

Romans 4:13-25

Romans 4:13-25 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. (14) For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, (15) because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression. (16) Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, 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 (17) (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed; God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; (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." (19) And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. (20) He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, (21) and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. (22) And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness." (23) Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, (24) but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, (25) who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

Questions On The Text

How do we become heirs of the promise?

Verses 13-14: We become heirs of the promise through faith, not through the keeping of the law. According to Paul, the promise was never actually given to those who would be Abraham's seed through the law. It was given to those who would receive it through the righteousness of faith.

What does the law bring?

Verse 15: The law brings about wrath. The explanation for this is that without law there is no transgression since a person is not actually aware of having broken any commandment. But once there is law, there is an awareness of sin and therefore an accountability for it.

Why is the promise received by faith rather than by law?

Verses 16-17: God purposed that the promise should be received only through faith so that it would be by His grace alone, and not through works. Only in this way would the promise be sure to be accessible to all, both those who are under the law, as well as those who aren't.

In what way was Abraham's faith demonstrated?

Verses 18-21: Abraham's faith was demonstrated in that, despite his advanced age, as well as that of his wife Sarah's, he continued to believe God's promise that he would become a father.

What were the characteristics of Abraham's faith?

Verses 19-21: Several characteristics describing Abraham's faith are given in this passage. First, his faith was not weak in that he didn't take any notice of his natural circumstances, and how irrational it was that he could hope to father a child at one hundred years of age.

Second, Abraham did not waver at the promise. If you take away the supernatural element, then a promise like that would seem utterly ridiculous. But Abraham was not fazed at all, and did not allow his faith to waver, since he believed that God was well able to do anything that He promised.

Third, Abraham was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God. This is an interesting reminder that praising is such an important means to strengthening our faith in God and His promises.

Fourth, Abraham was fully convinced. There was no room for doubt in Abraham's mind; he believed that God was able to do what He said He would do.

What was the result of Abraham's faith?

Verse 22: God counted Abraham's faith as righteousness.

Why was the fact that Abraham's faith was counted as righteousness recorded in Scripture?

Verses 23-24: It was also written for our sakes that Abraham's faith was counted as righteousness. This was to be an example to those in the future who would believe in Christ that their faith also would be counted as righteousness.

An important word that is used in this passage is "imputed". It means reckoned, or considered to belonging to something. In other words, righteousness was considered by God to belong to Abraham because of his faith. Paul says that it shall also be considered to belong to anyone who believes.

To be considered righteous by God, what must we believe?

Verses 24-25: First, we must believe "in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead". This presupposes two things. First, that we believe that Jesus rose from the dead; and second, that Jesus is our Lord.

Second, we must believe that He "was delivered up because of our offenses". In other words, Jesus paid the full price for our sins on the cross.

Third, Jesus was raised for our justification. Paul elaborates on this more in 1 Corinthians 15 where he explains that if Christ didn't rise from the dead, our faith is in vain. Without His resurrection, it would be impossible for us to be justified, since our justification relies on Christ's sinless sacrifice, and His resurrection was the proof that He was sinless. Death could only hold Him if He had sinned.

Further Questions For Discussion:

Who was the promise intended for if not for those who keep the law?

How is it that the law brings wrath?

How does the law of faith put everyone on an even footing as regards receiving righteousness?

Abraham's faith had several characteristics. In what ways have you demonstrated those characteristics in your own faith?

Why did God record in Scripture that Abraham's faith was counted as righteousness?

What are the key elements of our faith in order to be considered righteous before God?