

# Genesis 18 Commentary

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Summary Chart of The Book of Genesis								
Focus	Foundation Events (Four Events) (Events Predominant)				Foundation People (Four People) (People Predominant)			
Divisions	Creation (Ge 1-2)	Fall (Ge 3-5)	Flood (Ge 6-9)	Nations (Ge 10-12)	Abraham's Faith (Ge 12-24)	Isaac's Family (Ge 25-26)	Jacob's Conflicts (Ge 27-36)	Joseph's Calamity (Ge 37-50)

Topics	Beginning of the Human Race (Race As A Whole)	Beginning of the Hebrew Race (Family of Abraham)
	Faithfulness of Mankind (Noah)	Faithfulness of One Man's Family (Abraham)
	Historical	Biographical
Place	Eastward From Eden to Ur	Westward From Canaan to Egypt
Time	~2000+ Years (20% of Genesis) (~4004-2090BC)	About 300 Years 193 Yr in Canaan, 93 Yr in Egypt (80% of Genesis) (2090-1804BC)
	Primeval History of Humanity	Patriarchal History of Israel
Author	Moses	

## BEGINNINGS

- Ge 1:1-25 - The Universe (Everything)
- Ge 1:26-2:25 - The Human Race
- Ge 3:1-7 - Sin Enters the World
- Ge 3:8-24- God Promises Redemption from Bondage to Sin
- Ge 4:1-15 - Family Life
- Ge 4:16ff - Civilization
- Ge 10:1-11:32 - The Nations of the World
- Ge 12:1ff - The Story of Israel and the Jews



Abraham believed God (Gal 3:6<sup>+</sup>, Ge 15:5,6<sup>+</sup>)

**Genesis 18:1** Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day.

- **appeared:** Ge 15:1 17:1-3,22 26:2 48:3 Ex 4:1 2Ch 1:7 Ac 7:2
- **Mamre:** 10v - Ge. 13:18; Gen. 14:13; Gen. 14:24; Gen. 18:1; Gen. 23:17; Gen. 23:19; Gen. 25:9; Gen. 35:27; Gen. 49:30; Gen. 50:13
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## Related Passages:

Genesis 14:13 Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. **Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite**, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram.

Genesis 14:24 "I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share."

## ANOTHER APPEARANCE OF THE LORD

**Now the LORD** ([Jehovah = Yahweh](#); Lxx = [theos](#)) **appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent**([ohel](#); Lxx = [skene](#)) **door in the heat of the day**- The word for “**appeared**” is ra’ah which means “to view with one’s own eyes”. Immediately **the LORD appeared** tells us that one of the three men in the next verse is JEHOVAH in human form, a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ. "It appears that in Old Testament times God came in the form of a man, while in the incarnation He actually became man." (J Oswald Sanders) While God is recorded as have spoken to Abraham several times, only 5 times do we see that He specifically **appeared** to Him. Did God appear to him in those other times when He spoke to him? Possibly, but we cannot be dogmatic. And so here are the definite appearances recorded. (1) The God of glory appeared to Abraham "when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran" and told him to depart to land God would show him. (Acts 7:2+). (2) In Ge 12:7+ the LORD "appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” (3) The LORD came to Abram in a vision (Ge 15:1+) (4) Ge 17:1+ LORD appeared as El Shaddai (5) The LORD would appear to Abraham one more time in Ge 18:1+ at the oaks of Mamre. **The heat of the day** would be in the early afternoon.

The Lord visits Abraham to confirm the promise recorded in Genesis 17:19 to give Abraham and Sarah a child and pronounce its swift fulfillment.

**TSK** - In these verses we have a delightful picture of genuine and primitive hospitality: a venerable father sits at the tent door, not only to enjoy the current of refreshing air, but that if he saw any weary and exhausted travellers, he might invite them to rest and refresh themselves during the heat of the day, and the same custom still continues in the east. It was not the custom, nor was there any necessity, for strangers to knock at the door, or to speak first, but to stand till they were invited.

**THOUGHT** - On the **heat of the day** - We should be ready for Jesus to appear right during the hottest part of the day which is exactly when Abraham was ready! What will be the hottest part of your day or week? Will you be ready? Of course we will not see what Abraham saw, but through His Word, His Spirit, prayer, He may suddenly appear. Be ready to respond like Abraham!

**Jon Courson** - The **heat of the day** in Scripture is often a picture of the hard times that come our way. So often in my walk, I've seen the Lord in a fresh way in the heat of the day, in fiery trials. You have, too. This is not surprising. After all, it was when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were cast into a fiery furnace that they saw the Lord (Daniel 3:25). Consequently, when I hear of people in the body who are going through fiery trials and hot times, on one hand my heart goes out to them, but on the other hand, in a sense, I'm envious of them because I know the Lord will make Himself known to them in a special way in the heat of the day. (See [Courson's Application Commentary](#) page 77)

**Bob Utley** - **Now the Lord appeared to him**" The VERB "appeared" (Niphal IMPERFECT with waw) is used several times in Genesis (cf. Ge 12:7 [twice]; Ge 17:1; Ge 18:1; Ge 26:2,24; Ge 35:1,9). It denotes a personal physical manifestation. Since YHWH is an eternal spirit, this physicalness is hard to explain. It is interesting to me that **the rabbis say that chapter 18 is directly connected to chapter 17 and the reason for the visit from the Lord was to see if Abraham had recovered from his circumcision**. As a matter of fact, the rabbis understand all three of these visitors to be angels who simply represented the Lord. They assert that (1) one angel came to help Sarah conceive, (2) one came to heal Abraham, (3) one came to destroy Sodom. (**ED**: ARE WE SURPRISED AT THE RABBINICAL INTERPRETATION? THEY SIMPLY CANNOT EXPLAIN JEHOVAH APPEARING AS ONE THE THREE MEN DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE SCRIPTURE LEAVES NO DOUBT ONE OF THE MEN WAS GOD!)

**ESV Study Bible** ([borrow - see page 80](#)) on **Mamre** -- Although Ge 13:18+ reports that Abram settled at the **oaks of Mamre** many years earlier, he is still dwelling in a **tent** (cf. Heb. 11:9+).

**Bob Utley** - "**by the oaks of Mamre**" The same place is mentioned in Gen. 13:18 ([see note](#)) and Ge 14:13. It is very important for us to recognize the significance of trees in semi-arid areas. They were almost seen as having a holy sense because they represented the presence of underground water. Also they provided shade which, in this area of the world, can mean a 60 degree difference in temperature. In reality it was probably not an oak, but a terebinth (cf. See [UBS, Helps For Translators, Fauna and Flora of the Bible, pp. 154-155](#)). The rabbis say that it was not a single tree but an orchard, which may be true. [See note](#) at Gen. 13:18. "**he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day**" This is so realistic to the culture of that day, for the tent flap would have been open during the hot time of the day. The people would have been relaxing quietly at this time of day in order to avoid heat stroke.

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Source: [Abraham: Following God's Promise](#)

**Mamre** - Important oak grove near which Abraham lived, and named for an Amorite (**ED**: a grove of terebinth trees that were owned by Mamre who was chief of the Amorites who was allied with Abraham) who helped him defeat Chedorlaomer and rescue Lot (Ge 14:13, 24). Abraham erected an altar under the oak of Mamre (Ge 13:18). Abraham was sitting by the sacred tree when he welcomed three mysterious guests (ch 18). Mamre is also a possible site for the scene of Abrahamic covenant ceremonies (ch 15). Isaac and Jacob also lived there (35:27). (**ED**: Mamre is about 19 mi. SW of Jerusalem at Hebron whose elevation exceeds 3,000 feet)

While Mamre is not mentioned in the Bible outside of Genesis, it continued to be an important place of worship and many legends remain about the sacred tree. In the 1st century AD. pilgrims journeyed to Mamre for ceremonies venerating the tree. According to Sozomenus (Hist. Eccl. 2.4), Jews, Christians, and pagans performed devotions at the site, each in their own way.

In all probability, unorthodox worship was practiced at Mamre. Jerusalem tended to ignore such cults; therefore, it is not mentioned outside of Genesis and even there the location of the site is confused. The oak(s) of Mamre are identified as near Hebron (Gn 13:18) and Machpelah where the patriarchs and their wives were buried (23:17, 19; 25:9; 49:30; 50:13). Eventually, the younger city of Hebron over-shadowed the older sanctuary at Mamre.

**Mamre** has been excavated by archaeologists on a hill  $1\frac{2}{3}$  miles north of Hebron named Ramet el-Khalil. E.H. Mader cleared a Herodian enclosure wall and a well into which pilgrims threw gifts and money. In the eastern part of the area, Constantine built a basilica with a double narthex indicating that this site remained a place of prayer. It also may have been the site of the infamous "Fair of Terebinthos," where Hadrian sold the captives of the Bar Kochba war (AD 135) into slavery. Pottery from the 9th and 8th centuries BC. indicates earlier Israelite occupation. (Borrow [Baker Encyclopedia page 1384](#)) (See also [Wikipedia Article on Mamre](#))

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### Rod Mattoon - Tents of the Desert

In the heat of the day, Abraham saw the three men approaching. Noon is the siesta time among desert dwellers. The heat is very intense this time of day. Some Arabs would eat by the door of their tent in order to notice travelers in the area and invite them to dinner. Abraham may have been doing this.

Tents were made of goat's hair and were black or brown in color. Goat's hair was an ideal material to use for the tents because it was easy to acquire. The nature of the material helped the tent to breathe and not be stuffy because it was porous when dry. After the first rain, the hairs in the tent would shrink and make the tent waterproof. These tents were sometimes called "the house of hair". The goat's hair was the same material as sackcloth. It was prickly and coarse and worn by those in mourning.

The goat's hair was made in strips of cloth five to six feet wide. These strips were used to patch the rotted and torn areas of the tent and add on new sections to the tent in the event more room was needed. Most tents were oblong in shape and had about nine poles for the three basic sections it supported. The front section was the men's quarters, the second was for the women, and sometimes the livestock was put in the third section. A sackcloth curtain was hung between each section for privacy. Only the father was allowed to enter the women's quarters. Any other man entering these quarters could be punished by death.

Arabs that dwelt together would form their camp in a circle with the tent of the sheik in the middle of the circle. His tent could be identified by the spear stuck in the ground outside his door and the tent was usually large in its size. When weather permitted, the livestock were put in the center of the circle area at night for protection from predators.

Mats were placed on the floor of the tents for comfort. At the center of the tent was a hole dug for a fire and skins filled with wines and milk were hung around the tent poles.

A. Spontaneity Ge 18:1

1. Heat of the day, people resting, and the Lord appeared
2. God can suddenly change directions in your life
3. The 3 men
  - a. Trinity (view of the Church of England)
  - b. Best to see this as the Lord and two angels
4. Be flexible

B. Humility

1. Abraham was a sheik, but he bowed down - shachah - bow down
2. In God's presence I'm not important (who He is, who we are) Isaiah 6
3. Abraham called him my Lord, Adonai

C. Ministry

1. Personally
  - a. Abraham didn't have his servants do the work, he did it personally
  - b. Every Christian has a ministry
  - c. Serving God's people is serving Him
2. Immediately (Abraham was hot, old, and had servants, but he served)
3. Generously
  - a. Give the best
  - b. Don't give leftovers
  - c. Serving God costs something

D. Conformity

1. Abraham believed God, walked in God's will
2. You are a friend if you do whatever Jesus commands you John 15:14-15  
"If we are beset by an unseen foe, we are also befriended by an Unseen Friend. Great is our adversary but greater is our Ally." -- Vance Havner,

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**David Reed** in [Jehovah's Witnesses Answered Verse by Verse page 24 \(borrow\)](#) - Genesis 18:1–2 *Yahweh appeared to him.... He looked up, and there he saw three men....* (JB)

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that it is impossible for the one true God to exist as three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet, the Bible, in Genesis 18 and 19, shows God appearing to Abraham as three men. This account can be used to help JW's see that even the impossible (from a human viewpoint) is possible with God. Discuss it with them, as suggested here:

In the Watchtower Society's own New World Translation, at Genesis 18:1–2, God appears to Abraham as three men (or angels). Abraham addresses the three as "Jehovah" (v. 3). When the three men respond, the episode is described interchangeably as "they" speaking (v. 9) and "Jehovah" speaking (v. 13). When two of the three men depart to visit Lot in Sodom, Abraham continues to call the remaining one "Jehovah," but Lot addresses the other two as "Jehovah" (Gen. 18:22, 30 and 19:1, 18).

By itself, this account does not prove the Trinity doctrine. But, at the very least, it demonstrates that it is possible for God to manifest himself as three-in-one. The fact that this concept is beyond the full grasp of human intellect should not cause Jehovah's Witnesses to rule it out. As the apostle Paul wrote: "... we can see and understand only a little about God now, as if we were peering at his reflection in a poor mirror; but someday we are going to see him in his completeness, face to face. Now all that I know is hazy and blurred, but then I will see everything clearly, just as clearly as God sees into my heart right now" (1 Cor. 13:12, LB).

The discussion above may help a Jehovah's Witness to reconsider the concept of one God in three persons. For further help [see also Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1; John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 2:9; and Revelation 1:7–8.](#)

**Genesis 18:2 When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth,**

- **When he lifted up his eyes and looked:** Judges 13:3,9 Heb 13:2
- **three:** Ge 18:22 19:1 Heb 13:2 1Pe 4:9

- **he ran:** Ro 12:13
- **bowed:** Ge 23:7 33:3-7 43:26,28 44:14 Ru 2:10 2Ki 2:15
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

Abraham Prostrate Before the 3 Visitors

## ABRAHAM GREETES SPECIAL TRIO BY RUNNING & BOWING

When he lifted up his eyes and looked, **behold** ([hinneh](#); Lxx = [idou](#)) - Note 3 descriptions relating to seeing ([lifted...eyes...looked...behold](#)). **Behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!" In this case it has caught Abraham's attention.

**Spurgeon** says that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation."

**NET NOTE** - Hebrew "and saw, and **look**." The particle הִנֵּה ([hinneh](#)) draws attention to what he saw. The drawn-out description focuses the reader's attention on Abraham's deliberate, fixed gaze and indicates that what he is seeing is significant.

**Warren Wiersbe** 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.

**Three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw them** - The Hebrew word for **opposite** (preposition עַל 'al) indicates the three are relatively close (within running distance). The picture by Tissot above is excellent but it does not really depict Abraham running from the tent but has him on his face in the tent. Notice that the three appeared as **men**, not as glowing angels, etc. Another famous painting by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1667) is entitled "[Abraham and the Three Angels](#)" indicating that Murillo misinterpreted the text (don't get your theology from paintings as he even paints a house not a tent!) As alluded to above, the fact that Ge 18:1 says the LORD **appeared** is clear support that one of these men is the LORD! It is very likely that the other two men were angels, and in fact are most likely the same two angels we see in Ge 19:1+ where "**the two angels came to Sodom in the evening**." This could be referring to the same day because Abraham's visit was in the **heat of the day** and Genesis 19:1+ takes place **in the evening**. (So the angels would have had lunch with Abraham and would later have dinner with Lot, so to speak! Ge 19:3+)

As an aside the Church of England has interpreted the **three men** as the Trinity, because there are three persons but they are addressed as one and the name 'the LORD' is given in Ge 18:1. So each year on [Trinity Sunday](#), they read the first part of Genesis 18 because they see this as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If one examines the context of the entire chapter, clearly one of the men is Jehovah (Ge 18:13) and the other 2 men are angels who are sent on mission to Sodom (Ge 18:22, Ge 19:1).

**THOUGHT** - Keep context "king" if you want to avoid misinterpretation of the Bible!

**He ran from the tent door to meet them** - The fact that Abraham ran to meet them suggests he recognized them as not routine sojourning strangers. And if there was any doubt that he recognized their special nature, the next action of bowing to them removes all doubt.

**THOUGHT** - The Lord did not come to Abraham's tent and say, 'I am Yahweh. I'm coming in! Open that tent flap--I'm coming in.' He waited for Abraham to show hospitality and Abraham invited Him in. That's how God works. The Lord works by invitation. He will never force Himself on you. He waits for you to invite Him in. Do you feel far from God today? Guess who moved? Invite Him to come fellowship with you again, returning to that joy and excitement you had when you first fell in love with Him (cf Rev 2:4-5+). (Adapted from [Skip Heitzig](#))

**Jon Courson** - I like this! Here's a ninety-nine-year-old man who runs to meet the Lord. How do you and I greet the Lord when the alarm clock goes off for devotions and prayer, for meditation and worship? (See [Courson's Application Commentary](#) page 77)

**ESV Study Bible** ([borrow - see page 80](#)) on **ran from the tent door** -- Abraham's actions suggest that he viewed the men as exceptionally important. he ran. In the Middle East, an elderly man of some social standing would not normally respond in this way to visitors. bowed himself to the earth. While this may have been a common mode of greeting others (see Ge 19:1+), it shows that Abraham regards the visitors as worthy of great respect.

**And bowed** ([shachah](#); Lxx = [proskuneo](#)) **himself to the earth** - This demonstrates Abraham's humility and reverence. Remember Abraham is a man of esteem in the land, and is tantamount to what we would call a [sheikh](#) and yet he chooses to bow



down! **Bowed** ([shachah](#)) in the hithpalel (causative-reflective) stem indicates the subject is willingly bowing to the ground. It is translated in the Septuagint with the verb [proskuneo](#) (**pros** = before + **kuneo** = kiss or adore) which means to prostrate oneself in homage before another in the full sense of worship, not mere reverence or courtesy. Note that Lot has the same reaction to the two angels in Ge 19:1+ where bow is also ([shachah](#); Lxx = [proskuneo](#)). In Ge 22:5 Abraham says he is going to worship ([shachah](#); Lxx = [proskuneo](#)). So while one might consider this to be a customary greeting, in the context of Abraham's running and preparing a lavish meal would support that bowed in this passage was a reflection of his recognizing something special about the 3 men. Did he know one was God at this point? While I think it is very possible, it is difficult to be dogmatic.

When Abraham encountered Melchizedek, he did not bow to him or address him in such a manner as we see Abraham doing in Genesis 18:2-3, even though Melchizedek was superior to him in rank and authority due to his position as priest of the Most High God. This would indicate that Abraham recognizes that the Lord Himself came in human form to pay him a visit.

**Bob Utley** - "**bowed himself to the earth**" This can be seen as (1) an Oriental custom of greeting (i.e., Ge 23:7; 33:6-7; 43:28), (2) an act of reverence (divine visitors, i.e., Gen. 19:1+; or YHWH Himself, Ge 24:26,48,52) (3) an act of fear (Abraham was a sojourner in a foreign land,

**NET NOTE** - The reader knows this is a theophany. The three visitors are probably the LORD and two angels (see Ge 19:1). It is not certain how soon Abraham recognized the true identity of the visitors. His actions suggest he suspected this was something out of the ordinary, though it is possible that his lavish treatment of the visitors was done quite unwittingly. **Bowing down to the ground** would be reserved for obeisance of kings or worship of the LORD. Whether he was aware of it or not, Abraham's action was most appropriate.

**Bob Utley** has an interesting comment - This is a very anthropomorphic section (speaking of God in human terms). **This type of literary form has always made Jewish commentators very nervous.** However, to many of us in the Church, this is the pre-incarnate Christ who physically manifests the very presence of God (cf. [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ANGEL OF THE LORD](#))" Genesis 18-19 bring into vivid reality both sides of God's nature: love and judgment. It is uncertain at what point in chapter 18 if Abraham recognized the three visitors as being supernatural. Much of what is recorded is simply Oriental custom.

1. he bowed himself to the earth (cf. Gen. 23:7; 33:6-7; 42:6; 43:26)
2. he washed their feet (cf. Gen. 19:2; 24:32; 43:24)
3. he offered a meal (cf. Gen. 18:5)
4. he stood while they ate (cf. Gen. 18:8)
5. he called them Adonai, but in the sense of "Sir" (cf. Gen. 18:3)

On the other side of the coin (**ED: THIS IS THE SIDE OF THE COIN I AGREE WITH - I THINK ABRAHAM RECOGNIZED VERY QUICKLY THAT THESE WERE DISTINCTLY UNUSUAL MEN!**) there seems to be some indication that he understood very early that they were of supernatural origin.

1. he hurried and ran (cf. Gen. 18:2,6, and 7), which was an unusual act for the Patriarch in the heat of the day
2. the meal he prepared was very large in quantity (cf. Gen. 18:6)
3. he even prepared an animal from his flock, which was unusual (Gen. 18:7)

It is obvious from Gen. 18:9 on that he recognizes the Lord as being personified in one of these visitors.

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**Behold** ([02009](#)) [hinneh](#) is an interjection meaning behold, look, now; if. "It is used often and expresses strong feelings, surprise, hope, expectation, certainty, thus giving vividness depending on its surrounding context." (Baker) [Hinneh](#) generally directs our mind to the text, imploring the reader to give it special attention. In short, the Spirit is trying to arrest our attention! And so [hinneh](#) is used as an exclamation of vivid immediacy (e.g., read Ge 6:13)! **Hinneh** is a marker used to enliven a narrative, to express a change a scene, to emphasize an idea, to call attention to a detail or an important fact or action that follows (Isa 65:17, Ge 17:20, 41:17). The first use of **hinneh** in Ge 1:29 and second in Ge 1:31 - "And God saw all that He had made, and **behold**, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." **Hinneh** is often used in the idiom "**Here I am**" in Ge 22:1, 7,11 Ge 27:1,18, Ge 31:11, Ge 46:2 Ex 3:4 1Sa 3:4, 3:16, 12:3, 2Sa 1:7, Isa 52:6, Isa 58:9. [Hinneh](#) is used most often to point out people but also to point out things (Ge 31:41, 17:4). God uses **hinneh** to grab man's attention before He brings destruction (Ge 6:13, 17). God uses **hinneh** when He establishes covenants (Ge 9:9, 15:12, 17 [when Jehovah cut the Abrahamic covenant], Ge 17:4, cp Ge 28:13, 15), when He provided a sacrificial substitute for Isaac (foreshadowing His giving us His only Son!) (Ge 22:13). [Hinneh](#) marks the "chance ([The Providence of God](#))" arrival of Boaz at the field where Ruth was gleaning (Ru 2:4 [read about this "chance romance" - Indeed, "Behold!"](#)). [Hinneh](#) is used to announce the Lord's sending of a child as a sign and a prophecy of [Immanuel-Emmanuel](#), the Messiah (Isa. 7:14+). In fact **W E Vine** says that it is notable that when **behold** ([hinneh](#)) is used in Isaiah, it always introduces something relating to future circumstances.

**Hinneh** is translated in the Septuagint with the interjection [idou](#) (strictly speaking a command in the second person [aorist imperative](#), [middle voice](#)) a demonstrative particle (used 1377 times in the Septuagint and NT) which is found especially in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke "and giving a peculiar vivacity to the style by bidding the reader or hearer to attend to what is said: **"Behold! See! Lo!"** (Thayer) The command is calling for urgent attention. Do this now! Don't delay! It could be loosely paraphrased **"Pay attention!"** or **"Listen up!"** to arouse attention and introduce a new and extraordinary fact of considerable importance.

**Bowed** (prostrate, worship) (07812) **shachah** means to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to crouch, to fall down, to humbly beseech, to do reverence, to worship. The idea is to assume a prostrate position as one would in paying homage to royalty (Ge 43:28) or to God (Ge 24:26, Ps 95:6). To bow down (Qal) to bow down; (Hiphil) to depress (fig); (Hithpael) to bow down, prostrate oneself, before superior in homage, before God in worship, before false gods, before angel. It describes Joseph's brother's sheaves which "bowed down to my sheaf." (Ge 37:7) When God told Abraham to sacrifice his son, he told his men to remain for they would go to **"worship** (bow down) and return to you." (Ge 22:5) Joshua bowed down to the "Captain of the host of the LORD," (Joshua 5:14) a preincarnate appearance of Messiah. In Josh 23:7, 16 Joshua warned Israel NOT to **bow down** to the idols of the land, but in Jdg 2:12, 17, 19 but tragically that is exactly what they did when Joshua died! The English word **prostrate** is defined as being stretched out with one's face on the ground in adoration or submission. It is not just that the person has fallen down but pictures them lying at length or with their body extended on the ground and so lying in a posture which is reflective of genuine humility and/or adoration.

**Septuagint of Genesis 18:2** is **proskuneo** (from **pros** = before + **kuneo** = kiss or adore) means to prostrate oneself in homage before another in the full sense of worship, not mere reverence or courtesy. When Jesus Christ was born into this world, He was attended and worshipped by angels. (Lu 2:13f). **Proskuneo** represents the most common Near Eastern act of adoration and reverence and also carries the idea of profound awe and respect. Some believe that the root word **kuneo** may be related to **kuon** which is the Greek word for dog and which then could be picturing a dog licking his master's hand.

The word **proskuneo** literally means to kiss toward someone, to throw a kiss in token of respect or homage, to prostrate oneself in homage, to do reverence to, to adore and so to worship and show respect. In the ancient Oriental (especially Persia) the mode of salutation between persons of equal rank was to kiss each other on the lips. When the difference of rank was slight, they kissed each other on the cheek. When one was much inferior, he fell upon his knees touched his forehead to the ground or prostrated himself, and as he was bowing down he would be throwing kisses toward the superior. It is this latter mode of salutation that is intended by the Greek writers in the use of the verb **proskuneo**.

**Vine** says "This word is found in modern Hebrew in the sense of "to bow or stoop," but not in the general sense of "to worship." The fact that it is found more than 170 times in the Hebrew Bible shows something of its cultural significance. It is found for the first time in Gen. 18:2. The act of bowing down in homage is generally done before a superior or a ruler. Thus, David "bowed" himself before Saul (1Sa 24:8). Sometimes it is a social or economic superior to whom one bows, as when Ruth "bowed" to the ground before Boaz (Ru 2:10). In a dream, Joseph saw the sheaves of his brothers "bowing down" before his sheaf (Ge 37:5, 9-10). *Shāḥā* is used as the common term for coming before God in worship, as in 1Sa 15:25 and Jer. 7:2. Sometimes it is in conjunction with another Hebrew verb for bowing down physically, followed by "worship," as in Exod. 34:8: "And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped." Other gods and idols are also the object of such worship by one's prostrating oneself before them (Isa. 2:20; Isa. 44:15, 17). ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

"There is a dangerous absence of awe and worship in our assemblies today. We are boasting about standing on our own feet, instead of being broken and falling at His feet. For years Evan Roberts prayed: "Bend me! Bend me!" God answered finally in the form of the GREAT WELSH REVIVAL!!!

**Shachah in the Pentateuch** - Gen. 18:2; Gen. 19:1; Gen. 22:5; Gen. 23:7; Gen. 23:12; Gen. 24:26; Gen. 24:48; Gen. 24:52; Gen. 27:29; Gen. 33:3; Gen. 33:6; Gen. 33:7; Gen. 37:7; Gen. 37:9; Gen. 37:10; Gen. 42:6; Gen. 43:26; Gen. 43:28; Gen. 47:31; Gen. 48:12; Gen. 49:8; Exod. 4:31; Exod. 11:8; Exod. 12:27; Exod. 18:7; Exod. 20:5; Exod. 23:24; Exod. 24:1; Exod. 32:8; Exod. 33:10; Exod. 34:8; Exod. 34:14; Lev. 26:1; Num. 25:2; Deut. 4:19; Deut. 5:9; Deut. 8:19; Deut. 11:16; Deut. 17:3; Deut. 26:10; Deut. 29:26; Deut. 30:17;

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**James Freeman - Borrow [Manners & customs of the Bible](#) page 24 - BOWING** - In biblical times bowing was a method of showing respect, the lesser bowing to the greater, or a method of demonstrating humility or showing acquiescence. In certain Asiatic countries it is a way of salutation, just as shaking hands is in Western countries. Bowing is also used to express an attitude of deference or homage. Abraham bowed before the Lord to show respect and reverence. In Genesis 23:7, "Abraham rose and bowed



down before the people of the land, the Hittites” to express thankfulness. In Genesis 33:3, Jacob bowed to Esau seven times—the bowing was undoubtedly to express respect and humility, and the seven times may have been to express repentance and seek forgiveness. This would be in keeping with what the Lord said as recorded in Luke 17:4, “If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.” And in Genesis 43:28, the brothers of Joseph bowed before him to honor him as the governor of the land: “They replied, “Your servant our father is still alive and well.” And they bowed low to pay him honor.”

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**Norman Geisler - from [When Cultists Ask](#) -** GENESIS 18:2—Does the Oriental custom of bowing before a person of position justify the Roman Catholic practice of bowing before images?

**MISINTERPRETATION:** Genesis 18:2b informs us that “Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.” Does this justify the Roman Catholic practice of bowing before images?

**CORRECTING THE MISINTERPRETATION:** The Catholic argument that religiously bowing down before an image is not wrong because there are many cases in the Bible where such bowing down is approved, as in Genesis 18:2, confuses two very different contexts.

First, they were bowing out of respect, not out of reverence.

Second, bowing was understood as a social practice, not a religious rite.

Third, the Bible condemns even bowing before an angel in the worship of God (Rev. 22:8–9).

Fourth, the Bible clearly condemns bowing before any image in religious veneration (see, for example, Exod. 20:4).

Finally, God acted at one point to avoid this very practice. Knowing that devout Israelites might be tempted to venerate the remains of Moses, God buried him where no one knows (Deut. 34:6). His apparent aim was to prevent idolatry that the devil desires to encourage (Jude 9).

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**QUESTION - [Who were the three men who visited Abraham in Genesis 18?](#)**

**ANSWER - [Abraham](#)** was visited by three men one day; the men turned out to be unusual guests, to say the least, and the visit was life-changing for Abraham and Sarah. Genesis 18:1–2 says, “The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.” Abraham showed immediate hospitality to the three men, inviting them to rest under a tree and preparing a big meal for them (Genesis 18:3–8).

During their visit with Abraham, the three men warned him that God’s judgment was about to fall upon Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:20–21; 19:12–13). They also promised that Abraham’s wife, Sarah, would have a baby by the same time next year (Genesis 18:10).

Some have suggested that all three of these “men” were angelic beings who appeared to Abraham in the form of men. However, Genesis 18:1 says that it was “the LORD” (*Yahweh*) who appeared to Abraham. It is the LORD who speaks in verses 13, 20, 26, and 33. Abraham stands “before the LORD” in verse 22. So, one of the three “men” must have been God Almighty taking on the appearance of a man. We call such an appearance a “theophany.” When Jesus appears in His pre-incarnate body in the Old Testament, we call it a “Christophany.” Whether God’s appearance to Abraham in Mamre was a theophany or a Christophany, we don’t know. But it does seem clear from the context that one of the visitors was God Himself (Genesis 18:22) and the other two were the angels who later visited Sodom and spoke to Lot (Genesis 19:1).

Abraham’s response to the appearance of the three men also suggests that he instinctively knew that he was in the presence of God. A typical response to visitors in that culture was to rise and wait for them to approach the home. But Abraham ran to meet them and “bowed low to the ground,” a prostrate posture reserved for royalty or deity.

Abraham was well acquainted with the LORD and would have instantly recognized Him, because the Lord had spoken and/or appeared to him many times before. Those appearances include the following occasions:

- when God first called him (Genesis 12:1–3)
- when Abraham parted ways with Lot (Genesis 13:14–17)
- possibly when he met Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18–20)
- when God made a covenant with him (Genesis 15)
- when God restated His covenant (Genesis 17)

These three visitors whom Abraham entertained were heavenly, and Abraham and Sarah were in the company of God Himself. The

story teaches us that God is aware of what is happening on earth, and He is involved. God can even visit or send His heavenly messengers to help fulfill His plans (See Heb 1:14). We may not always realize whom we are speaking with, so we should treat everyone as though they were on special assignment from God. Hebrews 13:2 reminds us, “Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.” [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### QUESTION - [What is a theophany? What is a Christophany?](#)

**ANSWER** - A theophany is a manifestation of God in the Bible that is tangible to the human senses. In its most restrictive sense, it is a visible appearance of God in the Old Testament period, often, but not always, in human form. Some of the theophanies are found in these passages:

1. Genesis 12:7-9 – The Lord appeared to Abraham on his arrival in the land God had promised to him and his descendants.
2. Genesis 18:1-33 – One day, Abraham had some visitors: two angels and God Himself. He invited them to come to his home, and he and Sarah entertained them. Many commentators believe this could also be a Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ.
3. Genesis 32:22-30 – Jacob wrestled with what appeared to be a man, but was actually God (vv. 28-30). This may also have been a Christophany.
4. Exodus 3:2 - 4:17 – God appeared to Moses in the form of a burning bush, telling him exactly what He wanted him to do.
5. Exodus 24:9-11 – God appeared to Moses with Aaron and his sons and the seventy elders.
6. Deuteronomy 31:14-15 – God appeared to Moses and Joshua in the transfer of leadership to Joshua.
7. Job 38–42 – God answered Job out of the tempest and spoke at great length in answer to Job’s questions.

Frequently, the term “glory of the Lord” reflects a theophany, as in Exodus 24:16-18; the “pillar of cloud” has a similar function in Exodus 33:9. A frequent introduction for theophanies may be seen in the words “the Lord came down,” as in Genesis 11:5; Exodus 34:5; Numbers 11:25; and 12:5.

Some Bible commentators believe that whenever someone received a visit from “the angel of the Lord,” **this was in fact the pre-incarnate Christ.** (ED: **SEE MY DISCUSSION ON [Angel of the LORD](#)**) These appearances can be seen in Genesis 16:7-14; Genesis 22:11-18; Judges 5:23; 2 Kings 19:35; and other passages. Other commentators believe these were in fact angelophanies, or appearances of angels. While there are no indisputable Christophanies in the Old Testament, every theophany wherein God takes on human form foreshadows the incarnation, where God took the form of a man to live among us as Emmanuel, “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### Related Resource:

- [Has anyone ever seen God? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Genesis 18:3 and said, “My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, please do not pass Your servant by.**

- **favor:** Ge 32:5
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### ABRAHAM ENCOURAGES THE THREE TO REMAIN

**And said, “My Lord ([Adonay](#); Lxx = [kurios](#))** - This mode of addressing the three men could simply represent the customary respectful address of a host to a visitor but as the [NET NOTE](#) says the use of ['adonay](#) is usually reserved for God. In addition, Abraham uses this designation 4 times later in this chapter, clearly after he knows he is speaking with Jehovah.

**NET NOTE** on **LORD** - The [Masoretic Text](#) has the form אֲדֹנָי ([Adonay](#), “Master”) which is reserved for God. This may reflect later scribal activity. The scribes, knowing it was the LORD, may have put the proper pointing with the word instead of the more common אֲדֹנִי ([adoni](#), “my master”)

**Wenstrom** - The fact that Abraham addresses only one of the three and calls only one of the three 'adon, "Lord" indicates that Abraham recognizes the authority of only one of them who is the Lord Himself and appropriately addresses Him with the noun 'Adonay which denotes the idea of authority or lordship. Therefore, it should be translated not in a lower case "lord" but with an upper case "Lord."

**Skip Heitzig** on **My Lord** - 'Adonay is the Hebrew word. Now Abraham will refer to Him in this passage as your servant and call God my Lord, Adonai. The Mighty One. The Almighty. The Strong One. The Lord. I think it was Max Lucado who wrote something quite clever. He said, 'You don't boast about your paper airplane when you're dealing with NASA. You don't brag about your crayon sketches in the presence of Picasso. You don't claim equality with Albert Einstein because you can write H2O. And you don't talk about your own goodness in the presence of the Perfect One.' That's sort of the idea here. He recognizes who he's with and he bows down and he calls Him, 'My Lord.'

**ESV Study Bible** ([borrow - see page 80](#)) on **O Lord**. -- The term here (Hebrew, 'Adonay) is a distinctive one for God in the OT (e.g., Ge 20:4). The polite term of respect "my lord" (Heb. 'adoni) has a slight difference of spelling, affecting the last vowel (e.g., Ge 23:6). The ESV text renders the Hebrew, while the footnote represents the different spelling. **If the spelling in the Hebrew text is correct—and there is no reason to doubt it—then Abraham recognizes that one of his visitors is a divine manifestation.** This explains Abraham's part in the conversation of Ge 18:22-33.

**If now I have found favor** ([chen](#); Lxx - [charis](#)) **in Your sight, please do not pass Your servant** ([ebed](#); Lxx - [pais](#)) **by** - KJV = "pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant" Given the fact that they do not **pass** by would suggest Abraham has found **favor** in their sight. Notice also Abraham refers to himself as Your servant (I chose to capitalize "Your"). The idea is picked up by **God's Word** paraphrase "Stop by to visit me a while" or **NLT** "Stop here for a while." Note that the pronoun **your** is in the singular indicating Abraham is calling himself the servant of only one of the three. If the pronomial suffix was in the plural, it would mean that Abraham is calling himself the servant of all three but this is not the case. Also, the verbs in Genesis 18:3 are all used in the singular rather than the plural further indicating that Abraham is addressing only one of the three. The fact that Abraham singles out one of the three indicates he recognizes the superiority of this one over the others.

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**Lord** (Adonai) ([0136](#)) 'adonay, "the Lord"; is derived from an ancient Ugaritic word (ʿadn) meaning "lord" or "father. Many regard it as the plural of 'adon. It is used chiefly in the Pentateuch—always where God is submissively and reverently addressed (Exodus 4:10, 13; Joshua 7:8) and also when God is spoken of (1Ki 13:9; 1Ki 22:6; etc.). In about three hundred passages ʿādōn appears in a special plural form with a first-person singular suffix (ʿādōnāy). The plural form ʿādōnāy is the plural of majesty, which we also observed in the designation In this form, found in Psalms, Lamentations, and the Prophets, the term always refers to God. The Jews, out of a superstitious reverence for the name Jehovah, always pronounce Adonai where Jehovah is written. The similar form, with the suffix, is also used of men, as of Potiphar (Genesis 39:2, "master") and of Joseph (Genesis 42:30, 33).

**Adonay in the Pentateuch** - Gen. 15:2; Gen. 15:8; Gen. 18:3; Gen. 18:27; Gen. 18:30; Gen. 18:31; Gen. 18:32; Gen. 20:4; Exod. 4:10; Exod. 4:13; Exod. 5:22; Exod. 15:17; Exod. 34:9; Num. 14:17; Deut. 3:24; Deut. 9:26

**Girdlestone's Synonyms of the OT** - The word usually rendered 'Lord,' or 'my Lord,' is Adonai ([0136](#)) is a special form of 'Adon, a word which signifies Master, and which exactly answers to the Greek [kurios](#). 'Adon is sometimes rendered **Sir** in the A. V., as in Gen. 43:20KJV; **Owner**, as in 1Ki 16:24; but generally **Master**, as in Ge 24:9. The plural form (of 'adon) **Adonim** and its plural construct form **Adonei** are used in the same sense; but when the word is applied to God, the form **Adonai** is adopted. The termination of the word (-ai), as in the case of Shaddai; may mark an ancient plural form, but this is uncertain. In the A. V., as in other versions, **Adonai** is frequently rendered 'my Lord.'

**The title indicates the truth that God is the owner of each member of the human family, and that He consequently claims the unrestricted obedience of all.**

**'Adonay in the Pentateuch** - Gen. 18:3; Gen. 18:27; Gen. 18:30; Gen. 18:31; Gen. 18:32 - all 5 uses translated in Lxx = [kurios](#); Gen. 20:4; Exod. 4:10; Exod. 4:13; Exod. 5:22; Exod. 15:17; Exod. 34:9; Num. 14:17; Deut. 3:24; Deut. 9:26;

**Favor** (grace) ([02580](#)) [chen/hen](#) from verb **chanan** = to favor) means favor (acts which display one's fondness or compassion for another), grace (acts of kindness displaying one's pleasure with an object, which benefit the object of pleasure), acceptance. The essence of **chen** is that it speaks of an "unmerited favor or regard in God's sight. The idea is that a person finds favor in the sight of another person or acceptance by the person. This word plays a major role in helping us understand God's relationship with sinful men as shown in the first use in Genesis 6:8 with those wonderful words "And Noah found favor (grace) in the eyes of the Lord." The result of this favor was that he was delivered by God from His judgment of the world through the Flood. In a similar vein, the nation of Israel was granted by God to receive "favor in the sight of the Egyptians." (Ex 3:21, 11:3, 12:36). Meanings include - Favor, grace,

charm, graciousness, kindness, beauty, pleasantness, attractiveness, loveliness, affectionate regard. **Chen** is translated in the [Septuagint](#) by the Greek word [charis](#) which is usually translated **grace** in the NT.

**Chen** - 67v - **adornment(1), charm(1), charm\*(1), charming\*(1), favor(51), grace(8), graceful(2), gracious(3), pleases\*(1)**. Gen. 6:8; Gen. 18:3; Gen. 19:19; Gen. 30:27; Gen. 32:5; Gen. 33:8; Gen. 33:10; Gen. 33:15; Gen. 34:11; Gen. 39:4; Gen. 39:21; Gen. 47:25; Gen. 47:29; Gen. 50:4; Exod. 3:21; Exod. 11:3; Exod. 12:36; Exod. 33:12; Exod. 33:13; Exod. 33:16; Exod. 33:17; Exod. 34:9; Num. 11:11; Num. 11:15; Num. 32:5; Deut. 24:1; Jdg. 6:17; Ruth 2:2; Ruth 2:10; Ruth 2:13; 1 Sam. 1:18; 1 Sam. 16:22; 1 Sam. 20:3; 1 Sam. 20:29; 1 Sam. 25:8; 1 Sam. 27:5; 2 Sam. 14:22; 2 Sam. 15:25; 2 Sam. 16:4; 1 Ki. 11:19; Est. 2:15; Est. 2:17; Est. 5:2; Est. 5:8; Est. 7:3; Est. 8:5; Ps. 45:2; Ps. 84:11; Prov. 1:9; Prov. 3:4; Prov. 3:22; Prov. 3:34; Prov. 4:9; Prov. 5:19; Prov. 11:16; Prov. 13:15; Prov. 17:8; Prov. 22:1; Prov. 22:11; Prov. 28:23; Prov. 31:30; Eccl. 9:11; Eccl. 10:12; Jer. 31:2; Nah. 3:4; Zech. 4:7; Zech. 12:10

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## James Smith - ABRAHAM RECEIVING AND SERVING Genesis 18:1–17

Every Old Testament incident yields some New Testament truth. Let us read this portion in the light of the New Revelation.

### I. A Gracious Visit. “The Lord appeared unto him; ... and he lift up his eyes, and, lo, three men stood by him” (Ge 18:1 and 2).

This is striking language, that Jehovah should manifest Himself in the form of three. Does this not suggest the Trinity of the Godhead? The whole Trinity is interested and exercised in seeking to bless and save man. The Father loved, and sent His Son; the Son loved, and gave Himself up to the death to redeem; the Spirit loved, and came to make His abode in the believing heart. This threefold salvation is summed up in the benediction, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost” (2 Cor. 13:14).

### II. A Hearty Reception.

The manner in which Abraham received the visitors, and his various acts toward them, may serve us as an illustration of how a weary, longing soul may receive Jesus, and be drawn out in eagerness after Him.

1. THERE WAS A LONGING DESIRE. “He lift up his eyes and looked” (Ge 18:2). A good work has been wrought in us before we will even lift up our eyes. The Lord is sure to appear in grace to the looking ones. They looked, and were lightened.
2. THERE WAS A READY MIND. “He ran to meet them.” He was in haste to receive the visitors. When the heart is really hungering for the living bread it will receive it gladly. The soul that is sighing for Christ will hasten to Him.
3. THERE WAS A HUMBLE SPIRIT. “He bowed himself toward the ground.” The more closely we come to Jesus, the heavenly Visitor, the more unworthy do we see ourselves to be. The way to God is a self-humbling way. The nearer we come to His light the more unseemly doth the garments of our own righteousness appear.
4. THERE WAS A WILLING CONFESSION. Abraham said, “My Lord.” When a soul has found its way into the presence of Jesus Christ we expect to hear the language of confession and testimony. “My Lord!” These two little words imply two great thoughts—(1) appropriation; (2) entire subjection. He is mine and I am His.
5. THERE WAS A LOVE FOR FELLOWSHIP. “If I have found favour in Thy sight, pass not away, I pray Thee, from Thy servant” (Ge 18:3). What could be more natural? The soul that has found the Lord yearns to abide in His presence. In His presence is fulness of joy. The lonely heart finds its home in the bosom of His love.
6. THERE WAS A DESIRE FOR THEIR REFRESHING. “Rest yourselves, ... and comfort your hearts” (Ge 18:4 and 5). In our selfishness we are apt to be satisfied with getting His favour and blessing, and stopping short of seeking rest for His soul and comfort for His heart. Christ gave us rest and comfort by giving Himself for us; let us give Him rest and comfort by giving ourselves to Him.
7. THERE WAS A READINESS TO SERVE. “Abraham ran and fetcht and gave” (Ge 18: and 7). Love lends swiftness to the willing feet. “The Lord loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord” (Col. 3:23). “The love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor. 5:14).

### III. A Blessed Reward. “The Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” (Ge 18:17).

The devotion of Abraham is rewarded with a revelation of the secret purpose of the Lord. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. The way into the deeper things of God often lies through self-sacrifice and

active service. If we would know the hidden wisdom of God, and feed on the finest of the wheat, we must lay ourselves and all that we have at the feet of our Lord. Open your heart to Him, and His heart will be open to you.

**Genesis 18:4 "Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree;**

- **wash your feet:** Ge 19:2 24:32 43:24 1Sa 25:41 Lu 7:44 Joh 13:5-15 1Ti 5:10
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

John 13:4, 15+ (JESUS) got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.....15 "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.

1 Timothy 5:10+ having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, **if she has washed the saints' feet**, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work.

### ABRAHAM'S HOSPITALITY

**Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet** - NET adds "so that you may ALL wash." In those ancient times, shoes such as ours, were not in use; and the foot was protected only with sandals or soles, fastened round the foot with straps. It was, therefore, not only necessary from motives of cleanliness, but also a very great refreshment, in so hot a country, to get the feet washed at the end of a day's journey; and this is the first thing that Abraham proposes.

**And rest (sha'an) yourselves under the tree** - **Rest** (a command) in the shade was the second requisite for the refreshment of a weary traveller. **Rest** in the Septuagint is the verb katapsucho ([aorist imperative](#)) which means to cool off or refresh (used once in NT = Lk 16:24+).

[Warren Wiersbe](#) on Abraham's ministry to the Lord - 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). "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men ... for you serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:23-24)

**Rest** ([08172](#)) [sha'an](#) primarily means to lean on something (literally Saul on his sword = 2Sa 1:6 - avoid this type of leaning!) or someone (2Ki 5:16, 7:2, 17), to rest on, to support oneself (Jdg 16:26), figuratively to trust (2Chr 13:18, Job 8:15 other versions render with rely), to rest (Ge 18:4). Rely on (2Chr 16:7 - 2x). Samson leaned against the pillar (Judg. 16:26). This meaning led to the common usage of this verb as a figurative idea of "relying on" someone for help. Kings had a close aid or officer to "lean on" or accompany them and give advice, help and even protection (2 Ki. 5:18; 7:2, 17). The idea of having a sense of security and support is found in Job 24:23. Asa quit looking to or "leaning on" the Lord for help against enemies as he used to do and so was rebuked and punished (2 Chr. 14:11; 16:7f). The most well-known verse which uses both verbs trust and lean is Pr 3:5+ "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding."

**Sha'an** - 20v - ean(3), leaned(2), leaning(2), leans(2), relied(4), rely(4), rest yourselves(1), supported(1), trust(1), trusted(1), trusts(1). Gen. 18:4; Num. 21:15; Jdg. 16:26; 2 Sam. 1:6; 2 Ki. 5:18; 2 Ki. 7:2; 2 Ki. 7:17; 2 Chr. 13:18; 2 Chr. 14:11; 2 Chr. 16:7; 2 Chr. 16:8; Job 8:15; Job 24:23; Prov. 3:5; Isa. 10:20; Isa. 30:12; Isa. 31:1; Isa. 50:10; Ezek. 29:7; Mic. 3:11

#### Rod Mattoon - Examples of Hospitality in Genesis

1. Abraham invites the angels into his tent. 18:5
2. Lot invites the reluctant angels into his home. 19:2
3. Abimelech invites Abraham to dwell in the land. 20:15
4. Laban receives Abraham's servant. 24:31-33
5. Laban invites Jacob into his house. 29:13



6. Joseph cares for his brothers in his home. 43:24
7. Pharaoh invites Joseph's family to live in Egypt. 45:18–20

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**John Butler - Callers on Abraham.** Three men (heavenly beings) called upon Abraham.

- Politeness to the callers: Abraham was extremely hospitable which compliments his character.
- Promise from the callers: Sarah would bear Abraham a son (Sarah laughed at the promise, but when rebuked for laughing, she denied that she had laughed).
- Prediction by the callers: Divine judgment was coming to Sodom.
- Petition to the callers: this is Abraham's famous prayer for Sodom in which he first pleaded that if fifty righteous persons were in Sodom, God would spare the city; then when God accepted Abraham's plea, Abraham, with much trepidation and humility, kept reducing the number until he stopped at ten.

**Genesis 18:5 and I will bring a piece of bread, that you may refresh yourselves; after that you may go on, since you have visited your servant." And they said, "So do, as you have said."**

- **And I will bring a piece of bread** Judges 6:18 13:15 Mt 6:11
- **may refresh yourselves**, Judges 19:5 Ps 104:15 Isa 3:1
- are ye come: Heb. ye have passed, Ge 19:8 33:10
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## HOSPITALITY TO STRANGERS

**And I will bring a piece of bread** - Notice **I will bring** indicates that Abraham sought to serve the Lord personally. Remember that Abraham was ninety-nine years old and a wealthy [sheikh](#), so he could have entrusted this task to his chief steward or one of his more than 318 servants (Ge 14:14+). Instead, he chooses to minister to his Lord personally and without delay. Abraham was a man of faith, and faith does not delay when it comes to serving the Lord.

**A piece** ([morsel](#) - KJV) means just a fragment, a bit to bite, a small piece, clearly an understatement for in Ge 18:6 Abraham calls for Sarah to use three measures of fine flour, the equivalent to about 20 quarts (22 liters) of flour, which would make more than just a piece of bread! We see Abraham perhaps "[going overboard](#)," but it was another indicator that he recognized the special nature of his guests. Indeed, if Abraham's hospitable actions are seen as an act of worship (seeing someone as "worthy"), Abraham is carrying out lavish worship!

**THOUGHT** - How would I describe my worship? Would it be lavish or lackadaisical? Is it closer to [overboard](#)" or is it more like "[ho hum](#)"?

Abraham served the Lord generously and gave Him the best that he had. Sarah baked bread from "fine meal" (Ge 18:6), and the meat was "tender and good" (Ge 18:7). No leftovers for these important guests! What a contrast to the priests in Malachi's day, who did not give God their best (Mal. 1:6-14+).

**THOUGHT** - Do I give the Lord my best or my "left-overs?"

**That you may refresh** ([saad](#)) **yourselves** ([leb](#) - hearts) - Heb literally reads "so that you may refresh your hearts, after [which] you may be on your way—for therefore you passed by near your servant." Abraham is practicing Hebrews 13:2+ not neglecting to "show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it." In Abraham's case, I think he knew these were not normal, natural men, but supernatural men.

**After that you may go on, since you have visited your servant**([ebed](#); Lxx - [pais](#)) - **CSB** "This is why you have passed your servant's way." **NLT** = "let me prepare some food to refresh you before you continue on your journey." The phrase **visited your servant** ([ebed](#); Lxx - [pais](#) - note this is second time he refers to himself as "servant" - Ge 18:3) indicates that Abraham clearly recognized that this visit was not an accident and that these were not just three random travelers.

**And they said, "So do, as you have said** - The visitors find Abraham's hospitality agreeable.

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**Refresh** ([05582](#))([saad](#)) means to sustain, support, establish, strengthen, comfort, stay. The emphasis of the word involves the idea of sustenance, whereas other words for support lay stress on "leaning upon" The root is utilized for taking food for physical

nourishment or sustenance (Genesis 18:5). It is also employed abstractly. As a good king sustains his throne by righteousness (Pr 20:28) so Messiah will establish and maintain his everlasting kingdom with justice and righteousness (Isa 9:7). The believer who has enthroned God in his heart may claim the promise that God will support him (Ps 18:35) in time of trouble (Ps 20:1-2) and sickness (Ps 41:3). Yea, when cares multiply so that his foot would totter and give way, God is there to support him (Ps 94:18). But God's sufficiency is not restricted to the crisis experiences of life; God himself is the great Provider for man's everyday needs (Ps 104:15). (From [TWOT](#))

**Gilbrant** - Sā'adh most often refers to support given by God to someone in need. For example, when God held the psalmist, he knew he was safe (Ps. 119:117): he was held up by God's right hand (Ps 18:35), and when his foot slipped God's mercy supported him (Ps 94:18). The psalmist also understood that someone who has been faithful will be strengthened by Yahweh when his sorrow overtakes him (Ps 41:3). In Isa. 9:7, which most take to be messianic, sā'adh is used with "judgment" and "justice". The KJV translates the verb as "establish" in this context; however, the idea seems to be communicated better by "uphold." This verb also is used of the strengthening effects of food and rest. In Gen. 18:5, Abraham tells the three strangers to strengthen their hearts. The idea is probably that Abraham's hospitality and their rest would allow them to be strengthened anew for their journey. In Ps. 104:15, a similar theme can be seen: bread strengthens the heart. In this instance, however, God is the immediate Provider of the bread—not Abraham. Judges 19:5, 8 (probably also 1 Ki. 13:7) further use sā'adh in reference to strength gained from eating. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Saad** - 12x/12v - hold(1), refresh(2), support(1), sustain(3), sustains(1), uphold(2), upholds(2). Gen. 18:5; Jdg. 19:5; Jdg. 19:8; 1 Ki. 13:7; Ps. 18:35; Ps. 20:2; Ps. 41:3; Ps. 94:18; Ps. 104:15; Ps. 119:117; Prov. 20:28; Isa. 9:7

**Servant** (05650) 'ebed from 'abad = work in any sense) means a slave or bondservant. Slavery in Israel amounted to indentured servitude. A fellow Israelite could not be held indefinitely against his will. In fact, his time of service was limited to 6 yr (Ex 21:2). The master could be punished if evil intent against the slave was proven (Ex 21:14) or if the slave died (Ex 21:20). These types of servants held a position of honor (Ge 24:2ff; 41:12, 15:2). This word is also a humble way of referring to one's self when speaking with another of equal or superior rank (Gen. 33:5). The term is also applied to those who worship God (Neh. 1:10); and to those who minister or serve Him (Isa. 49:5, 6)

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**James Freeman - Borrow [Manners & customs of the Bible](#) page 25 and [page 26](#) - FEET WASHING** - Where the soil is dry and dusty and sandals or similar footwear is worn, frequent washing of the feet is not only a luxury, but a necessity for comfort and health. It is, also, extremely refreshing, as anyone knows who has bathed their feet in cool water when they're dusty and hot. **Under such circumstances, it's great hospitality and consideration to see that the feet of guests are washed with cool water. Just as important as feeding them when they're hungry, or giving them a place to rest when they're tired.** Not to do so would be discourteous and even insulting.

In Genesis 24:32, it tells how Rebekah's family gave Abraham's servant and the men who were with him water to wash their feet, "So the man went to the house, and the camels were unloaded. Straw and fodder were brought for the camels, and water for him and his men to wash their feet." In Genesis 43:24 it tells how Joseph's servant gave water to Joseph's brothers, "The steward took the men into Joseph's house, gave them water to wash their feet and provided fodder for their donkeys."

It is this courtesy of providing water for washing that Jesus refers to when He mildly reproves Simon the Pharisee, at whose house He was a guest, for not giving Him water to wash his feet: "Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair" (Luke 7:44).

When the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about the qualifications necessary for a widow be provided for by the Church, he listed foot washing among them: "... and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds" (1 Timothy 5:10). All of these were signs that the person had committed her life to serving others. If she had done this, then it was the responsibility of the Church to provide for her.

These signs of a servant give force to the beautiful symbolic action of our Lord, Who washed the feet of His disciples, so that His disciples might see how they were to act toward each other after He was gone. No one was to be master or lord it over another, each was to be a servant of the other. (John 13:4–15)

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**Genesis 18:6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead it**

and make bread cakes.”

- three: Isa 32:8 Mt 13:33 Lu 10:38-40 Ac 16:15 Ro 12:13 Ga 5:13 Heb 13:2 1Pe 4:9
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## ABRAHAM'S HUSTLES TO PROVIDE HOSPITALITY

So Abraham hurried ([mahar](#); Lxx = [speudo](#)) into the tent ([ohel](#); Lxx = [skene](#)) to Sarah - He must have had a very large tent, because one gets the impression that Sarah did not see the men. Notice that the verb **hurried** (**quickly**) is used 3 times in Ge 18:6-7! Abraham is not **dawdling**! **Hurried** ([mahar](#)) in the Lxx is the verb [speudo](#) which means to do something as quickly as possible or to make haste, which describes what Jesus commanded [Zaccheus](#) to do and also describes the way [Zaccheus](#) responded (Lk 19:5, 6+)! Although not commanded by the three men to hurry, Abraham's response was like Zaccheus because he too recognized that one of the men was his LORD!

And said, “**Quickly prepare** ([mahar](#)) **three measures** (seah) **of fine flour, knead it and make bread cakes** - A **measure** (seah) was equal to the capacity of 144 medium-sized eggs, or what is equal in volume to about 9 US quarts (8.5 Liters) thus **three measures** (three seahs) would have been equivalent to more about 27 quarts of flour, far more than would be need to feed three men, even three very hungry men. Abraham is [sparing no expense](#)!

**NET NOTE** on **bread cakes** - The **bread** was the simple, round bread made by bedouins that is normally prepared quickly for visitors.

*If you are waiting for the right feeling before you get involved  
you might never get involved.*

[Skip Heitzig](#) on **hurried** - Abraham served immediately. We notice that language. He **hurried**, he said to his wife, '**Quickly**!' He **ran** to the flock and said, 'Hasten,' or 'Quick! Prepare supper!' There was an immediacy to his service. Why is that noteworthy? Here's why. If you are waiting for the right feeling before you get involved you might never get involved. If Abraham was waiting for the right feeling when those visitors suddenly appeared at the tent, think of the excuses he could have had. 'It's hot. I don't work during the heat of the day. Nobody does. Number two, I'm old. Old people don't work well in the heat of the day. Number three, I have a staff for this.' He probably, if he waited for the right feeling, would never have gotten involved.

**THOUGHT** - Abraham was old but he served the LORD. I am 77+ as I write these notes. Dear older saint - if you are still breathing, God has work for you to accomplish! And remember if you are physically limited, prayer is a mighty work you can always perform! Only Heaven will reveal the true power of prayer and who the real prayers really were! See [notes below on intercession](#).

**Hurried** (04116) [mahar](#) means means to hasten, to hurry, to do something quickly. has the sense always of doing something quickly, in a hurry (e.g., escape judgment in Ge 19:22), hastily, or even rashly because of being in haste. The feet of wicked men hasten ([mahar](#)) to shed blood and practice evil (Pr 1:16; 6:18; Isa 59:7). This verb usually has an adverbial meaning when it is linked with another verb, as in Ps 106:13 = "They **quickly** forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel". Ge 41:32 = "God will **quickly** bring it about." Ex 10:16 = Pharaoh **hurriedly** called for Moses. Distress prompts the prayer, "answer me quickly" (Ps 69:17; Ps 102:2; Ps 143:7; cf. Ps 79:8). Of **swift** divine judgment in Mal 3:5. Eccl. 5:2 = Do not be **hasty** in word. Exodus 34:8 = Moses **made haste** to bow low toward the earth and worship.

**Mahar** - 60v - act quickly(1), anxious(1), bring quickly(2), bring...quickly(1), do quickly(1), haste(2), hasten(3), hastened(1), hastens(1), hastily(1), hasty(1), hurried(10), hurriedly(2), hurry(8), immediately(1), impetuous(1), impulsive(1), made haste(1), make haste(1), make speed(1), prepare(1), quickly(16), quickly thwarted(1), rapidly(1), soon(2), swift(3). Gen. 18:6; Gen. 18:7; Gen. 19:22; Gen. 24:18; Gen. 24:20; Gen. 24:46; Gen. 27:20; Gen. 41:32; Gen. 43:30; Gen. 44:11; Gen. 45:9; Gen. 45:13; Exod. 2:18; Exod. 10:16; Exod. 12:33; Exod. 34:8; Jos. 4:10; Jos. 8:14; Jos. 8:19; Jdg. 9:48; Jdg. 13:10; 1 Sam. 4:14; 1 Sam. 9:12; 1 Sam. 17:48; 1 Sam. 23:27; 1 Sam. 25:18; 1 Sam. 25:23; 1 Sam. 25:34; 1 Sam. 25:42; 1 Sam. 28:20; 1 Sam. 28:24; 2 Sam. 15:14; 2 Sam. 19:16; 1 Ki. 20:33; 1 Ki. 20:41; 1 Ki. 22:9; 2 Ki. 9:13; 1 Chr. 12:8; 2 Chr. 18:8; 2 Chr. 24:5; Est. 5:5; Est. 6:10; Job 5:13; Ps. 106:13; Prov. 1:16; Prov. 6:18; Prov. 7:23; Eccl. 5:2; Isa. 5:19; Isa. 8:1; Isa. 32:4; Isa. 35:4; Isa. 49:17; Isa. 51:14; Isa. 59:7; Jer. 9:18; Jer. 48:16; Nah. 2:5; Hab. 1:6; Mal. 3:5

**Genesis 18:7 Abraham also ran to the herd, and took a tender and choice calf and gave it to the servant, and he hurried to**

prepare it.

- Ge 19:3 Judges 13:15,16 Am 6:4 Mal 1:14 Mt 22:4 Lu 15:23,27,30
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

**Related Passage:**

Judges 13:15-16+ Then Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "Please let us detain you so that we may prepare a young goat for you." 16 The [Angel of the LORD](#) said to Manoah, "Though you detain me, I will not eat your food, but if you prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to the LORD." For Manoah did not know that he was the [Angel of the LORD](#).

## ABE PREPARES "PRIME RIB"

**Abraham also ran to the herd, and took a tender and choice calf and gave it to the servant, and he hurried to prepare it-** Abraham was old but must have been in fairly good shape for this is the second time we see him running. Note the words **tender and choice**. Abraham is [cutting no corners](#) in his preparations for these special men, but is preparing the best and preparing it without delay. "The animal prepared for the meal was far more than the three visitors needed. This was a banquet for royalty." ([NET NOTE](#))

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**James Freeman - Borrow [Manners & customs of the Bible](#) page 26 - MEALS** - Normal meals consisted of a vegetable or lentil stew made in a large cooking pot, and seasoned with herbs and salt. Only on special occasions such as a sacrifice or festival day, or in the case of special guests, was meat added to the stew. Rarely was the meat roasted or game or fish eaten. When it was time to eat, the pot was placed on the floor, usually on a rug, with all those eating sitting around the pot. A blessing or thanksgiving was always given, and each person used a piece of bread as a scoop to take up some of the stew from the common pot, because there were no eating utensils. For this reason, it was essential that everyone's hands be washed before the meal. At some point in biblical history, a table and benches, or simply a low table, began to replace the rug on the floor, but everyone still dipped into the common eating pot in the center. This common pot or dish is what is referred to in John 13:26—"Jesus answered, 'It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.' Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon."

After Abraham killed the calf to feed the Lord and his servants, he would have immediately roasted it, for it would have taken too long to boil it. To serve such a rare delicacy to unexpected guests in the middle of the day showed that Abraham well knew who had come to visit him, for almost never was a meal eaten in the heat of the day (Genesis 18:1). His knowledge of the nature of his visitors is shown also by the fact that he apparently did not consider himself worthy to eat with them, and stood by and watched while they ate (Genesis 18:8). The milk that was served at the meal would probably have been goats milk, and the butter (KJV) would have been curdled milk—Hebrew: hemah, (see Judges 5:25, 2 Samuel 17:29), or butter in the form of the skim of hot milk or cream, a semifluid (see Job 20:17, 29:6; Deuteronomy 32:14). Proverbs 30:33 speaks of butter being made into cheese.

**Genesis 18:8 He took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed it before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate.**

- **He took curds and milk:** Ge 19:3 De 32:14 Judges 5:25
- **standing by them:** Ne 12:44 Lu 12:37 17:8 Joh 12:2 Ga 5:13 Rev 3:20
- **as they ate:** Ge 19:3 Judges 13:15 Lu 24:30,43 Ac 10:41
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

**Related Passage:**

Genesis 19:3+ Yet he urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

1 Peter 4:9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

## THE THREE VISITORS ALL

## ATE ABRAHAM'S VERY BEST

He took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed it before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate - **Curds** are curdled milk that is much like butter, similar to cottage cheese or yogurt. **Milk** was highly esteemed in the ancient Near East because of its energy and that it was easy to digest. Abraham served his very best to the LORD! (**THOUGHT** - Do I? Do you?) Assuming these are 3 supernatural beings, One being the pre-incarnate Christ, it is fascinating to see them eat like normal men. **He was standing by them** is a Hebrew idiom that means Abraham stood ready to serve them.

*Abraham gave generously. He gave his best.*

*Do you give the Lord your best or your "left overs?"*

Let's summarize Abraham's ministry to the LORD in Genesis 18:1-8 - personally, immediately, speedily, generously, humbly, cooperatively (Sarah baked).

**Wenstrom** - The fact that Abraham stood by his guests while they ate in order to respond to their wishes was the **Bedouin** custom of the day, and which is still practiced today.

**Bob Utley** has an interesting note - Philo, Josephus, and the Targums of Jonathan translate this as **"they seemed to eat,"** but those of us who accept further NT revelation see that even Jesus ate (cf. Luke 24:41-43+) after His glorification, which makes the eating of food by Deity not an impossibility. Jewish writers are very uncomfortable with these **anthropomorphic** statements.

**Robert Candlish** ([Commentary on Genesis, Vol. 1](#)) explains that "It is a singular instance of condescension—the only recorded instance of the kind before the incarnation (ED: THE GOD ATE WITH MEN). On other occasions, this same illustrious being appeared to the fathers and conversed with them; and meat and drink were brought out to him. But in these cases, he turned the offered banquet into a sacrifice, in the smoke of which he ascended heavenward (Jdg 6:18–24, Jdg 13:15–21). Here he personally accepts the patriarch's hospitality, and partakes of his fare,—a greater wonder than the other; implying more intimate and gracious friendship,—more unreserved familiarity. He sits under his tree, and shares his common meal. (ED: I WONDER IF THIS IS NOT A FORESHADOWING OF THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB - Rev 19:9+?)

Some 400 years later the Lord held a covenantal meal with the Moses et al on the eve of the fulfillment of the covenant of the Law (Ex 24:9-11+). Of course the greatest shared meal was in Lk 24:14-22+ at the inauguration of the New Covenant.

**James Freeman** comments on serving a **calf** in the **heat of the day** (Ge 18:1) that "To serve such a rare delicacy to unexpected guests in the middle of the day showed that Abraham well knew who had come to visit him, for almost never was a meal eaten in the heat of the day (Genesis 18:1). His knowledge of the nature of his visitors is shown also by the fact that he apparently did not consider himself worthy to eat with them, and stood by and watched while they ate (Genesis 18:8)."

Genesis 18:1-8 is very interesting for the text repeatedly emphasizes that Abraham ministered to the Lord speedily. First on seeing the three men, he ran to meet them (Ge 18:2). Then he **hurried** to tell Sarah to **quickly** bake some bread (Ge 18:6). He **ran** to get a tender calf and saw to it that the young man **hurried** to dress the meat (Ge 18:7). Keep in mind that this is a 99 year old old man running around in the heat of the day! Surely all of this scurrying underscores that he had a definite sense that he was in the presence of deity. Only after he had served his guests did Abraham stand still (Ge 18:8)!

**THOUGHT** - Do I have a sense of top priority when I minister to the Lord? Yes, to be sure we are to be still before Him (Ps 46:10KJV+), but what about my preparations before we meet? Do I procrastinate? Do I say "I'll meet with Him later?" Or do I see it as my special privilege to meet with my honored Guest? Related - [Quiet Time: 7 Minutes With God; Thoughts on the Quiet Time; Quiet Musing \(Meditate, Meditation\)](#)

**Skip Heitzig** adds this **THOUGHT**- Now he's 99 years old, it's a hot day, he had 318 servants. He could've just clapped to any one of them and watched them get really busy around him. But he personally is serving. If you're going to serve the Lord, and by the way, if you're a Christian I would say, a Christian without a ministry is a contradiction (1Co 12:7+). If He is your **Lord**, it means He's the Master. The word **'Lord'** connotes that you are a servant (**doulos**), that you're doing some form of service, some form of ministry, some volunteer, some way to get involved (1Pe 4:10,11+). And even if you're serving people, keep this in mind: you're first serving the Lord. See this is where people get burned out in their service to the Lord. They forget they're serving the Lord. They serve people and you know what? It's not easy serving people because sometimes sheep bite back. And so the only way to make it through victoriously is to remember, 'Though I'm serving God's people, I'm first and foremost serving the Lord.'

**Jon Courson** on **under the tree** - Fellowship took place under the tree. Such is always the case, for it is only through Christ's death on the tree of Calvary that we have fellowship with Him.(See [Courson's Application Commentary](#) page 78)



- **Where:** Ge 4:9
- **in:** Ge 24:67 31:33 Titus 2:5
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## ASKING WHERE SARAH WAS

**Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?"** - **They** is plural, but the Septuagint has the singular and is translated "And **he said** to" Abraham. Note that they knew Sarah's name even though they were strangers and Abraham had not mentioned her name. Notice also that Abraham does not say "How did you know my wife's name?" Surely this is another indication Abraham was fully [cognizant](#) that he was in the presence of his omniscient LORD!

**And he said, "There ([hinneh](#)), in the tent ([ohel](#); Lxx = [skene](#))."** - In the days of Abraham, it was customary that the women did not sit with men at dinner, at least not with strangers, but confined themselves to their own place. Therefore, we see that Sarah is out of sight but she must not be out of hearing so that she can hear the promise

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**Tent** ([0168](#)) [ohel](#) describes a literal tent inhabited by [nomadic](#) peoples (those who have no fixed home and travel from place to place depending on seasons and other conditions - in Exodus depending primarily on the movement of God's [Shekinah glory cloud](#) which served to direct their journey)

**W E Vine - First**, this word refers to the mobile structure called a **tent**." This is its meaning in Gen. 4:20: "And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle." These are what nomadic Bedouins normally live in. "Tents" can also be used as housing for animals: "They smote also the tents of cattle [[nasb](#), "those who owned"], and carried away sheep and camels in abundance ..." (2 Chron. 14:15). Soldiers lived in "tents" during military campaigns (1 Sam. 17:54). A "tent" was pitched on top of a house so everyone could see that Absalom went in to his father's concubines (2 Sam. 16:22). This constituted an open rejection of David's dominion and a declaration that he (Absalom) was claiming the throne.

**Second**, the word is a synonym for "home, dwelling," and "habitation." This emphasis is especially evident in Judg. 19:9: "... Behold, the day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thine heart may be merry; and tomorrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home." This meaning appears in the phrase "to your tents": "We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel" (2 Sam. 20:1). The "tabernacle" ("tent") of David, therefore, is his dwelling place or palace (Isa. 16:5). Similarly, the "tabernacle" ("tent") of the daughter of Zion is Israel's capital, or what Israel inhabits, Jerusalem (Lam. 2:4).

**Third**, ['ōhel](#) may represent those who dwell in the dwellings of a given area or who form a unit of people. Thus the "tents" of Judah are her inhabitants: "The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah" (Zech. 12:7; cf. [Psa. 83:6](#)). Bedouin "tents" today (as in the past) are constructed of strong black cloth of woven goat's hair. They are shaped variously. The women pitch them by stretching the cloth over poles and tying it down with cords of goat's hair or hemp. Wooden mallets are used to drive the tent pegs into the ground (Judges 4:21). Sometimes the structure is divided in order to separate families or to separate animals from people (2 Chron. 14:15). The back of the "tent" is closed and the front open. The door is made by turning back the fold where the two ends of the cloth meet (Gen. 18:1). The "tent" and all its contents are transported on the back of a single pack animal. Richer people cover the floor with mats of various materials. A chief or [sheikh](#) may have several "tents", one for himself and his guest(s), another for his wives and other females in his immediate family, and still another for the animals (Gen. 31:33).

Before the construction of the **tabernacle** Moses pitched a **"tent"** outside the camp (Ex 33:7). There he met with God. The "tent" outside the camp persisted as a living institution for only a short period after the construction of the tabernacle and before the departure from Sinai (Nu 11:16ff.; Nu 12:4ff.). Eventually the ark of the covenant was moved into the tabernacle (Exod. 40:21) where the Lord met with Moses and spoke to Israel (Ex 29:42). This structure is called the tent of meeting inasmuch as it contained the ark of the covenant and the tables of testimony (Num. 9:15). As the tent of meeting it was the place where God met with His people through Moses (or the high priest) and revealed His will to them (1 Sam. 2:22). ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

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Excerpt for the [Dictionary of Biblical Imagery](#) (online - [see page 2868](#) for the complete article discussing the symbolism of "tent")

- **TENT** The patriarchs and their households were nomadic and lived in tents (Gen 12:8; 26:25; 31:25; Heb 11:7), as did all the people of God during the journey to the Promised Land (Ex 13:20; 15:27; 19:1). This period left an indelible impression on the Israelites (Ex 32:21ff.), and the words "To your tents, O Israel" (see 2 Sam 20:1; cf. 1 Sam 4:10 NIV) became a common idiom for returning to their homes. Soldiers continued to live in tents in times of war (2 Kings 3:9), and during festivals the Israelites stayed in tents (Lev 23:42–43). The imagery of tent dwelling served to remind Israel of God's provision to them during the wilderness wanderings and their continued dependence on him once settled in the Promised Land.

**Genesis 18:10** He said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and **behold**, Sarah your wife will have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him.

- **he said:** Ge 18:13,14 16:10 22:15,16
- according: Ge 17:21 21:2 2Ki 4:16,17
- **Sarah:** Ge 17:16,19,21 21:2 Judges 13:3-5 Lu 1:13 Ro 9:8-9 Ga 4:23,28
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Romans 9:8-9 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. 9 For this is the word of promise: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON."

Genesis 17:15-21+ Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 "I will bless her, and indeed **I will give you a son by her**. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her." 17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!" 19 But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. 20 "As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. 21 "But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, **whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.**"

### I WILL RETURN! SARAH WILL HAVE A SON

**He said** - Although "LORD" is not in the Hebrew here, several translations (CSB, ESV, NIV, RSV) substitute **"LORD"** for the literal word **"he"** because of the context (especially Ge 18:13).

**I will surely return** - This verb [shub](#) is intensified by repetition ("שׁוּבָא שׁוּבָא") which gives extra emphasis to the fact that the LORD would keep His Word (which He always does - cf Joshua 23:14+, Pr 30:5; Ps 12:6).

**I will surely return (shub) to you at this time next year and behold, (hinneh) Sarah your wife will have a son-** This time next year means that the following year, at exactly the same time. This is the same promise Yahweh had spoken to Abraham in Ge 17:15-21 ([see above](#)). The one slight difference is that in Ge 17:16+ Yahweh says the son would be His gift to Abraham, another manifestation of grace which gives to those who do not merit it! Notice now the Hebrew is "He" (compare **"they said"** in Ge 18:9) which is singular and He speaks a two-fold prophecy of (1) returning in one year and (2) Sarah will have a son. There is now no doubt that Abraham is crystal clear on Who is standing in his presence! Who else but the LORD could have made such specific promises?

**THOUGHT-** 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. (Wiersbe)

[Wenstrom](#) - The promise "I will surely return to you at this time next year" does "not" mean that the Lord would visibly appear to Abraham again in a theophany or Christophany at the same time the following year. But rather it means that He would intervene on behalf of Abraham and Sarah and exercise His omnipotence to fulfill this promise that Sarah would have a child with Abraham. This interpretation is confirmed since the Lord did "not" visibly appear to Abraham the following year but rather the Lord exercised His

omnipotence and enabled Abraham to impregnate Sarah.

**Bob Utley** - The NASB's **at this time next year**, is not a literal reading of the [Masoretic Text](#), which has "at the time of reviving" (i.e., spring). This is repeated in Ge 18:14, but with an added phrase, "at the appointed time". This is added to clarify that the time period will be nine months, not a full year (cf. 2Ki 4:16-17). **NET NOTE** adds "'as/when the time lives" or "revives," possibly referring to the springtime."

**And Sarah was listening at the tent** ([ohel](#); Lxx = [skene](#)) **door, which was behind him** - This is a parenthetical statement giving us background which prepares us for Sarah's response in Ge 18:12. While she had not come out, clearly she was interested in the conversation and she heard the prophecy.

**ILLUSTRATION OF "I WILL RETURN"** - After American troops were forced to surrender the Philippines in May, 1942, General Douglas MacArthur vowed to retake the islands, giving his famous "prophetic promise" "I WILL RETURN" which was printed on thousands of matchbooks, buttons, bars of soap and leaflets dropped by air all over the Philippines to encourage and give hope. MacArthur kept his promise! But even better the "Commander of the Lord's army" (Josh 5:15NLT+), Jesus our Messiah, made a similar "prophetic promise" to His disciples declaring "I go to prepare a place for you" and "I WILL COME AGAIN!" (Jn 14:3) As Hoekema rightly observes "The faith of the New Testament is dominated by this expectation." Indeed, the NT has some 318 prophetic promises (direct and indirect) describing Messiah's triumphant return as King of kings, and Lord of lords (Rev 19:11-16+), which means that there is approximately one prophecy on the Second Coming in every 20 verses! In fact it has been estimated that for every prophecy of Messiah's First Coming, there are eight describing His Second Coming! As the old Scottish preacher said "The doctrine of Messiah's Second Coming, as it appears in the NT, is like a lofty mountain that dominates the entire landscape." John Walvoord adds that Messiah's Second Coming is also "implied in hundreds of OT prophecies" often mingling them with His first coming as in Isa 61:1-2a+ which was fulfilled at Messiah's first coming (Lk 4:18-21+) and Isa 61:2b which describes "the day of vengeance of our God to comfort all who mourn" to be fulfilled at Messiah's Second Coming. And so just as MacArthur's promise on leaflets gave hope during the dark days of WWII, the prophecies of Messiah's Second Coming "give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises" (Ro 15:4NLT+). As this world grows darker and the promised return of Messiah grows brighter, we should continually be "looking (expectantly) for the BLESSED HOPE and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ (Messiah) Jesus." (Titus 2:13+) Paul called Messiah's return 'the Blessed Hope' and as our world unravels morally and ethically, indeed He appears to be the only Hope for the hopeless world! It is fascinating that the largest type used by newspapers for headlines of astounding events is called "second coming" type and is reserved for the most amazing front-page news (beginning or end of wars, moon landings, etc). One day soon every eye "will see Him," (Rev 1:7+) the One for Whom "Second Coming" type was named! Messiah came first as the "Man of sorrows" (Isa 53:3+), but will come again "with power and great glory" (Mt 24:30+) as Judge and King (2Ti 4:1+). Martin Luther well said, 'I preach as though Messiah died yesterday, rose from the dead today and was (is) coming back tomorrow.' How different our lives would be if we lived each day with that mindset! As one has well said "Don't complain about what this world is coming to. Proclaim the One Who is coming to this world!" Amen! See Vertical Vision

"And for the hope of His return,  
Dear Lord, Your Name we praise;  
With longing hearts we watch and wait;  
For that great day of days!"  
(Sherwood)

**Genesis 18:11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing.**

- **old**: Ge 17:17,24 Lu 1:7,18,36 Ro 4:18-21 Heb 11:11,12,19
- **the**: Ge 31:35 Lev 15:19
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### **ELDERLY SARAH WAS PAST CHILDBEARING**

**Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age** - Abraham was 99 and Sarah was 89. Moses adds another parenthetical description to help highlight the miraculous nature of Sarah's conception. It is interesting that prior to this note, no one before Abraham and Sarah's time was called **old** (Heb word zaqen)! We have seen before the couple is aged, but this time Moses gives us the explanation that not only was Sarah old, but she was past the age when women would be expected to bear children.

**Sarah was past childbearing** - The Hebrew literally reads "it had ceased to be for Sarah [after] a way like women." The **ESV** says

"The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah" which alludes to the fact that she was now [post-menopausal](#). The **NET** paraphrases it so that it is easier to understand - "Sarah had long since passed [menopause](#)." The NJB paraphrases it "Sarah had ceased to have her monthly periods."

The apostle Paul picks up this truth in his great chapter on the faith of Abraham writing "In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE." 19 Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and **the deadness of Sarah's womb**; 20 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform." (Ro 4:18-21+)

In a similar way the writer of Hebrews spoke of Sarah writing "By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised." (Heb 11:11,12+) (even though she laughed at the possibility of conceiving at her advanced age).

**Genesis 18:12 Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"**

Septuagint to English - Gen. 18:12 And Sarra laughed within herself, saying, "It has not yet happened to me up to the present, and my lord is rather old."

[HCSB](#) So she laughed to herself: "After I have become shriveled up and my lord is old, will I have delight?"

[ISV](#) That's why Sarah laughed to herself, thinking, "After I'm so old and my husband is old, too, am I going to have sex?"

[NABRE](#) So Sarah laughed to herself and said, "Now that I am worn out and my husband is old, am I still to have sexual pleasure?"

[VOICE](#) So Sarah laughed to herself, saying *under her breath*, "At my age—old and decrepit, as is my husband—both of us long past having any desire to engage in lovemaking?"

[WYC](#) And (so) she laughed, saying privily, After that I (have) waxed eld, and my lord is eld, shall I give diligence to lust?

- **laughed:** Ge 18:13 17:17 21:6,7 Ps 126:2 Lu 1:18-20,34,35 Heb 11:11,12
- **my:** Eph 5:33 1Pe 3:6
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

1 Peter 3:6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, **calling him lord**, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

### SARAH LAUGHS AND SPEAKS TO SELF

Sarah laughed ([tsachaq](#)) to herself (in her inner being), saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord (['adonay](#)) being old also?" - **NLT** ""How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure." The Hebrew word **become old** "expresses erosion or weathering. Usually it is used in the context of objects and not people. However, Sarah is comparing herself to something that is old, worn out and weathered." The Hebrew word for **pleasure** is found only here and is somewhat difficult to understand. In context it seems reasonable to interpret Sarah as asking something like "shall I still find delight and pleasure in physical relations with my husband who is also ancient and worn out?"

**THOUGHT** - God heard her inaudible laugh. How might we live if we remembered the truth that God hears and knows everything we think, not just everything we say?!

**Steven Cole:** Have you ever thought about how embarrassing it would be if your thoughts were uncontrollably linked to your vocal cords, so that whatever you were thinking was broadcast for everyone to hear? Instead of, "I'm pleased to meet you," you would blurt out, "Oh, no! I'm going to miss the kickoff if I talk to him now!" Instead of, "Great sermon, pastor," as you go out the door, you would hear yourself saying, "I thought it never would end!"

**Laughed** (06711)(**tsachaq**) means to laugh, toy with, make sport (Ge 39:14,17). To laugh outright in merriment or scorn, mockery or derision (Ge 21:9). Tsachaq conveys the idea of laughter, whether in joy or incredulity. The stronger Piel stem connotes positively, play and sport, or negatively, mockery and derision. **Tsachaq** expresses an attitude toward something promised (a son in their old age) that seemed impossible - Abraham laughed in faith (Ge 17:17), but Sarah laughed in unbelief (Ge 18:12, 13, 17). In Ex 32:6 **tsachaq** may have sexual or immoral overtones (cf Ge 26:8).

There is an interesting play on the Hebrew word **laughed** (**tsachaq**) in Genesis 17-19 for it is used of 3 different individuals and gives rise to the name of a fourth individual - first of Abraham laughing (I think in joy) (Ge 17:17), next of Sarah laughing in disbelief (Ge 18:12, 13, 15) and finally of Lot's potential Sodomite son-in-laws "laughing" in mockery (Ge 19:14). And in light of all this laughing we see the name Isaac (Yitschaq - "he laughs") derives from (**tsachaq**) (Ge 17:19)!

**Gilbrant** -A primary root, the verb **tsāchaq**, which means "to laugh," is used thirteen times in the Qal or Piel stems. All uses are in Genesis and Exodus, except for one use in Judges. An alternate form with similar meanings, **sāchaq**, occurs thirty-six times in later portions of Scripture. The Qal stem of **tsāchaq** denotes the action of laughter, and all six occurrences are in the account of events surrounding the birth of Isaac. When God announced to Abraham that he and Sarah would have a son, the ninety-nine-year-old fell to his face and laughed, thinking that it was impossible (Gen. 17:17). Sarah had the same reaction some weeks later when she overheard the Lord (in human form) announcing the same incredible promise (Gen. 18:12). Her laugh, like her husband's, was one of disbelief, and God pointed out her lack of faith (Gen. 18:13ff). A year later, however, the promised son was born, and Sarah's incredulous laugh turned to a laugh of joy (Gen. 21:6). Even the name of her newborn son Isaac meant "laughter."

In the Piel stem, **tsāchaq** can mean "to play," "to make sport," "to mock." The word often has a negative connotation. When Lot tried to warn his sons-in-law of the impending destruction of Sodom, they refused to take him seriously, assuming that he was simply jesting with them (Gen. 19:14). On the day Isaac was weaned, Ishmael was observed mocking him—an offense which ultimately led to the expulsion of him and his mother from Abraham's household (Gen. 21:9). The same spirit of mockery can be seen in the episode where the blind Samson was brought to the Philistine festival so that he could entertain and amuse the crowd, giving them an opportunity to taunt their old enemy (Judg. 16:25).

The Piel usage sometimes has strong sexual overtones. By claiming Joseph tried to seduce her, Potiphar's wife accused him of toying with the whole household and with her (Gen. 39:14, 17). When Isaac had claimed that Rebekah was merely his sister, the deception was uncovered when the Philistine king observed him "sporting" with her, obviously in the manner of a marriage relationship (Gen. 26:8). This gives a broad hint at the activities of Israel in the account of the golden calf, where Exo. 32:6 says that the people "rose up to play." ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Tsachaq** - 13x/12v - **caressing(1), entertained\*(1), jesting(1), laugh(4), laughed(2), make sport(2), mocking(1), play(1)**. Gen. 17:17; Gen. 18:12; Gen. 18:13; Gen. 18:15; Gen. 19:14; Gen. 21:6; Gen. 21:9; Gen. 26:8; Gen. 39:14; Gen. 39:17; Exod. 32:6; Jdg. 16:25

**Pleasure** (05734)(**ednah** ? from eden = a luxury, dainty, delight) means delight. **Gilbrant** - The noun 'edhnāh is derived from 'ādhan), "to live in luxury," and means "pleasure," but there is the strong connotation that the pleasure is sexual or related to the whole process of sexual reproduction, including intercourse, pregnancy and birth. The word is used only to describe Sarah, the wife of Abraham, when she laughed at the prophecy concerning her future son Isaac (Gen. 18:12). She doubted that such pleasure could be hers at her advanced age, but, of course, nothing is impossible for God (Gen. 18:14).

**E R Pigeon - ednah** - A feminine noun indicating sexual delight, ecstasy. It refers to the enjoyment of intimate love with one's spouse which in context implies the ability to become pregnant (Gen. 18:12: pleasure) (AMG's Comprehensive Dictionary of OT Words)

Here is a note from an interesting resource by Yigal Tzadka entitled "Choice Words from the Story of Abraham and the Angels" - "(ednah) pleasure (Ge 18:12) The word עֲדָנָה (ednah) has two possible sources that bear on its meaning. The first is the word יְדָן (idan), which means era. Sarah is asking, "Can it be that after I have reached old age, I will return to the era of my youth?" In this context, there are those who understand the word עֲדָנָה as a woman's menstrual cycle. The interpreters explain that a woman's menstruation is regulated by time and comes at set times. Another explanation is that it comes from the word אֲדָן (adin) which expresses gentleness, freshness and symbolizes youth. It also expresses pleasure and this is the translation that is found in most of the English translations. עֲדָנָה in its meaning as אֲדָן, can also mean smooth and silky skin, which is contrary to how Sarah first described herself. Incidentally, in the Aramaic translations of the text, this word is



## **J J Knap - With Loins Girded - A Laughing Sarah Gen. 18:12**

Abraham and Sarah had already awaited for a long time the fulfilment of the Lord's promise that they would receive a seed as numerous as the stars of heaven. That promise was confirmed at different occasions to them. Now that it was at the point of being fulfilled and Sarah, who stood listening behind the curtain of the tent, received the assurance that within a year she would bear a son, she began, partly from unbelief, partly from confusion and surprise, to laugh. The promise was so great and rich that she could hardly believe it. However, when the Lord rebuked her mildly, she quietly and believingly bent her head and she received by that faith her promised son.

The laughing Sarah be our shame. We also have to do with a God that provides us with such marvellous promises, that we also hear them often with a laugh of timidity. Complete remission of sin for free! Undeserved salvation! A mercy that is greater and higher than our sin! A paradise that Jesus Christ opened for those known of the Lord! An eternal happiness kept for us!

In connection with the Lord's promises there is more than one kind of laughing. There is a laughing in decided unbelief from which God keep us. The world laughs like this when it reads of God's promises of blessing and peace, of reconciliation and salvation. It also rudely laughs about God's threats, that speak of damnation and eternal woe, of judgment and condemnation. However, it be said with holy stress: who enters laughing in such a way, arrives at a place where there will be never any more laughing, but only wailing, a place where, according to Jesus' word, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

There is also a laughing like that of Sarah, a laughing of half-belief and little faith, of hesitation and reservation. A sinner laughs like that who knows his own insignificance and who all of a sudden is placed before the rich promises of the gospel. All these great things for him! That heavenly salvation for him! That great Christ and that great God for him! It is too much, too overwhelming to accept immediately. He would turn aside with a timid heart if the Lord would not embolden him by asking him, like Sarah, "Wherefore did you laugh?"

In this way of putting to shame, he finally teaches the laughing of faith, laughing in holy rapture, because the unbelievable has taken place; the laughing of the redeemed, the laughing in inspired jubilation: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

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## **Walter Kaiser - Ge 17:17; 18:12–15 Discriminatory Treatment of Abraham and Sarah? [Hard Sayings of the Bible](#)**

It is clear that both Abraham and Sarah laughed at the news that they would have a son so late in life. The question, then, is this: Why was Sarah the only one who was rebuked? Is this a case where male chauvinism shines through the text of the older testament?

Some have tried to explain the difference between the two laughs as arising from two different states of mind: Abraham's from a state of surprise and ecstasy; Sarah's from a state of unbelief. But the text will not let Abraham off that easily. There is no reason to connect Abraham's laughter with that of Psalm 126:2 (when the Lord brought back the captives from Babylon, "our mouths were filled with laughter") or even that of Job 8:21 ("he will yet fill your mouth with laughter"). Both the Jerusalem Targum and Calvin were too hasty in getting Abraham off the hook here by equating his laughter with joyous amazement.

The fact that Abraham immediately posed the issue of Ishmael and how he would fit into the promised seed if another son were born shows that he too spoke out of unbelief, just as much as did Sarah. The issue was not just Ishmael's person, but his posterity as well. The promise of another son, Abraham feared, would destroy all hope that he had placed in the one already given. So Abraham was equally guilty of unbelief. So why the rebuke on Sarah?

It is true that Sarah only laughed to herself; but so did Abraham. Nevertheless, the Lord saw what transpired in her inner being and openly spoke of his displeasure of the same. And since the principle from which both of their inward laughing sprang was the same (that is, unbelief, and not that one was a laugh of admiration and joy whereas the other was a laugh of disbelief and distrust), the unbelief of both of them was the main basis for the rebuke.

The question "Why did Sarah laugh?" was not addressed to her, but to Abraham. But Sarah felt the sting of inquiry most pointedly, for she felt that she had been trapped in her unbelief. Thus it was that she blurted out, "I did not laugh." This foolish and untruthful reaction was also rebuked when the Lord said, "Yes, you did laugh."

Does this mean that Abraham's unbelief was without blame, but Sarah's was? No, for the condemnation of one was equally a condemnation of the other. The text focuses on Sarah's unbelief because she went on to deny it (thereby making the issue memorable and newsworthy) and because when the whole matter was ended, it also became the basis for the naming of Isaac,

which is associated with the word “he laughs” or “laughter” (Gen 21:3, 6).

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### **Allen Ross - Romans 4:18 “Against all hope”**

The promise to Abraham and Sarah that they would be the ancestors of a multitude of nations provides Paul with a good illustration of faith. He says, “against all hope, Abraham believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, ‘so shall your descendants be’ [as numerous as the stars of the heavens].”

Paul explains this for people who may not know the story very well. Abraham faced the fact that his body was as good as dead, and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. In Genesis 18:12, when Sarah laughed at the prospect, she said, “After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?” Sarah was far past the age of having children, even for the longevity of the patriarchal age--she eventually had Isaac when she was 90, and Abraham was 100.

But Paul says this is a good illustration of the kind of faith that Abraham had, a faith that works against all odds, or as Paul says it, against all hope. That is why his kind of faith was rewarded with righteousness. It was genuine, working faith. He and Sarah had to believe God’s word that they would have a child, not just sometime, but according to the promise of Genesis 18, the next spring. And so this old couple, who apparently had long since abandoned that kind of pleasure, had to try to have a child.

Now, if a young couple gets married today and they believe that God will give them children, no one is surprised when they have a child. This does not take away from their faith and commitment to the Lord--but their belief that God will give them children is not “against all hope.” When they have a child they may marvel in amazement at the “miracle” of birth, but it is not what the “miraculous” normally describes. A miracle goes against the laws of nature, the laws of average, the normal expectation of the situation. When Isaac was born to Sarah and Abraham, it was truly a miracle.

Paul is saying that saving faith is faith against all hope. Sarah’s womb was dead. Abraham’s body was dead. Unless God supernaturally enabled them to have a child, they would not have one. And, as we know from the Bible, this was precisely the way God wanted to work--He wanted to produce the seed, the nation of Israel, supernaturally, so that they owed their existence to Him. Likewise, in the New Testament membership in the Kingdom of God is by a miracle of birth--the new birth we call it, in which people who were dead in sin are made alive in Christ.

So saving faith is still faith against all hope. Paul has argued in the Book of Romans that we are all sinners and have not a hope of salvation by our own efforts. But God by His grace has made righteousness available. And while it all may seem impossible, or it may seem in some sense unreasonable, it is the promise of God. And if people will believe His word, then they too will be credited with righteousness. And from that point on, like Abraham, they will see confirmation after confirmation that God is at work in their lives

**Genesis 18:13 And the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?’**

- **Why did Sarah laugh:** Joh 2:25
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### **Related Passage:**

John 2:25+ (JESUS' OMNISCIENCE) and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

### **SARAH'S LAUGH OF UNBELIEF**

**And the LORD** ([Jehovah = Yahweh](#); Lxx = [kurios](#)) **said to Abraham** - Now there is no doubt of the identity of one of the three men. It is [Jehovah](#), the preincarnate Jesus Christ.

[Wenstrom](#) The Lord addresses Abraham rather than Sarah since he is the authority in the marriage (see Eph. 5:23) and was responsible for informing Sarah of His promise to him in Genesis 15:4 but it appears he didn't inform her.

**“Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?’** - The LORD demonstrates His omniscience having discerned Sarah laughing to herself and questioning whether conception was possible at her age. One of the three men is

now clearly identified as Yahweh. Even though Sarah laughed in disbelief, the writer of Hebrews records her in the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11 writing "By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised." (Heb 11:11+).

Sarah laughed that the visitor said she would have a child. God rebuked her. When Abraham laughed God didn't rebuke him (Ge 17:17). They were different types of laughter.

**NET NOTE** - Sarah will have a son. The passage brings God's promise into clear focus. As long as it was a promise for the future, it really could be believed without much involvement. But now, when it seemed so impossible from the human standpoint, when the LORD fixed an exact date for the birth of the child, the promise became rather overwhelming to Abraham and Sarah. But then this was the LORD of creation, the one they had come to trust. The point of these narratives is that the creation of Abraham's offspring, which eventually became Israel, is no less a miraculous work of creation than the creation of the world itself.

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### **Rod Mattoon - The Knowledge of God in Genesis**

The Lord knew the thoughts of Sarah just as He knows ours. The book of Genesis reveals examples of what God knows.

Crime—God knew the earth was filled with violence. 6:13  
Chuckles—The Lord knew Sarah laughed in her heart. 18:15  
Character—God knew the character of Abraham. 18:19  
Corruption—The Lord knew of the sin of Sodom. 19:13  
Consecration—God knew Abraham feared Him. 22:12  
Curt & Coarse treatment—God knew Leah was hated. 29:33  
Crookedness—God knew of Laban's unfair treatment of Jacob. 31:12

The Knowledge of God in the Scriptures

Sinners—(all men) John 2:24  
Substance—(all things) John 16:30  
Sentiments—(hearts of all men) Acts 1:24  
Shatterings—(hell and destruction) Job 26:6  
Steps of Men—Job 31:4  
Sin—(iniquity) Jeremiah 2:22  
Schemes—(The thoughts of our mind) Ezekiel 11:5  
Secret places—Jeremiah 23:24  
Secrets—Daniel 2:28  
Second Coming of Christ—Matthew 24:36

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**Steven Cole:** God brings us to the end of our strength so that we will trust in His ability to do the impossible. . . It was humanly impossible for her to bear a son. She was already through menopause. In her natural strength, she was barren. That's where the Lord wants us in our relationship with Him, to recognize our weakness so that we will trust His strength. Many people mistakenly think that the reason they struggle in their Christian lives is that they're too weak. That isn't so. The reason we struggle in our Christian walk is that we do not recognize our own weakness for what it is, and so we trust in ourselves rather than in the Lord. When we see our weakness and cast ourselves on the Lord's strength, then we're strong. God doesn't help those who help themselves. God helps those who are helpless. When they helped themselves, Abraham and Sarah came up with Hagar and Ishmael. When they were helpless, God gave them Isaac. Hudson Taylor used to say that when God wanted to open inland China to the gospel, He looked around until He found a man weak enough for the task. But our problem is that even after we've trusted in Christ for salvation, we mistakenly think that we're competent to live the Christian life with just a little help from the Lord. And so the Lord has to bring us again and again to the point of helplessness, where we acknowledge our own insufficiency and depend His all-sufficiency. This is illustrated many times in the Bible.

Take Hannah (1 Samuel 1), for instance. She was another barren woman who desperately wanted to have a son. The Lord wanted her to have a son, too. So do you know what He did? He closed her womb! That's a strange way to give a woman a son! Her husband's other wife, Peninnah, who was not a godly woman, had many children. How frustrating for Hannah, crying out to the Lord for a son, to see Peninnah, who didn't seek the Lord, with many children!

But that's how God works with His people. He wants us to see that without Him, we can do nothing. If Hannah could have had children on her own, like Peninnah, she wouldn't have needed the Lord. And the Lord wasn't getting any glory from Peninnah and her brood. She could get along quite nicely by herself. But when Hannah finally had Samuel because the Lord gave him to her, she

sang a song of praise and gave Samuel back to the Lord to serve Him.

God wants each of us to see that our situation is humanly impossible without Him. That way, we'll look to Him for His power, praise Him when He delivers us, and He will be glorified through our lives. But sometimes, instead of trusting Him with our impossible situations, like Sarah, we doubt Him.....

Perhaps you're facing an overwhelming problem right now. Maybe it's the salvation of a loved one, and you've thought, "There's no way this person is going to come to faith in Christ. He's just too far gone in sin. He's been addicted to drugs for years. He's been drinking and lying and living for self, with no possibility that he's going to change." No human possibility! But is anything too difficult for the Lord? With God, all things, including the salvation of the chief of sinners, is possible! Factoring God into any situation suddenly changes the equation!

As I said, we tend to shrug off our unbelief as if it's no big deal. But God doesn't do that. There's a theologically staggering verse in Mark 6:5, which states that Jesus could do no miracle in His home town of Nazareth, except for healing a few sick people. The next verse adds that "He wondered at their unbelief." Even though God is sovereign in His almighty power, He has chosen to limit His working through our faith. So He views unbelief as a serious sin, and He confronts it in His people, just as He confronted it in Sarah

The Lord's confrontation got Sarah to face her sin and to look at things from His perspective. Isn't it interesting that the Lord first confronted Abraham about Sarah's sin (18:13)? The Lord viewed Abraham as spiritually responsible for his family (18:19), so He asked him, "Why did Sarah laugh?" Again, how ironic that the Lord who in His omniscience knew that Sarah, behind Him inside the tent, laughed (the text says she did it silently, "within"), asks, "Why did Sarah laugh?" He wanted Abraham and Sarah to think about that question. The answer was, "Sarah laughed because she didn't believe the Lord."

As I said, unbelief is sin because in effect it calls God a liar and me the truthful one. It says, "I know better than the omniscient, all-powerful God, what He can do or not do!" It implies either that God doesn't know what He's talking about or He isn't able to do it. So the Lord asks a second question, "Is anything too difficult for the Lord?" Is there anything you can think of which would make the Lord exclaim, "I'm not sure I can pull it off!"?

Unbelief is also serious because invariably it leads to other sins. Sarah denied that she did what the Lord says she did: "I didn't laugh." The text adds that she was afraid. But how foolish to think that we can hide our sin from the Lord who knows every thought in our heads! The Lord didn't let Sarah off the hook. He confronted her with the truth: "No, but you did laugh" (18:15). He got her to face her sin of unbelief and to think about things from His perspective with the rhetorical question, "Is anything too difficult for the Lord?"

The most loving thing the Lord can do is to make us face our sin of unbelief: "No, you did doubt Me. Admit the truth yourself, because I know your heart." Then He lovingly gets us to consider things from His almighty perspective: "I could never be in any situation which would be too difficult for the Lord to work."

Think about it: Is there any problem you're facing that is too hard for God? Is there a family problem that just got so bad that the Lord would have to say, "Now it's too tough for Me to handle"? Are any of your circumstances outside of His control? Do you suppose He's in heaven, wringing His hands, and saying, "Oh no! I didn't expect that to happen! I can't deal with it now!"? Can you dare to think that there is some sin which you have committed or some awful habit to which you are enslaved which the Lord is not able to forgive and deliver you from? Is anything in your life too difficult for the Lord?

A woman once came up to the famous Bible teacher, G. Campbell Morgan, and asked, "Dr. Morgan, should we pray about the little things in our lives, or only the big things?" In his British manner, Dr. Morgan drew up and said, "Madam, can you think of anything in your life that is big to God?"

The Lord's rebuke brought Sarah to faith. Hebrews 11:11 states, "By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised." In fact Sarah received more than faith. Her reward was faith, laughter, and the Lord's commendation (as James Boice, Genesis [Zondervan], 2:156-157, points out).

### **When we trust God to do the humanly impossible, He rewards us.**

Because she faced her sin of unbelief and thought about things from God's perspective, Sarah received the faith to conceive Isaac. Faith is a gift God is ready to give us the moment we will turn from our unbelief and see Him for who He is: the God for whom nothing is too difficult.

Also, Sarah received laughter. Her laughter of doubt (18:12) was replaced with the laughter of joy when Isaac was born (21:6). In fact, Isaac's name means "he laughs." Since that was the name God gave the boy, it means that God wanted to give Abraham and Sarah the right laughter of His blessing in place of the wrong laughter of doubt. God has a way of turning our sin, when we repent, into that which brings praise to Him and joy to us.

And Sarah received commendation from God. In 1 Peter 3:6 the Holy Spirit inspired Peter to use Sarah as an example of a holy woman who submitted to her husband by calling him "lord." The only place in the Bible it is recorded that Sarah called Abraham

“lord” is in Genesis 18:12, right as she was laughing at God’s promise. The Lord, in His grace, looked beyond Sarah’s doubt and picked out her submission to her husband and held it up as an example.

In the same way, the Lord is gracious, ready to forgive us and meet our every need when we turn from our unbelief and trust in His mighty power. He may not give us an instant answer. As with many of those in Hebrews 11, the great chapter on faith, we may die without receiving the fulfillment of His promises this side of heaven (Heb. 11:13, 39). But that doesn’t undermine the faithfulness or power of our great God, the God with whom all things are possible. We may not understand His ways and the reason for His delays. But we dare not doubt His goodness toward His chosen ones or His power to fulfill His purpose with them in His time and way.

## Conclusion

Jeremiah the prophet was a godly man who faithfully spoke God’s word to a disobedient people who rejected both him and his message. For years he warned them of coming judgment if they did not repent, but they didn’t want to hear it. They mocked him, threw him in a muddy pit, and listened to the false prophets who told them what they wanted to hear, that God wouldn’t judge them for their sin. Finally, just as Jeremiah had warned, the powerful Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar came and besieged Jerusalem. Jeremiah was thrown into prison by the wicked Jewish king Zedekiah because he was predicting a Babylonian victory.

In that bleak situation, a strange word came to him from God. The Lord told him to buy a field from his cousin because he was the closest relative with a right of redemption. This would be like telling someone to buy a house in Sarajevo when it was under siege. It was obvious that the country was about to fall to a foreign king, who would confiscate all property. So you would be throwing away your money. But God told Jeremiah to buy it as a testimony of the Lord’s faithfulness to His promise to restore His people to the land. So Jeremiah obeyed God and handed over the precious little money he had to purchase this field. In that context Jeremiah prayed, “Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You” (Jer. 32:17). The Lord confirmed Jeremiah’s prayer by answering, “Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?” (Jer. 32:27).

If God has you in a humanly impossible situation, it is to bring you to the end of your own strength so that you will trust in His ability to do the humanly impossible. You may not ever see the answer in your lifetime. But you can trust in Him and give glory to Him, knowing that His Word of promise will stand, and that He has not forgotten His promise to you. In Genesis 18:10, the Lord says to Abraham and Sarah, “I will surely return to you ....” God’s Word to us is always surely, even when circumstances shout, “No way!” Remember God’s question, “Is anything too difficult for Me?” and trust Him to do what is humanly impossible. May He bless you as you wait on Him! ([Nothing Too Difficult For God - Genesis 18:9-15](#))

**Genesis 18:14 “Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”**

Brenton's translation of the LXX: Shall anything be impossible with the Lord? At this time I will return to thee seasonably, and Sarrha shall have a son.

My translation of LXX (Brenton ignores the Greek word "rhema" = spoken word. He also translates adunatei as future but it is actually present tense. He also translates "theo" as Lord but it is actually "God"). Here is my rendition = Is any spoken word [continually] too difficult for God....

- **Is anything too difficult:** Nu 11:23 De 7:21 1Sa 14:6 2Ki 7:1,2 Job 36:5 42:2 Ps 93:1 95:3 Jer 32:17 Mic 7:18 Zec 8:6 Mt 3:9 14:31 19:26 Mk 10:27 Lu 1:13,37 8:50 Eph 3:20 Php 3:21 4:13 Heb 11:19
- **I will return to you** Ge 18:10 17:21 De 30:3 2Ki 4:16 Ps 90:13 Mic 7:18 Lu 1:13,18
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## Related Passages:

Numbers 11:23+ The LORD said to Moses, **‘Is the LORD’S power limited?** Now you shall see whether My word will come true for you or not.”

Job 42:2 **“I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.**

Jeremiah 32:17+ ‘Ah Lord GOD! **Behold**, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! **Nothing is too difficult for You,**

Jeremiah 32:27+ **“Behold**, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?”

Mark 10:27+ Looking at them, Jesus \*said, “With people it is impossible, but not with God; **forall things are**



possible with God.”

Luke 1:37+ “**For nothing will be impossible** ([adunateo](#)) **with God.**” (MORE LITERALLY - "No spoken word of God is devoid of power." Lk 1:37ASV)

1 Kings 8:56 “Blessed be the LORD, Who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised; **not one word has failed of all His good promise**, which He promised through Moses His servant.

## NOTHING IS TOO DIFFICULT FOR YAHWEH

Is anything too difficult ([pala](#); Lxx - [adunateo](#) - be powerless or impossible) **for the LORD** ([Jehovah](#) = [Yahweh](#); [theos](#)) - This is clearly rhetorical and deserving of a resounding "no, nothing is too difficult for Yahweh!" Or as Paul might have said "May it never be!" In short, the LORD'S omniscience (in the previous passage) is matched by His [omnipotence](#) described in this passage. **Difficult** can also translated wonderful or extraordinary (Ps 119:18). It refers to things that are unusual and beyond human capabilities and as such it awakens astonishment (or wonder) in men.

*Nothing is too big for my God to accomplish, and  
nothing is too little for Him to use in accomplishing it!*

God gave Sarah the faith to believe He could accomplish this wonderful miracle of rejuvenating her body, partly by letting her know He could hear her laugh even when she only laughed "within herself" (Ge 18:12).

**Henry Morris**, “He who created all things surely controls all things. He who enacted the laws of nature can change them if He wills”

**Guzik** on **difficult** notes that this "is the same word for wonderful in Isaiah 9:6: For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given ... And His name will be called Wonderful. Jesus is our “wonderful” One, and He isn’t to hard or wonderful for God to give unto us.”

**At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son** - Jehovah Jesus repeats His promise from Ge 18:10 that had elicited a laugh of disbelief from Sarah.

**THOUGHT** - How can we apply this truth about God? We can cease striving in whatever situation we are trying to overcome in our strength -- personal, work, family, etc. We can ask ourselves -- am I depending on His power in this situation or am I trusting in the strength of my arm? Remember that no purpose of God can be thwarted (Job 42:2).

Sarah will have a son. The passage brings God's promise into clear focus. As long as it was a promise for the future, it really could be believed without much involvement. But now, when it seemed so impossible from the human standpoint, when the LORD fixed an exact date for the birth of the child, the promise became rather overwhelming to Abraham and Sarah. But then this was the LORD of creation, the one they had come to trust. The point of these narratives is that the creation of Abraham's offspring, which eventually became Israel, is no less a miraculous work of creation than the creation of the world itself.

**Bob Utley** - It is interesting how the primary wives of the Patriarchs were all unable to have children without the help of the Lord. It was one way He showed His power, purpose, and eternal plan. It points toward the virgin birth of the Davidic Messiah. YHWH has an eternal redemptive plan, person, and lineage which He will develop and protect!

**Steven Cole**: Jeremiah the prophet was a godly man who faithfully spoke God's word to a disobedient people who rejected both him and his message. For years he warned them of coming judgment if they did not repent, but they didn't want to hear it. They mocked him, threw him in a muddy pit, and listened to the false prophets who told them what they wanted to hear, that God wouldn't judge them for their sin. Finally, just as Jeremiah had warned, the powerful Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar came and besieged Jerusalem. Jeremiah was thrown into prison by the wicked Jewish king Zedekiah because he was predicting a Babylonian victory.

In that bleak situation, a strange word came to him from God. The Lord told him to buy a field from his cousin because he was the closest relative with a right of redemption. This would be like telling someone to buy a house in Sarajevo when it was under siege. It was obvious that the country was about to fall to a foreign king, who would confiscate all property. So you would be throwing away your money. But God told Jeremiah to buy it as a testimony of the Lord's faithfulness to His promise to restore His people to the land. So Jeremiah obeyed God and handed over the precious little money he had to purchase this field. In that context Jeremiah prayed, “Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You” (Jer. 32:17). The Lord confirmed Jeremiah's prayer by answering, “Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?” (Jer. 32:27).

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**Difficult** (wonderful) ([06381](#)) **pala** is a verb which means to be difficult, to be hard, to be extraordinary or to be amazing, to be surpassing or to cause a wonderful thing to happen. To be beyond one's power to do. To do something wonderful, extraordinary or difficult = Wonders, Marvels, Marvelous works. **Pala** is used in OT mainly to refer to acts of God, either cosmic wonders or historical achievements on behalf of Israel. Note its usage in Ex 15:11; Ps. 77:14; 78:12; 88:10; 119:129; 139:6; and Isa. 9:6; 25:1; 29:14; Dan. 12:6. **Pala** refers to acts that are performed by Jehovah expressing actions that are beyond the bounds of human powers or expectations, especially His deliverances of Israel (Ex 3:20, Ps 106:22, 136:4). He has done things beyond the limits of human powers or expectation. God showed His people miracles when they came out of bondage in Egypt and as they were going into the freedom of the promised land - "Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." (Josh 3:5) See [WONDERFUL THINGS](#).

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#### **QUESTION -[Why does God ask Abraham, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" \(Genesis 18:14\)?](#)**

**ANSWER** - [Abraham](#) was visited by three men one day; the men turned out to be unusual guests, to say the least, and the visit was life-changing for Abraham and Sarah. Genesis 18:1–2 says, "The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground." Abraham showed immediate hospitality to the three men, inviting them to rest under a tree and preparing a big meal for them (verses 3–8).

When the Lord announced to [Abraham](#), "By this time next year, Sarah will give birth to a son," Sarah overheard and laughed in unbelief (Genesis 18:10–12). The news was so astonishing to the 89-year-old Sarah that she doubted God's word and His promise. Then God asked Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, 'Can an old woman like me have a baby?' Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son" (Genesis 18:13–14, NLT).

God countered Sarah's rhetorical question ("Can an old woman like me have a baby?") with one of His own: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" In other words, God answered Sarah's unbelief with His assurance: "Nothing is too hard for me!"

When Sarah doubted the Lord, she was questioning both His truthfulness and His ability. Sarah is not unlike us. We sometimes doubt that God will keep His promises. We disbelieve the Lord's power to do what He says He will do in His Word. And God, through Genesis 18:14, asks us the same question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

God framed the question rhetorically, but the Bible answers categorically, "No, nothing is too hard for the Lord!" The prophet Jeremiah observed, "Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you" (Jeremiah 32:17). Again God acknowledged, "I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?" (Jeremiah 32:27).

"I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted," testifies Job 42:2. God's Word never fails but accomplishes everything God intends for it to do (Isaiah 55:10–11; Joshua 21:45; Luke 1:37). His words are truth (2 Samuel 7:28). When God makes a promise, we can be sure He has the power to fulfill it (Ephesians 3:20–21; 2 Corinthians 1:20). "For the word of the LORD holds true, and we can trust everything he does," affirms Psalm 33:4 (NLT).

Jesus told His disciples that, humanly speaking, salvation is impossible, "but with God everything is possible" (Matthew 19:26, NLT). Sarah was looking at God's ability, fidelity, and truthfulness through a human lens. The Bible suggests numerous ways in which people fail or fall short (Psalm 14:3, John 20:27; Romans 1:25; Galatians 1:6; Revelation 2:4) yet emphasizes that God never lets His people down.

[Faithfulness and truth](#) are fundamental aspects of God's character (Revelation 3:14; 19:11). Even "if we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is" (2 Timothy 2:13, NLT).

Eventually, Sarah repented of her doubt and believed God. Isaac, the promised son, was born a year later: "The LORD kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised. She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. This happened at just the time God had said it would" (Genesis 21:1–2, NLT).

God has given us ample evidence of His power, faithfulness, and truthfulness. By a simple act of His will, He created the universe and everything in it out of nothing (Genesis 1–2; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). God keeps the planets in orbit and "stretches the northern sky over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing" (Job 26:7, NLT). He holds all things together and supplies the needs of every living creature (Colossians 1:17; Psalm 145:14–21). Surely the God who made heaven and earth (Psalm 121:2), who gives life and breath to every creature and human being (Job 12:10), can make an old woman conceive and give birth to a child.

God's question to Sarah ought to encourage us to examine our own hearts. Are there any obstacles of unbelief standing between me and God? Do I harbor doubts that cause me to laugh at the Lord's promises?

If we truly believe with hearts of faith that God is who He says He is, nothing will shake our confidence in Him. When God asks, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" our answer will be a resounding, "No! God can do anything!" [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### **QUESTION - [How long did Abraham and Sarah have to wait for Isaac?](#)**

**ANSWER** - Genesis 12 begins the story of [Abraham](#) (then called Abram) and his barren wife [Sarah](#). Verses 1 through 4 record God's first words to him about a homeland for his offspring. Even though the gift of a son is not directly mentioned in this first communication, God hinted at His plan for Abram. Abraham was 75 years old when he first received the promise, and Genesis 21:5 tells us he was 100 years old when Isaac was born. Sarah was 90. So Abraham and Sarah waited 25 years for the fulfillment of God's promise.

In that 25 years between the time that Abram was promised a son and the birth of [Isaac](#), Abram and Sarah had certain ideas of how they might facilitate the keeping of the promise. One was that Abraham's steward, Eliezer, would become the heir of Abraham's household (Genesis 15:2–3). Another idea was that Abraham could have an heir through a son conceived by Sarah's slave, Hagar (Genesis 16:1–2). In both cases, God rejected those men as Abraham's heirs, pointing Abraham and Sarah to a literal, miraculous fulfillment of the promise.

Abraham is called the father of faith (Romans 4:11–12) because of his response to God both in leaving his homeland and receiving a son in his old age. Genesis 15:4–5 again describes God's promise to Abraham that his offspring would be as "the sands of the sea." Even though Abraham was old and had no sons, he never doubted that God would do as He promised. He did not understand how such a thing could be possible, but he humbly accepted God's word as truth. Mary had the same response when the angel Gabriel told her she would be the mother of the Messiah (Luke 1:26–38). She did not understand how such a thing could be possible since she was a virgin. But she never doubted that God would do as He said. That response is the kind of faith that pleases God (Hebrews 11:6).

Genesis 15:6 lays out the truth that salvation is by faith, apart from works: "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness." Romans 4:3–5 and Galatians 3:5–7 elaborate on this truth. Just as Abraham was counted as righteous before he did anything worthy of praise, so we are counted as righteous by simply believing that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is sufficient payment for our sin (2 Corinthians 5:21).

However, that faith produces actions that validate it. James 2:14–18 helps us understand the kind of faith Abraham had. It was a faith that acted. He moved because God said to move. He trusted because God said to trust. He prepared to welcome a son because God promised him a son. By acting on his faith, Abraham proved that he trusted God, and that trust was credited to his account. His faith in the promises of God saw him through years of waiting. He never doubted God's goodness or His word, and, for that, God considered him righteous. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### **NO LAUGHING MATTER**

"Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Genesis 18:14

The Lord is able to meet all our needs, whatever they may be. Nothing is too difficult for Him. Sarah needed to learn this truth. God's promise to give Abraham a son named Isaac is recorded in Genesis 17:21. In the next chapter that assurance was repeated to the patriarch as he talked outside his tent with three men sent from God. This time Sarah overheard the conversation. To her, having a child at her advanced age was an impossibility, so she "laughed within herself" (v. 12). The Lord then said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?' Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (vv. 13-14). God was asking Abraham a rhetorical question to which the obvious answer was no.

As Christians, we have the same assurance. Abraham's God is our God, and He is omnipotent. He's the Creator of the universe. Nothing exceeds His power. No problem intimidates Him. No obstacle is too big for Him. Everything is possible with Him. Our heavenly Father is in control of every situation. What comfort we can find in this truth! What confidence it gives us!

The all-knowing, everywhere-present, all-powerful Creator and sovereign God can do anything. When we present our petitions to our heavenly Father in prayer, making sure we ask according to His will, He assures us that nothing is too hard for Him. —R W De Haan (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

We do not prove the resources of God until we trust Him for the impossible.

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#### **Never Too Old**

Is anything too hard for the Lord? —Genesis 18:14

The women of Brown Manor had raised their families and retired from their careers. Now they could no longer live on their own, so they came to Brown Manor as a sort of “last stop before heaven.” They enjoyed each other’s company but often struggled with feelings of uselessness. Sometimes they even questioned why God was so slow in taking them to heaven.

One of the women, who had spent years as a pianist, often played hymns on the Manor’s piano. Other women joined her, and together they lifted their voices in praise to God.

One day, a government auditor was conducting a routine inspection during one of their spontaneous worship services. When he heard them sing “What Will You Do With Jesus?” the Spirit of God moved his heart. He recalled the song from his childhood and knew that he had chosen to leave Jesus behind. That day, God spoke to him again and gave him another chance to answer the question differently. And he did.

Like the women of Brown Manor, Sarah thought she was too old to be used by God (Gen. 18:11). But God gave her a child in her old age who was the ancestor of Jesus (21:1-3; Matt. 1:2,17). Like Sarah and the women of Brown Manor, we’re never too old for God to use us. by Julie Ackerman Link (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

The longer we live, the more that we know,  
Old age is the time for wisdom to show;  
Who knows how much good some word we might say  
Could do for that one who’s wandered away?  
—Bosch

God can use you at any age—if you are willing.

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### **God’s Call to the Impossible** J. Ray Klingensmith

Texts: “For with God nothing shall be impossible” (Lk. 1:37). “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” (Gen. 18:14).

The call of God to believing people seems to be something totally impossible to the unbeliever. Our belief in God who created us, and all things that exist seems preposterous to unbelievers who do not know God. They would rather ascribe all life and existence to what they call “mother nature,” or more vaguely, hundreds of millions, or billions of years. They pretend that it is impossible for them to say “God”. But the believer stands in awe at the vastness and complexities of all things and humbly bows before the God who created them. Thus, what to the believer is totally obvious and acceptable is just impossible to the unbeliever. And there is a reason for this, which we will discuss later.

Again, another “impossible” for the unbeliever that is fully accepted by the believer is the One called Jesus Christ. The unbeliever respects His wisdom and His moral and social works, but to believe that he is the Son of God, that His great death and resurrection were accomplished in behalf of every sinner, is just out of the question for the unbeliever. Thus, what is impossible to plain human reason is wholly acceptable through the gift and experience of faith, which every believer knows.

So the natural human mind seeks what to him is reasonable, acceptable, provable; but faith, the gospel, the Bible, go far beyond the mere human reason. As the Bible says: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:9–10).

Now consider all of the “impossible” things God gives to the believer with which to witness to an unbelieving world. Everything in the Christian’s arsenal of faith is just impossible to the “natural man,” as the apostle Paul would say. Yet consider also how powerful and effective these “impossibles” have been to claim millions of believers for Christ. Only God knows how many hundreds of millions have given their lives to him, to serve, to believe, to go into the ministry, to become martyrs, or whatever their witness became. And there are now hundreds of millions believing and praying and working for Him regardless of how impossible it seems to those who do not have faith.

The Christians proclaim a Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ. The unbeliever says “impossible”. The unbeliever proclaims that such things never happen, in fact can’t happen. But God tells us to proclaim it! And hundreds of millions celebrate what they call the Christmas story which proclaims God’s entrance into the human family “made of a woman” (Gal. 4:4). And to make the story even more impossible this one born was called the Son of God! And he was born to an unmarried girl! And still worse, born in a barn! Now what a message to proclaim to a lost world! This One the Saviour of mankind? But it is this to which we witness. And it confounds the wisdom of the wise. And it is so unique and so out of the ordinary that only God could have brought it to pass. Thus its power.

The story continues with this One growing up as a laborer, a carpenter whose own relatives at one time thought him “mad”. The religious people were always challenging and contradicting Him and trying to make Him an enemy of their religion. They could not deny His miracles and great wisdom and His divine power; but they could not give up their own reasoning to accept by faith what God had given them. So they finally proved their own carnality by having Him murdered. So He was crucified between two thieves as an outlaw, a blasphemer, and enemy of God and the Jewish religion. And God gives us such a story to tell to a lost world! Impossible! So the Cross has become the symbol of victory, not of failure; of life, not of death. So the cross now decorates the churches and cathedrals and missions and is even worn as jewelry. Doesn't it seem that God would have given us a great success story to proclaim? He gave us the worst possible message to proclaim: a baby born to an unmarried couple, in a barn, in controversy with his own people, murdered as an outlaw! What a story! And yet millions bow before it! It is told and retold and sung about and written about and painted and preached more than any other event or life known to mankind. And by it we are redeemed.

And is there still more to this impossible story? Yes! The worst yet: He arose from the dead! God raised Him up! He broke open the way for all of us to go to God! Impossible! But that is the Gospel! And that we proclaim. And that becomes the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Would it not seem that God would have given us some great success story to proclaim? Could it not have been verified by great intellectuals and powerful leaders? But no, they rejected it.

And who witnessed and perceived and grasped all of this? Not the “wise”. Not the powerful politicians. Not the great religious leaders. Just people! “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom ...?” (James 2:5). And they tell us that more than 500 people saw Him after He had arisen from the dead, and they don't even give us the names of very many of them. And who were some of the witnesses who proclaimed it first? Mary Magdalene? The one out of whom he had cast seven devils? And the other Mary? And Peter who denied Him? And a couple people going down the Emmaus road who didn't know Him when He appeared unto them? Surely it would seem that some great scientist or some great historian or some great religious teacher should have been there to verify it. But no. God didn't need that. The event in itself would carry ample power with it to touch the human soul. So now God has armed us with the story of a Virgin Birth, a carpenter, a controversial life, a person murdered as an outlaw, a cross, and a resurrection from the dead—which becomes a victory over death and a salvation and redemption for a lost world! And it has changed the lives of millions upon millions in every nation, language and tongue. And it is still doing so.

But to carry the story of God's call to the impossible a bit further let us consider the people God used to get the message into writing and to what we now call the New Testament. The great religious leaders and intellectuals were offended that they were not called upon to be His disciples or to proclaim His Word. Neither were they needed to write it. For who were they who gave it to us? Matthew the publican. Mark, who had quit outright on his first attempt at a missionary venture. There was Simon Peter who had denied that he knew him. There was the original Saul of Tarsus who hated Him before his conversion. And there was James. Now surely we should have had some great University professor or some famous historian or some widely known philosopher publish this great story. But no. Our writers didn't even have a college education, except Paul. They had no experience in writing. In fact they didn't even have a publisher! Now how can this story get off the ground without a great public relations promoter? This is impossible! But we have their story in more homes and hearts than any other ever written. It is published in more languages, dialects, parts and parcels than any document ever written. Impossible! But this is how God works. This is the God and the Gospel that the unbelievers won't accept, while the evidence of it is so abundant that it practically smothers them.

So here we are with the simplest people carrying the most profound truth while God makes foolish the wisdom of the wisest of men (1 Cor. 1:26–31).

So you have heard of some “impossible” Christian? And you know some impossible church? And you know some impossible life that God can't use? Well, that's quite normal. All believers feel as if we are the most impossible of all; but God has called us and is using us, and we love it.

It was ever so that the great gift of faith supercedes all of the impossibles. Have you heard of Noah and an ark? Just impossible, but it saved the human race. Have you heard of Moses who was pitted against an Egyptian government and all of its power to rescue a nation of slaves who had been in captivity for over four centuries? Have you heard of a Daniel in a lion's den or the Hebrew children in a furnace of fire? Have you heard of a David and a Goliath? Did you know about an Isaiah or a Jeremiah, or Amos, or Elijah? All were called to what the world would say was impossible. Have you read the eleventh chapter of Hebrews lately? This is the faith. This is the power. This is where God always did and still does work.

Where is your church working? Or where are you working? Still in the possibles? Why not get into Faith for a change? We walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). The possibles are for those who live and work only by their own poor human reason. The impossibles are for those who have faith in the God of the impossibles. Be it done unto you according to your FAITH—not your worth, nor your merit, nor your virtue.



God is still calling thousands of young people into this "impossible" but greatest of all lives. Can you by faith join them, or help them? But even greater yet, can you and your church get out of the possibles into the great impossibles where God is always at work?

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### **Streams in the Desert p 320 -**

"Is there anything too hard for Jehovah?" (Gen. 18:14.)

*The only thing too hard for Jehovah is deliberate, continued disbelief in His love and power, and our final rejection of His plans for us.*

HERE is God's loving challenge to you and to me today. He wants us to think of the deepest, highest, worthiest desire and longing of our hearts, something which perhaps was our desire for ourselves or for someone is dear to us, yet which has been so long unfulfilled that we have looked upon it as only a lost desire, that which might have been but now cannot be, and so have given up hope of seeing it fulfilled in this life.

That thing, if it is in line with what we know to be His expressed will (as a son to Abraham and Sarah was), God intends to do for us, even if we know that it is of such utter impossibility that we only laugh at the absurdity of anyone's supposing it could ever now come to pass. That thing God intends to do for us, if we will let Him.

"Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Not when we believe in Him enough to go forward and do His will, and let Him do the impossible for us. Even Abraham and Sarah could have blocked God's plan if they had continued to disbelieve.

The only thing too hard for Jehovah is deliberate, continued disbelief in His love and power, and our final rejection of His plans for us. Nothing is too hard for Jehovah to do for them that trust Him.—Messages for the Morning Watch.

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### **F B Meyer - GOD'S RESOURCES**

"Is anything too hard for the Lord?"--- Ge 18:14.

"He Lord God! behold, Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee."-- Jer 32:17.

THERE IS no doubt as to the identification of these three guests that suddenly appeared before the tent-door of Abraham. We are expressly told that "Jehovah appeared unto him." It was thus that our Lord anticipated His Incarnation. He came incognito, and "His delights were with the sons of men" (Pr 8:31). During His earthly life, He loved the homes of men, lodged with Peter and Zacchaeus, and in the dear home where Mary loved and Martha served. After His resurrection, He tarried with two of them in the village inn. So He will come to thy heart and mine. Though He is the High and lofty One, who inhabits Eternity, yet He will plead for admission to sup with us and we with Him (Rev 3:20). But He often comes disguised as a wayfaring man, hungry and athirst. Let us "run to meet Him," remembering Mt 25:40.

God is no man's debtor; He always pays for His lodging, hence His promise to Sarah! She laughed with incredulity, but is anything too hard for the Lord? That is one of God's unanswered questions. It has accosted the human conscience all down the ages. Let us look away from the difficulties imposed by nature, to Him who holds the oceans in the hollow of His Almighty hand. Then we can stand with Him on the mountainside, and plead for Sodom; then God Himself will draw us on to ask for more and yet more, till, when our faith gives out, He will do something far in advance of all that we asked or thought.

PRAYER Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, World without end. AMEN.

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### **Paul Enns - GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL - [page 24 in Approaching God](#)**

Nothing is too difficult for Thee. (Jeremiah 32:17)

Skeptics sometimes challenge Christians with questions: "Is there anything God can't do?" "No, He can do everything."

"Can He create a rock so big that He can't move it?" Of course, that is a trick question. There are things that God cannot do. He cannot act contrary to His nature. But the fact is that most people have too small a concept of God, not recognizing that He is all-powerful. J. B. Phillips wrote a book titled [Your God Is Too Small \(borrow\)](#), in which he exposed people's caricatures of God. Many people have a God of their own making-but it is not the biblical God.

God can do anything He pleases that is in harmony with His nature. God "works all things after the counsel of His will" (Ephesians 1:11); "He does whatever He pleases" (Psalm 115:3). Nothing can hinder God's plan and purpose. Whatever He decides to do will

come to pass.

Almighty is a word that describes God's power. As God Almighty (El Shaddai) He could make ninety-nine-year-old Abram a father (Genesis 17:1); He caused cunning Jacob to be the father of nations and kings (Ge 35:11), and one day He will judge the world in the Great Tribulation (Revelation 4:8).

God's power also goes beyond what He actually does. "Is anything too difficult for the Lord?" asked the angel (Genesis 18:14). No. He can enable a ninety-year-old mother to conceive and bear a child, and He can do even more. John the Baptist said that God could turn stones into faithful Israelites-but He didn't (Matthew 3:9). Jesus said He could appeal to the Father to send seventy-two thousand angels to rescue Him-but He didn't (Mt 26:53).

There are things God cannot do. He can't associate with sin (Habakkuk 1:13), He can't go back on His word (2 Timothy 2:13), He can't lie (Hebrews 6:18).

The greatest expression of God's power was the bodily resurrection of Jesus (2 Corinthians 13:4). And the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead is operative in believers (Ephesians 1:19)! Think of it! Are you living by faith in the all-powerful God? Or do you carry the weight of the world as if God were not powerful? Remember, "Nothing is too difficult for God!"

LESSON: God is all-powerful and able to do whatever He wills and whatever is consistent with His nature.

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### **J C Philpot - "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Genesis 18:14**

The Lord will make us feel that though his arm is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear, yet he is to be enquired of. He is indeed a God that works wonders; apparent impossibilities are nothing with him; he has but to speak and it is done. But he will make us know his power by making us feel our weakness. He will often keep at a great distance, and for a long time, in order to make us value his presence. He will make us sink very low that he may lift us very high. He will make us taste the bitterness of the gall and wormwood of sin that we may know the sweetness of manifested pardon. He will teach us to abhor ourselves in our own sight, and loathe ourselves for our abominations, before we shall see and know ourselves washed in his blood, clothed in his righteousness, and to stand before him without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

The Lord in one sense is easy of access upon his throne of grace, but in another very hard to be got at. He invites his dear people to come and spread their needs before him; he encourages them with a thousand promises; he says in our text, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" But he will make us set a due value upon his visitations; they shall not be given to us very easily or very frequently that we may not hold them cheap. It is not "ask and have" immediately. We have to learn what sin cost our dear Redeemer; we have to see the holiness and majesty of God; we have to learn that though mercy is free, and grace superabounds over the aboundings of sin, yet it must be got at after many a struggle, many a cry, many a sigh and groan, and many a fervent petition; that though all fullness dwells in the Lord the Lamb, and he invites us to come and take of the water of life freely, yet it is guarded on every side by many things that would drive us back.

And thus he teaches us to put due value upon his grace, upon the visitations of his countenance and the words of his lips. They cost the dear Redeemer the deepest agonies of body and soul, and sufferings of which no finite mind can form a conception; and, therefore, are not to be given out without teaching us to know through what channel they came, nor what it cost the blessed Son of God to give out of his fullness those supplies of grace by which he enriches our need.

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### **Spiritual Fitness**

Is anything too hard for the LORD? Genesis 18:14

Why is it that getting into shape takes months of disciplined exercise, but getting out of shape is so incredibly easy? We wake every morning full of resolve that this will be the day, the month, the year that we finally drop those extra pounds or run that 5K race. But life pulls us in dozens of different directions, and often it seems just too plain difficult to keep those well-intended resolutions.

Lots of things in life can be tough, like maintaining muscle mass. Scripture tells us, however, that nothing is too hard for God. In Genesis we read the amazing account of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah that they will have a child in their old age. Now what kind of shape does an elderly woman need to be in for that to happen?

If God could quicken the womb of a woman in her nineties, He can work in your situation today as well. His ability to intervene has nothing to do with how "fit" you appear to be. First Corinthians 1:27 describes how much God delights in using the weak to accomplish His purposes: "God chose what the world considers nonsense to put wise people to shame. God chose what the world considers weak to put what is strong to shame."

Lace up those exercise shoes and head out this morning with a smile on your face.

Nothing is too difficult for God.

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**Andrew Murray** - Beware of limiting God in your prayer, not only by unbelief but also by pretending that you know what He can do. Expect unexpected things, greater than all we ask or think. Each time you intercede, be quiet first and worship God. Acknowledge what He can do and expect great things..... The God who said to Abraham, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (Genesis 18:14), pledges to work His power in us, too, if we will learn to trust Him.

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**L B E Cowman** - [Springs in the Valley - page 118](#)

Is any thing too hard for the LORD? (Gen. 18:14)

GOD wants us to ask Him for the impossible! God can do things that man cannot do. He would not be God if this were not so. That is why He has graciously made prayer a law of life. "If ye shall ask...I will do." This inviting promise from the Lord means that He will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves; He will do for others what we cannot do for them—if we but ask Him. How little do we avail ourselves of this immense privilege!

Someone spoke this searching word at Edinburgh in 1910: "We have lost the eternal youthfulness of Christianity, and have aged into calculating manhood. We seldom pray in earnest for the extraordinary, the limitless, the glorious. We seldom pray with any confidence, for any good to the realization of which we cannot imagine a way. And yet, we suppose ourselves to believe in an Infinite Father."

The natural man calculates results. Calculations have no place in our relation with God.

That matter which has been so burdening us just now, and with which we can see no way of dealing, how are we praying about it? In anxiety, or with thanksgiving?

Worrying prayer defeats its own answer; rejoicing prayer gets through. "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Then will come the answer "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

The more we are cut off from human help, the greater claim we can make on Divine help. The more impossible a thing is to human or mortal power, the more at peace can we be when we look to Him for deliverance.

"Only those who see the invisible can do the impossible!"

God will answer when to thee,  
Not a possibility  
Of deliverance seems near;  
It is then He will appear.

God will answer when you pray;  
Yea, though mountains block thy way,  
At His word, a way will be  
E'en through mountains, made for thee.

God who still divides the sea,  
Willingly will work for thee;  
God, before whom mountains fall,  
Promises to hear thy call.  
M. E. B.

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**Tim Lahaye** - [Embracing Eternity - GOD'S BIG PLANS](#) page 172

Is anything too hard for the Lord? Genesis 18:14

"My friend, if I had gone through what you've gone through and seen prayer answered the way you have, I would not be challenging God to do something so simple." Nicolae, 199

WHEN GOD PROMISED Abraham a son, his wife, Sarah, was listening nearby. She was long past the childbearing years, and she laughed silently at the idea. "How could a worn-out woman like me have a baby?" she thought to herself (Genesis 18:12). God heard her scoffs and confronted her about it. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" he asked her (18:14). Most of us know the end of the story. Sarah became pregnant and gave birth to Isaac, the son of promise.

I wonder how often we scoff at the Lord's plans. How many times have we inwardly laughed at the big ideas that God plants in our spirit?

Have you ever found yourself dreaming of doing something great for God? Have you ever lain awake at night and imagined yourself in the midst of a task so big and powerful and overwhelming that you eventually chuckled and shook your head in embarrassment? Who do I think I am ... Billy Graham? I could never do that. God would never do something like that through someone like me! You blame it on the pizza and roll over and go to sleep.

"The reason you don't have what you want is that you don't ask God for it," James tells us (James 4:2). It doesn't always occur to us that maybe the big dreams in our mind were placed there by God. He plants his plans in our heart, and we scoff at them simply because they feel much too big. And how will we ever know if we are so quick to discount the idea?

Why would we expect God to do great things through us if we don't ask? How can we accomplish big plans if we never try? How can we expect God to answer big prayers when we never ask him to?

Do you need healing—healing that only a miracle from God can bring? Why not believe that he will do it? God wants you to have a faith that is active and expectant—a faith that knows his power and believes that he is waiting to show it. God wants people who will listen to his unbelievable plans and then believe, shaking off any doubt. Don't scoff at the ideas God puts in your heart. Trust him to carry them out.

**REFLECTION** When was the last time God planted a big dream in your heart? How did you respond? How would God have you pray about this now?

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**[William MacDonald](#)** - The omnipotence of God means that He can do anything that is not inconsistent with His other attributes. Hear the uniform testimony of Scripture! "I am the Almighty God" (Gen. 17:1). "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:14). "I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted" (Job 42:2 NASB). "There is nothing too hard for Thee" Qer. 32:17). "With God all things are possible" (Mt. 19:26). "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37).

But it is understood that God cannot do anything that is inconsistent with His own character. For instance, it is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18). He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13). He cannot sin because He is absolutely holy. He cannot fail because He is absolutely dependable.

The omnipotence of God is seen in His creation and sustaining of the universe, in His providence, in the salvation of sinners, and in the judgment of the impenitent. The greatest display of His power in the Old Testament was the Exodus; in the New Testament, the resurrection of Christ.

If God is omnipotent, then no man can fight successfully against Him. "There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord" (Prov. 21:30).

If God is omnipotent, then the believer is on the winning side. One with God is a majority. "If God be for us, who can be against us" (Rom. 8:31).

If God is omnipotent, then in prayer we can deal in the realm of the impossible. As the chorus says, we can laugh at impossibilities and cry, "It shall be done."

If God is omnipotent, then we have the unutterable comfort that:

The Savior can solve every problem,  
The tangles of life can undo.  
There is nothing too hard for Jesus,  
There is nothing that He cannot do.

"When my weakness leans on His might, all seems light."

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**[The Impossible Dream - A Burden Shared - Encouragement for leaders](#) page 140 Dave Roper**

**Warm-up: Genesis 18:1–15**

Is anything too hard for the Lord? Genesis 18:14

"Is anything too hard for the Lord?" That's what the stranger asked Abraham and Sarah when he met them under the oaks at Mamre. It was a question that became a maxim in Israel.

Jeremiah had the same question when he bought a piece of ground near Jerusalem. The Babylonians were outside the city; the siege was on. They were not likely to give it up or go away.

Yet Jeremiah's purchase was made in good faith because God had promised to give the land back to Judah one day. So, based on that word, Jeremiah signed the deed. When challenged he asked, Is anything too hard for the Lord? (Jeremiah 32:17, 27).

When the stranger first posed the question to Abraham and Sarah, they were waiting for God to come through. Twenty-five years before, God had promised them a son. Now Abraham, almost one hundred years old, was "as good as dead" (Hebrews 11:12). Sarah herself was almost ninety, and "it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women" (Genesis 18:11 KJV).

Nevertheless, the stranger persisted, saying, "I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son" (Genesis 18:14). Sarah laughed, but one year later "the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him" (Genesis 21:1–2).

It was an impossible task that God had—making life in Sarah's dead body and bringing salvation into the world. But the stranger was right: "Is anything too hard for the LORD?"

There are those impossible people with whom we work who seem to have no heart for God, who are out of touch with reality and utterly untouched by the preaching of God's Word.

There are those impossible boards that are encumbered by men and women who have consecrated themselves to mild discipleship and devotion and who think and act as though God had never spoken.

There are those impossible communities where everything ugly and obscene is permitted and cultivated, but no one wants us to talk about the loveliness of Jesus.

There are those impossible churches with their unofficial power centers and self-appointed aristocracies who seem bent upon frustrating every God-given plan.

And then, there's you and me. It's an impossible job God has—ridding us of our private perversions, our bad habits and compulsions, the unholy attitudes and actions that plague us and inhibit us and, despite God's extraordinary grace, make us feel defiled and unqualified to serve.

Yes, there are people, places, and things that are impossible, but "What is impossible with men is possible with God" (Luke 18:27). He has His way of doing what cannot otherwise be done. He will not be hurried, but He's always at hand. He "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20).

As Hudson Taylor learned,

There are three stages in every great work of God.

First it is impossible.

Then it is difficult.

And then it is done!

**Genesis 18:15 Sarah denied it however, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh."**

- **denied:** Ge 4:9 12:13 Job 2:10 Pr 28:13 Joh 18:17,25-27 Eph 4:23 Col 3:9 1Jn 1:8
- **No, but you did laugh:** Ps 44:21 Pr 12:19 Mk 2:8 Joh 2:25 Ro 3:19
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## **SARAH DENIES SHE DOUBTED**

**Sarah denied it however, saying, "I did not laugh** - Sarah clearly lies.

**For she was afraid** - **For** explains why she denied laughing.

**And He said, "No, but you did laugh."** - The LORD immediately corrects Sarah's denial/lie. Clearly Sarah repented and was restored and is even listed in the Hebrews "Hall of Faith" (Heb 11:11+).

[Wenstrom](#) has an interesting point - remember Sarah laughed in unbelief and she thought this was an ordinary stranger and not the

Lord Himself making this promise to her and Abraham, thus, we see that the Lord seeks to reveal Himself to Sarah in order to trigger her faith in the promise. The Lord does this by revealing His omniscience to Sarah by telling her that she laughed, which she did, but to herself, inaudibly. Only she and the Lord would know that she laughed to herself, thus, by revealing to Sarah that it was indeed the Lord Himself making this promise to Abraham that she would have a child the following year, the Lord caused her to exercise faith in His promise to give her a child in her old age.

[Life Application Study Bible note \(borrow\)](#) - Fear is the most common motive for lying. We are afraid that our inner thoughts and emotions will be exposed or our wrongdoings discovered. But lying causes greater complications than telling the truth and brings even more problems. You will be far better off telling the truth right from the start.

**Genesis 18:16 Then the men rose up from there, and looked down toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off.**

- **to send them off:** Ac 15:3 20:38 21:5 Ro 15:24 3Jn 1:6
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Genesis 13:10+ Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere—**this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah**—like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar.

### EYES LOOKING TO SODOM

**Then the men rose up from there, and looked down toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off-**

As the passage unfolds it appears two of the men headed off for Sodom (cf Ge 19:1). The three were looking toward Sodom, and One of them, the Holy One in pre-incarnate form as a man, saw that the cup of evil of Sodom was filled to the brim (cf Ge 15:16KJV+). Abraham would send them off, but as of yet he was unaware of their mission which Jehovah would soon reveal to him.

**Looked down** is the verb *shaqaph* which means, look down from above. The basic idea is "to look down at a sharp angle from a great height" as one would look down from a pinnacle or onto the street from a high housetop and Genesis 18:1 records this high elevation as being the "**oaks of Mamre**." (3040 ft elevation). From this location in Hebron, 3,040 feet above sea level, the Lord, the angels and Abraham looked down in a southeasterly direction toward Sodom, which according to Genesis 13:10 was located in the Jordan valley.

**NET NOTE - send off** - The Piel of *nʾzʾj* (*shalakh*) means "to lead out, to send out, to expel"; here it is used in the friendly sense of seeing the visitors on their way.

**Bob Utley-** Jerome tells us that there was a site not far from Hebron where one could see the area of the Dead Sea, possibly as far as the cities of the plain. Most modern archeologists assume that the cities of the plain were at the southern end of the Dead Sea.

**Matthew Henry Concise - Verses 16-22.** The two who are supposed to have been created angels went toward Sodom. The one who is called Jehovah throughout the chapter, continued with Abraham, and would not hide from him the thing he intended to do. **Though God long forbears with sinners, from which they fancy that the Lord does not see, and does not regard; yet when the day of his wrath comes, he will look toward them.** The Lord will give Abraham an opportunity to intercede with him, and shows him the reason of his conduct. Consider, as a very bright part of Abraham's character and example, that he not only prayed with his family, but he was very careful to teach and rule them well. Those who expect family blessings must make conscience of family duty. Abraham did not fill their heads with matters of doubtful dispute; but he taught them to be serious and devout in the worship of God, and to be honest in their dealings with all men. Of how few may such a character be given in our days! How little care is taken by masters of families to ground those under them in the principles of religion! Do we watch from sabbath to sabbath whether they go forward or backward?

#### [Rod Mattoon](#) - Parents in Genesis

Praying—God prophesies that Abraham will be a good father. Ge 17:18

Poor Priorities—Lot offers his daughters to the Sodomites. Though this was their custom to protect a guest at all cost, the Scriptures teach we are to care for our family first. Lot should have never lived in that city in the first place. Ge 19:18



Prophecy about a Parent—God prophesies that Abraham will be a good father. Ge 18:19  
Pattern of a Parent—Rebekah is a bad example to Jacob. Ge 27:13  
Problems of a Parent—Jacob created his own problems by favoring Joseph. Ge 37:3  
Predictions of a Parent—Jacob predicts the future of his sons and grandsons. Ge 48:17–20; 49:1–27

#### Genesis 18:17 The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,

- 2Ki 4:27 2Ch 20:7 Ps 25:14 Am 3:7 Joh 15:15 Jas 2:23
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

The LORD ([Jehovah = Yahweh](#); Lxx = [kurios](#)) said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do- Ge 18:17-19 is a soliloquy by Jehovah. He is explaining why He should not hide His intentions from Abraham. Abraham, in communion with God, knew long before Lot, in Sodom, of the destruction of that city. Oh, for more communion!

**John Phillips** - The revelation of that truth was an interesting test of Abraham’s growth in grace and of his increase in the knowledge of God. How does a faithful, maturing, obedient child of God react to the truth that a holocaust of judgment is about to engulf a world of vile and godless men? Jonah, faced with apocalyptic truth, was glad. He pondered the impending doom of Nineveh with glee, determined to do nothing to stay its fall, careless of the thousands of little children who lived within its walls. Jesus, faced with apocalyptic truth, was moved to tears. His prophetic eye envisioned Jerusalem as it would be within a generation, the surrounding hills black with crosses and on every cross a Jew. And He wept, wept for the city whose sins called for vengeance so thorough and so complete. Faced with apocalyptic truth, Abraham prayed. ([Exploring Genesis - page 150](#))

#### Oswald Chambers - [Friendship with God](#) page 88

Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? Genesis 18:17.

**Its Delights.** This chapter brings out the delight of real friendship with God as compared with occasional feelings of His presence in prayer. To be so much in contact with God that you never need to ask Him to show you His will, is to be nearing the final stage of your discipline in the life of faith. When you are rightly related to God, it is a life of freedom and liberty and delight, you are God’s will, and all your commonsense decisions are His will for you unless He checks. You decide things in perfect delightful friendship with God, knowing that if your decisions are wrong He will always check; when He checks, stop at once.

**Its Difficulties.** Why did Abraham stop praying when he did? He was not intimate enough yet to go boldly on until God granted his desire, there was something yet to be desired in his relationship to God. Whenever we stop short in prayer and say—‘Well, I don’t know; perhaps it is not God’s will,’—there is still another stage to go. We are not so intimately acquainted with God as Jesus was, and as He wants us to be—“That they may be one even as We are one.” Think of the last thing you prayed about—were you devoted to your desire or to God? Determined to get some gift of the Spirit or to get at God? “Your Heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him.” The point of asking is that you may get to know God better. “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” Keep praying in order to get a perfect understanding of God Himself.

#### Genesis 18:18 since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?

- **become:** Ge 12:2-3 22:17,18 26:4 Ps 72:17 Ac 3:25,26 Ga 3:8,14 Eph 1:3
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Galatians 3:8+ The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.”

### PROPHECY REGARDING ABRAHAM AND NATIONS

Since (seeing that) **Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation** - **Surely become** is the verb *hayah* which is repeated to emphasize the certainty of the fulfillment of this prophecy regarding Abraham. **Nation** refers to the nation of Israel that would

originate from Abraham and Sarah's son Isaac and Isaac's son Jacob. **Great** refers both to numbers and to significance or impact the nation of Israel would have on both human and angelic history.

THOUGHT - Israel in fact is God's timepiece regarding what He will do in the world. So keep your eye on Israel.

**And in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?** This is quoted in part Ga 3:8+ as part of the proclamation of the gospel to Abraham. How could they be blessed in him? Because in Abraham was the seed of the line of Messiah Who would bless all the nations. The Lord's statement that "in him (Abraham) all the nations of the earth will be blessed" is an enlargement upon the Lord's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that in Abraham "all the families of the earth will be blessed."

**F B Meyer** - The Christian life, after all, comes to this--how much will you obey Christ? If you refuse, you shut yourself out of His best, for He can do nothing for you or with you. But if you surrender yourself to obey, there is no limit to the usefulness and blessedness that must ensue (Ge 18:18,19). To live like this, we must abide in Him, and allow His Word, by meditation and prayer, to abide in us (John 8:31-32, John 15:5). Then obedience ceases to be an effort, but it is the fruit of an exuberant life. (**ED**: DO NOT MISUNDERSTAND - IT IS NOT "LET GO, LET GOOD." IT IS "LET GOD, LET'S GO." OBEDIENCE IS THE KEY TO LETTING GOD'S SPIRIT WORK IN US GIVING US THE DESIRE AND THE POWER [Php 2:13NLT+] SO THAT WE CAN WORK ENABLED BY THE POWER OF HIS SPIRIT!)

#### Trust and obey for there's no other way

To be happy in Jesus

Then to trust and obey!

**Genesis 18:19** "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."

- **For I**: 2Sa 7:20 Ps 1:6 11:4 34:15 Joh 10:14 21:17 2Ti 2:19
- **command**: Ge 17:23-27 De 4:9,10 6:6,7 11:19-21 32:46 Jos 24:15 1Ch 28:9 Job 1:5 Ps 78:2-9 Pr 6:20-22 22:6 Isa 38:19 Eph 6:4 1Ti 3:4 1Ti 3:5,12 2Ti 1:5 3:15
- that the: 1Sa 2:30,31 Ac 27:23,24,31
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### **Related Passages:**

Amos 3:2 "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

Jeremiah 9:24 (GOOD DESCRIPTION OF ABRAHAM FRIEND OF THE LORD) "but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things, declares the LORD.

Psalms 89:14 **Righteousness and justice** are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You.

### **ABRAHAM TO TEACH HIS CHILDREN THE WAY OF THE LORD**

**For I have chosen him** - This is not the best translation for it literally reads "For I have **known** ([yada](#)) him." It means, "to know experientially the character of someone," and expresses the intimate fellowship between the Lord and Abraham. And by extension the LORD alludes to His sovereignty in choosing to have a personal, intimate relationship with Abraham.

**Steven Cole** - Verse 19 can be translated as either "I have chosen him," or "I have known him." H. C. Leupold translates it, "For I acknowledge him to be My intimate friend" (Exposition of Genesis [Baker], 1:544). The Lord shares His secrets with His friends. Jesus told His disciples, "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15). Abraham here is shown to be God's friend, as the Lord reveals the divine plan to him. ([Prevailing With God - Genesis 18:16-33](#))

**Parunak**: this knowledge is active, not passive. "I have known him in order that something will happen." This is an example of God's

elective knowledge of people, choosing them for his purposes. . . The purpose of the intimate relationship that God establishes with Abraham is the ordering of his family. This ought to encourage us concerning the first priority of the family. God does not elect Abraham in order to be a great preacher, or in order to subdue uncivilized nations, or in order to generate a prosperous society, but in order to rule his family well.

**NET NOTE** says "The verb [יָדָע](#) ([yada'](#)) here means "to recognize and treat in a special manner, to choose" (see Amos 3:2). It indicates that Abraham stood in a special covenantal relationship with the LORD."

The Lord is revealing that He considers Abraham an intimate friend and that Abraham is a prophet. Amos 3:7 says "Surely the Lord GOD does nothing unless **He reveals His secret counsel to His servants** the prophets." Friends do not withhold information from each other and share secrets with one another. Thus, we see that the Lord does not withhold that He is about to judge Sodom because He considers Abraham a trusted friend with whom He can confide in.

**Wenstrom** "**Righteousness**" refers to conduct that is in conformity to the character and nature of God and which conduct flows from being rightly related to God through faith in Christ and is expressed by obedience to the will of God. "**Justice**" refers to conduct guided by obedience to the Word of truth and thus in accordance with God's perfect standards and principles.

**So that** - This expresses one purpose of God's choice of Abraham.

**William MacDonald** - Don't miss the tribute God paid to Abraham as an outstanding family man (v. 19). Something worth coveting!

**He may command his children and his household after him to keep** ([shamar](#); Lxx - [phulasso](#) - guard, watch) **the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice** - The idea of keep means to observe conscientiously in the sense that Abraham would be careful, thoughtful, heedful, attentive, and meticulous in conforming his actions in compliance with the way of the Lord. Note the word **children**, for at this time he had only one child, but this clearly implies more children (beginning with Isaac a year from now). This **command** speaks of calling for a lifestyle of obedience for those who are in the Abrahamic covenant (cf "Walk before Me, and be blameless" -- Ge 17:1). Abraham would be responsible for passing this truth on to his offspring. How were Abraham's household to keep the **way of the LORD**? Jehovah says it is **by doing righteousness and justice**. We do what is right and with a sense of fairness.

**Wenstrom** The statement "so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him," indicates that the blessings the Lord promised to Abraham in the covenant that He made with Abraham were conditioned upon him doing righteousness and justice. Although the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant was unconditional, the "blessings" of the attached to the covenant would be conditioned upon Abraham doing righteousness and justice.

**Steven Cole** - Fathers (the biblical commands for training children are most often directed to fathers, not mothers) are responsible to instill the Lord's way, which involves righteousness and justice, upon their children. Righteousness refers to conduct which conforms to the ethical or moral standard stemming from God's character. Justice points to the administration of God's righteousness in human affairs, such as government and society, through honest and consistent application of the law. In other words, we are to teach our children through both example and instruction how to live so as to please God both as individuals and in society. The context of verse 19, where Abraham pleads with God concerning the impending judgment of Sodom, implies that we are to show our children the importance of prayer, especially prayer for a lost world that faces God's judgment. One tool I have found useful is Frontier Fellowship's "Global Prayer Digest" (**ED: [REPLACED BY JOSHUA PROJECT - DAILY PRAYER FOR HIDDEN PEOPLE GROUPS](#)**), which gives a story and prayer need of a different people group for each day of the month. As parents, we should be praying both for and with our children frequently, especially for the lost. A Senator was speaking at a church men's dinner when the subject of prayer in public schools came up. The Senator asked the men how many of them believed in prayer in the public schools, and almost every man raised his hand. Then he asked, "How many of you pray daily with your children in the home?" Only a few hands were raised! ([Prevailing With God - Genesis 18:16-33](#))

**Henry Morris** - This is the first specific reference in the Bible to the teaching of children, indicating that such instruction is the primary responsibility of the father and should take the form of commandments, (Pr 6:20) centering first on the ways of the Lord, then on justice and judgment to fellow-men.

**Skip Heitzig** on teaching **his children** - If your children go to school and most children do go to school, 16% of their time is spent at school. That's not very much. You say that's a lot of time at school. 16% if you just go by hours. If your kids go to school and go to Sunday school, add 1%. Sunday school is about 1% of your child's time. 83% of the time they're at home with you--parents. So you can see the fallacy of a parent saying, I send my kids to Christian school and to Sunday school and I expect them to teach them what they need to know. Well both of those systems only have your kids 17% of the time. 83% of the time they're in your house. So by pure mathematics, you exert a greater influence on your child than school and Sunday school....Trickle down righteousness. Trickle down evangelism. Watch how I live, son, watch how I live, daughter. In the tent, in the household. The percentage of the time that I have you, watch my life so that in watching my life, you can learn what it is to follow the Lord....Mark Twain gave his advice. He

said, 'Everything runs smoothly until your kid reaches age thirteen. That's the time to put him in a barrel, snugly hammer the lid down, and feed him through the knothole. Then when he turns sixteen, close up the knothole.' That was his advice in classic Mark Twain way of writing. You can't do that. I mean, first of all it would be highly illegal to put your kid in a barrel and hammer it shut. But that aside, we can't afford to disengage. We can't afford it to give it to somebody else to influence them. We have those years; we have that time. And we have that influence--that power. Engage them as much as you can, as much as the Lord will give you insight, and ask the Lord for insight to do that.

**So that the LORD** ([Jehovah = Yahweh](#); Lxx = [kurios](#)) **may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him** - This speaks of Abraham's responsibility in the covenant. Yes, it was unconditional in that the LORD would fulfill it, but those who would benefit from it had a responsibility.

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**Jon Courson on that he may command his children** - The Lord would give Abraham information and revelation based not upon the accumulation of his knowledge, but upon the communication to his family. "I will give Abraham understanding of what I'm about to do," said the Lord, "because I know he is a man who will teach his children."

The same is true today. The revelation God wants to give us concerning what He's doing, how He's moving, where He's going is based not upon our journal entries or our Bible Study notes. It's based upon whether or not we will share what He tells us with our children. People often say to me, "If I could go back and do it all over again, I would not go into the profession I'm in presently. I would go into the ministry." And I understand that, for I have found the ministry to be absolutely delightful. It's a fabulous calling. But here's the fact: If you have children or grandchildren, you are in the ministry. No clerical collar or pulpit compares to gathering your family around you, giving a simple Bible lesson, singing songs, sharing with each other, and praying together. That is the ministry. And anyone who takes seriously this call will, like Abraham, receive fresh revelation. I know this to be so, for the most wonderful insights and sweetest revelations of God to my heart have not come as I have prepared sermons, but as I have simply shared in worship with my family. .(See [Courson's Application Commentary](#) page 78)

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[Streams in the Desert - page 328](#) (free online)

"I know him, that he will command his children." (Gen. 18:19.)

GOD wants people that He can depend upon. He could say of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children ... that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken." God can be depended upon; He wants us to be just as decided, as reliable, as stable. This is just what faith means.

God is looking for men on whom He can put the weight of all His love and power and faithful promises. God's engines are strong enough to draw any weight we attach to them. Unfortunately the cable which we fasten to the engine is often too weak to hold the weight of our prayer; therefore God is drilling us, disciplining us to stability and certainty in the life of faith. Let us learn our lessons and stand fast. —A. B. Simpson.

God knows that you can stand that trial; He would not give it to you if you could not. It is His trust in you that explains the trials of life, however bitter they may be. God knows our strength, and He measures it to the last inch; and a trial was never given to any man that was greater than that man's strength, through God, to bear it.

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**Walter Kaiser - [Hard Sayings in the Bible](#) page 100 - Covenant Blessings Conditional or Unconditional?** (See comment on GENESIS 26:3–5)

### **Obedience the Way to Blessing?**

Did God grant his gracious gifts to Abraham on the basis of works? Are we to surmise that Old Testament men and women got salvation the old-fashioned Smith-Barney way: "They earned it"?

It is the word because in Genesis 26:3–5 that causes us to raise our eyebrows and see this as a hard saying. There does appear to be a tension here between the free and unconditional offer of the promise to Abraham and the promise conditioned on Abraham's keeping all God's commands, decrees and laws. Surely law and grace are on a theological collision course.

There are five key passages that are cited as demonstrating that the patriarch Abraham performed the requirements of God and in return God offered to him the everlasting covenant as a gift for his obedience: Genesis 12:1; 17:1, 9–14; 22:16; 26:3–5. Some have added additional commands to this list, but generally these are not as directly related to the promise-plan as the five already cited.

The difficulty of this argument for conditionality and earning the promise is the stress the text makes on God's actively conferring this covenant on Abraham. In one of the most dramatic scenes in the patriarch's life, Genesis 15:12–21 depicts Abraham as being only

a passive party to the formalization of the covenant, while the Lord, appearing as a “smoking firepot with a blazing torch,” passes between the pieces of the animals in the act of making a covenant with Abraham. It is well worth noting that only God passed between the pieces and therefore obligated himself. Had this been a bilateral covenant in which the covenant depended equally on both parties fulfilling their sides of the bargain, then both God and Abraham would have had to move between the pieces of the animals divided in half and thus say in effect, “May it happen to me what has happened to these animals if I do not uphold my side of the covenant.”

So how shall we explain the disparity that now seems to intrude, requiring obedience from Abraham if the covenant is to be maintained?

The answer will be this: promise and blessing still precede the command to obey and to keep the commands of God. Obedience is no more a condition for Abraham than it is for the church living under the command “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love” (Jn 15:10) or “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (Jn 14:15).

The promise does not oppose God’s law, either in Abraham’s gift of the promise or in our gift of eternal life. The promise-giver who initiated the covenant with the patriarchs is the same one who gave the commandments, laws and statutes. Obedience, then, was not a condition for receiving the promise-blessing of God but was instead the evidence of real participation in that same promise. Because God was faithful, it was possible for these patriarchs to receive the promised blessings even if they themselves did not participate in them through their own belief. Even those who were not personal participants in the benefits of the covenant still had to pass on these benefits to those who followed in the line of the seed of the patriarchs. That belief was most easily demonstrated by the way in which individuals obeyed God—just as John puts it in his Gospel for the believing community of the New Testament.

Therefore, the alleged conditional elements in the Abrahamic (and Davidic) covenant never threatened the constituent elements of the promise, nor did they add any stipulations to them. The matter of duty or obedience, which indeed is intimately bound up with the promise, is a matter of outcome and sequel rather than a prior condition to being a participant in its benefits by faith.

The most remarkable text expressing the unconditional nature of the promise is Leviticus 26:44–45—“Yet in spite of this [the sins of disobedience], ... I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them. But for their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors.” Surely that sounds as if it is indeed an unconditional covenant!

See also comments on

- LEVITICUS 18:5 [The One Who Obeys My Laws Will Live? on page 133;](#)
- MICAH 6:6–8 [Salvation Through Righteousness? on page 302;](#)
- JAMES 2:24 [Justified by What You Do? on page 653.](#)

**Genesis 18:20 And the LORD said, “The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave.**

- **The outcry:** Ge 4:10 Ge 19:13 Isa 3:9 5:7 Jer 14:7 Jas 5:4 Jude 1:7
- **Sodom** - 38v - Ge 10:19; Ge 13:10, 12, 13; Ge 14:2; Gen. 14, 10, 11, 12, 17, 21, 22; Ge 18:16; Ge 18:20; Ge 18:22; Ge 18:26; Ge 19:1; Ge 19:4; Ge 19:24; Gen. 19:28; Dt. 29:23; Dt. 32:32; Isa. 1:9; Isa. 1:10; Isa. 3:9; Isa. 13:19; Jer. 23:14; Jer. 49:18; Jer. 50:40; Lam. 4:6; Ezek. 16:46, 48, 49, 53, 55, 56; Amos 4:11; Zeph. 2:9 **NT** = Mt 10:15, 11:23, 24; Lk. 10:12, 17:29; Ro 9:29; 2Pe 2:6; Jude 7; Rev 11:8
- **sin:** Ge 13:13
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### **Related Passage:**

Genesis 4:10+ He said, “What have you done? **The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground.**

Genesis 19:13+ for we are about to destroy this place, because **their outcry has become so great** before the LORD that the LORD has sent us to destroy it.”

Jude 1:7+ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

Genesis 13:13+ Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD.



## OUTCRY GREAT SIN GRAVE

And the LORD ([Jehovah = Yahweh](#); Lxx = [kurios](#)) said, “The outcry ([zeaqah](#)) of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave - Now the LORD is speaking in the presence of the other two men with Him. It is interesting that the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full (Ge 15:16+), but the iniquity in these 2 cities was full and had reached God's limit in view of their gross wickedness. Since **outcry** usually refers to a plaintive crying out for aid or help by those oppressed, presumably this refers to those who are oppressed in Sodom and Gomorrah, and only righteous Lot was "oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men." (2Pe 2:7+). Alternatively, the verb outcry could be used of the cities and/or the sin in the cities personified as crying out (cf Ge 4:10) because of the evil within. In either case, the Lord hears the **outcry**.

**THOUGHT** - America is devolving (that is almost a euphemism!) quickly as ethics and morals and righteousness become attributes of a past generation. And yet there is a righteous remnant remaining who are oppressed and appalled by what is transpiring even at the highest levels of government where God is mocked and maligned. And so we who remain true to the LORD should be crying out to heaven (Mt 5:13+, Mt 5:14,15, 16+, Php 2:15+). "And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand." (Ro 13:11,12+) In mercy, our **outcry** should be -- Revive us O LORD according to Thy Word (Ps 119:25) and by sending the fire of Thy Spirit, before America's cup of iniquity is full (Ge 15:16+) and exceedingly grave. [Maranatha! Hosanna!](#) In Jesus' Name. Amen.

[Bob Utley](#) on **outcry...great** - Their sins "shouted" at YHWH for judgment! It is possible that Lot and his family were the ones praying (cf. Gen. 18:23) or watcher angels, or even a metaphor for the sins themselves.

**Steven Cole** links Ge 18:19 with this passage on the sin of Sodom - God's plan of righteousness and justice (v19) means that no sin escapes His notice and judgment. The Lord tells Abraham, "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave" (Ge 18:20). When Cain killed Abel, the Lord said, "**The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground**" (Gen. 4:10). Sin cries out to God. Just as right now there are many sounds surrounding us which we can't hear without a radio to tune them in, so we are not aware of all the sins around us; but God is. It cries out to Him for His righteous judgment (**ED: IF MURDERED ABEL'S BLOOD CRIED OUT TO GOD, IMAGINE THE CRY OF THE MILLIONS OF UNBORN WHO HAVE BEEN MURDERED IN AMERICA! EVEN SODOM'S OUTCRY MIGHT BE DEAFENED BY THE CRIES THAT GO UP TO GOD BECAUSE OF ABORTION!**). In speaking to Abraham, God adopts human language in reference to Himself (Ge 18:21), but He's making a point: Whenever He inflicts judgment, He does it on the basis of His perfect knowledge and justice. ([Prevailing With God - Genesis 18:16-33](#))

**Sodom had been warned by God** - Recall the context. **Sodom and Gomorrah** had been defeated by 4 kings (Ge 14:10, 11) and taken into captivity and Abraham had defeated their enemy and "brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people." (Ge 14:16) In addition Sodom had seen the revelation of Melchizedek (Ge 14:17-24). Finally, they had the testimony of righteous Lot (albeit it must have been weak as no one was impacted, not even his two son-in-laws!), who, although tormented, was still a faint light of God's righteousness shining in the darkness of Sodom (2Pe 2:7+). **The upshot is that Sodom and Gomorrah were accountable for the spiritual light to which they had been exposed.** In that sense, they were even more accountable than the world destroyed by the flood, for the pre-flood world did not have a similar degree of spiritual light. The message of Sodom and Gomorrah is woe to the one who hears God's truth and willfully rejects it.

*God has a limit!*

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### [Rod Mattoon](#) - The Cry of Sodom and Gomorrah Ge 18:20, 21

Just as the Lord went down to see what was taking place at the tower of Babel, He now comes down to investigate the wickedness of Sodom. The cry of Sodom's sin was great and grievous to the Lord. The word "cry" means to shriek. The sin of Sodom was shrieking to God. God hates our sin. The sin of Sodom was "grievous", a word that comes from the Hebrew word kabad which means "to be heavy". Our sins are weighty before the Lord. Sin slows us down spiritually. The writer of Hebrews admonishes us to lay aside every weight and the sin which easily besets us and run the race before us (Hebrews 12:1). What is crying to God in your life? It is your prayer and praise that cries, or your sin? May God help us to live for Him everyday.

The Cries of Genesis - Several cries are found in this book.

The Cry of Baseness & Blasphemy—The cry of Sodom's sin came up to God. 18:20; 19:13  
The Cry of Blood—Abel's blood crieth from the ground. 4:10



**Outcry** (02201)(zeaqah) has the basic meaning of to cry for help in time of distress. Thus it means cry, outcry, a cry of distress or sorrow. It is usually not a cry to God, but an expression of lamentation in the midst of trouble. Zeaqah is a cry of distress because of war, destruction, pestilence (Isa. 15:5; Jer. 18:22; 20:16). It speaks of a sorrowful cry heard by God (Neh. 9:9), the cry of sin in the presence of God (Gen. 18:20), the cry of humans against humans (Neh. 5:6), the lamenting cry for the people of God in distress (Est. 4:1; 9:31), the lamentation of a man in sorrow and suffering (Job 16:18), the cry of the poor (Pr 21:13), the ineffective and hopeless cry of the one who leads fools who will not learn (Ecc. 9:17), the cry resulting from the destruction and judgment of a nation (Isa. 15:5), and the cessation of lamentation over the sorrow of Jerusalem (Isa. 65:19). Zeaqah is used of the shouting or wailing by captains or pilots of merchant ships because of economic calamity (Ezek. 27:28).

The Hebrew word for “outcry” is used in Scripture to describe the cries of the oppressed and brutalized. It is used for the cry of the oppressed widow or orphan (cf. Ex 22:22, 23), the cry of the oppressed servant (cf. Dt. 24:15), and the cries of the Israelites in Egypt (cf. Ex 2:23; 3:7, 9). Jeremiah uses it to refer to the scream of terror by an individual or city when it is attacked (cf. Jer. 18:22; 20:16; 25:36; 48:3-5, 34; 49:21; 50:46; 51:54). Such an outcry is the miserable wail of the oppressed and brutalized.

**Zeqah - 16x/16v - cry(5), cry of distress(2), crying(1), lamentations(1), outcry(7)** Gen. 18:20; Neh. 5:6; Neh. 9:9; Est. 9:31; Job 16:18; Prov. 21:13; Isa. 15:5; Isa. 15:8; Isa. 65:19; Jer. 18:22; Jer. 20:16; Jer. 48:4; Jer. 48:34; Jer. 50:46; Jer. 51:54; Ezek. 27:28

**Genesis 18:21 “I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know.”**

- **I will go down:** Ge 11:5,7 Ex 3:8 33:5 Mic 1:3 Joh 6:38 1Th 4:16
- **see:** Job 34:22 Ps 90:8 Jer 17:1,10 Zep 1:12 Heb 4:13
- **I will know:** Ex 33:5 De 8:2 13:3 Jos 22:22 Ps 139:1-24 Lu 16:15 2Co 11:11
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## JEHOVAH JUDGES THE OUTCRY

**I will go down now and see** - Jehovah is speaking [anthropomorphically](#), describing what a man would do. As the narrative unfolds, it is the other two men, the angels, who go toward Sodom. Clearly God could “go down” (so to speak) without literally walking down, because He is omniscient and omnipresent. At the Tower of Babel Moses recorded similar [anthropomorphic](#) language writing that “The LORD **came down to see** the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.” (Ge 11:5+) The point is that Jehovah would not arbitrarily destroy the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, but as a fair and just Judge, He would examine the evidence and then “reward” according to their deeds (cf the final judgment is “according to their deeds” in Rev 20:12-13+).

**Bob Utley** - “I will go down” This anthropomorphic phrase speaks of YHWH’s personal presence for (1) judgment, here and Ge. 11:5,7 and (2) aid, Ex 3:8. It must not be used to conflict with YHWH’s knowledge of current and future events (i.e., “[Open Theism](#)”). This is eastern metaphorical language. This is a significant phrase which shows that the just God, although He is all knowing, still examines personally before making judgment. It was used by the rabbis to say that this was to be a characteristic of the judges in Israel (cf. Ge 11:5; Ex 3:8). [ANTHROPOMORPHIC LANGUAGE TO DESCRIBE GOD](#)

**If they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me** - The idea is God will see if the evil of Sodom corresponds with the outcry He has heard. Clearly Jehovah knew the outcry was correct, but states He will make a careful assessment to be certain. The reason, of course, is because if the outcry was correct, the verdict would be complete destruction.

**And if not, I will know** - Jehovah continues to speak [anthropomorphically](#) in these three phrases - will go down, will see, will know. God is not reactive but makes personal investigation. His judgment is never unrighteous but He acts in judgment when iniquity is full! **NET** Bible renders it “If not, I want to know.” The phrase “**if not**” may have been the small ray of hope that inspired Abraham’s intercession.

**John Walton (page 50)** - There is a combination of [anthropomorphism](#) (God being given humanlike qualities) and theodicy (explanation of [divine action](#)) in this story and in the Tower of Babel episode (Gen 11). In both cases, to demonstrate divine justice and fairness, God “comes down” to investigate a situation before taking action.

- [WHAT IS THEODICY?](#)
- [Pocket dictionary of apologetics & philosophy of religion - Theodicy](#) = An answer to the problem of evil that attempts to “justify the ways of God to man” by explaining God’s reasons for allowing evil. Two of the more important theodicies are the “soul-making theodicy,” which argues that God allows evil so as to make it possible for humans to develop certain desirable virtues, and the “free will theodicy,” which argues that God had to allow for the possibility of evil if he wished to give humans (and angelic beings) free will. Theodicies are often distinguished from defenses, which argue that it is reasonable to believe that God has reasons for allowing evil even if we do not know what those reasons are. (See also "[Action - Divine and Human](#)")

**Oswald Chambers** - The Awful Reckoning Ultimately (Genesis 18:20-22)

The moral demand is for the punishment of sin. Every grain of sand cries out for its punishment (cf. Genesis 4:10). Human beings do not echo the cry, only one or two echo it in intercession, and the cry of Nature is joined by the man who knows God.

“I will know.” This is the introduction of the final decision. It must become evident in the last trial whether the limit of the long-suffering patience of God has been reached. Verse 22: “And the men . . .” must be connected with Genesis 19:1. They were two angels who accompanied Jehovah, and in the form of men they depart to introduce the final test; they depart, but Abraham stands “yet before the Lord.”

**Genesis 18:22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD.**

- **the men:** Ge 18:2 19:1
- **Abraham was still standing before the LORD:** Ge 18:1 Ps 106:23 Jer 15:1 18:20 Eze 22:30 Ac 7:55 1Ti 2:1
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## TWO ANGELS HEADED FOR SIN CITY

**Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom** - **The men** refers to the two angels described in Ge 19:1. Did they walk (like men would walk) to Sodom? One would think they did because Lot is able to recognize them approaching Sodom and he makes no remark that they were “flying” into town.

**While Abraham was still standing before the LORD** ([Jehovah = Yahweh](#); Lxx = [kurios](#)) - Two men departed leaving the Man Jehovah and Abraham. Abraham has been taking in all the words of the Man Jehovah. He knew that the destruction of Sodom was imminent because of the outcry. And doubtless, he had heard some of the sordid tales of sodomy, etc, that occurred in those towns. The fact that the two men were going **toward Sodom** made it clear to Abraham that God’s verdict had been passed and judgment was now decreed. He knew that God’s justice called for divine destruction.

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### The Innocent Man

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? —Genesis 18:25

John Grisham is well known for his courtroom novels—fast-paced tales of lawyers and victims, authorities and wrongdoers. However, his book *The Innocent Man* is not fiction. It is a real-life story of injustice. It tells of the brutal murder of a young woman and the two men who, though innocent, were convicted and sentenced to death for the crime. Only with the advent of DNA testing were they proven innocent and spared from execution after 17 years of suffering wrongly. At long last, justice prevailed.

Everyone desires justice. But we must recognize that our human frailty makes it challenging to mete out true justice. And we can be bent toward revenge, making a casualty out of the pursuit of it.

It’s helpful to remember that perfect justice can be found only in God. Abraham described Him with the rhetorical question, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25). The necessary answer is yes. But even more, His courtroom is the one and only place where we can be certain that justice will prevail.

In a world filled with injustice, we can take the wrongs done to us, submit them to the Judge of all the earth, and trust Him for ultimate justice. by Bill Crowder (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

The best of judges on this earth

Aren't always right or fair;  
But God, the Righteous Judge of all,  
Wrongs no one in His care.  
—Egner

Life is not always fair, but God is always faithful.

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### [Streams in the Desert - page 140](#) (free online)

“Abraham stood yet before the Lord.” (Gen. 18:22)

THE friend of God can plead with Him for others. Perhaps Abraham's height of faith and friendship seems beyond our little possibilities. Do not be discouraged, Abraham grew; so may we. He went step by step, not by great leaps.

The man whose faith has been deeply tested and who has come off victorious, is the man to whom supreme tests must come.

The finest jewels are most carefully cut and polished; the hottest fires try the most precious metal. Abraham would never have been called the Father of the Faithful if he had not been proved to the uttermost. Read Genesis, twenty-second chapter:

“Take thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest.” See him going with a chastened, wistful, yet humbly obedient heart up Moriah's height, with the idol of his heart beside him about to be sacrificed at the command of God whom he had faithfully loved and served!

What a rebuke to our questionings of God's dealings with us! Away with all doubting explanations of this stupendous scene! It was an object lesson for the ages. Angels were looking.

Shall this man's faith stand forever for the strength and help of all God's people? Shall it be known through him that unfaltering faith will always prove the faithfulness of God?

Yes; and when faith has borne victoriously its uttermost test, the angel of the Lord—who? The Lord Jesus, Jehovah, He in whom “all the promises of God are yea and amen”—spoke to him, saying, “Now I know that thou fearest God.” Thou hast trusted me to the uttermost. I will also trust thee; thou shalt ever be My friend, and I will bless thee, and make thee a blessing.

It is always so, and always will be. “They that are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.”—Selected.

It is no small thing to be on terms of friendship with God.

### Genesis 18:23 Abraham came near and said, “Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?”

- **came near:** Ps 73:28 Jer 30:21 Heb 10:22 Jas 5:17
- **Will You indeed sweep away :** Ge 18:25 20:4 Nu 16:22 2Sa 24:17 Job 8:3 34:17 Ps 11:4-7 Ro 3:5,6
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Ezekiel 33:11 “Say to them, ‘As I live!’ declares the Lord GOD, **I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live.** Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?”

## ABRAHAM BEGINS INTERCEDING

**Abraham came near** - This is the first time in Scripture that a man initiated a conversation with God. This verb **came near** ([nagash](#); Lxx - [eggizo](#)) is used priests approaching the Lord (Ezek. 44:13) or the altar to carry out their priestly duties (Ex. 28:43; 30:20) and denotes close proximity. It is used of the mind and heart reaching out to God in worship and confession. In the present context, it would speak of both physical proximity and also nearness in terms of fellowship. This reminds me of the encouragement the writer of Hebrews gives to the children of God “let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb 4:16+)

*We are never more like our Lord  
than when we are interceding for others.*

Abraham knew the power of intercessory prayer from his experience with Abimelech, Moses recording

Genesis 20:7; 17 "Now therefore, restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray (INTERCEDE) for you and you will live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.".....20:17 Abraham prayed (INTERCEDED) to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore children.

**Bob Utley** - **Abraham came near and said** - This word *Qal* IMPERFECT with *waw*) was usually used of prayer and sacrifice. The Targum of Jonathan translates this as "and Abraham prayed," which may be accurate. The phrase (and context) does show a wonderful fellowship between Abraham and YHWH. [INTERCESSORY PRAYER](#).

*Abraham's appeal is based upon the justice of God which would not allow the righteous to suffer the punishment due the wicked*

**and said, "Will You indeed sweep away (saphah) the righteous (saddiq; Lxx = dikaios) with the wicked (rasha'; Lxx = asebes = "ungodly")?** - To intercede is to plead the case of another person and in this case many persons in Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham begins to intercede, showing he has the heart like God's as described in 2Pe 3:9+ "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." On **sweep away** see [comment below](#). Who would meet the criteria for **the righteous**? These would be those who like Abraham had believed God and He accounted it or reckoned it to them as righteousness (Ge 15:6+). Thus they had **righteous** standing with the Righteous Judge. Their **righteous** standing was attained by God's grace through their response of faith (Eph 2:8-9+), the same way believers escape God's righteous wrath in the New Testament. Note that Abraham doesn't question God's right to judge, unlike many in our day who question God's right to judge and to send people to Hell.

**Jonathan Edwards:** This verse caused him to say: "The justice of God will eventually be revealed in the damnation of the sinner"

**Bob Utley** on "**Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked**" - This shows Abraham's understanding of the nature and character of YHWH (i.e., "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" Gen. 18:25). YHWH certainly had knowledge of the situation, but He wanted Abraham to understand his unique relationship with Him, and the necessity for intercessory prayer on the behalf of others, which he will certainly use with Abimelech as can be seen in Gen. 20:7, 17. I think Abraham must have been thinking about Lot and his family in Sodom at this point, but also of Gen. 18:18!

**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" (Full Sermon [Intercessory Prayer](#))

**Ray Pritchard** from this text about Abraham's prayer - Four characteristics of biblical prayer:

1. Modesty—He didn't know what God would do
2. Humility—He didn't demand anything from God
3. Persistence—He came back again and again—6 times in all
4. Persuasive—He based everything he said on God's character

And for all that, his prayer wasn't answered. Sodom was destroyed. Sometimes our prayers won't be answered yes either. But it wasn't Abraham's fault. Nor is it always our fault. And with that truth in mind we return again to the most fundamental truth about prayer, which is that we must always say "Thy will be done."

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**Came near** (approached, bring, drew near)(05066) [nagash](#) root signifies coming into very near proximity to the object. **Nagash** most commonly denotes the act of approaching in ambulatory fashion (e.g., Ge 27:21). It is also frequently used in a military context, of the clash of opposing forces (e.g., 1 Sam. 7:10; Jer. 46:3). It can be a euphemism for sexual intercourse (Ex 19:15) or interlocking objects (Job 41:16), including shackles (2 Sa 3:34). It is also employed to describe a royal representative (Gen. 45:4) or Yahweh in role of king (Jer. 30:21). Another common nuance of the verb is as a legal technical term, as when plaintiffs approached judges with their claims (Gen. 18:23; Exo. 24:14) or disputing parties approached each other in court (Isa. 50:8). Another common meaning describes drawing near to Yahweh or into His presence. Priests "approach the altar to minister in the holy place" (Ex. 28:43). The idolatry and syncretism of the Levites led to their prohibition from temple service in Ezekiel's eschatological temple - "they shall not **come near** to Me to serve as a priest to Me, nor **come near** to any of My holy things" (Ezek. 44:13). The purpose of coming near was that offerings were presented to Yahweh (e.g., Lev. 2:8; Mal. 1:11) so that relationship could continue. Coppes says "The simple use of the root signifies proximity, i.e. near enough to touch (Genesis 27:21; Genesis 29:10), eat (Genesis 27:25), kiss

**Oswald Chambers - And Abraham drew near, and said . . .** (from [Not Knowing Where](#))

“Getting there” means coming into intimate relationship with God without impertinence or lack of reverence. The meaning of intercession is that we see what God is doing, consequently there is an intimacy between the child and the Father which is never impertinent. We must pour into the bosom of God the cares which give us pain and anxiety in order that He may solve for us, and before us, the difficulties which we cannot solve. We injure our spiritual life when we dump the whole thing down before God and say—You do it. That spirit is blind to the real union with God. We must dump ourselves down in the midst of our problems and watch God solve them for us. “But I have no faith”—bring your problems to God and stay with Him while He solves them, then God Himself and the solution of your problems will be for ever your own. Watch the tendency to pathetic humbug in your approach to God. If we could see the floor of God’s immediate presence, we would find it strewn with the “toys” of God’s children who have said—This is broken, I can’t play with it any more, please give me another present. Only one in a thousand sits down in the midst of it all and says—I will watch my Father mend this. God must not be treated as a hospital for our broken “toys,” but as our Father.

**The Appealing Reverence to the Uttermost (Genesis 18:23-33)**

There is no impertinence in Abraham’s attitude, only profound humility and intensest intimacy. Abraham is not questioning God, but bringing himself to see how God will solve the matter. God allows Abraham to come out with his full intercession until Abraham begins to grasp the essential conditions by which God governs all things. Abraham goes on from step to step, and Jehovah grants him step by step, without once going before his request. The stopping point is reached by reason of the fact that Abraham was in complete communion with God throughout the progress of his intercession. After the final test prayer is impossible (cf. 1 John 5:16).

By means of intercession we understand more and more the way God solves the problems produced in our minds by the conflict of actual facts and our real faith in God. Whenever temptations contend in our minds, and things meet us in the providence of God which seem to involve a contradiction of what we believe, let the conviction of God’s righteousness remain unshaken.

It is an insult to sink before God and say “Thy will be done” when there has been no intercession. That is the prayer of impertinent unbelief—There is no use in praying, God does whatever He chooses. The saying of “Thy will be done” is born of the most intimate relationship to God whereby I talk to Him freely. There is in this prayer of Abraham a distinction between the begging which knows no limit and the prayer which is conscious that there are limits set by the holy character of God. Repetition in intercessory importunity is not bargaining, but the joyous insistence of prayer.

The nearer Abraham came to God in his intercession the more he recognised his entire unworthiness—“Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.” Genuine unworthiness is never shy before God any more than a child is shy before his mother. A child of God is conscious only of his entire dependence upon God.

In the beginning of our spiritual life our prayers are not of faith but of fretfulness. But when you get into the inner place I defy you to go on praying for yourself, it never occurs to you to do so because you are brought into relationship with God Who makes your spirit partake of His own. Whenever Our Lord spoke of importunity in intercession it was never for ourselves but for others. When by imperceptible degrees we stop praying for ourselves, we are “getting there.” Prayer is the supreme activity of all that is noblest in our personality, and the essential nature of prayer is faith.

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**J J Knap - With Loins Girded - To Draw Near Ge 18:23**

Abraham’s intercession for the reprobate cities of the plain in which Lot also lived, contains a wealth of instruction in connection with our own practice of prayer. Praying is a royal privilege for God’s children. Undoubtedly it peaks when it becomes intercession. As long as we plead for the blessings of the Lord for ourselves, so easily some selfishness remains part of the most holy and tender prayer. However, the father who prays for his house, the mother for her child, the king for his people, the pastor for his congregation, — behold, they forget themselves with their own sorrow and need, and they bear the name of someone else to the throne of grace.

Abraham drew near! This drawing near contains the secret of true prayer, whether we pray for ourselves, or for those close to us, or for the cause of God’s kingdom. In our petitions we so often remain far away from the God of grace, as if we have to reach His ear from an unbridgeable distance. This is why so often the calm simplicity is lacking in our prayer, and it often gives more the impression of a tense calling than of a calm speaking, face to face over against the Lord. Jesus Christ has made an open way in His blood to the throne of grace. While resting upon His merits, we may enter boldly to make known our desires and we do not have to remain from afar. Therefore, it is good to consider that before offering the actual prayer we ought to draw near. Sometimes we “fall” from everyday life and even from the unholy into prayer, and then we are even surprised that we did not perceive anything of the glory of God. In that case we failed to draw near and we spoke into God’s direction but not directly to the Hearer of all prayer.

To draw near is to gather our thoughts in a moment of quiet that should precede each prayer; it is the stretching out of the hand of



faith to the name of Jesus, who only can lead us into the presence of the Lord; it is to appear consciously before the holy countenance of God, to open only then our mouth and to speak to Him. That speaking should be done trustingly: who is lead by the hand of Christ into the formidable palace, has nothing to fear. Let the peak be a pleading that does not fade away, but that arises higher and higher, much like Abraham became more urgent and more bold in his requests. Let our speaking be in particular most humble, because we ourselves are no more than dust and ashes, yes, even unclean sinners, who have taken it upon themselves to lift their hearts unto the most High Majesty.

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**QUESTION - [Why did Abraham bargain with God in regard to Sodom and Gomorrah \(Genesis 18\)?](#)**

**ANSWER** - When God revealed His plan to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah due to the wickedness of those cities, Abraham asked God to spare the people. In fact, Abraham engaged in a lengthy conversation to mediate for the cities.

First, Abraham wanted God to spare the righteous people who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah. He asked, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" (Genesis 18:23-25).

Second, Abraham's nephew Lot lived in Sodom. God did spare Lot and his two daughters, perhaps as a direct result of Abraham's request. Genesis 19:29 states, "So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived." Abraham certainly wanted to see his own extended family protected from God's judgment.

Third, Abraham had compassion for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. While he understood God's judgment of sin, Abraham asked God to spare the city even if there could be found as few as ten righteous people (Genesis 18:32). God agreed to spare the city for the sake of ten righteous people. Apparently, fewer than ten righteous were found, since God did destroy the cities, sparing only Lot and his two daughters. (God also planned to rescue Lot's wife, but she died when she disobeyed God and turned back to look at the city as it was being destroyed.)

Abraham's compassion for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah reveals the heart of a man who cared greatly for others, including those who did not follow God. In fact, the angelic visitors who visited Lot were threatened by men of Sodom who desired to have sex with them. Though Sodom's citizens were wicked, Abraham did not wish to see their destruction.

Like Abraham, we are called to have great compassion for others, including those whose lives do not follow God's ways. Also, we must ultimately accept God's judgments, even when His decisions are not our desired choices.

Abraham's request for these cities to be spared was denied. God sometimes says "no" to our requests, too, even when we pray with good intentions. The Lord may have other plans that we do not understand, yet which are part of His perfect will.

Finally, consider how God did answer Abraham's request by rescuing Lot and his daughters. Although Abraham's mediatory work did not result in the sparing of the cities, it did bring about the salvation of Abraham's nephew. Abraham's prayers on behalf of others were important, just as our prayers are today. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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**QUESTION - [What is intercessory prayer?](#)**

**ANSWER** - Quite simply, intercessory prayer is the act of praying on behalf of others. The role of mediator in prayer was prevalent in the Old Testament, in the cases of Abraham, Moses, David, Samuel, Hezekiah, Elijah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Christ is pictured in the New Testament as the ultimate intercessor, and because of this, all Christian prayer becomes intercession since it is offered to God through and by Christ. Jesus closed the gap between us and God when He died on the cross. Because of Jesus' mediation, we can now intercede in prayer on behalf of other Christians or for the lost, asking God to grant their requests according to His will. "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). "Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us" (Romans 8:34).

A wonderful model of intercessory prayer is found in Daniel 9. It has all the elements of true intercessory prayer. It is in response to the Word (Da 9:2); characterized by fervency (Da 9:3) and self-denial (Da 9:4); identified unselfishly with God's people (Da 9:5); strengthened by confession (Da 9:5-15); dependent on God's character (Da 9:4, 7, 9, 15); and has as its goal God's glory (Da 9:16-19). Like Daniel, Christians are to come to God on behalf of others in a heartbroken and repentant attitude, recognizing their own unworthiness and with a sense of self-denial. Daniel does not say, "I have a right to demand this out of You, God, because I am one of your special, chosen intercessors." He says, "I'm a sinner," and, in effect, "I do not have a right to demand anything." True intercessory prayer seeks not only to know God's will and see it fulfilled, but to see it fulfilled whether or not it benefits us and



regardless of what it costs us. True intercessory prayer seeks God's glory, not our own.

The following is only a partial list of those for whom we are to offer intercessory prayers: all in authority ([1 Timothy 2:2](#)); ministers (Philippians 1:19); Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6); friends (Job 42:8); fellow countrymen (Romans 10:1); the sick (James 5:14); enemies (Jeremiah 29:7); those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44); those who forsake us (2 Timothy 4:16); and all men (1 Timothy 2:1).

There is an erroneous idea in contemporary Christianity that those who offer up intercessory prayers are a special class of "super-Christians," called by God to a specific ministry of intercession. The Bible is clear that *all* Christians are called to be intercessors. All Christians have the Holy Spirit in their hearts and, just as He intercedes for us in accordance with God's will (Romans 8:26-27), we are to intercede for one another. This is not a privilege limited to an exclusive Christian elite; this is the command to all. In fact, not to intercede for others is sin. "As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you" (1 Samuel 12:23).

Certainly Peter and Paul, when asking others to intercede for them, did not limit their request to those with a special calling to intercession. "So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him" (Acts 12:5). Notice it was the whole church that prayed for him, not just those with a gift of intercession. In Ephesians 6:16-18, Paul exhorts the Ephesian believers—all of them—on the fundamentals of the Christian life, which includes intercession "on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests." Clearly, intercessory prayer is part of the Christian life for all believers.

Further, Paul sought prayer on his behalf from all the Roman believers in Romans 15:30. He also urged the Colossians to intercede for him in Colossians 4:2-3. Nowhere in any biblical request for intercession is there any indication that only a certain group of people could intercede. On the contrary, those who seek others to intercede for them can use all the help they can get! The idea that intercession is the privilege and calling of only some Christians is without biblical basis. Worse, it is a destructive idea that often leads to pride and a sense of superiority.

God calls all Christians to be intercessors. It is God's desire that every believer be active in intercessory prayer. What a wonderful and exalted privilege we have in being able to come boldly before the throne of Almighty God with our prayers and requests! [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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**Davis** - "It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to pray effectively for lost souls if one is not convinced that lostness will ultimately result in literal, eternal punishment.

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Bruce Hurt - Eternal punishment is the most solemn doctrine in all the Bible and it is subject on which I have never written. I have a dear uncle who was like a father to me and about whom I can hardly bear to think because I have a horror that he may not have accepted Christ before he died, even though the Gospel had been clearly presented to him. Nevertheless, this is doctrine which needs to be expounded because we live in a day when almost everyone thinks they are going to heaven (or some alternative thereof) when they die. So we need to look at what the Bible says about life after death and the doctrine of eternal punishment or Hell. See especially my discussion on the [Effect of the Truth of Eternal Punishment on Our Evangelistic Passion](#)

**John Lennon** was sadly mistaken when he wrote a popular song in the 1970's called "[Imagine](#)". What if the Biblical pictures of hell as a place of endless punishment and suffering are true? Sadly I don't think John Lennon has to *imagine* today!

Imagine there's no heaven  
It's easy if you try  
No hell below us  
Above us only sky  
Imagine all the people living for today.

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## **[Bob Utley - INTERCESSORY PRAYER](#)**

### **I. Introduction**

A. Prayer is significant because of Jesus' example

1. personal prayer, Mark 1:35; Luke 3:21; 6:12; 9:29; 22:31-46
2. cleansing of the Temple, Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46
3. Model Prayer, Matt. 6:5-13; Luke 11:2-4

B. Prayer is putting into tangible action our belief in a personal, caring God who is present, willing, and able to act on our behalf

and others, through our prayers.

C. God has personally limited Himself to act on the prayers of His children in many areas (cf. James 4:2)

D. The major purpose of prayer is our fellowship and time with the Triune God.

E. The scope of prayer is anything or anyone that concerns believers. We may pray once, believing, or over and over again as the thought or concern returns.

F. Prayer can involve several elements

1. praise and adoration of the Triune God
2. thanksgiving to God for His presence, fellowship, and provisions
3. confession of our sinfulness, both past and present
4. petition of our sensed needs or desires
5. intercession where we hold the needs of others before the Father

G. Intercessory prayer is a mystery. God loves those for whom we pray much more than we do, yet our prayers often effect a change, response, or need, not only in ourselves, but in them.

## **II. Biblical Material**

### **A. Old Testament**

#### **1. Some examples of intercessory prayer:**

**a. Abraham pleading for Sodom**, Gen. 18:22ff and Abimelech Ge 20:7,17

**b. Moses' prayers for Israel**

- (1) Exodus 5:22-23
- (2) Exodus 32:9-14,31-35
- (3) Exodus 33:12-16
- (4) Exodus 34:9
- (5) Deuteronomy 9:18,25-29

**c. Samuel prays for Israel**

- (1) 1 Samuel 7:5-6,8-9
- (2) 1 Samuel 12:16-23
- (3) 1 Samuel 15:11

**d. David for his child**, 2 Samuel 12:16-18

2. God is looking for intercessors, Isaiah 59:16

3. Known, unconfessed sin or an unrepentant attitude affects our prayers

- a. Psalm 66:18
- b. Proverbs 28:9
- c. Isaiah 59:1-2; 64:7

### **B. New Testament**

#### **1. The Son and Spirit's intercessory ministry**

**a. Jesus**

- (1) Romans 8:34
- (2) Hebrews 7:25
- (3) 1 John 2:1

**b. Holy Spirit, Romans 8:26-27**

**2. Paul's intercessory ministry**

**a. Prays for the Jews**

(1) Romans 9:1ff

(2) Romans 10:1

**b. Prays for the churches**

(1) Romans 1:9

(2) Ephesians 1:16

(3) Philippians 1:3-4,9

(4) Colossians 1:3,9

(5) 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

(6) 2 Thessalonians 1:11

(7) 2 Timothy 1:3

(8) Philemon 1:4

**c. Paul asked the churches to pray for him**

(1) Romans 15:30

(2) 2 Corinthians 1:11

(3) Ephesians 6:19

(4) Colossians 4:3

(5) 1 Thessalonians 5:25

(6) 2 Thessalonians 3:1

**3. The church's intercessory ministry**

**a. Pray for one another**

(1) Ephesians 6:18

(2) 1 Timothy 2:1

(3) James 5:16

**b. Prayer requested for special groups**

(1) our enemies, Matt. 5:44

(2) Christian workers, Hebrews 13:18

(3) rulers, 1 Timothy 2:2

(4) the sick, James 5:13-16

(5) backsliders, 1 John 5:16

**III. Conditions for answered prayer**

**A. Our relationship to Christ and the Spirit**

1. Abide in Him, John 15:7

2. In His name, John 14:13,14; 15:16; 16:23-24

3. In the Spirit, Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20

4. According to God's will, Matthew 6:10; 1 John 3:22; 5:14-15

**B. Motives**

1. Not wavering, Matthew 21:22; James 1:6-7
2. Humility and repentance, Luke 18:9-14
3. Asking amiss, James 4:3
4. Selfishness, James 4:2-3

### C. Other aspects

#### 1. Perseverance

- a. Luke 18:1-8
- b. Colossians 4:2

#### 2. Kept on asking

- a. Matthew 7:7-8
- b. Luke 11:5-13
- c. James 1:5

#### 3. Discord at home, 1 Peter 3:7

#### 4. Free from known sin

- a. Psalm 66:18
- b. Proverbs 28:9
- c. Isaiah 59:1-2
- d. Isaiah 64:7

### IV. Theological Conclusion

- A. What a privilege. What an opportunity. What a duty and responsibility
- B. Jesus is our example. The Spirit is our guide. The Father is eagerly waiting.
- C. It could change you, your family, your friends, and the world.

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### QUESTION - [What are some Bible verses about intercession?](#)

### ANSWER -

1 Timothy 2:1

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,

Romans 8:26

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Hebrews 7:25

Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Romans 8:34

Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Ephesians 6:18

Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Isaiah 59:16

He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him.

Isaiah 53:12

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

1 Timothy 2:1-2

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.

Matthew 5:44

But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

1 Timothy 2:5

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

James 5:16

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Psalms 106:23

Therefore he said he would destroy them— had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him, to turn away his wrath from destroying them.

Matthew 18:19-20

Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.

Acts 12:5

So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.

Ezekiel 22:30

And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none.

Job 42:10

And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

Ezekiel 22:31

Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them. I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath. I have returned their way upon their heads, declares the Lord God.

Luke 23:34

And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.

Luke 22:32

But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.

Joel 2:17

Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep and say, "Spare your people, O Lord, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the

**Steven Cole - ([Prevailing With God - Genesis 18:16-33](#)) There are four principles of prevailing prayer in these verses:**

**(1). To prevail with God we must draw near to His presence.**

Abraham was still standing before the Lord and then he came near (Ge 18:22–23). Only those who are close to God can intercede with Him on behalf of others. Abraham was separate from Sodom; Lot was living in it and caught up in its sinful ways. It was Abraham, not Lot, who interceded for it. There is a distinct contrast between Abraham, living peaceably in his tent, where he entertains the Lord and the angels, and Lot, living in a house (which Abraham never had), in the fast lane of wicked Sodom.

Donald Grey Barnhouse observes, "The longer one remains in the presence of God, the more proper perspective he gains on the world and all that is therein" (Genesis [Zondervan], p. 158). How true! You don't have to wallow in the mud of the world to understand it. The Bible gives us an adequate understanding of sin and its consequences. If we walk in holiness before God and meditate on His Word, we'll have enough insight on the world and on people, so that we can pray for and counsel them properly.

**(2) To prevail with God we must appeal to His Person.**

Abraham appeals to God based on who God is, namely, the just "Judge of all the earth" (Ge 18:25), and that He is merciful. Since He is merciful, Abraham could ask that He spare the whole wicked city on behalf of the few righteous. And yet He is just: He will not ultimately treat the righteous and the wicked in the same manner. When we pray, we must keep both aspects of God's character in view. In Paul's words, we must remember both the kindness and severity of God (Rom. 11:22), and pray accordingly.

Underlying this is Abraham's concern for God's reputation, or glory. He's concerned that if God wipes out the righteous with the wicked, others will question His justice. Abraham was not quite right, in that sometimes God's temporal judgment falls on both the righteous and the wicked (Luke 13:1–5). God always does right, no matter how it appears to sinful men. But Abraham's motive was right, to appeal to the reputation of God and to desire that God look good (= "be glorified") in the world.

When we pray, we should appeal to Him on the basis of His glory and His person, as revealed in His Word, especially the balance between His mercy and His judgment. Sometimes people will ask me to pray for a loved one who is ill. When I ask, "What should I pray?" they're taken aback. They assume that we should pray that the person be healed. But the illness may be God's way of bringing the person to repentance and faith. Our prayers should be in line with God's glory and His merciful and yet holy person.

**(3) To prevail with God we must maintain a right perspective.**

Abraham displays a reverent boldness toward the Lord, but never presumption (see Ge 18:27, 30, 31, 32). In Ge 18:27, he uses the word "Adonai," meaning Lord or Master. He is quick to acknowledge that he is but dust and ashes. Note that the Lord doesn't correct Abraham by saying, "You need to boost your self-esteem!" John Calvin points out "that the nearer Abraham approaches to God, the more fully sensible does he become of the miserable and abject condition of men" (Calvin's Commentaries [Baker], 1:490). God has told us to come boldly before His throne in prayer, but only that we may receive mercy and grace (Heb. 4:16). We draw near only as unworthy sinners who appeal to Him on the merit and worthiness of Jesus Christ.

Abraham also maintained the proper perspective toward those for whom he prayed. There is no hint that he thought of himself as better than those in Sodom. He knew many of these people from the time he rescued them from the kings of the east. He easily could have looked down on them: "I risked my neck for these no-good bums and now look at them! When are they going to wise up?" But Abraham prayed for Sodom with the very real awareness of his own sinfulness. We need that same perspective in our prayers. We need a reverent boldness in coming before the Lord and arguing our case. But we need to remember at all times that we're unworthy sinners who have found mercy. As Leupold comments, "A man who has himself received mercy seeks to secure mercy for others" (1:549).

To prevail with God we must draw near to His presence; appeal to His person; maintain our perspective; and,

**(4) To prevail with God we must persevere in our pleading.**

Abraham continued on from point to point, daring to ask God for more, until he went as far as he dared. Someone has said that Abraham ceased asking before God ceased giving. My opinion is that Abraham sensed that he was at the limit at ten, and that if he went further he would no longer be pleading according to God's will. God answered Abraham by rescuing Lot and his family before destroying Sodom. We need to remember that prayer is not getting God to do my will, but rather His will.

And yet Jesus taught that we need to persist in prayer. He told the parable of the man whose friend came late at night asking for bread. The man and his family were already in bed, but this "friend" kept banging on his door. Jesus applied it to our need to keep knocking on heaven's door (Luke 11:8–10). He also told of the judge, who would not listen to the repeated pleas of the widow. But



finally, to get some relief, he gave her what she wanted. How much more, said Jesus, will God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him (Luke 18:4–8). Persevere in prayer!

## Conclusion

If we could read a transcript of our prayers over the past week, I have a hunch that many of them would be for personal needs: “Lord, help me with this exam, help me get a job, heal me of this disease,” etc. These are legitimate topics for prayer, of course. But in the Lord’s prayer, the first item of business is the honor and purpose of the Father: “Hallowed be Your name; Your kingdom come, Your will be done” (Matt. 6:9–10). After that comes prayer for our needs. Our prayers, like Abraham’s, should center on what God is doing in the world. Pray for God to be glorified by showing mercy to lost family members, lost friends and neighbors. Pray for lost nations and the missionaries who are seeking to reach them with the gospel. Pray for this church, that God would be glorified here. Pray for our lost city and nation, that God would stay His hand of judgment and that many would turn from their sin and trust in Him.

**ILLUSTRATION** - Years ago, the China Inland Mission discovered that the number and spiritual strength of the converts at one station far exceeded anyone’s expectations and could not be accounted for by anything exceptional about the missionary personnel there. The mystery remained unsolved until Hudson Taylor visited England. There, at the close of Taylor’s message, a man from the audience stepped forward to greet him. In the ensuing conversation, Taylor learned that the man had detailed knowledge of this station.

“How is it,” asked Taylor, “that you are so conversant with the conditions of that work?” “Oh,” he replied, “for four years I have corresponded with my missionary friend there. He has sent me the names of inquirers and converts, and I have daily taken these names to God in prayer.” Taylor realized the answer to the puzzle: the daily, specific, prevailing prayer of this man had brought eternal fruit for God’s glory. God wants us, His friends, to prevail with Him concerning His plan of righteousness and justice for the nations.

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### F B Meyer - And Abraham drew near.

The patriarch’s attitudes are well worthy of note: he sat (Genesis 18:1), bowed (Genesis 18:2), ran (Genesis 18:7), stood by (Genesis 18:8), went with them (Genesis 18:16), stood before the Lord (Genesis 18:22); here, he drew near.

**He drew near with awful reverence.** — “I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.” The place whereon he stood was holy ground; and if he trod or crossed it, in the intensity of his desire, he never forgot that the most intimate fellowship of man with God must be mingled with the reverence of godly fear, which remembers that He is a consuming fire.

**He drew near in faith.** — He had enjoyed a blessed prevision of the day of Christ. There had been revealed to Him that one perfect and sufficient Sacrifice, in virtue of which sinners are welcome to draw near to God. They have boldness to enter the holiest, and draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, who know the new and living way which Jesus has opened for us.

**He drew near as intercessor.** — We never get so near God as when we plead for others. At such times we enter the holiest and innermost chamber, and talk to Him with an urgency which we dare not use for ourselves. Whilst the Syrophenician pleaded for her daughter, she came to the very feet of Jesus. Wouldst thou know the inner chamber? Go thither on errands for others.

**He drew near in intensity.** — When Haman pleaded for his life, he fell on the Queen’s couch in the anguish of his soul. Sometimes God appears to hesitate; it is only to draw us on, ever further and deeper, till we awake to find ourselves alone in his presence.

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### J R Miller - Abraham’s Intercession for Sodom Genesis 18

Three travelers came one day to Abraham’s tent door. They were strangers—he did not know them. Yet he treated them with warm-hearted hospitality. That was the custom of the East. Kindness was always shown to the stranger. No man’s tent was his own alone—it was his and God’s, and its shelter and comfort must be shared with any other who were passing through.

Abraham rose eagerly when he saw the three men approaching, ran to meet them, bowed himself to the earth before them, and welcomed them into his tent, showed them the most gracious hospitality, and provided for them an abundant meal. At length Abraham learns that one of the men whom he had thus entertained was God Himself, and that the other two were angels from heaven. But at the time he had no thought that they were other than ordinary men. In the Epistle to the Hebrews this beautiful incident is used to teach the duty of entertaining strangers, reminding us that in doing so—some have entertained angels unawares.

It is not likely that we shall have such visitors as Abraham had, that heavenly angels shall come to our doors unawares in the guise of book agents, peddlers, or strangers of any kind. Yet the lesson remains, teaching the duty that we should so treat all who come to our door as friends, neighbors or strangers, in whatever garb they come, that if it should turn out that they are angels—we shall not be ashamed to remember how we received them and treated them.

William Bryant said that his rule was to treat every person who came to him in any way—as if he were an angel in disguise. It may not always be easy to do this—but this would seem to be the Christian rule.

Jesus taught the lesson very clearly in His description of the Last Judgment, when He said that those who will be welcomed to the King's right hand will hear the words: "I was a stranger—and you took Me in;" while those on the King's left will hear, "I was a stranger—and you did not take Me in." If we knew that the stranger at our door needing welcome, love, shelter, and kindness were Christ Himself—how would we treat Him? Yet He says, "Inasmuch as you receive one of the least of these My brethren—you receive Me."

Times have changed since Abraham's day, and we are not expected to entertain everyone who comes along—as this good old patriarch entertained these men. Yet there is a courtesy which we may show to all who cross our path, a kindly spirit and manner which will at least not give pain, and may give pleasure and help. We should not treat even a beggar or a tramp—in a way the remembrance of which will condemn us should we learn that he is really an angel in disguise.

"Then the LORD said—I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." These strangers brought to Abraham a promise that in a short time, a son should be born to him. Thus the patriarch's faith received another assurance to strengthen it. The time of waiting was now almost at an end. The messengers then rose up to depart, and Abraham accompanied them on the way.

The Lord then told Abraham what he intended to do to Sodom—if he found the wickedness of the city as great as it had been reported to Him. When Abraham heard the words of the Lord, his heart went out in compassion for the people of Sodom, and especially for Lot, and he began his intercession. "Abraham drew near, and said." He drew near to the Lord when he began to plead. This showed his earnestness, also his great boldness and confidence.

We may get from this example of Abraham's, several lessons for ourselves. One is that we ought to draw near to God in spirit when we plead with Him. If we are really in earnest we will do so. We should always have deep reverence in our heart when we approach God—but reverence need not keep us far away from Him. We are His children, and children do not dread a true father—nor stand far off when they desire to ask any favor of Him. God does not want us to come before Him as if we were slaves—but as His dear children. "Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help." "Having therefore boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus—let us draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith."

Abraham's intercession also showed a noble heart. Were the people of Sodom anything to him? Lot, his relative, was there—but Lot had not treated Abraham well; he had been ungenerous toward him. Yet Abraham did not nourish malice, and now, when doom is impending over Lot, he is quick to plead for him. Lot had been drawn away from God into the world—but this did not prevent Abraham's seeking to save him from destruction. Indeed, this only added to his interest and his compassion. We should pray for others—even though they have treated us badly. Jesus tells us to intercede for those who persecute us.

But a careful reading of this narrative of Abraham's intercession, shows that he did not pray merely for Lot. Indeed, Lot's name is not mentioned at all in Abraham's prayer. Of course, it must have been that Lot was in his thought and compassion, in all his pleading—but not Lot only. It was for Sodom that he begged, for the saving of the city, not for the saving of his nephew alone. Abraham was a great-hearted man. A little while ago he fought for Sodom, not for Lot only, and rescued them. Now, when they were in far more terrible plight, he intercedes with God that they might be saved. We need to widen our praying, taking in all men.

There is a striking contrast to Abraham's intercession, in the prayer of Lot as he fled from Sodom. He thought only of himself, and pleaded that he might not be driven to the mountain—but that the little town of Zoar nearby, might be made his refuge and spared for his sake. There is not a word spoken for Sodom or its people, in his pleading. The characters of the two men, Abraham and Lot, are revealed in nothing else more markedly, than in the reach of their prayers.

As we look at Abraham standing before the Lord, interceding for the cities of the Plain, we are reminded of Christ as our Intercessor. He ever stands before God in heaven and pleads for us. We have a glimpse in one of His parables of His intercession for the impenitent. He pleads that the axe may not fall, that the fruitless tree may not be cut down—until He has tried in other ways to make it fruitful. Only the intercession of Christ spares the impenitent from speedy destruction. They are spared through Divine mercy that yet more may be done for their salvation. We have another glimpse of Christ's intercession in John's word, that if we sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. In heaven He carries our affairs in His hands. When we sin, He acts as our Advocate, securing our deliverance.

Abraham pleads God's own righteousness. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" He certainly will. We need not fear for a moment, that anything He does will be wrong. Some people worry about the fate of the heathen, and ask if God can be just and do so-and-so. A far better solution to such perplexity, is Abraham's, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Surely we can trust

Him with all such things, leaving them in His hands with perfect confidence.

Other people have perplexity concerning the apparent lack of justness in the allotments of earth. Some godly people have little but trouble here on earth, while some very evil people have much prosperity. We have the same truth on which to rest all such seeming inequities. We do not know what is good and what is evil—in the way of earthly experiences. What we call trouble—may have more blessing in it for us than what we call prosperity. Then the end of life—is not in this present world. God may not make all things equal before death—but He has eternal years in which to adjust the equities!

Abraham's intercession was humble and reverent. "O let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak." The Lord loves importunity in prayer. He delights in the earnestness of His children, when they call upon Him. Two of our Lord's parables enforce the duty of persistence in pleading. Christ's own example in the Garden, shows us that it is right to pray and pray again. The Lord is never angry with us for being urgent in intercession for others. No doubt He is grieved far more by our lack of earnestness, than by our importunity. All Christians should pray for the lost—as earnestly as Abraham pleaded for Sodom.

Abraham first asked if God would spare the whole city in case fifty righteous men were found in it. He then asked if it would be saved though only forty-five were found, though only forty, though only thirty, though only twenty, though only ten. To each request came an answer of mercy. If there had been even so many as ten holy people in Sodom—the whole Plain, with all its cities and inhabitants, would have been spared from destruction for the sake of the ten!

We do not know how many other cities, towns, and communities in the world—have been spared along the centuries, for the sake of the few righteous people who lived in them. The wicked make sport of the godly—yet they do not know how much they owe to them in a thousand ways. Infidels, while they scoff at Christians and caricature the gospel, forget that for the very blessings of their civilization, the things that brighten their homes—they are indebted to the Christianity which they so despise!

The world, even the wicked world, will never know what it owes to its saints. We do not know, any of us, what our debt is to the godly, the true, and the holy about us. Our security in our Christian community, is the result of the influence of the praying lives round us. As saints diminish in a place, and the wicked multiply—life and property become insecure.

**Genesis 18:24 "Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it?"**

- **there:** Ge 18:32 Isa 1:9 Jer 5:1 Mt 7:13,14
- **spare:** Ac 27:24
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## ABRAHAM'S INTERCESSORY LOGIC

**Suppose there are fifty righteous** ([saddiq](#); Lxx = [dikaioi](#)) **within the city; will You indeed sweep it away** ([saphah](#); Lxx - [apollumi](#)) **and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous**([saddiq](#); Lxx = [dikaioi](#)) **who are in it?** - Note Abraham does not begin with 50 per cent of the population as righteous for he surely was aware of the widespread nature of the evil in Sodom and Gomorrah. So he begins optimistically thinking that there surely are at least 50 righteous souls in sin city. **Sweep away** gives us an an interesting picture of Jehovah "sweeping away" sinners with a "divine broom", in effect, "cleaning house!"

*God's coming judgment on the lost around us  
should occasion our prayers and intercession for their eternal souls.*

**Sweep...away** ([saphah](#)) is translated in the Septuagint with the verb [apollumi](#) which is a strong verb meaning to destroy utterly. Note carefully the verb pertains to destruction but not to [annihilation](#) and basically has to do with a created being that is irretrievably ruined and is no longer usable for his or her intended purpose. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were ruined and had failed to achieve one of the main purposes of mankind, which is to glorify God. They did just the opposite, degrading or disparaging God's glory, and thus would justly receiving their reward of loss of life and existence on earth followed by solitary existence in eternal punishment.

**THOUGHT** - Is your heart broken by the rising tide of sin in America and around the world? One wonders how far being full is the cup of evil (cf Ge 15:16KJV+)? May God raise up many "Abrahamic" intercessors for the countless lost souls around us that they might be rescued from temporal destruction and eternal torment. For the glory of the Lord. In the Name of the only Name that can rescue them, Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12+, Col

**Sweep away** (destroy) (05595) [saphah](#) means to scrape or sweep away, to destroy, to perish, to be captured. The basic image of the root seems to be that of sweeping—both the process of heaping things together and of sweeping them away...The root is usually used in a hostile sense, particularly in contexts of judgment. The first four uses in Genesis 18 relate to the predicted destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. **Saphah** described the fate of those in the rebellion of Korah when Moses "spoke to the congregation, saying, "Depart now from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing that belongs to them, or you **will be swept away** in all their sin." (Nu 16:26+) Lot and his family were warned so that they would not be consumed with Sodom (Ge 19:15, 17+).

**Saphah** - 18 v - add(2), captured(1), destroy(2), heap(1), perish(2), remove(1), snatched away(1), sweep away(2), swept away(6). Gen. 18:23; Gen. 18:24; Gen. 19:15; Gen. 19:17; Num. 16:26; Num. 32:14; Deut. 29:19; Deut. 32:23; 1 Sam. 12:25; 1 Sam. 26:10; 1 Sam. 27:1; 1 Chr. 21:12; Ps. 40:14; Prov. 13:23; Isa. 7:20; Isa. 13:15; Isa. 30:1; Jer. 12:4

**Genesis 18:25 "Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"**

- **Far be it from You:** Jer 12:1
- **that the:** Job 8:20 9:22,23 Ec 7:15 8:12,13 Isa 3:10,11 57:1,2 Mal 3:18
- **Shall:** Dt 32:4 Job 8:3 34:17-19 Ps 11:5-7 58:11 94:2 98:9 Ro 3:6
- **Judge:** John 5:22-27
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## ABRAHAM APPEALS TO THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH

**Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous**([saddiq](#); Lxx = [dikaios](#)) **with the wicked** ([rasha](#)': Lxx = [asebes](#) = "ungodly"), **so that the righteous** ([saddiq](#); Lxx = [dikaios](#)) **and the wicked** ([rasha](#)': Lxx = [asebes](#) = "ungodly") **are treated alike** - Abraham appeals to God that His judgment is just and righteous and will not slay the **righteous** with the **wicked**. One is reminded of the two classifications (righteous, wicked) and two destinations (heaven, hell) of every soul ever born as described in Psalm 1:4-6+ which says "The **wicked**...are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the **wicked** will not stand in the judgment, Nor **sinners** in the assembly of the **righteous**. For the LORD knows ([yada](#)) the way of the **righteous**, but the way of the **wicked** will perish."

**Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"** Abraham's clear understanding of God's character being able only to do what is good and totally above reproach was affirmed with this rhetorical question.

**J Vernon McGee** - That is still a question that many people ask: **"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"** And there is an answer to it. The rest of the Bible testifies to the fact that the Judge of all the earth always does right

[William MacDonald](#) - Abraham's prayer is a wonderful example of effectual intercession. It was based on the righteous character of the Judge of all the earth (v. 25) and evidenced that boldness, yet deep humility which only an intimate knowledge of God can give. Only when Abraham stopped pleading did the Lord close the matter and depart (v. 33). There are many mysteries in life for which the truth of verse 25 is the only satisfying answer.

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**David Jeremiah** - [Sanctuary - WHEN IN DOUBT, DON'T!](#) page 68

GENESIS 18:25 Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Everyone has doubted God's justice at times. We may not think of it that way; we may just wonder, "Why did God allow an event to happen that way?" I know I have wondered the same thing on many occasions.

I have learned to take many things in my Christian walk purely by faith. I have learned enough about God through Scripture and His faithfulness in my life that when I come to a place where I am tempted to doubt—I don't. I take by faith the fact that God is good, that the Judge of all the earth shall do right (Genesis 18:25). Not to have that core conviction governing one's thoughts daily is to live in a world of vacillation and shifting shadows.

If we do not live our lives based on the fact that God is righteous, we have no basis for righteousness in our own lives.

## Charles Stanley - Evaluation and Reward

SCRIPTURE READING: Romans 7:18–25

KEY VERSE: Genesis 18:25 Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Concerning the judgment of God, theologian Henry Thiessen explains,

The whole philosophy of the future judgments rests upon the sovereign right of God to punish disobedience and the personal right of the individual to plead his case in court. Though God is sovereign, as judge of all the earth, he will do right (Genesis 18:25). He will do this not in order to submit to an external law, but as the expression of his own character.

The individual will have the opportunity to show why he acted as he did and to know the reasons for his sentence. These are fundamental factors in every righteous government. Insofar as human governments follow this order, they are imitating God's methods of government.

God's judgment always fits the crime. He never responds to sin out of His character. His first desire is to save you so that you might enjoy His fellowship for eternity. In Revelation 16, the judgment of God is poured out on the earth because man has chosen another way—a way opposed to God. In Romans 7:24, Paul asked, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" The answer: only the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 7:25)!

Judgment for the believer is a time of evaluation and reward, but for the nonbeliever it is the beginning of eternal death.

Lord, I praise You for the future You have planned for me—eternal life in Your presence. Help me live today with that hope in mind.

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## Vance Havner - [THE JUDGE WILL DO RIGHT](#)

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Genesis 18:25.

We are inclined to wonder sometimes how it will be in the world to come. In our wishful thinking, we imagine blissful reunion with dear ones we have loved and lost for a while. But then there sometimes comes the chilling thought that maybe God will not do it that way.

After all He has not told us very much about our future relations with our loved ones. But we need not worry. The Judge of all the earth will do right. And that does not mean in a cold judicial sense, for the Judge is also our Father and what He does will be mixed with love and joy. We may be certain it will be lovingly and joyfully right, not just right. He knows now our frame and remembers that we are dust and He will know what is happily best when we are no longer dust but His resurrected children.

**Genesis 18:26 So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account."**

- Isa 6:13 10:22 19:24 65:8 Jer 5:1 Eze 22:30 Mt 24:22
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## JEHOVAH RESPONDS TO ABRAHAM'S INTERCESSION

**So the LORD (Jehovah = Yahweh; Lxx = kurios) said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous (saddiq; Lxx = dikaios) within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account** - This is an amazing response. One would have expected Him to say He would spare the 50 righteous, but He says He will spare the righteous and the wicked. This is absolutely amazing grace.

**Bob Utley** This verse is an example of the corporate nature of the Hebrew culture. **Negatively** - (1) Adam and Eve sinned and all creation suffered the consequences. (2) Achan sinned (cf. Joshua 7) and the army of Israel lost a battle (some died). **Positively** - (1) Righteous people affect the actions of God toward the whole city of Sodom (and the cities of the plain). (2) One righteous man could divert God's judgment on Jerusalem (cf. Jer. 5:1). (3) Adam's sin affected all creation. Jesus' life and death affect all creation (cf. Ro 5:12-21). This concept is the theological basis for the vicarious, substitutionary atonement of Isaiah 53. One innocent One's death can bring forgiveness (cf. Leviticus 1-7; Mark 10:45 John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:21).

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Genesis 18:27 And Abraham replied, “Now **behold**, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am but dust and ashes.

- **I have ventured to speak:** Ge 18:30-32 Ezr 9:6 Job 42:6-8 Isa 6:5 Lu 18:1
- **dust:** Ge 2:7 3:19 Job 4:19 Ps 8:4 144:3 Ec 12:7 Isa 6:5 64:8 Lu 5:8 1Co 15:47,48 2Co 5:1,2
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## ABRAHAM HUMBLER HIMSELF IN RESPONSE

And Abraham replied, “Now **behold** ([hinneh](#)) I have ventured to speak to the Lord (['adonay](#); Lxx = [kurios](#)), although I am but dust and ashes - Abraham's intercession, far from being manipulative, reflects his humble attitude and compassionate concern for the people (cf his attitude in Ge 13:8,9+).

**Bob Utley** "I am *but* dust and ashes" This is obviously an allusion to Genesis 3 where humans come from dust and return to dust. Abraham knew the traditions about creation! However, it is also possible that this phrase was a Semitic idiom of the day (i.e., Job, a contemporary of Abraham uses the same phrase in Job 30:19; 42:6).

Genesis 18:28 “Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, will You destroy the whole city because of five?” And He said, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.”

- **Suppose:** Ge 18:30 Judges 6:39 Pr 15:8 Isa 42:6,7 Jas 5:15-17 1Jn 5:15,16
- **I will not:** Ex 32:9,10,14 33:13,14 34:6,7,9,10 Nu 14:11-20 Job 33:23 Ps 86:5 Isa 65:8 Mic 7:18 Mt 7:7 Eph 3:20 Jas 5:16
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## WHAT ABOUT 45 RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE?

Suppose the fifty righteous ([saddiq](#); Lxx = [dikaiois](#)) are lacking five, will You destroy ([shachath](#); Lxx = [apollumi](#)) the whole city because of five?”

And He said, “I will not destroy ([shachath](#); Lxx = [apollumi](#)) it if I find forty-five there

**Destroy** (corrupt)([07843](#)) [shachath](#) means to decay, to go to ruin, to corrupt, to destroy (Sodom and Gomorrah = Ge 13:10, Ge 18:28, 31-32), to lay waste (Egypt from swarms of flies -Ex 8:24). **Shachath** is used of Israelites who worshiped the golden calf (Ex 32:7; Dt 9:12; 32:5, Hos 9:9). God warned He would **destroy** Israel if they were turned away from following Him (Nu 32:15). **Shachath** describes Israel's behavior as more corrupt after a judge died (Jdg 2:19). Shāchath is used to describe the action of annihilation, for example, the action associated with the flood (Gen. 6:17), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (19:13), the extermination of the Ammonites (2 Sam. 11:1), the devastation of Zion (Lam. 2:8) and the end of Babylon (Jer. 51:11). Buildings (48:18), land (Judg. 6:5), walls (2 Sam. 20:15), a spring (Prov. 25:26) and plants (Nah. 2:2) are among objects which are destroyed by actions expressed by this verb.

Shachath in Pentateuch - The flood in Genesis 6 & 9 = Gen. 6:11; Gen. 6:12; Gen. 6:13; Gen. 6:17; Gen. 9:11; Gen. 9:15; Gen. 13:10; Gen. 18:28; Gen. 18:31; Gen. 18:32; Gen. 19:13; Gen. 19:14; Gen. 19:29; Gen. 38:9; Exod. 8:24; Exod. 12:13; Exod. 12:23; Exod. 21:26; Exod. 32:7; Lev. 19:27; Num. 32:15; Deut. 4:16; Deut. 4:25; Deut. 4:31; Deut. 9:12; Deut. 9:26; Deut. 10:10; Deut. 20:19; Deut. 20:20; Deut. 31:29; Deut. 32:5

Genesis 18:29 He spoke to Him yet again and said, “Suppose forty are found there?” And He said, “I will not do it on account of the forty.”

- Eph 6:18 Heb 4:16
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## NO DESTRUCTION IF 40 RIGHTEOUS FOUND



He spoke to Him yet again and said, “Suppose forty are found there?”- Abraham is illustrating 1 Th 5:17+ where Paul commands us to continually “**Pray** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) without ceasing.”

And He said, “I will not do it on account of the forty

**Genesis 18:30** Then he said, “Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?” And He said, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”

- Ge 44:18 Judges 6:39 Es 4:11-16 Job 40:4 Ps 9:12 10:17 89:7 Isa 6:5 Isa 55:8,9 Heb 12:28,29
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### NO DESTRUCTION IF 30 RIGHTEOUS FOUND

Then he said, “Oh may the Lord ([Adonay](#); Lxx = [kurios](#)) not be angry ([charah](#)) - The literal Hebrew reads “let it not be hot to the LORD” an idiom which means “may the LORD not be angry.” Abraham is now cautious and does not want to speak presumptively to the LORD.

And I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?”- One can imagine his voice as speaking rather softly by this point in the dialogue.

And He said, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”

**Become angry** (burn) ([02734](#)) [charah](#) means to burn, to be kindled, to glow, to grow warm. Figuratively, it means to get angry or to become vexed. This word is related to a rare Aramaic root meaning “to cause fire to burn,” and to an Arabic root meaning “burning sensation,” in the throat, etc. The Hebrew verb is used in reference to anger. The meaning of the root differs from such words for “anger” as *’ānap*, *zā’am*, and *qāṣap*, in that it emphasizes the “kindling” of anger, like the kindling of a fire, or the heat of the anger, once started. **Charah** is used in reference to the anger of both man and God. The verb emphasizes the kindling and burning aspects of anger. This primary nuance is attested in Talmudic and Middle Hebrew. In the Qal stem, the noun **’aph** (nose) is usually the subject, yielding the Hebrew idiom, “nose was kindled.” Although *’aph* is often omitted, e.g., “it was kindled.” in the Hithpael, **charah** is used 4x (Ps 37:1, 7,8, Pr 24:19) always meaning “to worry” and describing the agitation, irritation or vexation resulting from active worry.

**Charah in the Pentateuch** - Gen. 4:5; Gen. 4:6; Gen. 18:30; Gen. 18:32; Gen. 30:2; Gen. 31:35; Gen. 31:36; Gen. 34:7; Gen. 39:19; Gen. 44:18; Gen. 45:5; Exod. 4:14; Exod. 22:24; Exod. 32:10; Exod. 32:11; Exod. 32:19; Exod. 32:22; Num. 11:1; Num. 11:10; Num. 11:33; Num. 12:9; Num. 16:15; Num. 22:22; Num. 22:27; Num. 24:10; Num. 25:3; Num. 32:10; Num. 32:13; Deut. 6:15; Deut. 7:4; Deut. 11:17; Deut. 29:27; Deut. 31:17

**Genesis 18:31** And he said, “Now **behold**, I have ventured to speak to the Lord; suppose twenty are found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy it on account of the twenty.”

- Ge 18:27 Mt 7:7,11 Lu 11:8 18:1 Eph 6:18 Heb 4:16 10:20-22
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### NO DESTRUCTION IF 20 RIGHTEOUS FOUND

And he said, “Now **behold** ([hinne](#)) I have ventured to speak to the Lord ([Adonay](#); Lxx = [kurios](#)); suppose twenty are found there?” - Abraham speaks with the hope that surely there are 20 righteous men.

And He said, “I will not destroy ([shachath](#); Lxx = [apollumi](#)) it on account of the twenty - Twenty would be enough to withhold judgment of the total.

**Genesis 18:32** Then he said, “Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found

there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it on account of the ten."

- Oh: Ge 18:30 Judges 6:39 Pr 15:8 Isa 42:6,7 Jas 5:15-17 1Jn 5:15,16
- I will not: Ex 32:9,10,14 33:13,14 34:6,7,9,10 Nu 14:11-20 Job 33:23 Ps 86:5 Isa 65:8 Mic 7:18 Mt 7:7 Eph 3:20 Jas 5:16
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## NO DESTRUCTION IF 10 RIGHTEOUS FOUND

Then (NET = finally) he said, "Oh may the Lord ([Adonay](#); Lxx = [kurios](#)) not be angry ([charah](#)) - As in Ge 18:30

**And I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?"** - Abraham asks if ten "salty" believers would preserve thousands of lives? The principle of preservation is found in Mt 5:13+ where Jesus says "'You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men."

**Steven Cole** - The passage reveals the role of God's people as the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13). Because of Abraham, God would have been willing to spare Sodom if only ten righteous people could have been found in it. Wicked societies tend to despise righteous people, and yet it is because of the righteous that God's judgment is often withheld. There are times in history when God declares that a wicked nation has filled up the measure of their sins (see Gen. 15:16). When that occurs, even the godly cannot deliver that people from judgment (Ezek. 14:14, 20). But until that point of no return is reached, God's people are the safeguard of a nation, as they pray and live righteously before God. ([Prevailing With God - Genesis 18:16-33](#))

**And He said, "I will not destroy ([shachath](#); Lxx = [apollumi](#)) it on account of the ten."** - That the number of righteous people necessary to forestall judgment had been reduced from 50 to 10 may have reflected Abraham's awareness both of the intense wickedness of the cities as well as Lot's ineffective witness there. Abraham stops at 10 and must sense that there are not even 10 righteous souls in Sodom. Lot and his family would constitute 4 souls and that would be all that were rescued from the wrath of God. Note that if Lot had won only his own family to faith in the Lord, (this would include the two son-in-laws) that would have been 10 righteous and judgment would have been averted! In truth, God didn't stop at ten, for, as we will see, when He saved Lot and his household from destruction, He stooped all the way down to four.

That God is willing to save probably a quarter of a million people (Sodom and Gomorrah) if there are only 10 righteous is amazing. Clearly it shows that God defaults to mercy, not to judgment. One is reminded of passages in Proverbs

Proverbs 14:34 **Righteousness** exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people.

Proverbs 28:12 When the **righteous triumph**, there is great glory, But when the wicked rise, men hide themselves (LIKE LOT).

**J Vernon McGee** alludes to Jesus' words in this passage as support for a [pre-tribulation rapture](#) writing "Do you know that the Great Tribulation Period cannot come as long as the church is in the world? It just cannot come, my friend, because Christ bore our judgment, and the great tribulation is part of the judgment that is coming. This is the reason that the church cannot go through it. This is a glorious picture of that truth. We are going to see that Sodom and Gomorrah are a picture of the world."

[ESV Study notes \(borrow\)](#) adds that "The principle has been established that God will not punish the righteous along with the wicked." This too would tend to support the premise that the church of true believers is not present during the Seven Year tribulation.

**Jack Arnold:** God answered Abraham's prayer but not exactly like Abraham had petitioned. His petition was that the righteous would be spared and the city not destroyed. God destroyed the city and spared all the righteous. Abraham's desire was answered but not his entire petition.

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### G Campbell Morgan - Gen. 18.32.

This is one of the greatest chapters in all the Bible in its revelation of the possibilities open to the man of faith in communion with God. Abraham is seen as concerned for the honour of his God. To him it seemed that if in the judgment of the wicked, the righteous should be involved, justice would be violated; and in that view he was right. His conviction was the direct result of his knowledge of God. Under stress of this concern he talked to his God, and was answered. Accepting his suggestion as to a number, God declared that if fifty were found in Sodom He would spare the city. Encouraged by this assurance, Abraham applied his principle to forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty, and in every case the Divine response ratified his conviction. Then once more he ventured, suggested ten, and being again answered, stopped there. The statement is illuminated by the sequel. Abraham stopped at ten, but God carried out the

principle in that He delivered the one, as He compelled Lot to leave before the judgment fell upon the city. The lesson for us is patent. God is not only, as we sometimes say, better than our fears; He is better than our hopes. If we are concerned for His honour, He is ever willing to commune with us, and to lead us as far as our faith will travel, ever giving us assurance of His faithfulness to the highest things we think of Him. Then we may know, that when we dare go no further in suggestion, He will go beyond our daring.

**Genesis 18:33 As soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the LORD departed, and Abraham returned to his place.**

- **And the:** Ge 18:16,22 32:26
- **and Abraham:** Ge 31:55
- [Genesis 18 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## JEHOVAH ENDS THE "NEGOTIATION"

**As soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the LORD**([Jehovah = Yahweh](#); Lxx = [kurios](#)) **departed, and Abraham returned to his place** - While the LORD did not tell Abraham that He would spare the cities, He did answer Abraham's prayer by rescuing Lot and his daughters. So while his intercession did not result in the sparing of the cities, it did bring about the rescue of his nephew and two nieces. In Ge 19:29 we read "that God remembered Abraham [WHAT DID HE REMEMBER? SURELY HIS INTERCESSION!]" and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow." In a similar way, we may or may not see the answers to our prayers today, but we can be sure God will answer them according to His will. For that reason alone we should pray without ceasing!

[Life Application Study Bible note \(borrow\)](#) - Did Abraham change God's mind? Of course not. The more likely answer is that God changed Abraham's mind. Abraham knew that God is just and that he punishes sin, but he may have wondered about God's mercy. Abraham seemed to be probing God's mind to see how merciful he really was. He left his conversation with God convinced that God was both kind and fair. Our prayers won't change God's mind, but they may change ours just as Abraham's prayer changed his. Prayer helps us better understand the mind of God.

[Skip Heitzig](#) - It sounds like they're arguing; it sounds like Abraham is backing God into a corner. Until you get to verse thirty-three. And in verse thirty-three, it doesn't say, 'And when Abraham was finished and had done what he wanted.' It says, 'When God was finished,' when the Lord had finished. So what we understand here is that God all the while had in His perfect will to be merciful by separating the righteous, that would be Lot and family, away from them and then destroying the wicked. It was God's plan all along. But God wanted Abraham to be a part of the process. So God initiates the conversation, leads him through it, and when God is done with Abraham asking what God wanted him to ask, it was done. It was finished. The Lord is the one leading it; the Lord is the one who wanted to show mercy all along but wanted Abraham to be involved in prayer as part of the process. Therein lies the beauty of prayer. Prayer isn't getting my will done in heaven but God's will done on earth. And God has His perfect plan. And so in prayer God invites me to tap into His program, to become at one with Him. And to pray for things and then, when you see things happen according to the will of God, many of which have been included in your prayers and in my prayers, there's a great satisfaction of laboring together with the Lord.

**THOUGHT** - I believe all Christians are called at some point to intercede for others. In fact, one of the things that I have loved for years, and I just got my copy again this year, a beautiful prayer journal. And one of the reasons I've always loved [inaudible] prayer journal, is it gives me **people groups every day of the year to pray for**. And there's a write-up of their needs. Like the slave trade is sort of the focus this month in different parts of the world and praying for specific governments. Then the days of the week are broken up to pray for family and for media and for government and for business, etcetera. And I love having that little time in the morning; it's a regiment time, where I can intercede for other people and be a part of God's great plan. I encourage you to get some kind of plan of persevering for others in prayer.

**ED COMMENT** - To encourage you to pray for people you do not know and will never see down here take a few moments and read [Praying for People from Every Tribe, Tongue, People and Nation](#). You will see many of them in heaven forever and to think you had a small but real part in it!