been relying on Abraham's faith in the past.

Challenges:

Brother Lawrence, in his book "The Practice of the Presence of God" encourages us to frequently engage with God. He says it is easy to know and feel God's presence in us and with us if we simply recall it to mind throughout the day. Jesus has promised to be with us always (Matthew 28 verse 20) – why should we doubt it? When we get into this good habit of allowing God into every moment of the day, then He is in our every thought and decision and desire. Whether we are at home or at church, working or resting – it is all one. He is there. **Do we perceive God's Presence with us?**

Perhaps you feel you identify more with Sarah's response, maybe you have relied on the faith of others, rather than wanting more of God's presence yourself. In Abraham's story today we see the result of living in God's presence. His faith was quickened – and he believed for the impossible when God gave him the promise.

We understand God's Promises when we recognise His Presence

Communicate:

Feel free to let us know if you have questions or comments about this study. Perhaps you have a word of encouragement or a need for prayer if you are struggling with any of the issues. We will gladly get back to you.