

Part II: Abraham's Shadows, God's Reality, Rom 4:18-20; although Impotent Abraham Did Not Stagger in Unbelief; His Horrendous Decision

Part II. Abraham's Shadows, God's Reality

Romans 4:18 - Abraham, who beyond having confidence of sexual ability, believed in the confidence of its fulfillment in order that he might become the father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "So shall your descendants become" [**Genesis 15:5**].

v. 19 - And so, not becoming weak in that faith, he completely understood his own body which had received sexual death when he was about a hundred years old, and the barrenness of Sarah's womb.

1. Abraham was not discouraged by his sexual impotence but instead considered God's integrity as more real to him than his physical circumstance.
2. Abraham was ninety-nine years of age and had been sexually dead for thirteen years and Sarah was well-past menopause at age ninety. Both were sexually dead but Abraham came to believe in the promise of God that he would bear a son by Sarah:

Genesis 17:19 - But God said, " ... 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."

3. Because Abraham had faith in the divine integrity that backed this promise, he had more confidence in the reality of its fulfillment than in the reality of the fact he was impotent.

Romans 4:20 -With reference to the promise of God, Abraham did not stagger [οὐ διακρίνω, *ou diakrinō*] in unbelief but was invigorated [ἐνδυναμώω, *endunamoō*] by power poured into him by means of doctrine, giving glory to God.

4. The key phrase in this verse is "Abraham did not stagger," the aorist passive indicative of the verb:

διακρίνω, *diakrinō* -

to have self-doubt and therefore "to stagger, waver, hesitate, deviate." The prefix *dia-* indicates that the best translation is "self-doubt."

The prefix *δια-* strengthens the idea of separating included in the root word *κρίνω* [*krinō*]. Thus *διακρίνω* extends the lexical content of *κρίνω* considerably. *Διακρίνω* with the meaning *doubt* has theological significance in the passages where it appears in opposition to *faith* or firm trust. In Romans 4:20 *διακρίνω* is included in the contrasting description of the faith of Abraham.⁴

I have chosen to stay with the King James's word "staggered" because its definition brings into view Abraham's previous involvement with Hagar and the sad outcome of that ill-conceived ménage à trois. Because he doubted the divine promise of an heir, Abraham staggered in unbelief but on this occasion with the addition of the negative conjunction **οὐ, *ou***, we find that "Abraham staggered not."

aorist: Constative, contemplates the action in its entirety and regardless of its duration, gathers it into a single whole. In the face of the hopeless situation of sexual death, Abraham continued to have perfect courage, faith, and patience. Confidence in the integrity that backed the divine promise provided for him courage toward his circumstance.

⁴ Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (eds.). *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 1:305-6.

passive: Abraham received the action of not being staggered. Therefore, it was doctrine in his soul that provided the ability not to stagger, not Abraham acting independently.

indicative: Declarative; it is a historical reality that Abraham was never impatient, frustrated, or disturbed during the elapsed time between believing the promise and the delivery of Isaac in Genesis 21:2.

5. The battle over the line of Christ was won by Abraham's ability not to stagger. Demon influence caused Sarai to recommend that Abram sire the promised son through Hagar. Abram was more than willing to agree and quickly consummated the union.
6. This horrendous decision brought about the birth of Ishmael. It has led to a sequence of events that will not reach its conclusion until the Armageddon Campaign is halted at the Second Advent. The sons of Hagar unleashed the sword on the sons of Isaac and this war has raged from that day to this. It is gaining in both momentum and intensity and will not be resolved until the Lord Himself permanently halts the conflict.
7. But all antagonists need a protagonist and that is found in the person of Isaac. For Isaac to enter into world history, Abram had to have faith in the promise of God that he would have a son from his own loins.
8. Abraham suffered from sexual death. He was impotent but once he had more faith in the reality of God's promise than in the reality of his physical condition, the battle was won and Isaac was conceived.
9. Abraham's impotence was no more than a shadow on the wall. God's promise was a far greater reality. The former was a current visible reality while the latter was a future invisible promise. Abraham placed his faith in the future promise instead of the present reality.
10. In Operation Hagar, Abram staggered in unbelief. For Abraham this meant failure to function under the faith-rest drill. In Operation Sarah he staggered not through unbelief but rather "was strong in faith," the aorist passive indicative of the verb:

ἐνδυναμῶ, *endunamoō* - "to become strong" "invigorated"

There are two stems in the Greek for strength or power: (1) **δυνα-, *duna-***: the ability or capacity to perform something, and (2) **ἰσχυ-, *ischu-***: to have inherent power. Here we have the prefix **ἐν- *en-*** plus **δυναμῶ, *dunamoō*** and translated "to become strong," "to be strengthened," "to be made strong."

Abraham does not have inherent power to deal with this situation. The power that he has comes from a mental attitude of faith. But faith is transitive and must have an object and that object is the doctrine in his soul, the instrumental of means from the noun **πίστις, *pistis***.

Faith can have three translations: (1) If its verb is in the active voice then it means "faith," "trust," or "confidence." (2) If the verb is causal it shows "faithfulness." (3) If the verb is passive then it refers to that which is believed, i.e., Bible doctrine.

Here the verb is the aorist *passive* indicative of *endunamoō* therefore his strength is produced not by himself but by resident doctrine in his soul.

aorist: Culminative; views the function of the Grace Apparatus for Perception in its entirety but emphasizes the existing results: Abraham's inventory of doctrine available for recall and application.

passive: Abraham received the action of spiritual invigoration from resident doctrine that resulted in power being poured into him.

indicative: Declarative, the reality of the power of doctrine invigorating Abraham.

11. Abraham did not stagger in unbelief but rather had power poured into him by means of doctrine resident in his soul.

12. The power to face challenges, adversities, exigencies, and even disasters is not naturally available to the human mind. It is something that has to be acquired but can only be acquired through faith.
13. Faith identifies a source of truth into which it can place its trust. That source is God and He makes His truth available through His Word. Abraham believed the promise given to him by the Lord. He was confident it was true even in the face of the visible, present reality that he was sexually dead.
14. It was positive volition to the promise of God that poured power into Abraham. Doctrine is the power source. But this power is not activated unless it is accessed by faith. The power of the Word is always available but the issue in the angelic conflict is volition and the means of acquiring knowledge of the truth is to use one's free will to express faith in the Word of God.
15. Abraham did not have the divine operating assets that are available to the Church Age believer, such as the indwelling, filling, and teaching ministries of the Holy Spirit.
16. But he did have imputed righteousness and therefore was assigned a special mission: to extend the bloodline of Messiah that started with Adam. That bloodline was now being narrowed to the line of Abraham and then Isaac and, later, to Jacob; to be narrowed further to the tribe of Judah; and restricted finally to the house of David, specifically to the lines of Solomon and Nathan, culminating with Joseph and Mary respectively.
17. Abraham came to understand the part he was to play through the means of communication available to a believer in the dispensation of the Gentiles: teaching angels, visions, dreams, and, primarily for him, direct discourse with Jesus Christ through theophanies.
18. The end result for Abraham was not only acquiring this knowledge from the Lord but also having its power poured into him for application under pressure.

Romans 4:20 -With reference to the promise of God, Abraham did not stagger in unbelief but was invigorated by power poured into him by means of doctrine, giving glory to God.

19. Giving glory to God is the result of learning doctrine and applying it to the fulfillment of the divine plan. The believer is blessed exceedingly abundantly, God's plan moves forward, and because all is accomplished in grace, He is the One that receives the credit, i.e., the glory.
20. When we learn biblical truth its impact to us is the power it has to offer guidance, instruction, power, protection, and confidence with regard to the circumstances of life. This is all accomplished through grace.
21. Grace is all that God is free to do for us based on the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The believer has an overabundance of grace blessings available to him but they are only accessed through faith.
22. Our duty is to serve God. We do that by learning the Word through faith and applying it to our lives in service to God's will. All the benefits that result from this are through God's grace.
23. Therefore, since all is the result of grace, all that we do in serving Him means He receives the glory, that is, credit for the result. This idea is brought out in several of the Psalms where the writer uses the phrase, "Bless the Lord."
24. The word "bless" is בָּרַךְ *barach*. When directed toward God, as are several verses in Psalms 115 and 145, it means "to salute," a gesture of reciprocity toward God for the grace blessings He bestowed upon the psalmist.
25. The word *barach* comes from the bending of the knee to one in authority. As commoners bow before the king as a show of respect and submission, so also does the soldier salute his commanding officer as a show of respect and honor.
26. When Abraham remained steadfast, having been made strong by the power of doctrine poured into him, he was in effect saluting the Lord. He had learned the Word, he had trusted it, he applied it, and he did not stagger, waver, or stumble.

27. This is our duty as well. People may exclaim "Praise the Lord" in an emotional response to God's grace, but the real salute is found in having absolute confidence in the Word so that it becomes your absolute source of power for application to life and circumstances.
28. For Abraham, he had more faith in the future fulfillment of God's promise than the present cave-wall reality regarding his sexual death. This is brought out in the next verse:

Romans 4:21 -And having been fully convinced that what He himself had promised He is able also to accomplish.