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BIBLE STUDY.**LETTER TO THE ROMANS. — NO. 6.**

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In the fourth chapter of the book of Romans we have faith in a concrete form. The narrative of the lives of Abraham and Sarai in connection with the birth of Isaac, furnishes a practical example of justification by faith.

Abraham was not justified by works; but he believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Abraham received the seal of circumcision. Why? To cause him to believe? No, but because he had believed. It was a seal of the righteousness which he had by believing. The promise to Abraham and to his seed was that he should be heir of the world. This promised inheritance was to be for an "everlasting possession." Gen. 17:8. Therefore it was a covenant of righteousness, sealed by a seal of righteousness, and the inheritance was to be a righteous inheritance, which none but the righteous can gain. 2 Pet. 3:13.

The promise to Abraham depended upon one thing—his having a son. Twenty-five years elapsed from the time the promise was made until it was fulfilled. "Abraham staggered not at the promise of God," but Sarai did, and "Abraham hearkened unto the voice of Sarai." She undertook to help the Lord to carry out His plan. But Hagar was a slave, and her child could be nothing but a slave, born after the flesh.

The seed promised Abraham were to be free men, not slaves, therefore nothing was gain[ed] by this plan of Sarai's. The time came when Sarai realized that the only thing for her to do was to believe that God was able to carry out his promise without her help. Then, "through faith" she "received strength to conceive seed." The birth of Isaac was a miracle. From a human standpoint it was utterly impossible for Abraham and Sarai to become the parents of a child. She conceived by the power of God.

Abraham and Sarai did nothing to gain the promise, except to believe; and yet the child of the promise was their own child. So with Christians. Nothing can be done to

gain the righteousness of Christ, save only to believe the promises. It is wrong to put forth efforts to secure the righteousness of Christ. We are told to believe the promises. God has promised to make us righteous, and the only way to obtain that righteousness is to believe that God is able to impute it.

When men are content to believe God, and submit themselves to him, there is power in his promises to work out their righteousness for them, without any power of their own. How are men made righteous, or partakers of the divine nature?—"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that *by these* ye might be partakes of the divine nature." The power lies in the promise of God. How can we make the promises effectual to us?—By believing them. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Confess your sins, believe that God forgives them as he has promised; and the promise is yours, your sins are forgiven.

The promises of God may be likened to "promissory notes." How many may have these notes? "Whosoever will." They are good for a certain amount of blessing. That amount can never be drawn in full, because God is able "to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think." Men take a promissory note to the bank and, get the gold on it. Christians take the promises of God to him and cash them for a blessing.

How can God give us righteousness, when we are so sinful? We cannot understand how, nor do we need to inquire. It is just as great a miracle for God to make an unrighteous man righteous, as it was for him to create the world. If a man calls a thing which is not, as though it were, he tells a falsehood; but when God calls a thing which is not as though it were, the very fact of his calling it makes it so. God not only makes our hearts righteous, when there is no righteousness there, but He does more than that, he makes our hearts righteous, when there is nothing there but unrighteousness.

A man is just as much an infidel who does not believe that God can speak righteousness into his heart as a man who, by the theory of evolution, does away with the Mosaic record of creation. No limit can be put upon the power of God. If there were a huge mountain, which was to set itself up against the power of God, he could take *nothing* and break that mountain all to pieces.

"We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." We get to be the children of God in the same way as Isaac was born,—by believing, as Abraham and Sarai believed. The promise is to him "that worketh not, but believeth on him, who justifieth the ungodly."

There was much implied in the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Through no other son could the promise of the inheritance come. Christ could not come into the world except through Isaac. Cut off Isaac and what hope of a Saviour? None; Abraham to all appearances would cut off all hope of his own salvation.

Wonderful is the faith here exhibited. Abraham believed that God could raise Isaac up again, and yet, the very one (Christ) through whose power he believed Isaac would be raised up, had not come, and could not come except through Isaac. Nevertheless

God had promised, and Abraham believed, although he was called upon to do that very thing which to human sight would cut off all hope of even having the promise fulfilled.

The promise itself was immutable, and that immutable promise was confirmed by an immutable oath. Therefore God is under obligation to fulfill his promises to all who claim them. The very throne and existence of God are pledged to this, and not to do it would be for God to deny Himself.

By and by, God will come and say, "Gather My saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." Christ is the sacrifice here referred to. It is through him we come. He is the surety of the covenant.

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