



EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

This past month I read the New York Times Best Seller, *American Ulysses*. Throughout the book, the author Ronald White portrayed Ulysses S. Grant as a humble gentleman. Though he was considered by many as “the man who saved the union,” he never seemed enamored with himself. In fact, even the Confederate soldiers considered him a man with a heart of humility. One notable Confederate General was James Longstreet who graduated with Ulysses from West Point in 1842. They remained friends until the untimely death of Ulysses. Longstreet eulogized (p. 654), “He was a great general, but the best thing about him was his heart.” These words gave me pause as I read them. Proverbs 10:20 says, “the heart of the wicked is of little worth.” Lord, I pray, give me a heart that is worth much before you and before others.



Travis & Becky Gravley Baptist Mid-Missions

Alumni In Ministry Spotlight

Travis married Becky in December of 2000, a few months after graduating from Northland Baptist Bible College. In January 2001, Travis began pursuing the Master of Divinity at VBTS. Both Travis and Becky became a significant couple among the VBTS family, showing both godliness and the grace of Christ. Travis graduated in 2005; and in 2007, he and Becky (and Samuel and Kara) began their arduous deputation ministry for Romania with Baptist Mid-Missions (BMM). After faithfully serving in Romania for over 5 years, they were asked to join the Administration staff of BMM in Cleveland, Ohio. Last month, Travis assumed the title of Administrator for Church Relations and Enlistment. Congratulations, Travis on your new position! We thank God for your humble leadership and your servant’s heart.



Prayer During Chapel Last Thursday



Truth for the Agora: “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” *Genesis 18:14*

When living in a difficult circumstance – especially when it continues unresolved – there is a human inclination to question the competency of God. Over the years I have counseled many people who have lived for lengthy periods of time with this assumption: *I prayed, but God just doesn't respond to me.* Such conversations include those who have prayed for an unsaved loved one who still rejects Christ; or some who have begged God to free them from an addiction, but still feel shackled to their habit; or some who have asked God to remove their disease, yet continue to be debilitated by it. Invariably, the conversation comes to this: *Is God able to meet my need? If so, why doesn't he answer my prayers?* While I cannot solve all the personal dilemmas one faces in such challenging situations, I can draw your attention to the thought-provoking rhetorical question God posed to Abraham in his bitter circumstance (Gen 18:14): “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

First, it is obvious, but necessary to note, that this question is from God to Abraham, not the other way around. If Abraham posed this question to God, he might be suggesting that God is either indifferent to his situation or unable to do anything about it. However, this question originates from God. God's words were designed to move Abraham's thoughts from his personal need to “the incomparable nature and works of the Lord” (Ross, 339). Undoubtedly, the question caused Abraham to rehearse the *miraculous things* God had done for him since he left Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen 11:31). If God could bring him hundreds of miles from his original home and lavish numerous physical blessings upon him, is he not also able to give him a child?

Second, the context of Genesis 18 is Abraham and Sarah's childless misery. Many years earlier, God had promised a son to them through their union (Gen 15:1-4), but Sarah was barren and beyond childbearing years (18:11). Into this context God inserts himself and again promises a son to this couple by the following year! This immediately seems impossible, even “laughable” (18:12). So God fires this penetrating question to Abraham: “Is anything too hard for me?” It is notable that the Hebrew term God used – translated “hard” – means “surpassing, extraordinary, wonderful” (Ross, 344). Essentially, God is confronting this childless couple with this question: *Do you think I am up to the task of doing something extraordinary?*

Finally, though Sarah “laughed to herself,” initially doubting God's ability to perform his word, she did not stay in this spiritually weak state. Hebrews 11:11 states her change of posture, “by faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.”

This question from God to Abraham does not resolve every pressure we may face with unresolved circumstances, but it does cause us to consider three spiritual constants with which every believer must reckon: (1) Life is difficult, and we *will* face humanly impossible situations; (2) God is faithful, and he is *fully capable* of doing things “exceedingly above all we can ask or think” (Eph. 3:20); and (3) Though we may temporarily doubt God, let us not stay there! Sarah's beautiful testimony is both profound and strategic: in the midst of her inability, “*she counted him faithful!*”