



THE ACCOUNT OF ABRAHAM (PART II, Sect. 1)

Through the Law
or
Through Faith?

ROMANS 4:13-17a

Through the LAW or FAITH



Romans
4:13-17a

¹³Indeed, not through the Law was the promise to Abraham and to his seed, that he [would] be the heir of the world, but through [the] righteousness of faith. ¹⁴For if those from the Law are heirs, the faith has been emptied and remains hollow, and the promise has been made ineffective and is now void. ¹⁵For the Law brings about wrath, but where the Law is not, neither is there transgression [of the Law]. ¹⁶On account of this, [the promise is] from faith in order that [it is] in accordance with grace, so that the promise is certain to every seed, not to the one from the Law only, but to the one who is also from the faith of Abraham, who is father of us all, ¹⁷just as it stands written: “I have placed you, and so you are, father of many nations.”

Through the LAW or FAITH



Romans
4:13-17a

PROLOGUE

You may have noticed that up to this point in Romans 4, Paul has not mentioned: **The Law! Yet, Paul begins v.13 with the Law being placed in the emphatic position and it will be mentioned in four consecutive verses before, once again, dropping out of view (cf. 5:13)!**

There are two other words that Paul will introduce: **PROMISE! Paul's use of promise is the OT term for **Gospel!** And then: **SEED!** You should note that Paul has used seed, in 1:3, for Jesus...it's important to keep that in mind!**

Through the
LAW or
FAITH



Romans
4:13-17a

THE PROMISE COMES BEFORE THE LAW

The promise should be understood as the OT equivalent of the Gospel. Here's why. In Gen 15:5, God promises: ***“So shall your descendants be [as innumerable as the stars]”*** (cf. Romans 4:18). This promise proclaimed the Gospel because it assured Abraham of the birth of the Messiah (who would bless all nations). God promised that the Messiah would come through Abraham, even though Abraham did not yet have a son (Genesis 12:3).

Through the
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FAITH



Romans
4:13-17a

THE PROMISE COMES BEFORE THE LAW

Paul notes that God's promise to Abraham emphasized what God would do, not what we should do or have to do. Now notice the parallel version in 4:13, which emphasizes that the promise came to Abraham through faith and not through the Law. Paul emphasizes that if you teach righteousness through the Law, you cancel the promise that came before the Law and gave righteousness to those who believed (4:14).

Through the
LAW or
FAITH



Romans
4:13-17a

THE PROMISE COMES BEFORE THE LAW

“...in accordance with grace...”

Emphasized previously in 3:24, grace becomes prominent again in 4:16. The universal nature of God’s promise to Abraham also is clear: he is to be the father of all nations, not only Israel. The point is that the definition of who is an heir is not simply equivalent with one’s ethnicity or possession of the revealed Law.

Through the
LAW or
FAITH



Romans
4:13-17a

THE PROMISE COMES BEFORE THE LAW

At this point in the study you may ask yourself: *“Why does Paul continue to emphasize this particular point?”*

Take note! If you misunderstand what the Bible teaches about angels, Old Testament events, or practical wisdom that would be a shame. Yet, if you misunderstand what the Bible teaches about justification by God’s grace through faith in Christ Jesus, the result will be condemning!

Through the
LAW or
FAITH



Romans
4:13-17a

THE PROMISE COMES BEFORE THE LAW

The Doctrine of Justification is the chief doctrine of Holy Scripture. Persist in studying Paul's arguments, and see every other teaching of Scripture in light of this chief doctrine and this will enlighten your understanding of the Christian faith and life.

Through the
LAW or
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Romans
4:13-17a

THE PROMISE COMES BEFORE THE LAW

As Paul clearly states in v.15,
“...*the Law bring about wrath.*”

Thus, the Law, instead of being a vehicle for receiving the promised inheritance; will bring every mouth to silence, hold all the world accountable, and is a means by which humans become fully aware of sin (3:19-20).

Through the
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Romans
4:13-17a

THE PROMISE COMES BEFORE THE LAW

Paul then shoots off one more divergent phrase: “...*but where the Law is not, neither is there transgression [of the Law].*”

Please note: For Paul the absence of transgression does not equate to the absence of sin! He has already stated in 2:12 that one can sin, and perish as a result, apart from transgressing the revealed Law. Paul will elaborate on this further in Chapter 5!

Through the
LAW or
FAITH



Romans
4:13-17a

THE PROMISE COMES BEFORE THE LAW

“...but where the Law is not, neither is there transgression [of the Law].”

Paul is implying that the Law brings about wrath by the judgment it pronounces upon those who transgress its commands. The Law, thereby, turns *“...their sin into conscious transgression and so render[s] it more exceeding sinful”* [Ap XII 88). So, rather than leading to the promised inheritance, the Law actually leads one away to even a worse result (again, we’ll study this more fully in Chapter 5).

Through the
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FAITH



Romans
4:13-17a

THE PROMISE COMES BEFORE THE LAW

In the middle of v.16, Paul specifies two reasons why the promise is received “*from faith.*”

First: “...*in order that [it is] in accordance with grace.*” This is purpose!

Second: “...*so that the promise is certain to every seed.*” It is God’s purpose and intention that every one be “**certain**” that is: solid, confident, and guaranteed to every one of Abraham’s offspring!

Through the
LAW or
FAITH



Romans
4:13-17a

THE PROMISE COMES BEFORE THE LAW

This brings us to the first half of v.17:
*“...just as it stands written: ‘I have placed you,
and so you are, father of many nations.’”*

Abraham’s faith in God’s Word of promise is the point! The promise stated that he would not be father of ONE nation only! Instead, we see God’s Word to Abraham from Gen 17:5 quoted above. Paul leaves out the change of name (Abram to Abraham); since Paul always refers to the patriarch as Abraham.

Through the
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FAITH



Romans
4:13-17a

THE PROMISE COMES BEFORE THE LAW

“... father of many nations.”

The Hebrew is very telling...and important: God told Abraham that he would be the father of “Goyyim”
[.y3WG].

This is the Hebrew word that is always used for non-Israelite pagan nations, which Paul uses from the LXX,
ejqnw:n.

Through the
LAW or
FAITH

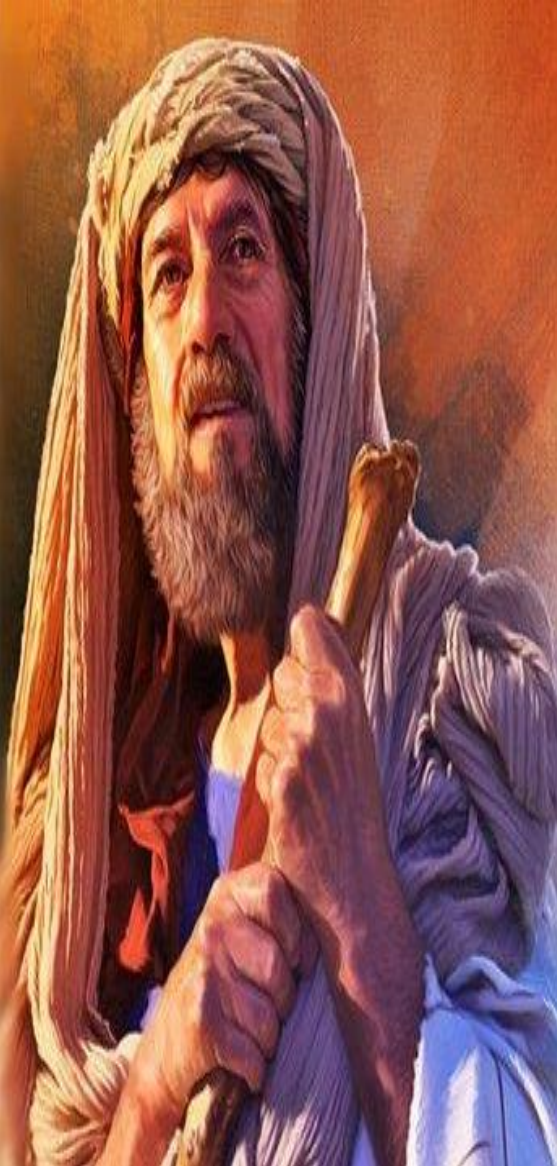


Romans
4:13-17a

THE PROMISE COMES BEFORE THE LAW

Thus, Gen 17:5 provides the verification that Abraham “...is father of all of us,” that is, of all who are “...from the faith of Abraham” (4:16).

Through the  **FAITH!**



Romans
4:13-17a

Conclusion

Abraham's fatherhood applies not simply to those who are circumcised, but to those who are circumcised AND who walk in the footsteps of his FAITH! Since Abraham had FAITH and was credited with righteousness while uncircumcised, the same is true for the uncircumcised who also follow in the footsteps of Abraham's FAITH.

The key word is the Greek verb: *logivzomai*, "to credit; charge." All works and boasting is excluded. Instead, FAITH passively receives a declared righteousness, which is credited to YOU!



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**Next
Week**

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