

# Abounding Grace Christian Church

## A Study through the Epistle to the Romans – Part 11

### I. Exposition of Chapter Four (Continued).

#### A. Verses 13-15 - God's promise to Abraham was based on the principle of faith, not law or works.

1. **Verse 13** – “For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.”
  - a. The word “**promise**” here is the first of five times it is mentioned in this passage. (cf. vv. 14, 16, 20 and 21[verb form]). The meaning of this word is; “**to announce. Primarily a legal term denoting a summons or promise to do or give something.**” – **Word Study Dictionary.**
  - b. “**...the heir of the world...**” – No specific mention is made in Genesis of Abraham becoming the heir of the world. He is promised “**descendants as the dust of the earth**” (**Genesis 13:16**) and possession of the land of Canaan (**Genesis 12:7; 13:14-15; 15:7, 18-21; 17:8**), and that all the nations on earth will be blessed through him. (**Genesis 12:3; 18:18**) or his offspring (**Genesis 22:18**). But since, as Genesis already makes clear, God purposed through Abraham and his offspring to work out the destiny of the whole world, it was implied in the promises to Abraham that he and his offspring would “**inherit the earth**” (cf. **Psalm 37:9, 11, 22, 29, 34; Matthew 5:5**). The completion of this will be at the return of Christ and the setting up of the Messianic Kingdom.
  - c. “**not...through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.**” – Emphasizing that this promise is received by faith.
2. **Verse 14** – If the promise was made under the law, then that would mean that the Jews under the law are the heirs which would not only leave out the Gentiles but also Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all other Old Testament believers who were before the law.
3. **Verse 15** – “[B]ecause the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.” -
  - a. Wrath was mentioned before in **1:18** and **2:5-8**, referring to the judgment of God. How does the law bring about wrath? Because no one can keep the law and, therefore, they “**transgress**” or break the law of God, deserving wrath.

#### B. Verse 16 - Justification according to grace, through faith.

1. “**Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace...**” – To speak technically, we are not saved by faith. We are saved by God's grace, and grace is appropriated by faith.
2. “**...so that the promise might be sure to all the seed...**” - The promise can only be sure if it is according to grace. A law-promise of salvation can never be sure.
3. “**...not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.**” – Remember as we saw in **verse 11**, Abraham is called “**...the father of all those who believe.**” (cf. **Galatians 3:1-9**).

#### C. Verses 17-18 - The Life-Giving power of the God Abraham believed in.

1. **Verse 17** - “**As it is written, ‘I have made you a father of many nations...’**” – This is a quote from **Genesis 17:5**. This is one of the promises given to Abraham. God gives Abram a name change to Abraham which means, “**father of a multitude**”.
2. “**...who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did.**” – God promised this before Abraham and Sarah had an heir.
3. **Verse 18** – “**Who contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, ‘So shall your descendants be.’**” – Contrary to all hope, Abraham believed what God had promised!

#### D. Verses 19-22 - The Character of Abraham's Faith.

1. **Verse 19** – “**And not being weak in faith...**” - The idea seems to be that Abraham was strengthened in his
2. “**...he did not consider his own body, already dead...**” - Abraham, in faith, did not look to circumstances (**his own body and the deadness of Sarah's womb**) but he looked at the promise of God.
3. **Verse 20** – “**He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God.**”
  - a. When Paul says that Abraham did not waver because of unbelief, it almost seems like he forgot about his effort to help it come to pass in the flesh by having relations with Hagar and ending up with Ishmael (**Genesis 16**). Abraham had momentary doubts, but over time he continued to be strengthened by God reassuring him and so he never remained in any permanent attitude of doubt.

b. **“...giving glory to God.”** – One expression of strong faith is giving God glory and praise when all you have is the promise and not the substance.

4. **Verse 21** – **“Being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.”** – Abraham was fully convinced of God’s ability to perform what He has promised.

**“Fully satisfied and assured that God was able and mighty to keep His word and to do what He had promised.”** – Romans 4:21 – Amplified Bible

a. Faith lessons from Abraham:

- 1) If God declares it, it’s true whether the circumstances look like it or not!
- 2) When everything looks hopeless in the natural, believe God’s Word with expectation!
- 3) Agree with God and speak the promises He has made to you! **II Corinthians 4:13.**
- 4) Praise Him for the answer before you see it come to pass – **Philippians 4:6.**

5. **Verse 22** – Another quote from **Genesis 15:6.**

#### E. Verses 23-25 - Abraham’s Justification and our Own.

1. **Verses 23-24** - **“Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him.”** - It wasn’t only for Abraham’s benefit that God declared him righteous through faith; he is an example that we are invited to follow - it is **also for us**. Paul’s confidence is glorious: **“...It shall be imputed to us who believe...”**.

2. **“...who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.”** - When we talk about faith and saving faith in Jesus, it is important to emphasize that we mean believing that His work on the cross (**“...delivered up because of our offenses”**) and triumph over sin and death (**“...raised because of our justification**) is what saves us. There are many false-faiths that can never save, and only faith in what Jesus accomplished on the cross and through empty tomb can save us.

**“But [the words], It was credited to him, were written not for his sake alone, But [they were written] for our sakes too. [Righteousness, standing acceptable to God] will be granted and credited to us also who believe in (trust in, adhere to, and rely on) God, Who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, Who was betrayed and put to death because of our misdeeds and was raised to secure our justification (our acquittal), [making our account balance and absolving us from all guilt before God].”**  
**Romans 4:23-25 – Amplified Bible**

#### II. Summary of Chapter Four.

A. The theme of this chapter is **“imputed righteousness” (12-24). Faith-righteousness is imputed righteousness (1-11). The doctrine of imputed righteousness by faith was a stumblingblock to Jewish pride. There is no possible way to become righteous except through faith.**

1. **There is none righteous – Romans 3:9-10, 19-20.**
2. **The law exposes self-righteousness in the Jew.**
3. **Therefore, God must impute righteousness, on His terms, to those who believe in the death and the resurrection of Jesus.**