

He staggered not

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[0 : 00] We may now read together portions of God's words as you will find them first in the book of Genesis chapter 15. The book of Genesis and the 15th chapter. We may now consider together as we shall be enabled words you will find in the second portion of scripture we read together.

Romans chapter 4. And we shall read again from the 20th verse. Romans 4 at verse 20.

So therefore Abraham's case is brought forward by the apostle to prove the doctrine he had set out at length in the preceding part of this epistle.

Namely the doctrine that has been justified by faith alone.

Now that doctrine requires much proof. Not because there is any juviety about it.

[2 : 04] But because it is the last doctrine that the natural man wishes to believe.

The last doctrine that he will believe. In the preceding chapter, Paul tells us that both Jews and Gentiles are guilty before God.

And the law serves the purpose of bringing all in guilty.

With every mouth stopped in the presence of the Lord. And the law serves the purpose of the Lord.

And the law serves the purpose of the Lord.

And the law serves the purpose of the Lord. So as to what is past, man is guilty. As to what is to come, he is unable, utterly unable to remove his guilt.

[3 : 20] Or to bear this condition in any way. He is brought in guilty. And by the works of the law, no flesh can be justified before God.

But lest any should think that this was new teaching. Paul cites both the case of David and the case of Abraham.

Reminding his readers that this was God's dealings with men from the beginning.

From the time that man fell. And grace was exercised in the world. This was the only way in which a sinner could become accepted of God.

Or acceptable to God. In verse 6 he says, David also, Describing the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputed righteousness without works.

[4 : 47] Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, And whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the blessed man. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. This is the blessed man.

The man whose sins are forgiven. Whose iniquities are forgiven. Whose sins are covered.

And as an outstanding case of this justification. The apostle goes on to cite the case of Abraham.

And in the 13th verse he says, The promise that he should be heir of the world. Was not given to Abraham or to his seed through the law.

[5 : 52] But through the righteousness of faith. The righteousness which God imputes.

And which is received by faith alone. Now he comes on in the case of Abraham.

To describe. The type of faith. By which the righteousness of God is received.

And he tells us. That Abraham received the promise.

Through faith. Through faith. But he tells us more. That the faith by which Abraham received the promise.

[6 : 51] Was in degree outstanding. He doesn't mean that the faith by which Abraham received the promise.

Which Abraham received the promise. Is different in nature. To the faith. Of other believers. But he tells us.

That as to degree. To measure. It was outstanding. And then he goes into detail. Concerning this faith.

And he sums it up by saying. He staggered not. At the promise of God. Through unbelief. But was strong in faith. Giving glory to God. Being fully persuaded. [7 : 51] That. What he had promised. He was able. To perform. Now for a little this morning. We may look at the contrast. That are. Set before us. In these words.

There is first of all. The contrast between. Faith. And unbelief. He staggered not. At the promise of God. Through unbelief. He staggered not. At the promise of God. Through unbelief. What else did he do? He was strong. In faith. And in these words. In these words. There is first of all. The contrast between. Faith. And unbelief. Church. For a little this verse. And incomprehensible. Most of us. After down. How that Entäoll. For a little. For this universe. First. Jesus. For theOW. For the!!!! Faith. For the bikes. For example. For. For. We are 100. We are's alone. Of free. [8 : 45] Through. And we are 100. And we are 100. Turks. For. Now that is the basic contrast. But there are the results. Accueing from that contrast there is this he didn't stagger. What else did he do? He was strong. Staggering is contrasted with being strong as fairness contrasted with unbelief. And as he was strong we are told that he gave glory to God. The faith by which Abraham was strong was a faith that gave glory to God. [9 : 50] And then again he tells us why his faith was strong. He was fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to as war.

Now there is the basic contrast that between faith and unbelief. He staggered not at the promise of God to unbelief. Now what is unbelief? It is the refusal of the creature to believe what God does say. it is to turn it round and look at it from another angle it is the creature telling God that he is a liar. He that believed not God or that believes not God had made him a liar. God that doesn't mean of course that the creature of unbelief makes a liar of God actually. [11 : 30] But it does mean that the creature is treating God as if he were a liar. He that believes that believes not God makes God a liar.

Now it doesn't matter what what refinement we may bring in to tone this doubt. The fact remains that unbelief is this attitude of mind towards God. The attitude of mind that refuses to credit God. That refuses to believe God. that is not influenced by what God does say. But what the apostle here brings specially before us is unbelief. As it causes staggering. He staggered not not at the promise of God through unbelief. And there he lays it down clearly and plainly that the only reason for staggering at the promise of God is unbelief. [13 : 11] there is no other reason whatsoever. And when he says he staggered not he means that he doubted not.

He didn't doubt the promise of God through unbelief. He didn't waver. Now we know that he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven to and fro and tossed. Now to and fro means backwards and forwards. So there are two things in the context which gives us to the clue to the meaning of staggering or of going backwards and forwards. And the two words are against faith and envy or against hope and in hope. [14 : 30] Who against hope believed in hope? Against hope and in hope?

Now this was reason enough to stagger him. Something against him and something for him. And that is exactly what causes staggering or what causes going backwards and forwards against hope. That was enough in itself to drive him back. In hope was enough to drive him forward. And these two had to be taken into consideration against hope. That is to say there were certain grounds on which there was no hope. Absolutely none. No hope at all. hope. From a consideration of the natural and the ordinary there was no ground whatsoever to hope. [16 : 02] To hope as to the fulfillment of God's promise that he should have a son. That in him all the nations of the world would be blessed. And the most final terminology is used concerning this. we know that there is nothing more final among men than death. That is the last word in finality.

Hence we say where there's life there's hope. But where there's death there's no hope. Once death lays his hand upon the key to that is absolutely final there's no more that anyone can do.

There's no more hope. However sick a person may be as long as there is a spark of life there is some ground for hope.

[17 : 24] But once that is gone once that spark is extinguished there's no more hope. This is final absolutely final.

Well that is exactly what the apostle says of Abraham that his body was now dead. Dead. No hope.

But us over against that we read that Abraham hoped in the one who quickeneth the dead.

He believed God who quickeneth the dead and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

No hope. Not only was the fulfillment of the promise improbable it was absolutely impossible.

[18 : 44] and when the improbable merges into the impossible that is the death of hope.

Now there was we saying no hope whatever for the fulfillment of the promise or anything that reason could grasp or anything that experience could lay hold of.

All was dead. Absolutely dead. Against hope. But there is the term in hope.

He believed in hope. That doesn't mean of course that he believed in his own hope. That his own hope was the ground of his belief.

Oh no. But the belief which he had in God gave him hope. What God?

[19 : 57] The God who quickeneth the dead, who calleth the things that are not as though they were.

dead. No other God could make this case now but the God who can bring life out of death. The God who is Lord of death.

the God who can rebuke death. And not only so but this God in quickening the dead calleth the things that are not as if they were.

Now what are these things? The things that are not God and God is calling them as if they were.

Well various explanations have been given of that but we take it that what is here meant is this the things that are not and yet are for what the apostle does say actually is this he calleth the things not being as being.

He calls the things that have not been as having been. Not as if they had but as having. Now what are the things that have not yet have been.

[21 : 55] While we take it that the apostle here is directing us to the purpose of God what hasn't yet come to pass in God's purpose.

purpose. It hasn't it is not yet it hasn't yet been executed as the catechism puts it the execution of God's decrees.

it it is the execution of the decree that brings into being what God purposed.

But then what God purposed is already in being that is in the purpose of God. It has been in the purpose of God.

it has not been in the execution of the purpose as yet but it has been in God's purpose.

[23 : 02] The decrees of God that is eternal purpose is eternal purpose and what is in that purpose has been in that purpose although as yet it has not come into being in this world.

For instance God purposed to create man. No man's creation was in the purpose of God and it had been in the purpose of God but it didn't have been in this world until God actually created man.

It was when he executed his decree when he put it in effect that man came into being. No God calls the things that haven't yet happened.

He calls the things that have not been in the sense of having happened in this life in this world. He calls them yet as having been in his own purpose.

He calls the things not having been as being. And of course it is on that that the faith of Abraham rested.

[24 : 27] It is to that that the faith of Abraham clung. What did God say? Come and look at the heavens.

Look at the stars. Look at the sand on the seashore. So shall thy seed be. But Abraham had no seed.

Ask it. No. But in the purpose of God his seed was to be as the sand of the sea.

And on this the faith we say of Abraham rested. It wasn't what God was to do. It was on the purpose of God which had not yet been executed.

It was on that that he rested. And while there was much to push him back and make him stagger yet he staggered not through unbelief.

[25 : 39] Why? He rested his whole weight upon God. The God who quickens the dead and who calls the things that have no being as as having be.

He didn't go backwards and forwards. Wondering today if this was to be so and believing tomorrow that it was to be so then wondering all over again what was going to happen.

He staggered now through unbelief. Now we say that it is unbelief alone that is responsible for making one stagger.

At least that's what the apostle says here. If he had staggered he would have staggered through unbelief. No unbelief is related directly to the promise of God.

No one can have unbelief but in the light of what God says. If God hadn't spoken unbelief would be impossible.

[27 : 17] There would be no such thing as unbelief. Whatever else there would be there certainly would be no unbelief. But unbelief is the sinful attitude of man towards the God who has spoken.

And especially towards the God who has promised. God promised Abraham that his seed would be as the star of the sea.

as the stars of heaven and as the sand of the sea. God promised this to Abraham. Now seeing God's book Abraham was placed in the position of either believing or not believing.

God and everyone is in the same position. When God speaks man cannot help.

It is certainly impossible for him but to take up an attitude either of faith or of unbelief. there can't be no neutrality.

[28 : 41] Man cannot say it is immaterial to me whether God speaks or not. That itself of course is an attitude of unbelief.

He must either believe or not believe. now we remind ourselves again of the fact that it is the measure of Abraham's faith that is here brought before us in particular.

Certainly its nature is brought before us but it is the measure of it. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief.

What else did he do? He was strong in faith. He not only had faith but he was strong in faith and it was the strength of his faith that overcame the power of unbelief and nothing else can overcome unbelief but faith.

now here we have not told or the special subject under consideration is not the salvation of Abraham although it reverts back back to that it is not the salvation of Abraham now what about the faith that saves or the faith that justifies must it be so strong as that there will be no staggering through unbelief is this the only type or rather the only measure of faith by which a soul is saved now again and again we said and we repeat the very nature of faith is that it can come under attack now if you go back to the 15th chapter of

[31 : 32] Genesis we see there that even Abraham's faith was clouded to a degree he had had the promise of a son but then he says to God what wilt thou give me seeing I go childless and the silly years of Damascus is my age then God repeated the promise and it is at the repetition of the promise that we read Abraham believed God and it was accounted unto him for righteousness now we read in the scripture not only of strong faith but of weak faith as well not only of great faith but of little faith as well now we know that faith however weak however are vacillating it may be faith is saving faith still the least degree of saving faith is saving the least degree of saving faith will bring us soul to heaven why well first of all the least degree of saving faith lays hold of

Christ and Christ becomes the righteousness of that soul so that the one having the least degree of faith is as righteous as the one having the highest degree of faith because little faith has Christ for his righteousness and great faith can have no more the most trembling believer in the world is as righteous as Abraham was but while the least degree of saving faith will bring us all to heaven it won't bring the soul so comfortably or so triumphantly to heaven as a greater measure of faith will and what is still more little faith while it gives glory to

God doesn't give the glory to God that great faith does if there is anything plainly written on the page of scripture it is this that there are different degrees of faith take Peter for instance when he said to the Lord ask me to come unto thee walking on the sea and the Lord said come and Peter came out of the boat and walked on the sea walked on the water but when he looked and saw the wind boisterous he was afraid and he began to sink and then his cry is

Lord save me and the Lord comes and brings him back into the boat and he says to him why didst thou fear oh thou of little things it it wasn't the strength of the wind or or the tempestuousness of the waves that made Peter sink or that led him to sink what then did it wasn't the wind neither was it the waves it was his little faith and it is to that his attention is directed oh thou what little faith and that the sea stormy no no he directs attention to this to his faith oh thou what little faith and again and again we read of degrees of faith take again take again at the other end the woman the syrophenician woman to whom

Christ said oh woman great is thou faith be unto you as as thou hast believed great as thy faith there are degrees in faith but to be strong in faith is not to stagger at the promise of God no one may have faith and stagger and stagger much and what he needs in that connection is more faith Lord increase of faith he may stagger and stagger again and again now as to his justification he may feel his hold of

[38 : 59] Christ slipping again and again but it is not his hold of Christ that counts it is Christ's hold of him and that grip never slackens the least degree of saving faith takes Christ and the sinner into a relationship that cannot be broke the sinner may stagger he may be endowed he may be cast down he may say I am lost again all that but that is not due to the nature of justification it is due to the measure of his faith the measure of his faith and now we say faith is exercised towards the

God who speaks the God who promises now this is a question to whom are the promises made you might say to Abraham and to his seed you might say to the elect of God all all correct but that is not the immediate answer to whom are the promises made to those who believe him and to everyone who believes him see how beautiful is the apostle that conclusion and another here it was written not for his sake only but for our sake also to whom it shall be imputed when and how if we believe on him that raised up

Jesus from the dead now hundreds and thousands of people have tormented themselves at this very point say is the promise of God made unto me is it made was it not made to such and such a one or is it not made in such and such a context now all that is true but that is beside the point a man's immediate reaction to the promise of God ought not to start in heaven above or on the earth beneath but it ought to start with himself the question is not is the promise made to me that's not the question the first question is this do I believe the promise that's the first question if you believe it it is huge it shall be imputed to us who believe do you believe it do you really believe it do you believe it so as not who stagger through unbelief at least do you believe it in such a way as that this is all you hope and all you decide do you believe

God's promise do you believe God when he speaks that is the question the promise is made to faith to all who believe who believe with the faith which is the gift of God do I believe do I believe God's promise and when I put the question I find myself staggering certain things against me certain things for me do I believe do I not say well if I really believed would I be like this would I be like that a host of questions springing upon the mind but while that is true the basic principle is unaffected do I believe the promise of

God do I believe what God says God does now that is far more important than looking into a region in which we can find no answer supposing one were to ask this question well do I believe supposing one were to turn it round and say well am I of God's people am I of God's elect there's no answer to that question but by believing there's no answer to it in heaven above or on the earth but by believing how can one know that he is one of God's chosen and purchased ones by believing and there's no other way absolutely none and suppose one were to believe it on some other ground that would be presumption and ignorance supposing an angel from heaven were to come to me and say now you are one of God's children

[45 : 50] I would have no warrant in the world to believe in but if he said to me now you believe in God I wouldn't need any more warrant because I have God's own word there to us it will be imputed if we believe on him that raised up Jesus from the dead who was delivered for our offenses and raised up again for our justification he staggered not against hope he believed in hope he believed in God who wiggens the dead and calls the things that are not as being now this is the hope this is the faith of the gospel to believe what God the Lord does mean to believe what he says as it bears to believe him in all things but justifying faith as justified looks unto

God who testifies that he raised up Jesus from the dead who was delivered from for our offenses and raised up again for our justification and this is God's way of salvation by the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified all the world is brought in before God as guilty they're brought in as

guilty before God but God set him forth that he set Christ forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood do we believe this that's the crucial question do I believe it do I believe God in his testimony concerning his son if not

I make God a liar but if I do heaven and earth will pass away but God's word as it bears upon my justification will not pass away and this is the hope of the soul believing that what he promised he is able us to perform let us pray oh blessed one blessed must thy word enabling us rest rest upon what thou dost declare concerning thy son to rest upon Christ Jesus receiving him alone for salvation oh that thou would teach us this lesson that they just live by faith that they are justified by faith that they are sanctified by faith that they are kept by the power of God through faith and through salvation take away of sins in Christ amen Home to should