

*First Things – Genesis*  
**Genesis 18:1-15**  
**“Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner”**

1. **GOD’S PRESENCE IS SPECIAL, ENJOY IT!**
  - A. Seek Him eagerly
  - B. Serve Him extravagantly
2. **GOD’S PROMISE IS SURE, EXPECT IT!**
  - A. In spite of the limitations that you face
  - B. In spite of the lack of your faith
3. **GOD’S POWER IS SUPERNATURAL, EMBRACE IT!**
  - A. Realize the potential of His power
  - B. Remember the purpose of His power

1. 1967 saw the release of the film “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner”. It featured a powerhouse cast, including Spencer Tracy, Audrey Hepburn, and a young Sidney Poitier.
2. Though the film dealt with a controversial subject, an interracial relationship, it turned out to be a box office hit.
3. In the first part of Genesis chapter 18, we read about a dinner guest whose appearance was a lot more surprising than anything a Hollywood script could ever depict.
4. Genesis 18:1 tells us that Lord appeared unto Abraham one day while he was resting in the shade of his tent door, living near the Oaks of Mamre.
5. Rather than coming to Abraham in a vision, as He had in the past, this time the Lord appeared to Abraham in the form of a man, accompanied by two other men, whom the text later indicates were angels.
6. Abraham welcomed them, and treated them with the highest hospitality, providing a full meal for them, and waiting on them like a servant.
7. At the close of dinner, the Lord again confirmed His previous promise that Sarah was going to give birth to a son.
8. As I read over this text, I can’t help but be reminded of the words of Jesus in Revelation 3:20. He said, *“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”*
9. This text reminds us of the privilege we have to fellowship with our Lord. It also points us to how we should relate to Him as He reveals Himself to us.

10. As we look over this great story, I want to draw three truths from it that speak to us about our relationship with the Lord, and our response to who He is. First of all, looking at this text we learn this lesson:

### **I. GOD'S PRESENCE IS SPECIAL, ENJOY IT!**

1. Though it is not exactly clear *when* Abraham fully realized that one of His guests was none other than His God, it is obvious from the beginning that Abraham recognized something special about these visitors.
2. Verse two says, *"And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground."*
3. Abraham's hospitality in this text is used by the writer of Hebrews to encourage us to be kind to strangers, not knowing whether or not we could be in the presence of angels. (Hebrews 13:2)
4. I think we also learn from Abraham how we should respond to the presence of God in our lives. It is always special to find yourself in the manifest presence of the Lord.
5. Whether it is in your private devotions, or public worship, the presence of God is a special gift, and we should respond accordingly.
6. How should we treat the presence of God in our lives? Look at the text, and notice that we should:

#### **A. Seek Him eagerly**

1. Again, verse 2 says, *"And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground."*
2. The text says that Abraham ran. That is significant. Besides the fact that he was almost 100 years old, we also know that middle-eastern men did not normally run.
3. It was considered improper and undignified for an older man to run for any reason. Yet, here is Abraham sprinting out of the tent at the first sign of these visitors.
4. Abraham's eagerness speaks to us. How eager are you to get into the presence of God? Do you rush *to get into* your morning devotions (as opposed to rushing through them)? Are you excited about spending time with the Lord?

6. The text also says that Abraham *"bowed himself toward the ground."* The word translated "bowed" is the Hebrew word for worship. This is the first time it appears in the Scripture.

7. Here is Abraham then, running and eager to worship. I wonder, would that describe your attitude on Sunday morning?

8. Do you come to the Lord's house with eagerness, excited to be in His presence and worship Him? You should!

9. Vance Havner once said, "Don't ever come to church without coming as though it were the first time, as though it could be the best time and as though it might be the last time."<sup>i</sup>

10. When we have the privilege of being in the presence of God, we should seek Him eagerly. Looking back at our text, we find that we should also:

### **B. Serve Him extravagantly**

1. Abraham was anxious for His special guest to stay a while, so he said to Him in verses 3 and 4, *"My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree."*

2. His hospitality continued in verse 5. He said, *"And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts..."*

3. Though Abraham promised only a modest snack, the text indicates that he pulled out all the stops, and prepared a full meal for his guests.

4. Verse 6 says, *"And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures (six gallons) of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth."*

5. Verses 7 and 8 add that Abraham also, *"...ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat."*

6. One writer calls this "a royal feast"<sup>ii</sup>. This was a man who held nothing back, but served the Lord with extravagance and generosity.

7. In our day, I fear that God gets little more than our leftovers, much less our best. We will stay up for Saturday Night Live, only to stagger in for Sunday Morning Dead.

8. We will pay the closest attention while watching a movie on the couch, but we will drift off into day dreams while sitting on the pew. We will sing to the top of our lungs with the car radio, only to mumble through a hymn with the congregation.

9. Is it any wonder that we don't experience a genuine visitation from the Lord? Is it any wonder that we don't sense the manifest power of His presence in our gatherings?

10. We need to be reminded that the presence of God is a special, gracious gift, and we should do all we can to engage it and enjoy it!

11. The first lesson is this: *God's presence is special, enjoy it!* Notice with me a second lesson we draw from this text. That is this:

## **II. GOD'S PROMISE IS SURE, EXPECT IT!**

1. After the feast was finished, verse 9 says that the Lord inquired about Sarah. Then we read in verse 10, "*And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son.*"

2. It seems that the purpose of this visit was to confirm to Abraham and Sarah the promise that we read about in chapter 17.

3. There God had assured Abraham that a promised son, aptly named Isaac, was to be born to him and his wife, even in their old age.

4. This text again reminds us that when God makes a promise, it is as good as done. No matter how improbable or impossible it may seem, we should always expect that God will keep His word.

5. In fact, through the exchange that takes place between the Lord and Sarah in this text, we see just *how* we are to trust His promises. First of all, you can expect His promises to be true:

### **A. In spite of the limitations that you face**

1. In chapter 17, when Abraham first heard the news of a coming son through Sarah, he laughed. He is not the only one who thought it was funny.

2. Look back in our text to verse 12. After Sarah overheard what the Lord had said outside the tent, the Bible says, "*Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?*"

3. In verse 11, Moses supplies the reason for Sarah's laughter. He says, "*Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.*"
4. In other words, Sarah was post-menopausal. Her statement in verse 12 indicates that things were not what they used to be, neither in her body, or her bedroom.
5. She laughed, but God was not chuckling. He had given a promise, and in spite of physical limitations and biological impossibilities, Isaac *was* going to be born.
6. Though our Lord has given us many "exceeding great and precious promises", very often we do not claim them simply because we cannot see beyond our own limitations.
7. The budget won't allow it. The doctor says nothing more can be done. The marriage is too far gone. The child is too long lost.
8. What Sarah and Abraham found out is that this was no time to be laughing. They needed to start adding a nursery to the tent, because God said a baby was coming.
9. Likewise, in spite of limitations, we must expect that God will most certainly do what He has promised!
10. You must trust Him, therefore, not only in spite of the limitations that you face, but notice also that you should expect his promises:

#### **B. In spite of the lack of your faith**

1. Sarah is doubtful, and she laughs to herself about the prospect of being a 90 year-old mother. Yet, God was not amused.
2. In verse 13, He asked, "*Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?*" Then in verse 14, He reaffirmed the promise that in the next year, Sarah would have a son.
3. What mercy and grace this is! Here is a woman whose faith is lacking, and yet God *still* promises to keep His word!
4. I'm reminded of Paul's words in II Timothy 2:13: "*If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.*"
5. Don't misunderstand this point, unbelief dishonors God. A lack of faith is an insult to Him. Nevertheless, our lack of faith does not keep Him from being God and doing what He promises!

6. There are times when though we want to believe God, our faith is weak. Like the man in Mark 9:24, we cry out, "*Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.*"

7. The good news is that the promises of God are not based on the strength of our faith; they are based on the character of God!

8. The great writer, C.S. Lewis was an atheist before he came to faith in Christ. He said something interesting about his experience. He said, "Now that I am a Christian I do have moods in which the whole thing looks very improbable: but when I was an atheist I had moods in which Christianity looked terribly probable."

9. The reality that Lewis discovered was that regardless of his "moods" of faith, the truth remained constant through it all.

10. In much the same way, we can be sure of God's promises, in spite of our moods of faith. We can expect that He will do what He has said!

11. So the first two lessons here are these: *God's presence is special, enjoy it! God's promise is sure, expect it!* The third lesson we find here is this:

### **III. GOD'S POWER IS SUPERNATURAL, EMBRACE IT!**

1. When Sarah heard God speak of a son, all she could see was her wrinkles and her years. Yet, what Sarah failed to realize is that neither of these were a problem to the Almighty God.

2. Sarah was looking at the situation with eyes fixed on the natural world. What she did not realize is that God is not bound by the laws of a natural world. He operates *supernaturally!*

3. As we look at what God communicated to Sarah that day, we are challenged to embrace and believe the almighty, supernatural power of God in our own lives.

4. How do we do that? First of all, we must:

#### **A. Realize the potential of His power**

1. Look now at verse 14 in our text. If you were ever going to mark something in your Bible, this should be it. God asked this question: "*Is any thing too hard for the LORD?*"

2. Henry Morris, in his wonderful commentary on Genesis says, "Verse 14 is one of the mountain-peak verses of the Bible."<sup>iii</sup>

3. When I read this question, I am quickly reminded of another question like it in Luke 1:34. There the birth of the ultimate promised Son was announced, and the young, virgin Mary asked, *"How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"*
4. The angel's answer to Mary's question is also the answer to the rhetorical question in Genesis 18. The angel said, *"For with God nothing shall be impossible."*
5. We must believe that our God is the God with whom nothing shall be impossible! The potential of His power is unlimited.
6. Notice the phrase "too hard" in verse 14 of our text. It literally means "too wonderful" or "too incredible".
7. There is no wonder too wonderful for Him to perform. The incredible is completely credible and possible for Him!
8. The old spiritual song says:

*Got any rivers you think are uncrossable?  
Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?  
God specializes in things thought impossible,  
And He can do what no other power can do!*

9. In this natural world, we must embrace the supernatural power of our God. To do that, we must not only realize the potential of His power, but I would say further that we must:

#### **B. Remember the purpose of His power**

1. Let us not lose sight of what this whole scene is about. God has promised to work this miracle, not just for the blessing of Abraham and Sarah, but for the furtherance of His plan in the world.
2. Back in chapter 17, when God reaffirmed this promise to Abraham, He said to him, *"And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee."*
3. Later on in that chapter, He stated that His covenant would be with Isaac. It was through the line of Isaac that the kings would come.
4. More importantly, it was through the line of Isaac that King Jesus would come! The power of God was working towards His ultimate plan of redemption through His own promised Son, who would die on the cross for our sins.

5. My point is this; when we embrace the supernatural power of God, we do so understanding that He employs that power *only* for the working out of His will.
6. The purpose of God's power is to bring glory to Himself! If we wish to see that power in our lives, then our desire must be for His glory as well.
7. It is when and where our lives intersect and align with the glorious purposes of God that we will begin to see the almighty power of God.
8. With that in mind, we must ask ourselves, "What in my life will bring glory to God? What could be accomplished through me by God's power that would further His purposes in this world?"
9. Someone has once said that rather than asking God to bless what we are doing, we should find out what God is blessing, and start doing that.
10. To embrace the supernatural power of God is to pursue the glorious purposes of God. Only then will we see Him work the impossible in our lives!

1. This truly is a fascinating scene in Genesis 18. The God of heaven came down in a human form, sat down to a meal with his servant, and spoke truth to his life.

2. R. Kent Hughes describes this as a "covenantal meal", and points out that the next time we find God doing this sort of thing is when Jesus sat down with His disciples and said, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you..."

3. Reading about this covenantal meal, I am reminded of another meal that is yet to come. In Luke 22:29-30, Jesus said to His disciples, "*And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom...*"

4. That great meal will take place one day, and guess who's coming to that dinner? We are!

5. Until that day, we learn from this ancient meal that we should relish every moment we get to spend in the presence of God now.

6. We should believe the promises of His word, and expect fully that He will do what He has said.

7. Lastly, we are reminded that until that kingdom comes, we must align ourselves with the glorious purpose of God, believing that His supernatural power can do with us what we cannot do by ourselves.

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- <sup>i</sup> Hester, Dennis J., The Vance Havner Quote Book, (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1986), p. 41  
<sup>ii</sup> Hughes, R. Kent, Genesis: Beginning and Blessing, (Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 2004), p. 254  
<sup>iii</sup> Morris, Henry, The Genesis Record, (Creation Life Publishers, San Diego, CA, 1976), p. 341