

Studies in Romans

Faith in the God Who Keeps His Promises (4:13-25)

Context

- **1:1-17 Introduction**
- **1:18-4:25 The problem and God's solution**
 - **3:21-4:25 God's solution: justification by faith**
 - 3:21-26 God has revealed a way by which he justly makes people righteous through Jesus' death if they have faith in Him
 - 3:27-4:25 Faith is what God has always wanted – it is the only means by which a person may inherit God's promises
- **5:1-8:39 What it means to be justified by faith**

Why is faith God's appointed way for us to be justified?

Romans 4:13-25

Note the word "for"...*What is it there for?*

Note Paul's emphasis on God's promises (vv. **13, 14, 16, 20, 21...**) *How are we to inherit these promises?*

What promise/s (vv. 13-17a)? See Gen. 12:2-3 & 15.

Compare **Genesis 13** and **Rom. 4:13**. *What is surprising there?* Thomas Schreiner: "If universal blessing for all peoples is guaranteed by God, then this is another way of saying that God would reclaim the world that was lost through Adam's sin." See also **Psalm 2:7-12; 22:27-28; 47:8-11, 17; Isa. 2:1-4; 55:3-5; 66:23; Zech. 14:9;** etc. Paul "saw this promise fulfilled as Jews and Gentiles put their faith in Jesus as Messiah" (Schreiner).

Who are the recipients of this promise?

Note that there are only two possible futures in front of every one of us...

God's promises:

1. The promise of God: "What God says, God does" (4:13-17a)

Verse 13: *how will God keep His great universe-changing and universe-renewing promise?*

What does Paul mean "faith is null" or "of no effect" (v. 14)?

Why is it that the inheritance cannot be realized by law keeping?

Why does the law provoke God's wrath?

"Where there is no law there is no transgression"?

What did and what does God's promise of an inheritance depend on?

2. The promise of God: “What God says, God does, because He can raise the dead” (4:17b-22)

“It’s all very well to insist that God will fulfil his promise because it depends on Him and not on us. But how exactly is God going to make Abraham’s offspring into people who are fit to rule the world? How in the face of human unfaithfulness will He find a faithful people?”

The answer (v. 17b):

What is the connection between the power of God and the weakness of Abraham?

Verse 19: “he did not weaken”? But didn’t Abraham weaken?

3. Conclusion and application (4:23-25)

So what happened when Abraham believed the promise of God shows the shape of the gospel. It shows us how God *imputes* righteousness to the believer of every age. Abraham is the type. Christ is the Antitype. Abraham is the shadow. Christ is the reality.

So the point as we finish **chapter 4**: assurance. Assurance is guaranteed!

For further discussion

(Perhaps choose one or more to think about further or to discuss in a group)

- *Compare and contrast GRACE and WORKS using Romans 3 & 4. Example: “Grace is given to the wicked and works are done by the wicked.”*
- *What difference does the assurance of 4:13-25 make to our daily lives? And to our attitudes to having jobs/posts/ministries in the church?*
- *What difference does justification by grace make to our prayer lives both individually and as a church?*
- *Give God thanks for the faith of Abraham, and that we can be his spiritual offspring, having our faith counted to us as righteousness. Pray that we will know that God is able to do as He has promised.*