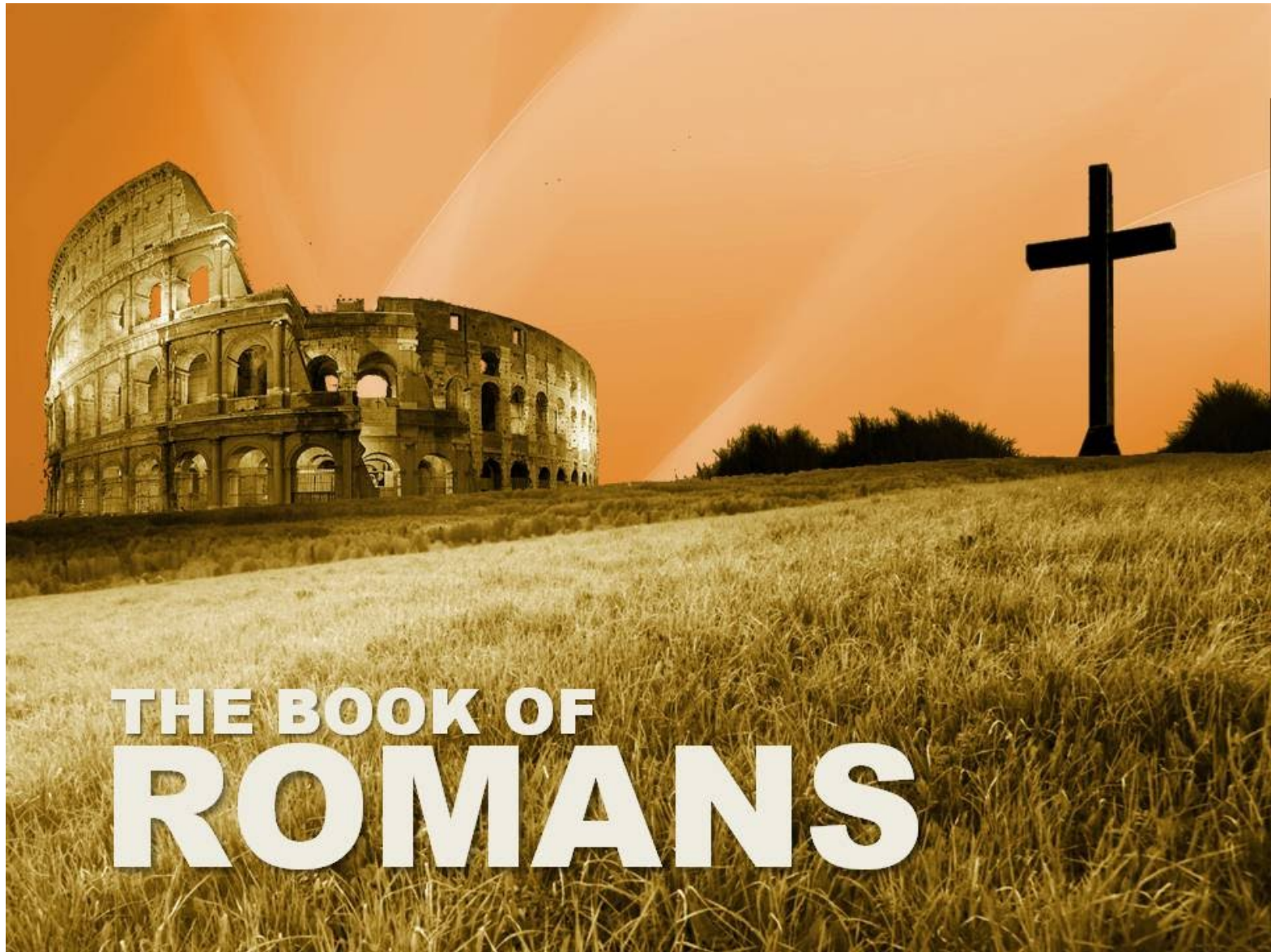


Rom 4:18-21 Abraham's Path of Faith



Last Week's Verses



¹³ For **the promise to Abraham** or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

¹⁴ For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified;

¹⁵ for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.

^{16a} For this reason *it* **[the promise]** is by faith, in order that *it* **[the promise]** may be in accordance with grace,

^{16b} so that **the promise** will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

¹⁷ (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, *even* God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.

13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.



The promise to Abraham or to his descendants [lit: the seed of him]

- Def: The promise is **that he** [Abraham] **would be heir of the world.**
- [this promise] **was not through a law** [system]
 - no system of rule keeping could fulfill this promise
- **but through a righteousness of faith**
 - Since there is no definite article, it's talking about the character of righteousness of faith.
 - Righteousness only comes by faith in what God has promised.

¹⁶ For this reason *it is* by faith, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,



- For this reason *it* [the promise] *is by* [ek] faith,
 - lit: it is out from faith as a source
 - The promise is only accessible via faith
- in order that *it* [the promise] *may be* in accordance with grace
 - God only operates by the principle of grace
- so that the promise will be guaranteed* to all the descendants [the seed]
- all = who are of Law & who are of the faith of Abraham

* firm, steadfast

¹⁷ (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.



as it is written, “A father of many nations have I made you”

- This is a quote from Gen 17:5b
- But your name shall be Abraham; For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.
- God gave the ability to father many nations to Abraham when he was already dead regarding his reproductive powers.*
- God summoned yet uncreated nations as He had summoned the yet uncreated cosmos, namely, with a word, in this case a promise.*

* Constable

Merryman's Observation on Rom 4:16-17



- Faith was made a condition of the promise so that the promise would be secured apart from works.
- The type of faith that Abraham had is the type of faith that the New Testament believer is to have.
- We now have the characterization of Abraham's faith in verses 17 to 25.
- Verse 17a now tells us the object of Abraham's faith – **even God**
- The merit is always in the object of faith.
- Now from verse 17b he is the God of the impossible:
 - **He gives life to the dead**
 - **Calls into being that which does not exist**

Today's Verses



¹⁸ 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.

18 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."



who [Abraham], **being beyond hope, upon the basis of hope believed** Wuest

- **being beyond hope** – what does this mean!
- this was Abraham's human perspective
- It was contrary to hope (as far as [man's] nature could give hope)*

[but Abraham] **upon the basis of hope believed**

upon the basis of

hope - *elpis* – favorable & confident expectation; when God is the object of our hope it is an absolute certainty

- rested on hope (that God could do what man could not)*

* Denny

18 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."



- So Abraham believed in the absolute certainty of God's word.
- 1 Peter 1:21 who through Him are believers in God,
--- so that your faith and hope are in God.

so that – with a purpose that

he [Abraham] might become a father of many nations

according to that which had been spoken,

“So shall your descendants be.”

- Gen 15:5 And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "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;

- Rearranging this verse we have

He [Abraham] **contemplated his own body**

contemplated - *katanoeō* - to consider attentively, fix one's eyes or mind upon (aorist tense)

- so this was an event in Abraham's life
- so Abraham gathered the facts – as explained in 19b

without becoming weak in faith

- not being weak with respect to his faith Wuest
- this phrase modifies “He contemplated” (or considered)
- but these considerations did not sway his faith



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;

- The remainder of this verse tells us what were Abraham's considerations:

1st – (his own body) now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old

lit: already having been dead – perfect, passive

- That is, so far as procreative functions were concerned, Abraham's body had died, (ceased to function)*
- and was as a result in a condition in which it would stay dead (never function again).*

* Wuest

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;



2nd - and the deadness of Sarah's womb

- The deadness of Sarah's womb is described as follows:
- Gen 18:11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing.
- Heb 11:11 By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life.
- Gen 17:17 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?"

²⁰ yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,



yet or but - *de* - in contrast

he did not waver in unbelief

did not waver - *diakrinō* - to judge between two, thus,
to vacillate between two opinions or decisions

- Vincent says the word [*diakrino*] implies a mental struggle. Robertson translates, "He was not divided in his mind by unbelief."
- But we do see his struggles in Gen 17:18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!"

with respect to the promise of God

- The promise of God was Abraham's focus.

²⁰ yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,



but grew strong in faith

grew strong – *endunamaō* - to make strong, endue with strength (aorist, passive)

- lit: was empowered
- This was an event in Abraham's life and God did it.
- This strength is qualified by the words **in faith** [with respect to faith].*
- That is, **his faith** was strengthened in God to meet his impossible difficulty with a miracle.*
- Isaac was the result of a biological miracle performed by God in answer to Abraham's faith.*
- The glory would therefore be to God.*

* Wuest



^{20c} giving glory to God ²¹ and being fully assured, that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.

[by] giving glory to God and being fully assured

- This was what Abraham did in response to God's strengthening.

being fully assured - *plērophoreō* - to bring in full measure, to fulfill, also signifies to be fully assured (aorist, passive)

- This was an event in Abraham's life and God did it.
- He believed despite the knowledge that what God had promised could not happen naturally. Constable

that what God had promised, He [God] was able also to perform

- Heb 11:19 He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

Mc Calley's observations on verses 18 to 21



1. God waited until all hope was gone before He fulfilled His promise – Gen 15:6 (hope), Gen 17:17 (no hope)
2. Isaac - means laughter – their frailty and God's faithfulness
3. God credited Abraham for such great faith – but consider:
 - Faith is not the absence of doubt – Mark 9:24
 - Faith is the mastery of doubt – 2 Cor 12:9-10
 - Every saint has had doubts – 2 Cor 12:8
4. Faith is not deciding what we want and then expecting God to deliver it.
5. Faith is believing His word and walking in it.
6. Faith is believing God promises made by God.
7. Faith is no mere hopefulness but confidence in His Word.

Final Thoughts -----

John Bunyan's *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ* gives us his contrasts of faith and unbelief:



1. Faith believes the Word of God, but unbelief questions the certainty of the same.
5. Faith will help the soul to wait, though God defers to give, but unbelief will snuff and throw up all, if God makes any tarrying.
6. Faith will give comfort in the midst of fears, but unbelief causes fears in the midst of comforts.
8. Faith makes great burdens light, but unbelief makes light ones intolerably heavy.
9. Faith helps us when we are down, but unbelief throws us down when we are up.

Final Thoughts -----



10. Faith brings us near to God when we are far from Him, but unbelief puts us far from God when we are near to Him.

11. Faith puts a man under grace, but unbelief holds him under wrath.

14. Faith gives us peace and comfort in our souls, but unbelief works trouble and tossing like the restless waves of the sea.

16. By faith we have our life in Christ's fullness, but by unbelief we starve and pine away.

19. Faith makes the ways of God pleasant and admirable, but unbelief makes them heavy and hard.

23. By faith Peter walked on the water, but by unbelief he began to sink.