

## Romans Chapter 4 : Believing God's Tremendous Promise

### Romans 4.1-12 "The Blessing of Abraham"

The Signs of the Times : February 13, 1896

The ultimate object of studying any Bible book in detail is to be able to take in the entire book at one glance. The second chapter and the first portion of the third of Romans have given us the information that all men are in the same deplorable condition. Then comes the brighter side in the last part of the third chapter, in which the free grace of God is set forth in Christ as the Saviour of sinners. And now in the fourth chapter we have the final argument concerning justification by faith.

#### The Case of Abraham: Romans 4:1-12

"What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also; and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised."

#### Questioning the Text:

- What is the theme for consideration in this chapter?
  - What "Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found."
- What would Abraham have if he were justified by works?
  - "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory."
- But can he glory?
  - "Not before God."
- How is this proved?
  - By "the Scripture."

- “What saith the Scripture?”
  - “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”
- What was counted unto him for righteousness?
  - His faith.
- How would the reward be reckoned if it were the reward of works?
  - Not “of grace, but of debt.”
- How is it to him that worketh not?
  - “His faith is counted for righteousness.”
- Whom does God justify?
  - “The ungodly.”
- Who describes this blessedness?
  - “David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.”
- In what words?
  - “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”
- What important question arises here?
  - “Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?”
- What gives rise to this question?
  - “For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.”
- How was it reckoned to Him? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision?
  - “Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.”
- What did Abraham receive?
  - “He received the sign of circumcision.”
- What was the value of this sign?
  - “A seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had.”
- When did he have this righteousness of faith?
  - “Yet being uncircumcised.”
- Why was his faith reckoned to him for righteousness when he was yet uncircumcised?
  - “That he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised.”
- Of whom else is he the father?

- “The father of circumcision.”
- To what circumcised ones is he the father?
  - “To them who are not of the circumcision only.”
- What must the circumcised children of Abraham necessarily have in addition to their circumcision?
  - “That faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.”

**“As Pertaining to the Flesh:”** Abraham was not the father, or ancestor, according to the flesh, of all those to whom Paul addressed the epistle. The question under consideration is justification by faith. If now it can be shown that even Abraham received no righteousness through the flesh, but that it was only by faith, the case will be practically settled.

**Glorying:** If in the plan of salvation there were any such thing as righteousness by works, then there would be provision made for boasting. For if one may be saved by works, then all men may be; and then those who were saved might boast of their superiority to others in like circumstances. But we have already learned that boasting is excluded. “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

**Glorying In, and Glorying Before:** If Abraham were justified by works, he might glory; but the fact is that he can not glory before God; and the proof of this is found in the words of Scripture: “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” A man can be justified by works when it can be shown that he has done no wrong. In that case he needs no faith; his works speak for themselves. But Abraham was justified by faith, and therefore it is evident that he was not justified by any works. He who is justified only by the works of God, will glory only in those works. That is glorying in God, and is far different from glorying before God.

**Paul and James:** Here is where nearly everybody quotes the words of James, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?” James 2:21. Unfortunately this text is usually quoted as a disparagement of the words of Paul. It seems to be taken for granted that there is a contradiction between Paul and James; and sympathy naturally leans to James, because people like to believe that there is some merit in their own works, and they imagine that this is what James teaches. Indeed, there are some who hold that James wrote for the purpose of correcting Paul’s “extreme views” of justification by faith. We may well throw all such foolish and wicked ideas to the winds. No one need hope to come to an understanding of the Scriptures until he approaches them with the settled conviction that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” The Holy Spirit does not at one time inspire words which must later on be corrected.

**Faith Working:** The trouble with those who thus read the words of James is that they suppose that the apostle says that Abraham was justified by his own works of faith. “Seest thou how faith wrought?” That is ever the mark of living faith, as the apostle is showing. And that is just the statement of the apostle Paul. The last verse of the third chapter of Romans tells us that by faith

we establish the law. Moreover, the very term “justification” shows that faith performs the requirement of the law. Faith makes a man a doer of the law, for that is the meaning of the term “justification by faith.” So in James we read that the works of Abraham simply showed the perfection of his faith. “And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.” The apostle James, therefore, teaches the same kind of justification that Paul does. If he did not, one or the other or both of them would be discredited as apostles. *Justification by faith which works is the only kind of justification known in the Bible.*

**Debt and Grace:** “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” It is necessary to keep in mind what the apostle is writing about. The subject is the means by which a man is justified. To him that works for justification, the reward of righteousness is not a gift of grace, but the payment of a debt. That is, it would be so if there were any righteousness by works. In that case, the man would come to the Lord and demand of him his due. But no man can put the Lord under obligation to him. “Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?” Romans 11:35. If any one could do something for the Lord for which the Lord would be under obligation to him, then all things would not be from him. That is to say, the idea of justification by works is opposed to the fact that God is the Creator of all things. And, conversely, the recognition of God as Creator is the acknowledgement that righteousness comes from him alone.

**Justifying the Ungodly:** God justifies the ungodly. No others need justification. But mark that he does not justify ungodliness. That would be to call evil good, and to deny himself. But he justifies or makes righteous the ungodly, and that is just what they need. He justifies the believing sinner by making him a new man in Christ Jesus, and this he can do and still be just. To make a new man in righteousness is perfectly in harmony with his own character as Creator.

**Working Not:** “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Bear in mind that justification is the subject under consideration. When the apostle speaks of not working, it is evident that he means not working in order to be justified. A man is not made just by works, but the just man works yet always by faith. “The just shall live by faith.” It is faith that makes him continue to live justly. The reality of the works of faith is made more prominent in the latter part of this chapter.

**The Blessedness Described:** The blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works is the blessedness of sins forgiven, and of freedom from the power of sin. God will not impute sin to the man who lives by faith in Christ, so that Christ's works are his works. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; . . . for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him.” Colossians 2:6-10

**Blessings to Jew and Gentile:** This blessedness comes alike to the circumcision and to the uncircumcision. We have here a repetition of the truth set forth in the third chapter, namely, that there is no difference in the matter of justification. Abraham is the father of the Jewish nation after the flesh, but the blessing which he received was while he was uncircumcised, the same as any other gentile. Therefore he can be the father of both the Jews and the gentiles. His blessing was received by faith, and therefore “they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” Galatians 3:9

**How the Blessing Comes:** We have some time ago seen that the blessing came to Abraham through Christ. In another place the apostle Paul tells us that “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Galatians 3:13, 14. Whatever was promised to Abraham was all contained in the blessing which David described. God sent his Son to bless us in turning every one of us away from our iniquities. Acts 3:26. It is the cross of Christ that transmits the blessings of Abraham to us. Therefore the blessings are spiritual. None of the blessings promised to Abraham were merely temporal. And this further shows that the inheritance promised to Abraham and his seed is only to those who are the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

**Circumcision is Nothing:** The advantage of those who are circumcised was that to them were entrusted the oracles of God; but that did not come to them through circumcision. Circumcision was only a sign; it was not the thing itself. It was given to Abraham as a token of the righteousness by faith which he already possessed. Therefore it could not signify anything more to anybody else. If any who were circumcised did not have righteousness, then their circumcision did not signify anything. “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.” 1 Corinthians 7:19. So Abraham was the father of the circumcised, provided they were not of the circumcision only, but had righteousness by faith, which is the one necessary thing.

**Everything in Christ:** Speaking of Christ, the apostle says, “All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” 2 Corinthians 1:20. There is no promise of God to any man that ever lived on earth, or that will ever live, except through Jesus Christ. The promises to Israel, especially, which most concern us are those that were first made to Abraham. But “he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness.” Genesis 15:6. Therefore “if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Galatians 3:29. So, then, the promise to Israel come through the cross of Christ; and none are Israel except those who have personal, saving faith in him.

### **Roman 4.13-15 “The Blessing of Abraham”**

The Signs of the Times : February 13, 1896

In our lesson last week we began the study of Abraham as a special illustration of the doctrine of justification by faith. We found that Abraham could not glory before God, because he was justified by faith only, and not at all by works. But the verses, which follow, will involve a sufficient review of the first part of the chapter, and therefore we will at once proceed to the study of

#### **The Inheritance and the Heirs: Romans 4:13-15**

“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. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect; because the law worketh wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression.”

#### **Questioning the Text:**

- What promise was made to Abraham?
  - “That he should be the heir of the world.”
- To whom was this promise made?
  - “To Abraham” and “to his seed.” “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made.” Galatians 3:16
- Who is the seed?
  - “He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.” Galatians 3:16
- Is Christ in his own person the only seed?
  - “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Galatians 3:29
- Of what are Abraham and his seed heirs?
  - “Of the world.”
- On what basis was this inheritance promised?
  - “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.”
- If they which are of the law be heirs, what is the result?
  - “Faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect.”
- Why so?
  - “Because the law worketh wrath.”
- If there were no law, what would there not be?
  - “Where no law is, there is no transgression.”
- Why is it, then, that the law worketh wrath?
  - Because “by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Romans 3:29

### **Where Is the Promise?**

A very natural inquiry upon reading the thirteenth verse would be, Where is there any promise that Abraham and his seed should be heirs of the world? Many think that no such promise is contained in the Old Testament. But there can be no doubt about the matter, for the apostle says that there was such a promise. If we have not found it, it is because we have read the Old Testament too superficially, or with minds biased by preconceived opinions. If we consider the connection, we shall have no difficulty in locating the promise.

Of what is the apostle speaking in this connection? Of an inheritance through the righteousness of faith, and also of the fact that circumcision was given to Abraham as a seal of this righteousness which he had by faith, and therefore as the seal of the inheritance which was to come thereby. Where in the Old Testament do we find the account of the giving of circumcision, and of a promise in connection therewith? In the seventeenth chapter of Genesis. Then that must

be the place for us to look for the promise that Abraham should be the heir of the world. Let us turn and read:

“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God . . . And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.” Genesis 17:7-11

The reader will at once say: “Yes; it is plain enough that there is a promise here; but what we are looking for is the promise that Abraham and his seed should inherit the earth; and I do not see that here. All that I can see is a promise that they should inherit the land of Canaan.” But it is certain from the connection in Romans that we are on the right track, and we shall soon see that this is indeed the promise that Abraham and his seed should be heirs of the world. We must study the details of this promise. And first let us note the fact that the inheritance promised in this place is

### **An Everlasting Inheritance**

The Lord said to Abraham, “I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession.” Note well that both Abraham and his seed are included in all the promise. The inheritance is not to be merely in the possession of Abraham’s seed forever, but Abraham himself is to have it for an everlasting possession. But the only way, in which both Abraham and his seed may have everlasting possession of an inheritance, is by having everlasting life. Therefore we see that in this promise to Abraham we have the assurance of everlasting life in which to enjoy the possession.

This will appear still more clearly when we consider that the inheritance is

### **An Inheritance of Righteousness**

“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.” Romans 4:13. That is just what we have in the promise recorded in the seventeenth of Genesis. For that covenant was sealed by circumcision (see verse 11), and circumcision was the seal of righteousness by faith. See Romans 4:11

Someone may say that this does not appear from the Old Testament itself, and that therefore the Jews could not be expected to have understood it; we have the New Testament to enlighten us. It is true that in studying the Old Testament we owe much to the New Testament, but it is also a fact that there is no new revelation in it. One may see from the Old Testament alone that the inheritance promised to Abraham and to his seed was only on the condition of righteousness by faith.

This is the natural conclusion from the fact that the inheritance is to be an everlasting possession. Now the Jews well knew that everlasting life belongs to the righteous alone. “The righteous shall never be removed; but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.” Proverbs 10:30. “For evildoers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.” Psalm 37:9. “For

such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.” Verse 22

The fifth commandment reads, “Honor thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” The keeping of the commandments has never made any difference in the length of men’s lives in this present world. But the inheritance which God promised to Abraham is one that will be everlasting because of the righteousness of its possessors.

### **The Promise and the Resurrection**

Another point from the promise is recorded in Genesis, if we read carefully. The promise was to Abraham and to his seed. Now Stephen stated as a well-known fact that Abraham did not have so much of the promised land as he could set his foot on. Acts 7:5. We may learn this from the Old Testament record, because we are told that he had to buy from the Canaanites, whom God had promised to drive out, a spot of land in which to bury his wife. As for his immediate descendants, we know that they dwelt in tents, wandering from place to place, and that Jacob died in the land of Egypt.

Further than this, we read the words of David, whose reign was at the time of the highest prosperity of the children of Israel in the land of Canaan: “Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears; for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.” Psalm 39:12. See also his prayer at the consecration of the gifts to the temple, when Solomon was made king. 1 Chronicles 29:15

Still further, and this is most positive of all, we have the words of God to Abraham when he made the promise. After telling him that he would give the land of Canaan to him and to his seed, the Lord said that his seed should first be slaves in a strange land. “And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again.” Genesis 15:7, 13-16. Thus we see that Abraham was plainly told that he should die before he had any inheritance in the land, and that it would be at least four hundred years before any of his seed could inherit it.

But Abraham died in faith, and so did his seed. See Hebrews 11:13. “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” They died in faith, because they knew that God could not lie. But since God’s promise must be fulfilled, and they did not receive the promised inheritance in this present life, we are shut up to the conclusion that it can be obtained only through the resurrection from the dead.

This was the hope that sustained the faithful Israelites. Abraham had faith to offer Isaac upon the altar because his faith was in God’s power to raise the dead. When Paul was a prisoner on account of “the hope and resurrection of the dead” (Acts 23:6), he said, “And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come.” And then, to show the reasonableness of this hope, he asked, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” Acts 26:6-8

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the pledge and surety of the resurrection of those who believe on him. See 1 Corinthians 15:13-20. The apostles “preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.” Acts 4:2. And one of them says for our benefit, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” 1 Peter 1:3-5. And then he adds that this faith is tried that it may “be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

And this brings us to the conclusion of the matter, namely, that the promise to Abraham and to his seed that they should be heirs of the world, is

### **The Promise of Christ’s Coming**

The apostle Peter says that it is necessary to remind us of the words that were spoken by the holy prophets because “there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” Therefore they do not believe in the promise at all.

But they do not reason well, “for this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, whereby the world that then was being overflowed with water, perished; but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” 2 Peter 3:5-7

Take notice that not only has the promise something to do with the fathers, but it concerns the whole earth. The complaint of the scoffers is that since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. But the apostle shows that when they say so they shut their eyes to the fact that the same word that in the beginning made the heavens and the earth, also destroyed the earth by the flood. Also the earth is by the same word now preserved until the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men, when it will be destroyed by fire. “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” 2 Peter 3:13

According to What Promise? —Why, according to the promise to the fathers, which was that Abraham and his seed should inherit the earth. It has been a long time, as men count, since that promise was made, but “the Lord is not slack concerning his promise.” It has not been so long since it was made that he has forgotten it; for “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” The reason why he has waited this long is that he is not willing that any should perish in the fires that will renew the earth, but he desires that all should come to repentance.

And so we find that we have as great an interest in the promise to Abraham as he himself had. That promise is still open for all to accept. It embraces nothing less than an eternal life of righteousness in the earth made new as it was in the beginning. The hope of the promise of God unto the fathers was the hope of the coming of the Lord to raise the dead, and thus to bestow the inheritance. Christ was once here on the earth, but then he did not have any more of the

inheritance than Abraham had. He had not where to lay his head. God is now sending his Holy Spirit to seal the believers for the inheritance, even as he did to Abraham; and when all the faithful shall have been sealed by the Spirit, “he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” Acts 3:20, 21

### **Romans 4.16-25 ”The Surety of the Promise”**

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In our last lesson we learned what Abraham found, and how he found it. At the same time we have learned what God has promised us as well as Abraham, if we believe his word. God has promised to every man who believes him nothing less than the freedom of the world. This is not an arbitrary thing. God has not said that if we will believe certain statements and dogmas, he will in return give us an everlasting inheritance. The inheritance is one of righteousness; and since faith means the reception of the life of Christ into the heart, together with God's righteousness, it is evident that there is no other way in which the inheritance can be received. This is further made clear by a statement in the last section, which was not noted, namely, that

**“The Law Worketh Wrath:”** Therefore whoever thinks to get righteousness by the law is putting his trust in that which will destroy him. God has promised a grant of land to every one who will accept it on his conditions, namely, that he shall also accept the righteousness which goes with it, because righteousness is the characteristic of the land. Righteousness is to “dwell” in it. But this righteousness can be found only in the life of God, which is manifested in Christ. Now the man who thinks that he himself can get righteousness out of the law is in reality trying to substitute his own righteousness for God’s righteousness. In other words, he is trying to get the land by fraud. Therefore when he comes in the court to prove his claim to the land, it appears that there is a criminal charge against him; and he finds “wrath” instead of blessing. “Where no law is, there is no transgression;” but there is law everywhere, and therefore transgression. All have sinned, so that the inheritance cannot be by the law.

#### Romans 4:16-25

“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 (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations), before him whom he believed, even God, who quickens the dead, and calls those things which be not as though they were. 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. 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; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus

our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”

#### Questioning the Text:

- What have we already found the inheritance to be?
  - “The world.”
- And how is it to be obtained?
  - “Through the righteousness of faith.”
- If it were of works, what would be the result?
  - “Faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect.”
- Why?
  - “Because the law worketh wrath.”
- Why is the inheritance of faith?
  - “That it might be by grace.”
- To what end?
  - “To the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.”
- Of whom is Abraham the father?
  - “The father of us all.”
- Before whom?
  - “Before him whom he believed, even God.”
- According to what scripture?
  - “As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations.”
- How could God say to Abraham before he had any child, “I have made thee a father of many nations”?
  - He “quickeneth the dead, and calls those things that be not as though they were.”
- How did Abraham receive the promise of God?
  - “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief.”
- In what was he strong?
  - He “was strong in faith, giving glory to God.”
- Of what was he persuaded?
  - “Fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.”
- What was the result?
  - “Therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.”

- For whose sake was this written?
  - “For us also.”
- Why for our sakes?
  - “To whom it shall be imputed.”
- What shall be imputed?
  - That which was imputed to Abraham, namely, righteousness.
- On what condition will it be imputed to us also?
  - “If we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.”
- Why was he delivered to death?
  - He “was delivered for our offenses.”
- For what purpose was he raised again?
  - He “was raised again for our justification.

**Sure to All:** Since the inheritance is through the righteousness of faith, it is equally sure to all the seed, and equally within the reach of all. Faith gives all an equal chance, because faith is just as easy for one person as for another. God has dealt to every man a measure of faith, and to all the same measure, for the measure of grace is the measure of faith, and “unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” Ephesians 4:7. Christ is given without reserve to every man. Hebrews 2:9. Therefore, as the same measure of faith and grace is given to all men, all have an equal opportunity to gain the inheritance.

**Jesus Is the Surety:** Faith makes the promise sure to all the seed, because it has Christ alone for its object, and he is the surety of the promises of God. 2 Corinthians 1:20. We read also of the oath of God, by which Jesus was made high priest, that “by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament,” or covenant. Hebrews 7:22. Now Jesus was not given for a certain class, but for all without distinction. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. Jesus by the grace of God tasted death for every man. Hebrews 2:9. He says, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” John 6:37. Christ dwells in the heart by faith. Ephesians 3:17. Therefore, since Christ is the surety of the promise, it must be sure to every one who believes.

**The Oath of God:** It may seem to some a little far-fetched to say that the oath by which Jesus was made priest is the surety of the promise to Abraham. But a little consideration will enable any one to see that it can be no other way. In the sixth chapter of Hebrews we read: “When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee. . . . God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

**For Our Sakes:** Why did God confirm his promise to Abraham by an oath? That we might have a strong consolation. It was not for Abraham's sake, because Abraham believed fully without the oath. His faith was shown to be perfect before the oath was given. It was altogether for our sakes. When does that oath give us strong consolation? When we flee for refuge to Christ as priest in the most holy place. Within the veil he ministers as high priest; and it is the oath of God that gives us courage to believe that his priesthood will save us. Then our consolation comes from Christ's priesthood, and so from the oath which made him priest. Therefore the oath of God to Abraham was identical with the oath that made Christ high priest. This shows most plainly that the promise of God to Abraham is as wide as the gospel of Christ. And so our text, speaking of the righteousness that was imputed to Abraham, says, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead."

**The Power of God's Word:** God "calleth those things which be not as though they were." Sometimes men do the same thing, but we soon lose confidence in them. When men speak of things that are not as though they were, there is only one proper name for it. It is a lie. But God calls those things that be not as though they were, and it is the truth. What makes the difference? Simply this: Man's word has no power to make a thing exist when it does not exist. He may say that it does, but that does not make it so. But when God names a thing, the very thing itself is in the word that names it. He speaks, and it is. It was by this power of God that Abraham was made the father of many nations, even of us, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again.

**Quickening the Dead:** It is by the power of God's word which can speak of those things that be not as though they were and have it true, that the dead are raised. His word makes them live. It was Abraham's faith in the resurrection of the dead that made him the father of many nations. God's oath to Abraham was on the occasion of his offering Isaac. Genesis 22:15-18. And "by faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." Hebrews 11:17-19

**Righteousness and Resurrection:** The righteousness which was imputed to Abraham will be imputed to us also if we believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. Therefore it follows that righteousness was imputed to Abraham because of his faith in the resurrection of the dead, which comes only through Jesus. Acts 4:2. That was what the apostles preached the promises to the fathers. The power by which a man is made righteous is the power of the resurrection. See Philippians 3:9-11. This power of the resurrection, which works righteousness in a man, is the surety of the final resurrection to immortality at the last day by which he enters upon his inheritance.

**Not Weakened in Faith:** Some versions of Romans 4:19 give the idea, "Without being weakened in faith, he considered his own body now as good as dead." That is to say, after God had made the promise to him, a full consciousness of his weakness and of all the difficulties and seeming impossibilities in the way did not have any effect in weakening his faith. Nothing is impossible with God, and there are no difficulties for him. Whenever a person is inclined to doubt the possibility of his salvation, let him stop and consider that God made the world by his word, and that he raises the dead, and that it is by that same power that God will save him if he is willing. To doubt God's promise to deliver us from all evil is to doubt the fact that he created all things by his word, and that he is able to raise the dead.