

The Point of Arguing

Abraham stepped forward and said, "Will You really sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are 50 righteous people in the city? Will You really sweep it away instead of sparing the place for the sake of the 50 righteous people who are in it? You could not possibly do such a thing: to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. You could not possibly do that! Won't the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" – Genesis 18:23-25 HCSB

Have you ever wondered why Abraham tried to argue with God? Did he actually think that one can prevail over Elohim? Jacob did.¹ Jacob wrestled with the Son of God all night long and when the Son saw that He had not prevailed against Jacob, He damaged Jacob's thigh and yet Jacob – seeking God's blessing – continued to hold on. "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures," taught the Lord's half-brother.² "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord."³ God wants to give us good things. He wants us to come boldly to His throne room,⁴ recognizing that we are no longer enemies or even servants, but His children. Doing this lets us realize our true status – our new relationship with the Father.

But why did God let Abraham go on arguing, when He knew that there were no righteous people to be found in Sodom? He could have told the man that He had just called His "chosen one" in verse 19 "That's okay, Abraham. I really appreciate your willingness to intercede on their behalf. Wonderful attitude you have there, really – but save your breath. It's no use. It's too late. There are no righteous people in Sodom." But He didn't. He let Abraham go on and on. If you look carefully at the text you will see that Abraham was getting more and more nervous as he tried (as he thought) raising the stakes.

I believe that God's purpose is always good. "For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope."⁵ God allowed Abraham to stretch his compassion muscles. He could not save Sodom. But He could save Abraham. This is the point of compassion: even if we cannot save others, the act may yet save us.

¹ Genesis 32:24-29

² James 4:3

³ James 1:5-7

⁴ Hebrews 4:16

⁵ Jeremiah 29:11