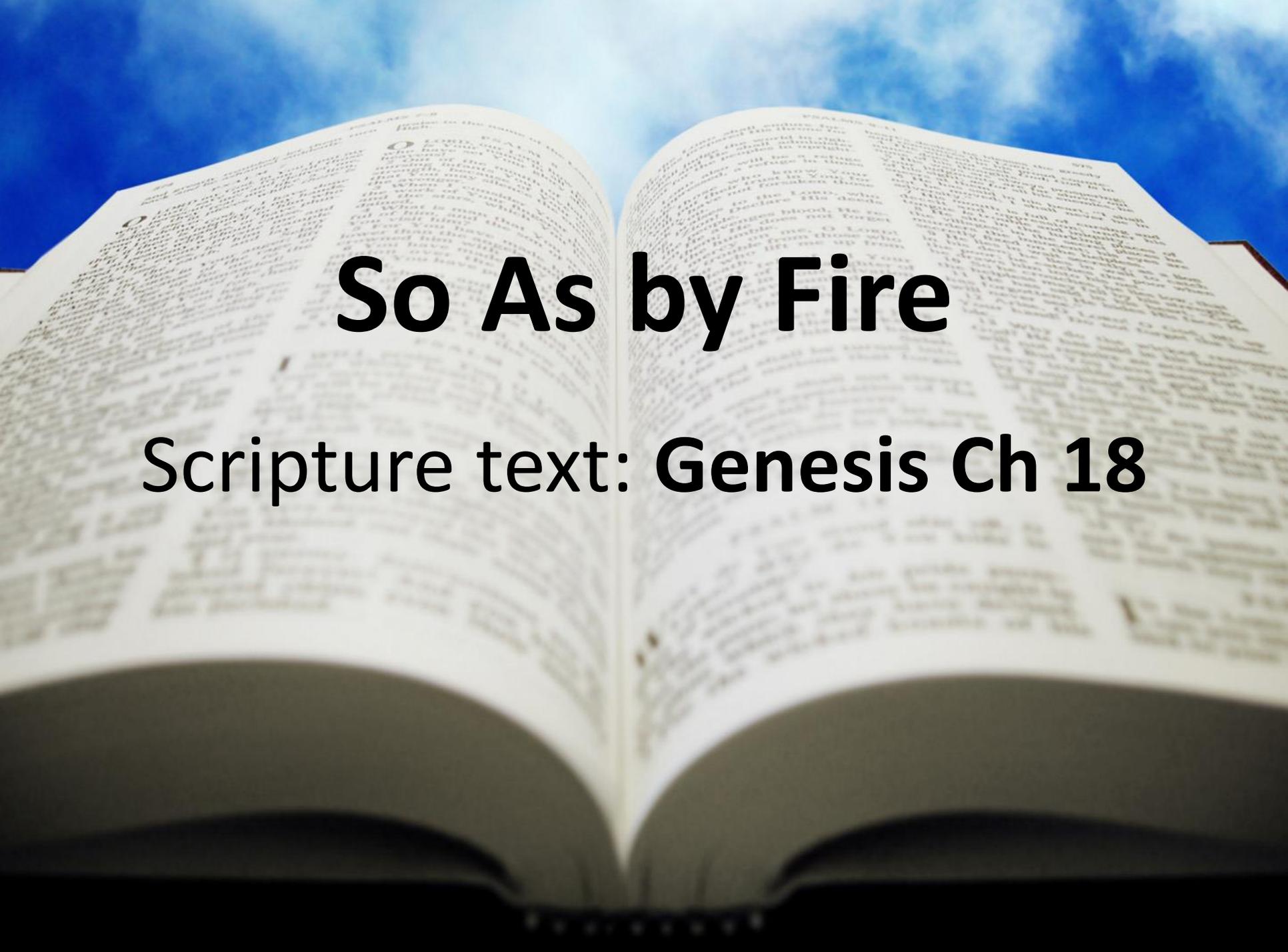


Welcome to Promise Land Bible Church
We're glad you're here!



An open Bible is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with text, but it is mostly 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. Below it, 'Scripture text: Genesis Ch 18' is also overlaid in a slightly smaller, bold, black font.

So As by Fire

Scripture text: Genesis Ch 18

“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.**

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.**

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.

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.**

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.

He ministered to a lost world (Gen 18:16–33).

Abraham belonged to that select company of God's people **known as intercessors**, individuals like Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Jeremiah, the apostles, and our Lord Himself. In fact, **our Lord's ministry today in heaven is a ministry of intercession** (Rom. 8:34); so we are never more like our Lord than when we are interceding for others. It is not enough for us to be a blessing to our Lord and our home; **we must also seek to win a lost world** and bring sinners to the Savior.

Charles Spurgeon said: “If they [lost sinners] will not hear you speak, they cannot prevent your praying. Do they jest at your exhortations? They cannot disturb you at your prayers. Are they far away so that you cannot reach them? **Your prayers can reach them.** Have they declared that they will never listen to you again, nor see your face? Never mind, **God has a voice which they must hear.** Speak to Him, and He will make them feel. Though they now treat you despitefully, rendering evil for your good, **follow them with your prayers. Never let them perish for lack of your supplications**”
(Metropolitan Pulpit, vol. 18, pp. 263–264).

The Lord and the two angels left Abraham's camp and started toward Sodom, but **the Lord lingered while the angels went on** (Gen. 18:16, 22; 19:1).

In the first half of the chapter, Abraham is running here and there; but in the last half, **he is standing reverently before the Lord and interceding for Lot and the other people in Sodom. Blessed are the balanced!**

An intercessor **must know the Lord personally and be obedient to His will.** He must be close enough to the Lord to learn His “secrets” and know what to pray about (Amos 3:7; Ps. 25:14). The Lord’s words “I know him” (Gen. 18:19) mean **“I have chosen him, and he is My intimate friend”** (John 15:15).

Abraham knew more about Sodom’s future than the citizens themselves, including Lot. **It is the separated believer who shares God’s secrets.**

Amos 3:7 "For the Lord GOD does nothing **without revealing his secret** to his servants the prophets.

Psalms 25:14 The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and **he makes known to them his covenant.**

John 15:15 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.**

Sarah and the servants helped Abraham when he prepared a meal for the three visitors; **but when it came to the ministry of intercession, Abraham had to serve alone.**

Abraham drew near to the Lord (James 4:8), and the Hebrew word means “**to come to court to argue a case.**” Abraham was burdened for Lot and Lot’s family, as well as for the lost sinners in the five cities of the plain; and he had to share that burden with the Lord.

Abraham's prayer was based not on the mercy of God but on the justice of God. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25; see Deut. 32:4)

A just and holy God could not destroy righteous believers with wicked unbelievers; and Lot was a believer (2 Peter 2:6–9), even though his actions and words seemed to belie the fact.

Deuteronomy 32:1-4 "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak, and let the earth hear the words of my mouth. May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, like gentle rain upon the tender grass, and like showers upon the herb. For I will proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God! **"The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.**

2 Peter 2:6-9 if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and **if he rescued righteous Lot**, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); **then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,**

The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were exceedingly wicked (Gen. 13:13) because the men of these cities were given over to sexual practices that were contrary to nature (Gen. 19:5; Jude 7; Rom. 1:27).

The words “sodomy” and “sodomize” are synonyms for these homosexual practices. The men **did not try to hide their sin** (Isa. 3:9). **Nor would they repent** (Jer. 23:14).

Genesis 13:13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD.

Genesis 19:5 And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, **that we may know them.**"

Jude 1:7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which **likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.**

Romans 1:26-27 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Isaiah 3:9 For the look on their faces bears witness against them; **they proclaim their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them!** For they have brought evil on themselves.

Jeremiah 23:14 But in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: **they commit adultery and walk in lies; they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his evil; all of them have become like Sodom to me, and its inhabitants like Gomorrah."**

The sudden destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is **used in Scripture as an example of God's righteous judgment on sinners** (Isa. 1:9; 3:9; Lam. 4:6; Zeph. 2:9; 2 Peter 2:6ff), and Jesus used it as a warning for people in the end times (Luke 17:28–32).

But why would Abraham want God to spare such wicked people? Far better that they should be wiped off the face of the earth! Of course, Abraham's first concern was for Lot and his family.

Luke 17:28-32 Likewise, **just as it was in the days of Lot**--they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on **the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all**-- so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back.
Remember Lot's wife.

In fact, Abraham had already rescued the people of Sodom solely because of Lot (Gen. 14:12–16), though none of the citizens seemed to appreciate what he had done for them. They all went right back into the old way of life and did not heed the warning of God.

But even apart from Lot's situation (and he should not have been in Sodom in the first place), Abraham did not want to see all those people die and be lost forever. God is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9), and He "will have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. 2:4).

2 Peter 3:8-10 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. **The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

1 Timothy 2:1-6 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings **be made for all people**, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, **who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.** For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, **who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.**

“I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Ezek. 33:11).

The issue is not what kind of sins people commit, though some sins are certainly worse than others, but that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23) and beyond that death is an eternal hell. Intercessors must have compassionate hearts and a deep concern for the salvation of the lost, no matter what their sins may be. (See Romans 9:1–3; 10:1.)

Ezekiel 33:10-11 "And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said: 'Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?' Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, **I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live;** turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

Romans 9:1-3 I am speaking the truth in Christ--I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit-- **that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.**

Romans 10:1 Brothers, **my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.**

We must **not** get the idea that Abraham argued with the Lord, because he did not. **He was very humble before the Lord as he presented his case** (Gen. 18:27, 30–32). Abraham was sure that there were at least ten believers in the city.

Genesis 18:27 Abraham answered and said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes."

Genesis 18:30-32 Then he said, "**Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak.** Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there." He said, "**Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord.** Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." Then he said, "**Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once.** Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it."

Never underestimate the importance of even a small number of believers.

As few as **ten people would have saved a whole city from destruction!** If Lot had won only his own family to faith in the Lord, judgment would have been averted.

Your personal witness today is important to God, no matter how insignificant you may feel.