

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTERIES DEVOTIONAL

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“BEYOND THE IMPOSSIBLE!!”

Scripture Reading – Romans 4:18-25.

INTRODUCTION

In this devotional I have chosen to discuss the subject “Beyond the Impossible.” The word impossible is solely a human word. It is not a God word. It is in the human vocabulary- it is not in the Divine vocabulary. The dictionary of God does not have the word. Jesus told us that “all things are possible with God” so He stated the truth that God works in realm of the impossible. Indeed God does not know or is ever confronted by the impossible, because all things are possible to Him. Man severed his relationship with God when he sinned in the Garden of Eden. Once that relationship had been broken there was nothing in the human inventory of power plays that could repair that break. Indeed it was impossible for man to restore that relationship. He could not save himself from the cause and the consequences of sin. This does not mean to say that he has not tried. He has and has failed miserably. He is living in a sinful state that goes beyond human solution or remedy. His sinful bondage breeds despair. Man is totally helpless. He needs Divine intervention. God does not view man’s depraved condition as an impossible state or insurmountable obstacle to restore his

relationship with Himself. The scripture makes clear that He stepped into the man’s dilemma and pledged that He could and would provide a way to reconciliation with Himself. He Himself would bridge that impossible gap, but it would cost Him the life of His one and only Son on a Cross. This was the only way by which man could be restored to a relationship with God. Paul had already said in the 1st chapter of Romans that he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. Because it is the power of God for salvation of everyone who believes.....for in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written that “The righteous will by faith.” We are not made righteous by the law BUT by faith. Stanley Jones warned us however that, “we are not saved by faith but by faith in Christ.” We are made righteous by a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the central theme in the passage of scripture upon which our meditation is based. It is the cardinal truth that the Apostle Paul is expounding on in this fourth chapter of Romans. Man is inclined to think that we are saved by

obeying the Ten Commandments or by earning our salvation and building up our merit points by our good works. Paul would say that is not the way. His message is that we are made righteous by faith in Christ. We are not made righteous by works. (Romans 4:2-3). The rite of circumcision does not justify us. (Romans 4:9 -12). We are not saved by the law. (Romans 4:13-17). Man has discovered that he cannot make himself righteous. It is impossible to save himself from the pollution of sin. And Paul again and again emphasizes the truth in his teaching that "We are made righteous by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." To clarify and amplify this truth this truth he reflects on the one of great figures of the Old Testament. In effect he was saying if you want to see this truth in action, you will see it in Abraham. Paul, after discussing that the righteousness from God is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who believe in chapter 3:22, moves into chapter 4 and in the first verse asks a question. "What shall we say that Abraham discovered in this matter? What he discovered said Paul, is that righteousness comes by faith in God." Then in Romans 4:3, he calls upon the scripture to support this truth. "Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. This in turn is a reference to Genesis 15:6. You will note that "Abraham was made righteous before the rite of circumcision had been commanded, and before the Mosaic Law had been given. The observance of religious ceremonies cannot make us right with God." We do not receive our salvation by our righteous deeds. The scriptures tell us that our righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of God. The deeds that we think are so righteous and that can save us are in the eyes of God as filthy rags. At this point you might throw up your hands in despair and say I am living on the edge of impossibilities. Yes you are, without faith in Christ and the Grace and the mercy of God. So Paul would

say, "wait a minute your focus is wrong. Salvation is not found in what you do. Look higher for salvation and you will discover that it is found "by faith in Christ." Romans 4:3. What does the scripture say again. "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. One paraphrase puts it this way. "If Abraham, by what he did for God, got God to approve him, he could certainly have taken credit for it." But the story we're given is mainly a God-story, not primarily an Abraham story. What we read in scripture is, "Abraham entered into what God was doing for him, and that was the turning point. He trusted God to set him right, instead of trying to be right on his own." Paul is writing about a God story and because it is, it introduces the possibility of the impossible. It is only God who can take us beyond the limits of the unthinkable. Let us not fool ourselves; twenty first century man is lost in spite of his advances in technology. It does not take a rocket scientist to come to this conclusion. And so he finds himself in an impossible situation, a situation from which he cannot extricate himself. This did not bother Paul, for he teaches that the bridge between the possible and impossible is faith in the crucified risen Christ. He illustrates this truth by highlighting the story of the faith of Abraham and his wife Sarah. Both of them were old and childless when God appeared to Abraham and told him that he would have an heir and that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. The human impossibility lay in the fact that Sarah was long past childbearing age, but the scripture tells us that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. It was by faith that he was made righteous, so let us look at these verses to see what Paul has to say to us about the faith that takes us beyond the impossible. It is a faith that "justifies." Paul makes clear that we are justified or made righteous by faith, and it is all of grace. Faith, then, is the key to the door that opens the door

to being made righteous. As we study the faith of Abraham you will note first,

1. THE CONFLICT OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH.

Romans 4:19. When God made his promise to Abraham, wherein did the challenge to his faith lie. Note the words in verse 19, "without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead – since he was a hundred years old and that Sarah's womb was also dead." There lies the impossibility in natural dimension of life. The conflict was self-evident. Sarah could not bear children in the prime of her youth, how then could she bear them in her old age? According to the natural law it was impossible. This is where faith faced its challenge. Now it is clear that faith's conflict lies in two areas. First it lies in the,

a. Limited Human Perception of Life.

Romans 4:19. In verse 19, you see Abraham's perception was that his "body was as good as dead, since he was a hundred years old and his wife's womb was also dead." From the human stand point that would be the end of the matter. Having a child at this stage of life was an impossibility. This is what was thought, but these are the limits of human perception. After all there only so much that is possible in this life. In a secular humanistic age this kind of thinking is being intensified in proportion to the decreasing acknowledgement and recognition of the reality of God in our world. In other words when you eliminate God you eliminate the possibility of the miraculous taking place. This is coming in subtle ways into the church as we rely more and more on human innovation and methodology to the neglect of God. The result is that the miraculous does not take place as it should because the church will only receive that which these human methods are able to give us and nothing more. "Everything we do and accept, so often, must fit into what our minds think is possible. We like to live in our safe zones. We are not too comfortable with the miraculous because it is outside of what is humanly possible and because it does not conform to any known law. But since there is a God there is introduced a higher law. It is the

law of the supernatural. Yet some of man's inventions can supersede natural laws. For instance a lump of metal in the shape of an aircraft can fly through the air at 40,000 feet with 200 people on board. The law of gravity says it cannot be done. It cannot happen because it is impossible for metal to fly. But the aircraft continues to defy the laws of gravity, because the laws of aerodynamics come into play and they supplant the law of gravity. It is true that the supernatural law is persuaded that there are no impossibilities with God. If God desires to work in accordance with His will in order to accomplish His purposes, He will bring down the walls of impossibilities. He can perform the unthinkable and this is where faith so often faces its conflict. Can God do it for Sarah and Abraham? Everything in the natural world says it cannot be done. According to the human perception of life is that this natural law makes it impossible for them to bear children at their stage of life. The second dimension in which faith had a challenge was in,

b. The Limited Human Power in Life.

Romans 4:19. "Abraham faced the fact that his body was as good as dead – and Sarah's womb was also dead." Many times faith dies because it does not rise above human ability. Human ability has its limitations. It is faith with a horizontal vision and this kind of faith only sees what man is able to do, and the danger is that it will operate within the dimensions of human power and human ability and human capacity. This is a very limited perception. But herein lies the conflict of faith. Horizontal faith says "your faith is too old to have a child for the womb is dead." The age of the body does not have the capacity to do it. It is too old. It is at this point that human ability ends. Now as we move with flow of this story we see that Paul not only talks about the conflict of faith, but he underscores,
2. THE COMMITMENT OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH. Romans 4:18, 20-21. Paul writes in verse 18, "Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations." And in verse 20, "Yet he did not

waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God. v21. "Being fully persuaded that God had the power to do what He had promised. V.22. This is why it was credited to him as righteousness."

These strong statements give clear evidence of faith's commitment. In this commitment there were two forces that came into play. There was, **a. Human Power. Romans 4:18, 20.** It would have been easy for Abraham's faith to succumb to the limitations of human power. Romans 4:18. "Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed."

V20. "He did not waver through unbelief." One paraphrase of this passage has it, "Abraham didn't focus on his own impotence and say it's hopeless. This hundred year old body could never father a child." Nor did he survey Sarah's decades of infertility and give up. He didn't tiptoe around God's promise asking cautiously skeptical questions. He **PLUNGED** into the promise and came up strong, ready for God, sure that God would make good on what He said..." Faith's commitment to believe that the impossible could take place, demanded human energy, determination and resolution. "He plunged into the promise and came up strong." There is a human side in faith commitment that is indispensable to overcoming the impossibilities of life. But human power by itself is insufficient for it must be linked to,

b. Divine Power. Romans 4:21. Paul tells us that Abraham was, "fully persuaded that God had the power to do what He promised." Divine energy and Divine power is the foundation of the miraculous. It is faith that links human impotency with Divine sufficiency. It unites human inadequacy with Divine adequacy. "Hudson Taylor, the great missionary to China, said, "Many Christians estimate difficulty in the light of their own resources, and thus they attempt very little, and they always fail. All giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on His power and His presence." Paul testified with unshakable conviction "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens

me." That is a supernatural statement. When God is brought into the equation of our daily lives anything is possible. It is true what Stanley Jones said "Anything less than God will let you down. Anything less than God.....has built in failure. Let us never forget that for every particular need there is a particular supernatural resource. For every definite problem there is a definite answer. For every hurt there is a cure. For every weakness there is a strength. For every confusion there is a guidance." God and God alone can take us beyond our impossibilities. The prophet Jeremiah recognized this when he declared "Ah Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by great power and outstretched arms. Nothing is too hard for you." Jeremiah 32:17 And in Chronicles 16:9 "For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him." The faith of Abraham was faced with a challenge, but his commitment was such that he was fully persuaded that God had power to do what He promised and the impossible became possible." This was the strength of the commitment of Abraham's faith. Paul has up to this point vigorously discussed the robust nature of the faith Abraham. But Paul does not remain here he moves on to underline, how it applies to us and he highlights the **3. THE CONQUEST OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH. Romans 4:24-25. "Abraham believed God is it was credited to him as righteousness."** This principle applies to each believing soul. And so Paul concludes this chapter on a triumphant note. In verses 24-25 he says "God will credit righteousness - for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. V.25, He was delivered over to death for our sins, and was raised to life for our justification or if you like he was raised that we might be made righteous." This is a note of victory and accomplishment for Paul here once again describes the conquest of God in Christ over sin and death. This is the central theme of Paul's

preaching and there are two fundamental truths which he emphasizes. First he talks about,

a. The Foundation of Faith's Conquest.

Romans 4:25. Paul clearly tells us in what and where the roots of a triumphant faith lies. In verse 25 he says that Jesus was "delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." Paul is delighted in and is excited about the mighty powerful act of God on the Cross of Calvary. This mighty act of God in Christ was accomplished we might say in two steps. Firstly there is,

i. The Price He Paid. Romans 4:25. Jesus was "delivered over to death for our sins." "Stanley Jones was right when he said, "God cannot save without a Cross. The Cross is the price that God must pay to get to us in spite of our sins. God wrapped up His heart in flesh and blood and let it break on a cross." When we are faced with the reality of the cross, its ugliness and its pain, we are not only faced with the pain and heartbreak of God, we are faced with the reality and consequences of our sin. Sin always has a price tag to it and if there is to be salvation from it, someone must pay that price. God's deepest desire was to make forgiveness freely available to all. But he could not wink at sin nor dismiss it lightly and so He gave his one and only Son. Forgiveness with God is free but it is not cheap. For at the heart of forgiving grace is the Cross. And it was costly because the Lord Jesus Christ bore our sin in His pure, holy unblemished body. Bernard Shaw skeptic as he was remarked that, "forgiveness is a coward's refuge. We must pay our debt. Basically he is right, but it is a debt we cannot pay. That is impossibility." That is why the debt we cannot pay has been paid by the death of the Son of God for us. Forgiveness is not simply the casual dismissal of our sinful acts for as Dr. W. E. Sangster wrote, "God does not deal lightly with sin in His readiness to forgive as He bears it himself." The debt was met in Jesus. Paul confirmed it in Romans 4:25, Jesus was "delivered over to death for our sins." But Paul does not stop there for this is only part of the

story. Not only do we see the price Jesus paid but also the,

ii. The Power Jesus Displayed. Romans

4:23-24. Jesus not only died for our sins "He was raised to life for our justification." The resurrection gives the Cross its power and authority. For if death and sin had kept him bound in a sealed tomb, how could He break the chains of my sin. If the powers of hell had conquered Him how could claim to be a Savior from all sin. If death had mastered him forever how could He give me life? But Paul was firm on it for he says that Jesus was "raised to life for our justification." The crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead is the eternal unshakable foundation of our faith and hope of heaven. Let us move on with the Paul's discussion on this great subject of the crucial nature of faith to the,

b. The Confirmation of Faith's Conquest.

Romans 4:23-25. Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness, but Paul says in v. 24. "But also for us to whom God will credit righteousness-for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead." The confirmation that faith conquered and was victorious lies in the glorious truth that it is credited as righteousness. The Psalmist explains this in Psalm 32:1-2. In the words of a modern translation "Fortunate are those whose crimes are carted off, whose sins are wiped from the slate. Fortunate is the person against whom the Lord does not keep score." God not only forgives us of our sins, He cancels them, He blots them out, so that they are no longer remembered against us. Man has tried by every means available to find a way to alleviate his guilt and lift the burden of his sin but has miserably failed. Stanley Jones maintained, "many try to obtain peace by their own blood, their own struggles and sacrifice; but it is not by our own blood, but His that we obtain peace. But as far as man is concerned to be made righteous by his efforts is an impossible task. But God has made that which is impossible, possible. John Phillips wrote "some years ago a

wealthy English business purchased a Rolls Royce and soon afterward took his new car to France. When in the south of France, it broke down and he phoned the Rolls Royce people in Britain. The manufacturer flew a mechanic to France and the man's car was repaired. He expected to receive a sizable bill for this unprecedented service, but as months passed and no invoice arrived the business man wrote to the Rolls Royce Company asking for the account to be rendered. By return mail he received a courteous note from the company assuring him they had no record of anything having gone wrong with his car. In other words, the Rolls Royce Company had refused to acknowledge any imperfection in their product. This is exactly what being credited with righteousness means. God cancels the debt forever and in such a way that there is no record of anything done wrong. God announced through His servant Isaiah, "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgression, for my own sake and remember your sins no more. Isaiah 43:25. This is the confirmation of Faith's conquest.

CONCLUSION

There are millions of people today whose lives are riddled with guilt, whose hearts are heavy with the burden of sin. They look everywhere for relief, and they have concluded that it is an impossibility. Oh yes they seek answers for their sin in the psychiatrist's office. They try to drown it in a bottle of alcohol or numb it in the drug culture. All their efforts no matter how intense and sincere end up in vain and they have concluded that freedom from guilt and the burden of a sinful past is impossible, and the problem of getting right with God will never be resolved. They would right except for one thing. God came into the picture and at great cost sent His Son to die for us so that we might be made righteous. Paul wrote that "He saved us, not because of the righteous things we have done BUT because of His mercy." Titus 3:5. The story

is told of a widow whose only daughter was very sick and need of fresh fruit. But it was winter; grapes and oranges were expensive, and the widow found herself outside the royal palace. She looked through the gate and saw in the royal greenhouse great clusters of the most appetizing and tempting grapes. As she gazed at them wistfully, the princess came by and, taking in the situation at a glance, with her own hands cut for the widow a magnificent basketful of fruit. With trembling hands the widow offered the royal lady in payment the few coppers she had in her purse, but she received instead this noble reply, "Madam, these grapes are not for sale. My Father is a king and he is much too rich to sell, and besides, you are much too poor to buy. You can have these grapes free or not at all." That's it! Our Father is a King. He does not sell salvation. He offers salvation free or not at all.