

Romans Summary
Week 8, Wednesday November 2, 2016
Romans 4:13-25

Paul explains that Abraham's inheritance, which is the whole world not just a piece of land in the Middle East, and that of his heirs, comes through promise not law. This is so because, he has already said that the law establishes sin, so if the heir or the inheritance is by law, then there is only condemnation — not heir and no inheritance. This is expanding on what Paul had said in the section before.

Being an heir and having an inheritance is by faith which is in line with grace so that they (being an heir and having an inheritance) would be for all people — both Jew and Gentile. After all Abraham is father of us all (see last summary). Abraham is a father of many nations (Jew plus Gentile) because of his faith. The shape of his faith is resurrection shaped. Abraham believed that God could bring life from the dead (resurrection) and into existence what doesn't exist (creation). When God brings a Gentile to faith in Jesus it is new creation; being out of non-being and when God brings a Jew to faith in Jesus it is resurrection; life from the dead.

Paul goes deeper into Abraham's resurrection-like faith. Abraham believes God's promise that his family will be like the stars and like the sand, particularly in light of his own body and that of his wife's. They are, from the perspective of childbearing, dead bodies, yet Abraham believes God will make his a father of many nations — he hopes against reasonable hope.

Abraham typifies what it means to be truly human: believing God, giving glory to God as God, knowing God's power, and becoming fruitful (literally). This is all stacked up in distinction to the human/Israel problem of sin and idolatry described in chapters 1 and 2. This is resurrection-shaped faith is the reason why God reckoned (declared) Abraham righteous.

Of course, Paul isn't just giving a history lesson. The life of Abraham is more than veneration of a saint; Abraham's story shapes our own. Paul has said that we Christians have been made righteous. Our righteousness isn't because of something in us; after all we, like Abraham, are the ungodly. However, when we heard the gospel of Jesus and we believed that God raised him from the dead, then we are exercising the same faith as Abraham. We believe in the God who gave life from the dead when he raised Jesus from the dead.

Paul finishes this section with a theological summary. Jesus was delivered (handed over same as chapter 1) because of our transgressions. God's wrath is revealed against ungodliness. And, Jesus has been raised for our justification — because we have faith in God's raising of Jesus we are made members of Abraham's/God's family.

“The Great Reckoning” reflection and discussion questions:

1. What is the true foundation of righteousness and godliness?
2. Why does Paul's use of the word reckon sweep away everything that separates us from each other?
3. Why does the world need to see goodness?
4. How does Grace Church's building project parallel Northview's life plan?