

The Power of God

By Paris Reidhead*

Romans, Chapter 4, for a brief meditation before we go to prayer. Romans, Chapter 4. I'm going to begin reading with the 16th verse. It is extremely difficult to know where to begin, because this is a narrative concerning the Father of the faithful, those who are full of faith, and we would like to have it all before us. But let us seek to remember as we read what proceeds in the preceding verses. Verse 16:

"Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all. (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. (Notice this definition of God who is the author of faith) calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification"(Rom. 4:16-25).

Now if any of you are using another version than the King James that 19th verse is extremely interesting. If you are using the Authorized Version it is even clearer. In the text itself the other version says, And being not weak in faith (Now listen carefully, if you are looking at the King James to what I am saying. It is extremely interesting.) "And being not weak in faith, he considered his own body now dead, and the deadness of Sarah's womb." Do you see? Now there are two points of view. The one point of view is to say, There aren't any problems. Put on pink glasses, and go through life as though they did not exist. And this is what is implied here to some degree that he did not even consider his deadness, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb. Well that is true, and that is why it is put that way by the translators, because he did not let it stand in the way is what they were saying. He did not let it stand in the way. He knew it, but he did not let it stand in the way.

Now reading it superficially, that would appear to say why he didn't even look at the problem, he didn't even look at the difficulties. He just set his sails right on into the wind, and didn't even realize the wind was blowing against him. And he went right through against the wind. But that is not what it says. It says that he, realizing that he was past the time of giving life, and Sarah was past the time of giving life, that still, he still... Do you see the difference? The one is, well just ignore it; and the other is to say, that's the problem, that's the difficulty, but God... but God.

And this is exactly what the Lord wants us to teach regardless of whether you accept the King James or the Authorized translation; the same is to be inferred by you. He must have known it obviously, because he was a man living in reality, and he knew his age, and he also knew Sarah's age; and he did not stagger. He did not waver. He pressed through. In either case it comes out the same way, that it did not cause him to be swerved from the intent and purpose of his heart.

Now notice why he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief. Why? Because in verse 21 he was fully persuaded that what God had promised He was able also to perform. This was the ground of his faith. This was the ground of his confidence.

Now there are two things implied in this, and your mind must be satisfied about both. The first, the most obvious, is that God is able, that God is able. If you have any questions as to God's ability, then of course there is real grounds for wavering, or if not wavering, complete unbelief. Is God able to meet this problem? Is He able to meet this need? I think very few of us stagger here. I do not think that any of us are quite so filled with skepticism as to question God's ability. This is not the place that touches us primarily.

If I were to ask any of you, Do you believe God is able?, you would say, Yes, He is able. He is able. But notice that this is not all that it says. It didn't just say, He believed that God is able. He was fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able... And this is where the question rises in your heart, and this is why I feel that we must learn how to pray about large problems by our practice with the smaller problems. After all, if you just wait until you come to a momentous problem, and then you begin to pray, there isn't very much encouragement. But if you are prepared to face each issue, that is of consequence, on the basis of finding out what God has promised and what His will is, you have the practice you need when you come to the momentous issue. This is what is involved in his being the father of the faithful.

God dealt with this man by speaking to him, saying, Get up and leave your father's house, and your kindred. And he made a mistake. He sinned really. He disobeyed the Lord. He took his father's house with him, and his kindred with him, and he got into trouble. And seven years at Heron he had a postgraduate course in learning how to do what God says, learning to obey when the Lord spoke. And apparently, this had helped him considerably. Then along the way he sent some other problems. He had a problem you remember when he went to a certain king and said about Sarah, She's my sister. Now this was true, if you wanted to go back and stretch his genealogy; she was his half-sister once removed, and so on. But she was his wife. That was the primary relationship. And the other was so far removed from the fact that it was actually a lie, because that was not the relationship in which he had carried her with him as his sister but as his wife. And God taught Abraham through a pagan king — it is awfully hard to learn from a... much easier to learn from experience than it is to learn from a pagan, you know. Much easier to have someone just have the grinding of the abrasion of experience but to have a pagan, come to you, a king such as this come, and teach as he taught, that was pretty hard. So he did not come by this easily.

Then you recall he had a problem with Hagar. He could not listen to Sarai too much, because she said, Well look, you've got to fulfill the Lord's Word. He promised, and you have got to decide to do it for Him and work with Him, and the world has been cursed ever since by the conflict between the descendants of Jacob and Ishmael. That he learned. He has learned a great deal you know, this man. And now when it comes to the matter of looking over the past, it was not just an unbroken experience any more than yours will be. And if you do not understand that God is going to teach you how to meet today's need by yesterday's failure you have misunderstood the sanctifying grace of God.

Maude Groom, a teacher I had in Minneapolis at Bible School years ago, said, "Paris, listen. One thing you want to remember Everything of the past, your successes and your failures, God in His grace is going to change and use to help you to live this moment to His glory, your sins, your failures, and your successes, He will change to help you to live this moment to His glory. That is the sanctifying grace of God that makes all things work together to His purpose." And I am confident that in this last issue he waits, and there is Ishmael running around the camp, and there is the friction between Hagar and Sarah, and now God begins to quicken his heart, and there is the rising beam of expectancy, and then Sarah is with child; Abraham looks back, and he sees that this was not an easy road.

This isn't an easy road, and I want to say this to you today, that the road to persevering prayer and prevailing prayer and faithful prayer is never an easy road. Never. If you read this, and just think that Abraham jumped from being a vital, worshipping pagan into a man that was filled with faith, you have forgotten the history. He had to be put into the grinder. There was abrasion. There was cutting. There were failures. There was heartache, And estrangements, and all of this went into making the father of the faithful. And if it went into making him, I think it is going to go into making me, and it is going to go into making you. And that is why I think we should never allow the disappointments of the past, or the failures of the past, or the sins of the past, or the successes of the past to become barriers. Oh, how often it happens. Well I tried and it didn't work. What's the use?

You know I have talked to you about these five deadly sins, five deadly 'd's.' Disappointment, and discouragement, and disillusionment and depression and defeat. Abraham could have stopped right back there at Heron, spent seven years, taken up his place in the community in Ur of the Chaldees. But he absolutely refused to let the failures of the past stand in the way of what God had for him tomorrow. And thus he has become to us the father of the faithful, and you have to have the same attitude. God is able to do what He has promised.

Now my responsibility is to find out what He has promised, not to Abraham but to me. God did not promise to give me the land from the Euphrates and Tigris to the Mediterranean. He promised to give it to Abraham. What has He promised me? Do you see? The Bible teaches us that God will speak. He spoke to Abraham, and so I can expect God will speak to me. But I have got to find out... That is why we have got to pray about things, and get experience in the little things, and capitalize in terms of our prayer life in everything. It all becomes part of it. You have got to learn what God is promising you, not just what He promised Abraham, not what He promised Samuel, not what He promised Paul, but what He promised you. I can imagine that Paul spent a whole night in prayer. O God, what is your will for this ship? We are in danger, Lord. They are cutting off the ropes. They are cutting away the spars, they are emptying the holds. What is Your will for this ship? He had to find out what God had promised. He knew God was able but he did not know what He had promised. Do you see? All the experience of the past taught him God had an answer in his situation, God was able to meet that situation; but he had to find out how God related himself to Him in his prayer life. And I am confident that Paul – It clearly says, “he was in fasting and prayer” (1 Cor. 7:5).

Then he came. He could not have come the day before, because the angel had not spoken to him. He could not have come two days before that, because the angel had not spoken. He had to find out what God had promised. And angel of the Lord stood by him during the night and said, If you do not leave the ship you will be safe. Same ship. This is what God had promised. He knew, he knew, he knew.

And I believe, dear friends, that when we come to matter sin our own life or the lives of others, or in the life of the church, our first prayer is to read the Word until it begins to rise up within us, and we see that God is able, and then we see what He has done in other situations, and we press through until we have some leading as to what he is going to do in our situation.

That is why sometimes when people come to me and say, Will you pray? I'll say, Yes, I'll pray about how I should pray. You see. It is not enough to say, I'll pray, If it be Thy will; that is not the end of it. That is what they have got to pray about for the first three days. What is Thy will? Do you see? That is the first prayer. What is Thy will? Then when we have found out what His will is, then we say, Now I know this is what it is, because this is God's will, this is what God has promised. That is why so many prayers are not answered. Because we have not pressed through to know the will of God, to know what He has promised us.

Oh, that we can learn from the father of the faithful that God has a will, God is willing show His will, that the first thing we have to do is to pray through until we know the will of God and know the promise of God. Then when we have this sure and certain promise of God we hold on to it, regardless of what comes, knowing God has promised.

Well, I like that, that he had fully persuaded of what He had promised He has able to perform. Now you have got to settle the first. He is able to perform it. You have got to settle the second, waiting on Him, and watching to find out what He has promised. Then when you know what He has promised you can proceed with it. I am confident that in the New Testament when they prayed they knew what was going to happen. We spent a long time some months ago, talking about Paul, Peter and John going into the Temple. Do you know what I have come to conclude since then? That they had been praying for many weeks, and even months about how to pray for this poor man at the Temple that they saw every time that they went in for prayer. And they did not know until that day they knew what God had promised. And I would rather be pressing my own heart, saying, Now look, fellow, you had better spend a little more time finding out what God has promised in this situation rather than just turning it back to Him and saying, If it be Thy will. You had better be prepared to seek God's mind and seek His heart, and seek His Word, and wait before Him until you know what His will is. Then you will know how to pray.

Now I hope that is as helpful to you as it is to me. But it really has been something quite significant in my heart in the last few weeks, because I have had to re-enroll as a candidate as a student in the school of prayer. And this has been pressing home. What He promised He is able to do. We have got to find out what He has promised to me in my situation at this time. That is going to be our first prayer. When we find that out, then we press right through on it.

All right. Well, that satisfies my heart. I think I know something of what He wants in my own prayer life. There are some things He has promised, He has promised for us as a people, that if we would call upon Him He would hear and answer, if we would forsake our sins, He would forgive us, He would heal our land, He is a covenant keeping God. Many wonderful things He has promised us. And I think tonight that some of these promises ought to encourage our hearts. Perhaps we could take just a few

minutes now and some of the general promises of the Word of God that are there upon which we base our approach to our particular needs. Would you like to do that for about three minutes and refresh our hearts with some of the promises from the Word of God? General promises that encourage us to seek the Lord, and we will go directly to prayer...

Now, our Father, teach us not only to pray but how to pray. Release us in prayer. We plead the precious Blood of Christ. Take liberty for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Stand against the defeated foe on the grounds of the victory of Calvary. Give to Thy dear people delight in sharing together an intercessory desire as we wait before Thee now. In Jesus Name.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Wednesday Evening, March 6, 1963 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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