



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Letter of St. Paul to the Romans

Chapter 4

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Introduction

- After St. Paul has explained that the works of the law cannot justify us. Referring to Abraham, he now proceeds to explain justification by faith. Abraham
- St. Paul demonstrated also that the righteousness of God by faith is offered to both Jews and Gentiles since Abraham serves as a father of all who believe, whether circumcised or not
- Faith: works based on faith in Christ
- Works: any works without believing in Christ

Abraham Justified by Faith (4:1-4)



- According to the flesh: according to the works of the law
- The Jews boasted because they are the children of Abraham according to the flesh
- If works were the ground of Abraham's justification, he would have a reason for boasting; but as it is perfectly certain that he has none in the sight of God, it follows that Abraham could not have been justified by works

Abraham Justified by Faith (4:1-4)



- Abraham believed in the promises which embraced Christ, exactly as we believe in Christ Himself (Genesis 15: 6)
- In both cases, faith is merely the instrument that puts us in possession of the blessing bestowed
- To him who works, the wages are counted as a matter of right not as a matter of favor
- These wages cannot justify us. We need Grace to be justified

David Celebrates the Same Truth (4:5-8)



- Does not work: not relying on his works for justification
- But believes: trusts in the mercy of Him who justifies the sinners who come to Him penitent and believing
- His faith: it is made the ground of his acceptance with God
- By faith he clings to Christ, the Savior

David Celebrates the Same Truth (4:5-8)



- David is fitly introduced after Abraham, because He also received and delivered the promise
- Without works: that is, without regard to any good works supposed to have been done by him
- David himself, a great sinner, had been forgiven (Psalm 32:1, 2)
- Covered: by the Blood of the Lord
- One whose sins have been forgiven will not find them imputed to him at judgment

Abraham Justified Before Circumcision (4:9-12)



- Who shall enjoy this blessing of forgiveness? Shall it be Jews only, or shall the uncircumcision that is to say the Gentiles, enjoy it?
- Abraham's faith was counted for righteousness; will this be true of all, both Jews and Gentiles?
- To settle the question, the inquiry is made whether Abraham was a Jew or Gentile when it was said of him that his faith was counted for righteousness

Abraham Justified Before Circumcision (4:9-12)



- He was not circumcised for at least fourteen years after this statement was made of him
- He was then justified, without circumcision, while yet a gentile
- Why then was Abraham circumcised? That the gift of righteousness might be confirmed in him
- Circumcision is a sign not only to signify, but also to seal up the righteousness of faith
- Circumcision is death and life (baptism)

Abraham Justified Before Circumcision (4:9-12)



- That he might be the father of all those that believe, both Jews and Gentiles, circumcised and uncircumcised
- Abraham became the father to the uncircumcised believers, who will receive the gift of righteousness though uncircumcised
- He is also the father of the circumcised believers, who walk in the steps of his faith (notice that faith without works is dead)

The Promise Granted Through Faith (4:13-25)



- For the promise: the reference is to the various promises to Abraham himself and his seed
- Heir of the world: father of all
- Was not through the law: the Mosaic law was given many years afterward
- It was through the righteousness of faith not of law or works of law that Abraham secured the promise

The Promise Granted Through Faith (4:13-25)



- For if they who are of the law are heirs: if keeping law makes men heirs, then faith is made void
- It sets aside God's plan of counting faith as righteousness, and destroys the promise which depends on faith
- The law threatens punishment to all who break its commandments, and since none keep them perfectly, it works punishment for all

The Promise Granted Through Faith (4:13-25)



- If no law had been given, there could be no transgression of its demands
- Without law, we are sinners, but with the law we both sinners and transgressors
- The inheritance promised to Abraham and his seed comes through faith; hence a free gift of Grace
- It could not be sure if it had to be secured by the righteousness that is of law, since none can keep the law perfectly

The Promise Granted Through Faith (4:13-25)



- All can secure it through faith in Christ
- To all the seed: to all children of Abraham, whether those of the law, the Jews, or those of the faith of Abraham, whether Jews or Gentiles
- As it is written (Gen 17:5)
- A father of many nations: the name of the patriarch was changed from Abram (a father) to Abraham (father of a multitude)

The Promise Granted Through Faith (4:13-25)



- In the presence of Him whom he believed: that is by membership in his spiritual family, which has a place before God, and makes us acceptable to God
- Who gives life to the dead: Abraham had to believe that the Divine power, which can give life to the dead, would give new life to his aged body and that of Sarah

The Promise Granted Through Faith (4:13-25)



- Calls those things which do not exist as though they did: summoning them to rise into being, and appear before him
- The seed of Abraham did not then exist; yet God said, so shall your descendants be
- A man can command his existing servant, to do something and he does it
- But God says to the light, while it does not exist, Go forth; and it goes

The Promise Granted Through Faith (4:13-25)



- Who against hope: though an old man, and his wife an aged woman, far beyond the time of child-bearing, he yet believed the promise that he would have numerous offspring
- “So shall your descendants be” (Gen 15: 5)
- He, being strong in faith, though weak in body, did not pay attention to those physical obstacles, both in himself and in Sarah, which might seem to nullify the fulfillment of the promise

The Promise Granted Through Faith (4:13-25)



- Giving glory to God as able to make His own word good in spite of all obstacles
- Being fully convinced: the glory which Abraham's faith gave to God consisted in this, that, firm in the persuasion of God's ability to fulfill His promise, no difficulties shook him
- Therefore it was accounted: let all then know that this was not because of anything praiseworthy in Abraham, but because he believed in God

The Promise Granted Through Faith (4:13-25)



- Here is the application of this whole argument about Abraham: these things were not recorded as mere historical facts, but as everlasting illustrations of God's method of justification by faith
- If we believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead
- Who was delivered up because of our offenses: by His death our sins were forgiven
- We die with Him in Baptism

The Promise Granted Through Faith (4:13-25)



- The Resurrection of Christ was His own justification against the condemnation of the world
- In His justification, all for whom He died, who have laid hold on Him by faith and are found in Him, are justified with Him, in that their sins are forgiven
- In Baptism we rise with Him, new creatures, justified by His Resurrection



Conclusion

- How did Abraham attain righteousness?
- How does David describe the righteousness which is imputed to man?
- How is Abraham the father of the uncircumcised who possess faith?
- Upon what was the promise made to Abraham based?
- How did Abraham demonstrate his faith?
- For whose sake was the example of Abraham's faith written?