

Romans 4:12-25

- 1: Rom. 3:27 (God's court is now offering, in response to the charges of the prosecution, a plea deal by the Law of Faith)
 - 2: Rom. 4:1-8 (Legal precedents of ruling: *Abram*, Gen. 15:6; *David*, 2 Samuel 12:13, Ps. 32)
 - 3: Rom. 4:9-12 (These precedents prove circumcision is not required)
 - 4: Rom. 4:13-16c (Inheritance for Abraham and his seed was by faith in God's promise—not of works)
 - 5: Rom. 4:16d-25 (In Christ, we are Abraham's seed, and heirs of God also).
-

Verse 13 begins the fourth “legal proof” of justification by faith alone. This proof demonstrates that God's promise to Abraham, that he would be the heir of the world, was through the righteousness of faith, and not the Law. This demonstrates that not only remission of sin occurred through faith, but that the inheritance of eternal life was something that was through faith as well.

We often confuse the two as being one and the same, and though one is the necessary prerequisite of the other, they are still two separate issues. One, the forgiveness of sins, deals with the legal necessity of the propitiation of trespasses, essentially zeroing out the negative balance of debt.

The other, inheritance—*eternal life*—requires *imputed righteousness*, restoring man back to the image of The Father and making him fit to be part of the family of God, and putting, as it were, his account into the infinitely positive balance of Christ's perfect righteousness.

If your account is balanced at zero, so to speak, this doesn't make you fit to be part of the family of God, this only means God is not now predisposed to execute wrath against you, and in fact, He legally can't, which would leave you in hypothetical limbo. To be *with Him* and to *be His* and to be fit to be an heir of God one must receive that which is His—His image and His righteousness.

This is in fact the core of what was said of Abram in legal proof number 2, that his faith was *counted as righteousness*; this speaks to imputation. However, this is why it was necessary to include David in this proof as well, one providing a legal precedent of imputed righteousness by faith, the other, David's, providing a legal precedent of forgiveness of all sin by faith. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord *will not* impute sin. And thus we have what scripture calls, *The sure mercies of David*, of which Israel will obtain in the future in an everlasting covenant (Isaiah 55:3), and which Paul in Acts 13:34 says was given to Christ in that He has been resurrected, never to die again, and who because of this is the author of eternal life. Because of this, we are able to obtain those same mercies today by faith in what He accomplished on our behalf, while Israel's fulness is still in waiting.

Romans 4:13-16

¹³ *For the promise, that he should 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 they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:*

¹⁵ *Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.*

¹⁶ *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham*

When did God promise Abraham he would be the heir of the *world*?

Let's first define the word *world*:

1. The universe; the whole system of created globes or vast bodies of matter.
2. The earth; the terraqueous globe; sometimes called the lower world
3. The heavens; as when we speak of the heavenly world or upper world
10. Mankind; people in general; in an indefinite sense

(from Webster's 1828)

Consider now the following of God's promises:

- Make of him a great nation and make his name great (Gen, 12:2)
- In him all families of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:3)
- The land of Canaan promised *forever*, seed as the dust of the earth (Gen. 13:14-16)
- An heir from his own lineage, and seed as the stars of heaven (Gen. 15:4-5)
- A father of many nations; kings shall come from him (Gen. 17:4, 6)

And so we see in these promises that blessing would come to all families of the earth through him.

We see a certain geographical land promised to him and his offspring *forever*. Implicit in this promise is resurrection and eternal life.

We see his offspring being compared in number to both the dust of the earth and the stars of heaven, a reference to innumerable quantity, but also an allusion to both spheres of creation—heaven and earth.

We see him being called the father of many nations, and that authorities themselves, *kings*, would come from him.

Nowhere and to no one did God ever promise such things. To understand what Abraham thought about these things, let's consider a few passages:

Hebrews 11:8-10

⁸By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

⁹By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

¹⁰For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Abraham was looking forward to God's establishment of righteousness in the earth—he was looking forward to God establishing a city. All the land God promised Abraham *forever*, Abraham never actually received in life. In that God said he would inherit it forever, he knew God had promised him resurrection and eternal life.

He was looking forward to something God would accomplish in the earth and in creation.

And this is exactly what we learn from Hebrews 11.

Consider the following:

Hebrews 11:17-19

¹⁷By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

¹⁸Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

¹⁹Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

Abraham was willing to offer up his only son of promise because he believed God would even raise him up from the dead if He had to. Abraham believed in resurrection.

In all of this, Abraham knew he had received unconditional promises from God regarding God's plan for the redemption of the earth, and that he himself would share in an inheritance there. In that way he understood he would be the heir of the world.

And so back to the point of Romans 4, all of these things of promise pertaining to Abraham's inheritance, these he received not by the works of the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

If inheritance was accomplished through obedience to the Law, Paul says in verse 14, then faith is made void, and the promise is made of none effect.

Romans 4:14

For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect...

This should be seen in two ways: first, if it is of the Law, then it is dependent upon your effort in the flesh, therefore, it would nullify the promise altogether, seeing as you could then fail (and would fail); therefore God had no right to make such a promise and then subsequently impose a condition that could not be met. The condition, demanding works of the flesh, would necessarily void faith, and would undermine the promise altogether, seeing as the Law is not compatible with fallen man's ability to perform it to the degree of perfection.

Second, the Law was not even of force at the time of Abraham, meaning, if the true standard was the Law of Moses, then Abraham would not have qualified to begin with, seeing he never formally kept the Law of Moses; there was no written objective standard of Law from God to obey. If this were the case, then God's promise would be found to be a lie.

This of course is entirely hypothetical, and Paul is using this hypothetically to show the insanity of trying to claim heirship through the Law, when Abraham's promise came before the Law was even given. In either sense, it would make God a liar, whether we see it in the historical context or in our personal application.

Paul explains:

Romans 4:15

Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

The Law in its essence is God's perfect righteousness; in its application by man can be nothing more than a tool of condemnation, seeing as judgment occurs for that which you have done wrong, not all the things you happen to do right.

The Law therefore could not be utilized by man in any sense to obtain such an inheritance as eternal life; for that would only produce condemnation. We have already seen Scripture conclude all men under sin.

And while the Law could not *produce* eternal life, neither can it void the promise. This is good news. This means that, since it was by promise, no failure on Abraham's part, no failure on our part, can prevent it.

This scripture does not mean that sin was not imputed to men before the giving of the Law, for the law of conscience still serves as a point of reference to God's righteousness. This was addressed in Romans chapter 2.

Conscience was then the mechanism by which God judged man, and yet, by a base knowledge of God through creation, and faith in that God, and an acknowledgment of their own inadequacy before Him, men would have been justified by grace through faith, same as today.

Today it is the same, only now we have been given more form to our faith—we must trust what God has provided for us and believe in that exclusively.

For those under the Law, their faith in God's provision in their covenant was what justified them, not the works themselves. David's sin shows how one could have trusted in God in spite of irrevocably breaking that covenant, and how God would still have justified them. David did not disregard the covenant, or esteem it as nothing, but in light of breaking it, and being worthy of death, still looked to God.

The only requirement God has is faith. This is Paul's next point and concluding proof of justification by faith, through grace, without works:

Romans 4:16

Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all...

The Law of Faith *enables* God to operate by grace. The Law of Moses works wrath. The Law of Faith then takes the Law of Moses and its prescribed wrath out of the picture, and makes it so the promises of God are readily accessible to mankind. Promise does not depend on the performance of the flesh.

This will be true for those “of the Law,” that is, Israel. Though they must endure chastening under the Law in their prophesied time of tribulation, faith is what will ensure they receive their inheritance.

Through their faith they will receive “The Helper,” the Holy Ghost, and are given the power to overcome the world, that they receive the end of that faith, the salvation of their souls, when Christ returns to bring them into the bond of the New Covenant.

We who are simply of the faith of Abraham have received abundance of grace *now*, and Abraham, being the father of the Lord Jesus Christ, is our father in a spiritual sense, since we are reproduced, reborn, after the image of Christ. The fulfillment of Abraham’s promised seed *is* Christ, and Christ of necessity had to be planted in the ground, that *the* Seed would bring forth new life, and reproduce. *We are* that multiplied seed in Christ.

Jesus alludes to this in **John 12:23-24**:

²³ *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.*

²⁴ *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

Paul also explains this in **1 Corinthians 15**:

³⁵ *But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?*

³⁶ *Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:*

³⁷ *And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:*

³⁸ *But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body...*

⁴⁹ *And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*

Christ was planted in the earth *in death*, that He might reproduce His image in resurrection—that He would reproduce the Father’s image in resurrection. We are the multiplied seed of Christ. And if Christ is the Promised Seed and Heir of father Abraham, then are we Abraham’s seed as well. We don’t have to be “Israel” in order to be Abraham’s seed.

If we are Abraham's seed, and Abraham and his seed are to be the heirs of God, of the world, and of eternal life, then that means we too are heirs of God, of the world, and of eternal life.

In that we say world, remember, world is not restricted to the sense of earth only. We are heirs of the new creation, the new world, of which both heaven and earth will be made new.

Both the prophetic scriptures and mystery scriptures make reference to this new and everlasting creation with the phrase *world without end* (Is. 45:17, Eph. 3:21).

¹⁷ *(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.*

¹⁸ *Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.*

¹⁹ *And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:*

²⁰ *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;*

²¹ *And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*

²² *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*

²³ *Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;*

²⁴ *But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;*

²⁵ *Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*

In that it says, *I have made thee a father of many nations*, God could not have specified the nature of the Body of Christ in His promises to Abraham, because He of necessity had to keep it hidden from Satan and the other princes of this world (1 Cor. 2:8).

Remember, Christ also died for the gentile nations of the world according to prophecy—John tells us plainly that Jesus died not only for Israel's sins, but also the whole world (1 John 2:2).

The nations will also come to be "in Christ," and just as we are, they too will be, in that sense, Abraham's seed.

And so Abraham was quite literally, *physically*, the father of many nations (Israel, Ishmaelites, Midianites, Temanites, Sheba, Dedan, etc...), but will also be the father of those who inherit the new heaven and earth, and so Abraham is called *the heir of the world* (Rom. 4:13).

Verse 23 tell us that all of this was not written for Abraham's sake alone, but for us also who are *persuaded* that what God says He is able to perform.

God *will* impute righteousness to us if we believe *on* God. It does not say believe *in* Him, but believe *on* Him, that is, believe that He will perform that which He has spoken.

That through faith in Christ's work in life, death, burial, and resurrection, we are justified unto eternal life and made heirs of God.

This last verse says Jesus was *raised* for our justification. Romans 5:9 will say we are justified *by His blood*. The one speaks to justification in regards to forgiveness of sin (the blood), the other speaks of justification in regards to an eternal (resurrection).

Since Jesus is the author of eternal life through His sinless life and therefore His resurrection, He gives both through the work He performed.