

**Thought for Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021**  
**Pastor Gordon Hamilton**

**Read Genesis 18:1-15** Chapter 18 neatly breaks into two stories, so we will begin with the first 15 verses. It always amazes me who these three men were that Abraham saw. In the N.I.V. bible, Abraham calls them '*my lord*' (v3) small l, the King James version says; '*My Lord*' note the capital L, the Living Bible just says '*Master*' and the Living Bible says '*Sirs.*' Of all the newer translations '*my lord*' with a small l appears the most popular. The writer of Genesis leaves us with a query as to who Abraham thought these three visitors were, although he obviously believed they were very special visitors. Lord, lord, master and sirs, all titles that give a sense of at least one of them being somebody special. The writer does tell us where this event happened, near the great trees of Mamre. You may remember at the end of chapter 13 we find Abraham was found; '*near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the Lord.*' We know that Abraham had moved about a bit, but it appears that he decided that he would make this area, the place to make his base. We know that Abraham had interaction with the Lord before, the beginning of chapter 12, chapter 13:14, chapter 15 and chapter 17:1-22, so did Abraham see the same figure each time, which was how he recognised him? We don't know but there was definitely something special because we are told in verse 2; '*he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.*' This is the second time we see this reaction from Abraham. It is possible that Abraham realised the error of his ways with Hagar. At the beginning of chapter 17 we read that Abram fell face down before God. Here we see Abraham, recognising he has received a blessing from God, and it is as if he wants confirmation that he is still doing the right thing. '*If I have found favour in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by.*' Abraham knew he'd fouled up and knew that if he was to continue to receive God's blessing then he dare not mess up again. '*Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way – now that you have come to your servant.*' Abraham's reaction reminds a little of the Dickens character, Uriah Heep, trying to get back into somebody's good books, being very humble. And so Abraham hurries off and gets Sarah to make some bread, and a herdsman some meat, while he brought some curds and milk, plus the calf that had been prepared. It could be said that Abraham went a bit OTT, a bit Over The Top but God knows the heart, although we know from 15:6; '*Abraham believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*' Many of the Jewish heroes messed up at times, but God knew their hearts. That is true of us, there are times when we mess up, but if we truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, God knows our heart's, he knows that if our intention is not to harm our relationship with him, I am sure he will credit it to us as righteousness. I am not sure what Abraham was endeavouring to do, was he trying to make a good impression, or some other reason? We will never know, but one thing is certain, he knew his place with these three visitors, he knew he should be subservient. To everyone else, Abraham may have been the head of his household, but Abraham knew who he had to adhere to. There is a chorus written by Jim Bailey at the end of last century; '*As for me and my house, as for me and my family, as for me and my children, we will serve the Lord. In this family, we're gonna do things properly, read God's word every day and then we'll try to pray; although we get it wrong, we will still carry on, make Jesus number one, in this place. In this place we're gonna say grace.*' We should be able to sing that, even though there may be members of our family who don't believe, we have an obligation to witness that love to our Lord and Saviour; '*As for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.*' That is what Abraham wanted to show he was trying to do. Having given them the food that was prepared we are told

that Abraham stood near them under a tree (v8). He was acting the perfect host, ever attentive. Then his guests ask Abraham; *'Where is your wife, Sarah?'* Then the Lord says; *'I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.'* You may remember last week, in 17:17 when Abraham was told the self same thing; *'Abraham fell face down; he laughed.'* So should we be surprised when Sarah does the same. *'Sarah laughed to herself.'* (v12). Maybe Abraham hadn't told Sarah what the Lord had told him, because he felt she wouldn't have believed him. What we do know is that this time Abraham didn't laugh, but may well have been wondering, how much longer do we have to wait? After all he was told this a year ago, when he was 99 years old, now he is 100. He doesn't appear to have time on his side. There are two things we have to be aware of here, to begin, Sarah laughed to herself, which means that others may not have been aware of her laughing but God knows the heart, we have to remember, you cannot hide your feelings from God. Yet the Lord says to both of them, to Abraham and to Sarah; *'Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?'* I guess we can all empathise with Sarah, humanly this appears impossible, then the Lord says to them both; *'Is anything too hard for the Lord?'* Mary the mother of Jesus, also heard similar words from the angel Gabriel when told of Elizabeth's pregnancy; *'nothing is impossible with God.'* When God challenges us to do a task, no matter how impossible it may appear if God says it will happen, then be assured it will happen. The Lord then says to Abraham and Sarah; *'I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.'* Verse 15 ends; *'Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, 'I did not laugh.'* But he said, *'Yes, you did laugh.'* God knows our inmost thoughts, Psalm 139 says; *'O Lord, You have searched me, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar...'* let's read the whole of Psalm 139... I pray we can now sing our final hymn. Amen.

Have Thine own way, Lord, have Thine own way;  
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.

Mould me and make me, after Thy will,  
While I am waiting yielded and still.

Have Thine own way, Lord, have Thine own way;  
Search me and try me, Master today.

Whiter than snow, Lord, wash me just now,  
As in Thy presence humbly I bow.

Have Thine own way, Lord, have Thine own way;  
Wounded and weary, help me, I pray.

Power, all power, surely is Thine;  
Touch me and heal me, Saviour divine.

Have Thine own way, Lord, have Thine own way;  
Hold o'er my being absolute sway.

Fill with Thy Spirit till all shall see  
Christ only, always, living in me.