

Romans 4:13-25^{iv}

For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations")— in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So numerous shall your descendants be." He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his faith "was reckoned to him as righteousness." Now the words, "it was reckoned to him," were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

^{iv} About the Second Reading: Romans 4:13-25

In chapter 4, Paul cites the examples of Abraham to prove that justification by faith is not contrary to the Old Testament. In Judaism at that time, Abraham was held up as a model of righteousness through works. Paul argues that Abraham's faith, his readiness to believe and act upon God's promise, put him in right relationship

to God, apart from any works. This righteousness is open to all—Jew and Gentile—who trust in God, regardless of whether they keep the law.

Paul, on the other hand, argues that Abraham's faith, his readiness to believe and act upon God's promise, put him in right relationship to God apart from any works. This righteousness is open to all—Jew or Gentile—who trust in God, regardless of whether they keep the law or not. The promised inheritance comes through faith to Abraham's true descendants who are those who follow his example of faith. To make the fulfillment of the promise contingent upon the later Mosaic law would render the promise void. The law serves only to make transgression evident. This was probably developed from the Roman maxim, "no punishment without a law."

God "gives life to the dead" (v. 17: a phrase from the daily Jewish prayers, perhaps used here especially in association with the later rabbinic belief that Abraham had indeed sacrificed Isaac but that God had raised him) and "calls into existence the things that do not exist" (v. 17; the son of the aged Abraham and those descended from him). God can through his grace, his favor, fulfill his promise to all, even "against hope" (v. 18), against all human expectation.