

# Genesis Chapter 18 v 1 - 15

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Date: 17 June 2018

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'm going to turn to God's Word as we begin this evening to Psalm 147.

Psalm 147. We're going to be reflecting mainly this evening on the power of God.

Psalm 147. Praise the Lord.

How good it is to sing praises to our God. How pleasant and fitting to praise Him. The Lord builds up Jerusalem. He gathers the exiles of Israel.

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power.

[ 1 : 11 ] His understanding has no limits. The Lord sustains the humble but casts the wicked to the ground. Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving. Make music to our God on the harp.

He covers the sky with clouds. He supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills. He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call.

His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of a man. The Lord delights in those who fear Him, who put their hope in His unfailing love.

Extol the Lord, O Jerusalem. Praise your God, O Zion. For He strengthens the bars of your gates and blesses your people within you. He grants peace to your borders and satisfies you with the finest of wheat.

He sends His commands to the earth. His word runs swiftly. He spreads the snow like wool and scatters the frost like ashes. He hurls down rain like hail, like pebbles.

[ 2 : 14 ] Who can withstand His icy blast? He sends His word and melts them. He stirs up His breezes and the waters flow. He has revealed His word to Jacob, His laws and decrees to Israel.

He has done this for no other nation. They do not know His laws. Praise the Lord. Let's stand and sing number 16 in your hymn books.

Number 16, immortal, invisible, God only, wise. Let's pray together.

Amen. Our Father, we come to you this evening hour.

And we want to acknowledge that you are almighty. That you are all-powerful. That you're the God that's above all that we understand and grasp.

[ 3 : 24 ] You're a God who is indeed beyond our understanding. And yet, Lord, you've revealed yourself to us. All that we need to know, you have revealed to us.

We thank you that your power is great. We thank you, Lord, as we come this evening. We no doubt come with concerns of heart and mind, Lord, of things that have gone on in a week.

Or thoughts of things that are happening soon. And some of them, Lord, seem too big for us. Some of them seem like a really heavy burden. Some of the things that we're concerned about seem to be impossible things.

And we thank you that we meet this evening in the presence of the God who is the God of the impossible. The God who meets us in our need.

The God to whom we can turn. We thank you, Lord, that you've not left us as people to struggle through this life in our own strength. Lord, we were never designed to live without you.

[ 4 : 33 ] But, Lord, you are that great tower. You are the strong one that we can run to. You're our defender, our keeper. You're the one who is the victor.

And, Lord, it's in you that our hope is placed. Lord, it's to you that we come and we stand in fear before a holy God, a perfect God, a righteous God. And yet also, Lord, an almighty, powerful God. And, Lord, we bow the knee before you. We acknowledge that so often we feel like life revolves around us. The things that go on in our lives, in our family, in our hearts.

And we confess that so often we're selfish in our thoughts. So often we're looking to see what we can gain in life. And, Lord, we come and we confess and we admit and we acknowledge that our

hearts are sinful.

And, Lord, we pray that you'd forgive us. We pray, Lord, that you would meet us this night, just as you've promised. And that as we turn to your word, that your word would live.

[ 5 : 44 ] That, Lord, by your spirit you would speak to us. That you would change us. That you would affect our attitudes and our thoughts and our patterns of behavior. And especially, Lord, tonight as we think about your great power, we pray that our understanding of your power would have an impact in our lives this coming week.

Lift our eyes heavenward, we pray. Save us from just looking at problems and panicking or being anxious or worried. We pray that you would lift our eyes to you, the great, awesome God.

And, Lord, it's such an amazing privilege to know that, Lord, you, although you're almighty, although you're this great, awesome God, Lord, you're here. And that you care about each one of our lives. You care about the things that we are anxious about. You care about those burdens that we carry. Lord, you know about those joys that are leaping in our hearts as we come to worship you this night.

Please come among your people. Lord, for those who come this evening who don't know the Lord Jesus as Savior, we pray that your power will be displayed in the miracle of new birth, that people's eyes will be opened, their hearts would understand and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior.

[ 7 : 06 ] For those here that have been Christians for many years, I pray, Lord, that you would give them strength to face this coming week, that you would uphold them and encourage them and show them the way forward.

We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Let's see. This is chapter 18. Genesis chapter 18 and verse 1.

Genesis chapter 18 and verse 1. And we're going to read through to verse 15. The three visitors. 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. He said, If I have found favor in your eyes, my Lord, do not pass your servant by.

Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat so that you can be refreshed and then go on your way, now that you have come to your servant.

[ 8 : 36 ] Very well, they answered. Do as you say. So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. Quick, he said, Get three sears of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread.

And then he ran to the herd and selected a choice tender calf and gave it to a servant who hurried to prepare it. He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared and set those before them.

While they ate, he stood near them under a tree. Where is your wife Sarah? They asked him. There in the tent, he said. Then the Lord said, I will surely return to you about this time next year and your wife will have a son.

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years and Sarah was past the age of childbearing.

So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure? Then the Lord said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh and say, Will I really have a child now that I am old?

[ 9 : 46 ] Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son. Sarah was afraid. So she lied and said, I did not laugh.

But he said, Yes, you did laugh. Well we pray that God will add his blessing to his word and speak to us from it. And before we come to consider it together, we're going to sing together, Restore, O Lord.

It's number 402. 402 in the hymn books. Restore, O Lord. The honour of your name. I wonder what you actually do when you're facing a challenge which you feel or know is beyond your strength or wisdom.

I wonder if you've faced something like that over the last week. One of my favourite verses is from 2 Chronicles chapter 20.

The King Jehoshaphat. He says this, For we are powerless against this great horde that's coming against us.

[ 11 : 07 ] We don't know what to do, but our eyes are upon you. Facing this horde, coming to attack them, far outnumbering them, him and his armies.

He says, I don't know what to do, Lord, but our eyes are upon you. I know that you know this, and so do I, but I just want to encourage you to apply it to our lives over these coming days.

To keep looking to God and not to lean upon our own wisdom or the world's wisdom or lean upon our strength or our own natural talents, but to rest upon him and to keep looking to God.

What is it that we see when we look to God in times of trouble? We see how big he is.

We see how powerful he is. We see how wonderful he is. Just back a chapter, in chapter 17 and verse 1, God reveals himself to Abraham as El Shaddai, Almighty God.

[ 12 : 26 ] He's above all. He's supreme. He's sovereign. He is the one for whom nothing is impossible. And if you haven't worked it out already, my main text is from chapter 18 and verse 13 and 14.

Then the Lord said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh and say, Will I really have a child now that I am old? Is anything too hard for the Lord?

I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son. The Lord himself says, Is anything too hard for the Lord?

If you spend your time looking how big the problem is, all you will see is a great big problem. If you look to God, then you'll be reminded how big your God is.

The problem might not go away immediately. Indeed, it might never go away. But it will certainly look smaller in comparison as you look to your almighty God.

[ 13 : 41 ] What we're going to do is reflect on this scripture and some other scriptures in the Bible that teach the same thing. Perhaps you're already thinking of some of those other verses. One, for example, Ephesians 3.20.

It says, Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we could ask or imagine. So if there's anything that we can ask or imagine, God's able to do more than that.

He's able to do much more than we could even think or conceive. But let's start first of all with some things that we can conceive. Could wit be celebrating black and all things to do with death be transformed in a generation to a place of life?

Could this church be packed to the rafters front to back side and there's more space there isn't there out to the side. Could it be heaving every week with people that are worshipping the Lord Jesus?

Perhaps your problem tonight or question tonight is can Jesus heal me? Can my husband come to know Christ? Can my wife come to know God?

[ 15 : 01 ] Can children and young people in Whitby be saved by God despite the massive influence of the media and the culture and their peers? Can we see men and women in this area following Jesus in their droves that churches are so full that they're more and more being planted?

Can marriages be saved? Can marriages be restored? Can your family situation be changed?

Can those entrenched harmful habits in our lives be broken by the power of God? Can God give you a fear of Him that overrides your natural fear of what other people think of you?

can God soften your heart and give you compassion for the lost for the unlovely for the rebellious?

Surely the answer is yes yes yes yes He can I can't do it you can't do it we can't do it but God can do it nothing is too difficult for the Lord I wonder if you really believe that that nothing is too difficult for the Lord now of course that doesn't mean that God will definitely do all that we ask for or do all of those things that I've just listed His perfect will and purpose is being worked out in this world and we'll come back to that but my question for now is do you even believe that He could do it He's able to do it that He has the power to do it and this evening I just want to ask a simple question why should we believe that nothing is too hard for the

Lord why should we believe it and then we're going to ask how that might apply to our lives why should we believe it the first reason is that God has told us in His word you might say well that's it it's there well yeah sure that's something to rely upon isn't it God's word God tells us that He can do it let's start in this passage Abraham has a visitation from God mysterious visitors these three men appear and some of the verses indicate that two of the men were angels and the third was God himself he's referred to as Lord and if you have the same Bible as me you'll find it's in capital letters

God himself is speaking and they're shown hospitality and respect by Abraham he washes their feet they rest under the tree bread is made for them if you look at how much that is that's an enormous amount

[ 17 : 54 ] I think it was 22 litres of flour if I look at the footnote that's an enormous amount of bread was baked for them the best calf was killed and cooked curds and milk were brought with the meal and Abraham did you notice he doesn't eat with them he stands at a distance and watches there's something very something out of the ordinary going on and in the middle of this we read verse 10 then the Lord said I will surely return to you about this time next year and Sarah your wife will have a son now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent which was behind him Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years and Sarah was past the age of childbearing so Sarah laughed to herself as she thought after I'm worn out and my master is old will I now have this pleasure we can understand can we not some of the doubt some of the concern that Sarah is expressing she's been barren she's too old she's gone through the menopause it says in

Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 12 that Abraham at that point was as good as dead I do love that little verse he was so old he was as good as dead but yet God could do it it wasn't going to be the servant Eliezer it wasn't going to be Ishmael but this was going to be Isaac is anything too hard for the Lord but this is just one of the first of many similar statements in the Bible perhaps you can think of some of them here's a few Job 42 verse 2 Job says I know that you can do all things Jeremiah in chapter 32 Jeremiah's in Jerusalem it's under siege by the Babylonians and the people are about to be exiled but God told Jeremiah to buy a field what a ridiculous thing to do when you're going to be exiled but in faith that's what he does and after he's done that he prays our sovereign Lord you have made the heavens and the earth by your outstretched arm nothing is too hard for you and God answers his prayer in

Jeremiah 32 27 and says I am the Lord the God of all mankind is anything too hard for me God will restore them to the land perhaps you're thinking of the birth accounts in Luke Luke chapter 1 37 how will this be Mary asked the angel since I'm a virgin the angel answered the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you so the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age and she who was said to be barren is in her six month and then you know what it says for nothing is impossible with God and then you've got the account of the rich young ruler in Matthew and Mark and Luke the version in Matthew chapter 19 says this then Jesus said to his disciples I tell you the truth it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven again I tell you it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God and when the disciples heard this they were greatly astonished and asked who then can be saved and Jesus looking at them and looked at them and said with man this is impossible but with God all things are possible just one more Mark 14 36 going a little further Jesus fell on the ground and prayed that if it's possible that the hour might pass from him Abba father he said everything is possible for you take this cup from me yet not what I will but what you will so why should we believe that nothing is too hard for the Lord because God himself tells us in the Bible and he tells us repeatedly that he is the God of the impossible why else should we believe that nothing is too hard for God God has proved it in history God was able through his word to create the universe that we see God was able to bring a global flood across the earth

God was able to create a nation from an aged barren couple God was able to deliver his people from the mighty Pharaoh God was able to deliver his people through the Red Sea as the water stood in walls at the side God was able to feed and give water to his people water from the rock and manna from the sky God was able to lead them in the desert with a fiery pillar and a cloud God was able to hold back the Jordan River as they entered into the promised land Jericho's walls tumbled at the marching and the blowing of horns and etc etc etc need we mention Gideon defeating the Midianites with 300 men think about the way that God directed his prophets to speak about future events many of those prophecies coming true already and many more to be fulfilled

[ 23 : 45 ] God overruled in the nations including the most powerful Nebuchadnezzar that great king that great ruler of an empire was humbled and even become like a wild animal do we need to mention the donkeys that talked the axe heads that floated the oil that never ran out the dead that were raised the battles that were won the visions that were seen the prophecies that were spoken that men escaped from the lion's den and from the fiery furnace these don't even scratch the surface do they think of the son of God born of a virgin it seems impossible but God can do it the

father that spoke from heaven so that all could hear his voice Jesus walking on the water calming the sea healing the sick even a man that was born blind raising the dead even commanding the demons

Jesus himself being raised from the dead think of the believers in the new testament anointed with power by the holy spirit to speak languages that weren't their own so that all present could understand on the day of pentecost think of the way that people's lives were transformed by this gospel message that people were born again that the divided groups were brought together that the gospel was advancing at an incredible pace across the known world think of that great enemy of the church Saul and what God did in his life to make him that apostle Paul the apostle to the Gentiles reflect for a while of what you know of church history God has proved his power through the centuries he's proved that nothing is impossible with God even in the lives of ordinary people like us you might continue to read stories or accounts you might get emails you might read blogs or whatever of people today who are seeing

God do amazing things missionaries preachers in this land preachers abroad churches throughout the globe God has proved his power in history history why else might you believe that nothing is too hard for God because God has proved it in your life or at least he can if you're a Christian a true Christian one that's born again of the spirit of God you are a miracle what God has done is beyond what we would consider possible he's made us a new creation you're a demonstration a living demonstration that God is in the business of doing the impossible he's taken a sinner someone who wanted to do his own thing go his own way whose heart was far from God who was rebellious didn't care for the things of

God and brought you to your knees before a holy God to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ or perhaps you were dead in a different way perhaps you were a religious person and you spent your life doing religious things but you didn't actually know what it was to be born again of God's spirit spiritually you were dead but you went through the motions of religious things but God one day opened your eyes to see the truth and brought you out of a religious sort of wanted to save yourself about understanding and to come to the point of realising that you could only be saved by putting your faith completely and fully in the hands of the Lord Jesus God does the impossible taking the spiritually dead and bringing them to life in Christ he brings children of promise out of barrenness God came looking for you he promised you new birth not because of your merit not because of your parentage but because of his grace and he therefore brings hope to the hopeless he brings light to the darkness he brings joy to the downcast he brings forgiveness to the sinner and no one is beyond his reach think of some famous atheist Richard Dawkins maybe fierce atheist not beyond the reach of God perhaps you know someone who still is caught up with religion just going through the motions feeling that they're doing something to please God but yet inwardly doesn't seem to know Christ themselves none of them are too far from God perhaps you've got adult children or you know people that have adult children

[ 29 : 26 ] Christians that have adult children that aren't following the Lord Jesus and how that burdens you or burdens them they're not beyond God's power to save however hard and rebellious sometimes they might seem they're not beyond God's ability to save God can prove his power in your life for many of you I know he already has you're a testimony that God is able to do the impossible surely we rejoice to know that we have a God who's revealed this ability in our own lives not just not just even in his salvation but his ability to keep us some of you your salvation would have been years ago decades ago and still today you can testify that he has kept you he has held you when your strength was gone when you felt completely weak when you felt you were in trouble and there was nothing to hold on to

God has held you through those times so God can do the impossible and we should believe it because he said it in the Bible because he's shown it through history and because he's proved it in your life now I want to ask a question as we conclude a question I quite like to ask seems a little bit rude but it's so what so what okay we've thought about God and his power he's able to do these amazing things so what and there's two things that come to my mind the first thing is that it makes us ask questions and let's be honest when we think of a great mighty God and his power to do stuff and perhaps your years of praying for things it brings questions and we say well why hasn't he then done this why hasn't he done that why does it seem that God seems reluctant when I've been praying for this and the truth is that sometimes this truth about

God's power sort of gets a bit stuck in our throat prompting more questions than it seems to answer but at least to some extent the answer is in the question itself that God must have a reason if God is able to do something and he's chosen not to do it at least for the moment then he has a reason and we believe that he's sovereign don't we and we believe that he's working his purposes out if he didn't do something that you expected him to then he has a reason and if he does something that you didn't expect him to do he has a reason he hasn't been overpowered by Satan the devil's not got God's arm up his back and he doesn't know how to get out of the dilemma God's not been caught sleeping God created the world by a simple word out of nothing everything has its first and ultimate cause in God

God's passion is for his own glory and he will use his power for that purpose and that might not always coincide with what we think that God should do to get himself glory and so I accept there's still questions I accept I can't really answer them all but I want to acknowledge that this doctrine of God's power does make us ask well why then and my best attempt at an answer is to say because he's God and he knows what's best and we need to trust him and secondly with so what I want to suggest that it makes a massive difference and encourages us as we begin to allow this doctrine of God's power to soak into our bones it doesn't just affect our understanding of

God it does that a reminder I know you know that God's powerful I'm just reminding you of that but think of the effect it has on your prayers if you believe that God is able to do anything in fact he's able to do far beyond all you can even imagine think about how that would affect your prayer life if you really believe that think about the faith that you can place in him think about what you could ask him for that perhaps yesterday you felt that you couldn't believe that God can do it accept that he can ask him to do it your prayers should be completely different when you believe that he is the God of the impossible I want to suggest as well it affects your attitude to every single situation in life particularly when it's bad but also when it's good I wonder what you're facing at the moment

[ 34 : 45 ] I wonder what it is that's going to hit your expecting tomorrow or perhaps you're going to go home and worry about perhaps there are people here that are going to go home tonight and they'll be tempted to just cry themselves to sleep because of some situation in their lives or there's something happened this week that you know nothing about at the moment but that will come from the blue as it seems and will be a real challenge to you remember this week that God is the God of the impossible for those things that are breaking your heart for the thing that doesn't seem to go away remember that the God that you trust is the God of the impossible every situation think about your evangelism your desire to tell other people about the Lord Jesus doesn't it make a difference when you believe that God is the God of the impossible that when people go to where you off to Cambridge sorry Richard yeah

Cambridge I should remember that shouldn't I when you're off to Cambridge when you're going out to the beach when you're walking around with tracks when you're speaking to a friend over a coffee believe that God can do the impossible there'll be people that you're thinking I'm sure I know there's no way that so-and-so is going to become a believer there's just no way there's no point even trying that's not a God of the impossible is it believe that God's able to save any and no one is too difficult no situation is too hard think about your attitude to ministry or service many of you I know will be engaged in service whether it's this church or if you're a visitor perhaps other churches and sometimes let's be honest it's hard sometimes we don't know how to face the next day sometimes it seems impossible we're thinking about what we've got to do and it all just seems too much or you're coming to the youth group and last week it was terrible and you're fearful what are they going to do this week when they turn up or the little child that you found really difficult to handle last week what are you going to do those instances remember that God is the God of the impossible so when you're serving the

Lord this week perhaps it's just something at home or perhaps it's something serving the church be aware that there's a mighty God strengthening you and upholding you and will guide you and help you in any situation that you're going to face it affects our sanctification our holiness a posh word for us becoming more and more like Jesus if we believe that God is the God of the impossible there's no habit that we have that's too entrenched there is no sin that's too grievous no situation that God cannot help us to face no temptation that God cannot help us resist what a transformation that would be if we set out into this next week believing that God can make us holy and help us and give us the strength to resist temptation to turn from that habit from feeling that that sin can't be forgiven God is able to do it let's just come back to this passage and I just want to remind you if you flick

over to

Genesis chapter 21 what happened Genesis chapter 21 and verses 1 and 2 now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said and 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 God made a promise to them it seemed absolutely impossible but God fulfilled his promise God is able to do immeasurably more than all we could ask or imagine believe him because he says so believe him because he's proved it in history believe him because he's proved it in your life and allow this truth truth to sink deep into your bones so that through this coming week you will be constantly remembering that you worship a God who's a God of the impossible let's pray father God we we worship you we thank you as we look back in our lives for every testimony that we have in our hearts of what you're able to do we thank you for the history of this church for the way you've led and guided and uphelded the people who have served you here over decades we thank you Lord God that as we look back through history we see testimony after testimony of your amazing power and Lord as we look ahead we pray that you would show and reveal your power afresh in our hearts and that Lord you would prove yourself not just to us but to the world by your great power we pray for a great turning to you in this place of

Whitby Lord would you get glory for yourself by bringing men women boys and girls in their hundreds to come to know Jesus as Lord we know Lord that that means that we need to do something about it but we can't do it without you we pray that you would turn people's hearts to you and we ask Lord about the things that are in our hearts that are burdens or problems or difficulties that we face challenges for the church perhaps Lord we come to you and remember that you're the God of the impossible these things are a small thing to you please Lord work out your purpose and help us to trust you in Jesus name we pray amen let's close our father God we thank you for all that you've reminded of us of tonight the way you've encouraged us that you're a mighty God able to do the impossible and we pray not only we would believe it for ourselves but as we leave we pray that your power the works of God would be on that our lips that people around us would hear us declaring your great power Lord that you might do great things in this world and get much glory for yourself in Jesus name we pray amen amen