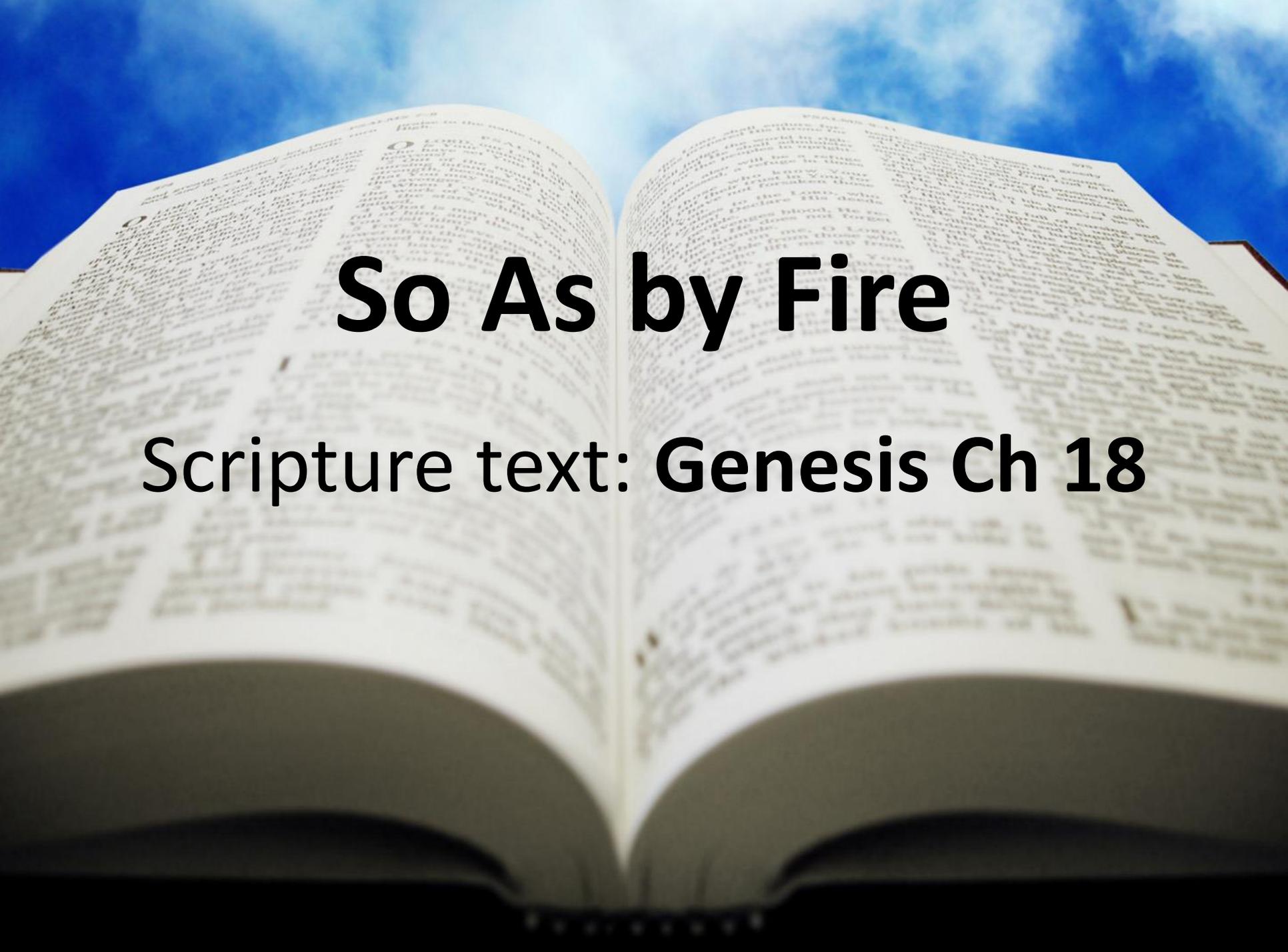


Welcome to Promise Land Bible Church
We're glad you're here!



An open Bible is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with text, but it is out of focus. The background is a bright blue sky with some light clouds. The text 'So As by Fire' is overlaid in the center in a large, bold, black font.

So As by Fire

Scripture text: **Genesis Ch 18**

So As by Fire

Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.”

Sir Winston Churchill spoke those words to the British House of Commons on August 20, 1940. He reviewed the first year of the war and then paid special tribute to the brave Royal Air Force fighter pilots who were “turning the tide of the World War by their prowess and their devotion.”

The citizens of Great Britain knew what the Royal Air Force was doing for them, but the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the plain did not know that three persons—Abraham, Lot, and Jesus Christ—stood between them and total destruction.

Abraham, the friend of God (Gen. 18)

Abraham is given this special title in 2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; and James 2:23; and he is the only person in the Bible to have it.

2 Chronicles 20:7 Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of **Abraham your friend?**

Isaiah 41:8-9 But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, **the offspring of Abraham, my friend**; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "**You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off**";

James 2:22-23 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 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.**

Jesus called Lazarus His friend (John 11:11), and He calls "friends" all who believe on Him and obey Him (15:13–15). As His friends, we can share His love and fellowship, and we can know His will.

John 11:11-15 After saying these things, he said to them, "**Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.**" The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "**Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.**"

John 15:12-15 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone **lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends** if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I **have called you friends**, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

You can be a "friend" of God.

“If we are beset by an unseen foe,” wrote Vance Havner, “we are also **befriended by an Unseen Friend**. Great is our adversary but greater is our Ally.”

Friendship involves ministry; and in this chapter you will find Abraham ministering in three different areas: **to the Lord (18:1–8)**, **to his home (18:9–15)**, and **to a lost world (18:16–33)**.

He ministered to the Lord (Gen. 18:1–8).

All ministry must first be to the Lord; for if we fail to be a blessing to the Lord, we will never be a blessing to others. This was true of the Jewish priests (Ex. 28:1, 3–4, 41; 29:1) and of God’s servants in the early church (Acts 13:1–2).

Colossians 3:23-24 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. **You are serving the Lord Christ.**

Exodus 28:1 "Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, **to serve me as priests**--Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.

Exodus 28:4 These are the garments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash. They shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons **to serve me as priests.**

Act 13:1-2 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. **While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting,** the Holy Spirit said, **"Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."**

Abraham was taking his daily rest during the heat of the day when he saw three strangers approaching. Few people ever traveled when the sun was so hot, so Abraham was immediately both curious and courteous. Hospitality is the first law of the East, and Abraham faithfully obeyed it.

Genesis 18:1 And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day.

The three strangers were the Lord Jesus Christ and two of His angels (Gen. 18:1, 22; 19:1).

There was nothing about their appearance that told Abraham who they were; but as he fellowshiped with them, he learned that he was entertaining royal visitors. His ministry to the Lord was so acceptable that we ought to follow his example today.

Genesis 18:22 So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but **Abraham still stood before the LORD.**

Genesis 19:1-3 The **two angels** came to Sodom in the evening, and **Lot was sitting in the gate** of Sodom. When **Lot saw them**, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth and said, "**My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet.**" Then you may rise up early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the town square." But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

To begin with, he served the Lord personally.

Remember, Abraham was ninety-nine years old and a wealthy sheikh, and he could have entrusted this task to his chief steward or one of his more than 300 servants (14:14). Instead, **he decided to minister to his Lord personally.**

He also ministered immediately. Abraham could have ignored them by pretending to be asleep, or he could have asked them to sit down and wait until he had finished his siesta. But Abraham was a man of faith, and **faith does not delay when it comes to serving the Lord.**

This chapter emphasizes that Abraham **ministered to the Lord speedily**. He ran to meet the visitors (18:2) and **hastened to tell Sarah** to bake some bread (18:6). He ran to get a tender calf and saw to it that the young man **hastened** to dress the meat (18:7).

Keep in mind that this is an old man running around in the heat of the day! Only after he had served his guests did Abraham stand still (18:8).

Abraham served the Lord generously and gave Him the best that he had. Sarah baked bread from “fine meal” (18:6), and the meat was “tender and good” (18:7).

No leftovers or second-rate fare for such important guests! **What a contrast to the priests in Malachi’s day**, who did not give God their best (Mal. 1:6–14).

Malachi 1:6-8 "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. **If then I am a father, where is my honor?** And if I am a master, **where is my fear?** says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?' **By offering polluted food upon my altar.** But you say, 'How have we polluted you?' By saying that the LORD's table may be despised. **When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil?** Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts.

Abraham's service was marked with humility. He bowed to his guests (Gen. 18:2), called himself a servant (18:3, 5), and called the feast only "a morsel of bread."

He served the three visitors and then stood near to be available if needed. He interrupted a comfortable afternoon nap to become a servant to three strangers; but **because of that service, he received tremendous blessings for himself and his wife.**

Finally, he served the Lord willingly and involved the ministries of others. Sarah baked the bread; a young man dressed the meat; and no doubt other servants brought Abraham the butter and milk.

“I would rather put ten men to work than do the work of ten men,” said evangelist D.L. Moody; and he was right.

Over the years, I have studied the biographies of great Christians; and **I have learned that dedicated servants of God encourage and inspire others to serve the Lord.** D.L. Moody was used of God to enlist and assist a host of workers, including F.B. Meyer, G. Campbell Morgan, and R.A. Torrey. Paul Rader had a similar ministry in his generation, helping give birth to ministries still with us today. When we serve ourselves or our own ministries, **our work perishes; but when we serve the Lord, He gives lasting and abundant fruit (John 12:20–28).**

Before leaving this section, I should say a word about **the importance of Christian hospitality**. In this day of convenient motels and hotels, we rarely think about what it means to entertain strangers; but hospitality is an important part of Christian ministry (Rom. 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9). In fact, “**given to hospitality**” is one of the requirements for leadership in the local church (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8). **By lovingly serving others, we serve Jesus Christ our Lord** (Matt. 25:34–40), and **we promote the spread of God’s truth** (3 John 5–8).

He ministered to his wife (Gen 18:9–15).

Because Abraham was faithful to the Lord, he became **a channel of blessing to his wife and eventually to his family** (Gen. 18:19). Sarah had an important role to play in the working out of God's plan of salvation for the world, and she did her part (Heb. 11:11; 1 Peter 3:1–7; Rom. 4:18–21). Sarah was now **eighty-nine years old**; yet she was still a desirable woman with charm and beauty (Gen. 20), **partly because her husband loved her and treated her like the princess that she was.**

Romans 4:18-21 In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." **He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.** No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, **fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.**

1 Peter 3:3-6 Do not let your adorning be external--the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear-- but **let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit**, which in God's sight is very precious. For **this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves**, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And **you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.**

The Lord had come all the way from heaven to give Abraham and Sarah an announcement: **At that same time next year, Sarah would give birth to the promised son!**

The news was so incredible that Sarah laughed and questioned whether such a thing could happen to two elderly people. Abraham's laughter had been born out of joyful faith (17:17); but **Sarah's laughter was marked by unbelief**, even though she tried to deny it.

Of course, whenever we doubt God, we are questioning both His veracity and His ability.

Does He keep His promises?

Does He have the power to do what He says He will do?

The answer to both questions is **yes!**

Romans 4:20-21 No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, **fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.**

“Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (Gen. 18:14) Of course not! If you need proof, then listen to Job (42:2), Jeremiah (32:17 and 27), the Angel Gabriel (Luke 1:37), and the Apostle Paul (Eph. 3:20–21).

If God makes a promise, you can be sure He has the power to fulfill it; and He will remain faithful even if we are faithless (2 Tim. 2:13). **Sarah eventually repented and, with her husband, trusted God; and He gave them the promised son.**

Job 42:1-2 Then Job answered the LORD and said: "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

Jeremiah 32:17 'Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! **Nothing is too hard for you.**

Jeremiah 32:27 "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. **Is anything too hard for me?**

Luke 1:37 For nothing will be impossible with God."

Ephesians 3:20-21 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

The husband who ministers to the Lord will find himself ministering to the members of his own family, especially his wife.

He will be a source of blessing in the home.

When we study Genesis 19, we will see the contrast in Lot, a worldly man who had no spiritual influence in his own home.