

ROMANS

Chapter 4

Abraham Justified by Faith

What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” 4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5 And to the one who does not work but believes in[a] him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: 7 “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; 8 blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.” 9 Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. 10 How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. 11 He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, 12 and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

Luther: “After the first three chapters, in which sin is revealed and faith’s way to righteousness is taught, St. Paul begins in chapter 4 to meet certain remonstrances and objections. First he takes up the one that all men commonly make when they hear that faith justifies without works. They say, ‘Are we, then, to do no good works?’ Therefore he himself takes up the case of Abraham, and asks, ‘What did Abraham accomplish, then, with his good works? Were they all in vain? Were his works of no use?’ He concludes that Abraham was justified by faith alone, without any works, so much so that the Scriptures in Genesis 15[:6] declare that he was justified by faith alone even before the work of circumcision. But if the work of circumcision contributed nothing to his righteousness, though God had commanded it and it was a good work of obedience, then surely no other good work will contribute anything to righteousness. Rather, as Abraham’s circumcision was an external sign by which he showed the righteousness that was already his in faith, so all good works are only external signs which follow out of faith; like good fruit, they demonstrate that a person is already inwardly righteous before God. (TLSB)

“With this powerful illustration from the Scriptures, St. Paul confirms the doctrine of faith which he had set forth in chapter 3. He cites also another witness, David, who says in Psalm 32[:1–2] that a man is justified without works—although he does not remain without works when he has been justified. Then he gives the illustration a broader application, setting it over against all other works of the law. He concludes that the Jews cannot be Abraham’s heirs merely because of their blood, still less because of the works of the law; they must inherit Abraham’s faith, if they would be true heirs. For before the law—before the law of Moses and the law of circumcision—Abraham was justified by faith and called the father of all believers. Moreover the law brings about wrath rather than grace, because no one keeps the law out of love for it and pleasure in it. What comes by the works of the law is thus disfavor rather than grace. Therefore faith alone must

obtain the grace promised to Abraham, for these examples too were written for our sakes [Rom. 15:4], that we too should believe” (AE 35:373–74). (TLSB)

4:1 Having shown that circumcision does not merit salvation, Paul now applies this to Abraham, the first to receive God’s covenant of circumcision (Gn 17:10–14). (TLSB)

Abraham, our forefather.† The great patriarch of the Jewish nation, the true example of a justified person (see Jas 2:21–23). The Jews of Jesus’ time used Abraham as an example of justification by works, but Paul holds him up as a shining example of righteousness through faith (see Gal 3:6–9). (CSB)

The key example Paul chooses is Abraham. The term “forefather” (προπάτωρ) occurs only here in the NT. The referent of “our” is most interesting. Initially, as indicated by the phrase “according to flesh,” “our” has the obvious meaning of Paul and his fellow Jews. They are Abraham’s children according to physical lineage. This is reflected in how Scripture describes Israel as “the seed of Abraham” (Ps 105:6; Is 41:8; see Rom 9:7–8). Here “flesh” need not have any negative sense (a nuance of “flesh” present thus far in Romans only in 2:28). Instead, “according to flesh” (κατὰ σάρκα) has the same meaning as when applied to the sinless Christ in 1:3 and 9:5. (CC)

“Our forefather according to the flesh.” If one receives something by the flesh, he receives it by works of his own deeds and efforts. The apostle also thinks of the good works that Abraham did after he was converted, after he became a servant of the living God, of all his glorious virtues for which Scriptures praise Abraham. The works of the converted, though done in the power of God, are still the deeds of man. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

While the primary focus of “our forefather according to flesh” is, at least initially, the Jewish people collectively, it is not necessary to restrict this description as a return to the second person singular “you” used to interact directly with a Jewish person in 2:17–27. The question-and-answer format is able to dialog with all who are listening (as in 3:1–8). This is particularly evident in how the application of “our” expands as the chapter progresses. Father Abraham has children beyond these (see 4:12, 16). (CC)

4:2 Hypothetical point. Many rabbis assumed that Abraham was justified by keeping the Law perfectly. If this were true, Abraham had reason to boast. But he could not boast before God, who knew that Abraham was not justified by works but by faith. (TLSB)

The engaging diatribe format continues in 4:2 with a non-committal conditional. It expresses, at least initially, the possibility that perhaps “Abraham was declared righteous from works” (ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη). If so, the verse continues, then “he has a boast” (ἔχει καύχημα). Dunn points out that an affirmative response to this conditional is “the normal or at least widely accepted way of thinking about Abraham among his fellow Jews.” Indeed, Matera articulates this in even more exclusive terms by stating: “Although Jewish tradition recognized the importance of Abraham’s faith, it never argued that Abraham was justified by faith. Jewish tradition was more inclined to view Abraham as righteous because he was obedient to God.” (CC)

Although Paul does not directly diminish the character of Abraham in any way in Romans 4, the most challenging reply to all these assertions comes from Scripture itself. First of all, Luther points out: “If you should ask what Abraham was before he was called by a merciful God, Joshua (24:2) answers that he was an idolater, that is, that he deserved death and eternal damnation.” In that passage, Joshua reminds Israel, “Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, ‘Across the River [the Euphrates] your fathers lived long ago, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and

they served other gods' ” (Josh 24:2). Second, the narrative of Genesis itself hardly depicts Abraham as perfect after Yahweh’s call. Twice he lies about the fact that Sarah is his wife (Gen 12:10–20; 20:1–18). His conduct in regard to Hagar and Ishmael is also far from exemplary (Gen 16:4–6). (CC)

4:3 Elderly Abraham believed God’s promise that he would be the father of a great nation (Gn 15:1–6). His faith is noted, not his works. (TLSB)

The reference is to Ge 15:6, where nothing is mentioned about works. (CSB)

counted. Abraham had kept no law, rendered no service and performed no ritual that earned credit to his account before God. His belief in God, who had made promises to him, was credited to him as righteousness. (CSB)

Abraham did not act righteously; God declared him righteous because of his faith. “Faith itself is credited for righteousness. Faith is the thing God declares to be righteousness. Paul adds that righteousness is credited freely” (Ap IV 89). (TLSB)

Paul counters that Abraham’s righteousness before God was not based upon works. Later in 4:9–11, Paul will use the chronology of the narrative account to deal with the matter of circumcision as a supposed basis of, or requirement for, righteousness. In 4:3, however, his evidence is provided by a direct quotation from the authoritative “Scripture” (γραφῆ; see γραφαῖς in 1:2): “for what is the Scripture saying?” Note the present tense of the verb “is saying” (λέγει). It conveys that God’s Word continues to speak, as stated regarding the Law in 3:20. It also reinforces that when a perfect tense is used, the emphasis is on the present impact. (CC)

elogistha auto “was reckoned to him.” The passive construction highlights the passive role of the believer in the doctrine of justification. God is the active agent; he is the one who justifies. The believer is the passive one who is acted upon. The believer does nothing, contributes nothing. He receives the promise in faith, but even this is not his doing, because faith is worked in him by God’s promise. Paul takes this from Genesis 15 which is still two chapters before the requirement of circumcision. Abraham was justified by faith before any works of law were asked of him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

4:4-5 Including works in salvation destroys grace. If we save ourselves, then God is not our Savior! God justifies sinners who cannot deserve His grace. (TLSB)

Before proceeding there, Paul provides an everyday illustration, as true today as it was then. While 4:4 has terms loaded with theological nuances, it is best to read the verse simply as it stands: “now to the one who works, the payment is not credited as a favor, but according to what is owed.” The noun “works” (ἔργα, as in 4:2, 6) is typically suspect in Paul and the phrase “works of the Law” (e.g., 3:20, 28) is always negative. However, Paul does use the verb “to work” (ἐργάζομαι in 4:5) in positive expressions elsewhere (Rom 2:10; 1 Cor 16:10; Gal 6:10; Col 3:23). The sense here is more neutral. It reflects the secular working world, where a person’s “wages” or “payment” (ὁ μισθός) is not credited by the employer as a gracious favor (κατὰ χάριν) or even as a gift. Instead, “payment” denotes the sum the employer is obligated to pay the worker, “according to what is owed” (κατὰ ὀφειλῆμα). If unpaid, this might become a debt, but that is not the sense in 4:4. (CC)

4:4 *his wages* – misthos means “pay, earnings” and stands in opposition to faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

his due – *opheilama* is a debt owed and is the opposite of grace. Apology IV, 89, Tappert 120 says: “Therefore he excludes even the merit of works according to the moral law; for if by these we earned justification before God, faith would not be accounted for righteousness without works. Romans 4:4-5.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

4:5 *who does not work*. “But to the one who is not working, but believing on the One who declares the ungodly righteous, his faith is being credited for righteousness” (4:5). This brief expression encapsulates Paul’s Good News in a manner reminiscent of 3:28. In so doing, Paul retrieves the key terms of Gen 15:6 in a manner which he will utilize throughout the rest of the chapter. Rom 4:4–5 also enables us to define “believe” (πιστεύω) most simply. To work is to be owed (4:4). To believe is to not work (τῷ δὲ μὴ ἐργαζομένῳ πιστεύοντι δέ, 4:5). Thus faith is the opposite of works (as in Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16; 3:2). In relationship with God, there is *either* the “works” approach *or* there is faith. (CC)

But what about those who believe in both faith *and* works (synergism)? Paul does not even bring up that alternative. “It is faith, therefore, that God declares to be righteousness; he [Paul] adds that it is accounted freely and denies that it could be accounted freely if it were a reward for works” (Ap IV 89). Thus righteousness is credited “to the one who is not working, but believing” (Rom 4:5). (CC)

Herein lies Paul’s fundamental charge against human thinking about God, thinking which has all too often influenced Jewish and Christian attitudes. Our dominant worldly view generally wants to follow the employment metaphor in desiring to receive what is owed or fair from God based upon works (4:4). Paul has endeavored to explode that type of thinking in 1:18–3:20. He continues to do so in Romans 4 by proving such was never the case, even with our forefather Abraham (4:1). The scriptural account of Abraham declares that what was in his account before God was not there from his working, but rather because righteousness was credited to him by God himself. (CC)

Ungodly. The grenade Paul tosses right in the midst of “believe” (πιστεύω), “declare righteous” (δικαιώω), “credit” (λογίζομαι), “faith” (πίστις), and “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνη) is the word “ungodly” (ἀσεβής). Dunn understates the case in suggesting that this term “would be distinctly more provocative.” In 1:18, Paul asserts: “indeed, [the] wrath of God is being revealed from heaven upon every ungodliness [ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἀσέβειαν] and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” “Ungodliness” (ἀσέβεια) is a powerful, derogatory word which depicts an absolute rejection of the existence of God with a corresponding dishonorable lifestyle. Now Paul asserts that these are exactly the kind of people whom God credits as righteous! More precisely, righteousness is credited to the one “believing on the One who declares the ungodly righteous” (πιστεύοντι ... ἐπὶ τὸν δικαιῶντα τὸν ἀσεβῆ, 4:5). Paul’s primary assertion, once again, then, ultimately is not about people, but about God. God is the one who “declares righteous” (an active participle of δικαιώω in 4:5, as in 3:26); by him is a person “credited” (a divine passive of λογίζομαι in 4:5, as in 4:3) with righteousness. (CC)

Thus Jesus himself exemplifies what Paul here says about the God who declares the ungodly righteous. Jesus fulfills the prophecy that “the righteous one, my Servant, shall declare many to be righteous,” and he does this not for those who are already righteous, but for “transgressors” laden with “iniquities” (Is 53:11–12). The problem with the Pharisees and others who scorned and derided Jesus for associating with “sinners” was their refusal to acknowledge their own ungodliness. Jesus, however, does not avoid the topic in his scathing accusations against the

Pharisees (e.g., Lk 11:37–52; 16:14–15), something Paul similarly reinforces in Rom 2:17–29 and 3:9–20. (CC)

4:6-8 Paul cites further evidence for believing on the God who declares the ungodly righteous from Psalm 32. As in the quote from another psalm of David, Psalm 51 in Rom 3:4, one could delve into the narrative of David’s life for examples which affirm his personal experience as illustrative of the truth. But in Romans 4, it also seems best to simply regard David as the author of the words which corroborate the theological reality Paul is expounding: “just as David also pronounces the blessing of the person ...” (4:6). Though David is long dead, the words God inspired him to sing are also cited with the present tense Greek verb λέγει, “is saying,” as in 4:3 (although translated differently here because of the context; see the second textual note on 4:6). David still speaks of real blessedness or, more accurately, continues to actually pronounce the blessing to a person through the words of Psalm 32. (CC)

4:6 imony of Genesis regarding the relationship between righteousness and faith and works. Here again God is at work. God is in charge; man is the recipient. (Franzmann)

apart from works. “For the holy apostle Paul writes, ‘Of grace,’ ‘without merit,’ ‘without Law,’ ‘without works,’ ‘not of works.’ All these words together mean that we are justified and saved through faith alone in Christ” (FC Ep III 10). (TLSB)

Saints under the OT were saved in the same was as saints under the NT: not on account of their own works, but on account of Christ, and through faith in Him. (CB)

4:7-8 Ps 32:1 shows how the OT teaches justification through faith. The confession reveals that David was not relying on his works, but on grace. Although we are sinners, God forgives us and covers us with His righteousness. (TLSB)

To introduce the quotation in Rom 4:7–8, Paul first announces that this blessing rests on the person who is like Abraham, the person “to whom God is crediting righteousness apart from works” (4:6). It is, therefore, intriguing that the psalmist does not actually use the vocabulary of “righteousness” or “works,” but of the forgiveness of sins. However, it is his emphatic use of the accounting term λογίζομαι, “to charge; credit,” which drives Paul to the LXX version of MT Ps 32:1–2. While the presence of this same verb connects the passage with LXX Gen 15:6 and Romans 4, “Paul’s argument is not merely verbal but substantial.” (CC)

Paul’s quotation of this flows nicely out of what he asserted in 4:5. The faith which is credited *for* righteousness is one which believes on the God who declares the ungodly righteous. Stated positively, 4:7–8 asserts that such a person’s blessedness lies in that fact that his lawless acts “were forgiven” (ἀφέθησαν) or, in Hebrew, “lifted up, taken away” (נִשָּׂא) by God. Furthermore, their sins “were covered over” by God (ἐπεκαλύφθησαν is another divine passive). These verbs bring to mind the OT picture of the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement, the blood applied to the mercy seat or covering placed over the ark that day, and sacrificial blood in general (Leviticus 16). This reinforces the association of OT roots for “redemption” (ἀπολύτρωσις) in Rom 3:24, as well as “atoning sacrifice” or “mercy seat” (ἱλαστήριον) and “in his blood” (ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι) in 3:25. Finally, the psalmist speaks emphatically about the Lord not crediting or, better, *not* charging sin against a person (“whose sin the Lord will in no way charge [to his account].”) Thus λογίζομαι now expresses *both* the sense of credit *and* debit (charge). The faith of the ungodly in God is *credited for* a declaration of righteous in 4:5. Now, on the basis of the psalmist’s words, Paul says blessing resides in sin *not being debited against* a man. (CC)

4:7 *whose sins are covered* – Not punished but forgiven. (CB)

4:8 *blessed is the man* – The quotation is from Psalm 32. A repentant King David is speaking as he recalls his own sorry past. Initially stubborn and unrepentant, David tried to minimize and ignore his sin, but that didn't work. He now admits: (PBC)

“When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.” (Psalm 32:3,4)

Brought to his knees, David resorted to the only thing that works: looking in faith to the God who justifies the ungodly. David had no good works to bring, only ungodliness to confess. And he does just that: (PBC)

“Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”— and you forgave the guilt of my sin.” (Psalm 32:5)

God forgave the guilt of David's sin. This free forgiveness through faith without the addition of any works or merit is precisely the same pattern that Abraham had experienced. And it forms the basis for David's cry of joy and relief (Psalm 32:1,2), which Paul quotes almost word for word. (PBC)

4:9 *blessing*. God's forgiveness. (TLSB)

circumcised. Jews. (CSB)

Judaic teachers held that the promise of Ps. 32:1-2 held only for Israel and referred it to the forgiveness bestowed upon the people of God on the Day of Atonement; no other nation partook of it. Could there be a reckoning of righteousness to man without the benefit of circumcision? That question was a live one for the Jew, and it disturbed Christendom. (Franzmann)

uncircumcised. Gentiles. (CSB)

We. Paul and fellow Christians. (TLSB)

4:10 *not after, but before!* Abraham was declared righteous (Gen 15) some 14 years before he was circumcised (Gen. 17). See Gal 3:17 for a similar statement. (CSB)

4:11 *sign*. Circumcision was, among other things, the outward sign of the righteousness that God had credited to Abraham for his faith. (CSB)

Not circumcision, but God's declaration—His Word—made Abraham righteous (Gn 15:6) (TLSB)

It is dangerous to put the sign for the thing signified, or make the one a substitute for the other. Those who depend on the sign are destitute of the thing signified; and so long as they continue to do it will remain destitute. Glorifying in the shadow, they lose the substance. (CB)

how then. Abraham is the “father” of believing Gentiles (the uncircumcised), because he believed and was justified before the rite of circumcision (the mark of Jews) was instituted. (CSB)

Abraham was counted as righteous before God instituted circumcision (Gn 17:10–14). (TLSB)

father of all who believe. Abraham, the physical ancestor of Israel, is the spiritual ancestor of all who, like him, are justified by faith. (TLSB)

4:12 *father of the circumcised.* Abraham is also the father of believing Jews. Thus his story shows that for Jew and Gentile alike there is only one way of justification—the way of faith. (CSB)

who also walk in the footsteps of the faith. Israelites who believed what Abraham did. (TLSB)

The Promise Realized Through Faith

13 For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15 For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. 16 That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, 17 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. 18 In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” 19 He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness[b] of Sarah’s womb. 20 No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, 21 fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. 22 That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” 23 But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, 24 but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, 25 who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

4:13 *the promise* – God promised to multiply Abraham’s descendants (Gn 15:5) and to bless all nations through him. This was a prophecy about Jesus. (TLSB)

If Paul wants to speak about the Gospel in the OT, he typically uses “promise” (ἐπαγγελία). Prior to the second century BC, however, that Greek word simply meant any type of “announcement” (literally, “a message upon”), and thus it rarely occurs in the LXX. But since ἐπαγγελία had later developed the notion of “promise” or “pledge,” it is a favorite term for Paul. It occurs particularly as an expression of God’s Word of future blessing to the patriarchs or “fathers.” (E.g., Rom 4:13, 14, 16, 20; 9:4, 8, 9; 15:8; 2 Cor 1:20; 7:1; Gal 3:14–29; 4:23, 28; Eph 2:12; 3:6; see also Acts 13:32; 26:6) (CC)

In Jewish circles, “what is striking is the way in which when the concept ‘promise’ emerges it is subordinated to or its effects seen as mediated through the law.” A couple of examples, which also include the notion of inheritance, illustrate the point. Psalms of Solomon 12 contrasts the deeds of the wicked with the devout who refrain from doing evil. It concludes with this plea: “and let the pious of the Lord inherit the promises of the Lord” (καὶ ὅσοι κυρίου κληρονομήσασαν ἐπαγγελίας κυρίου, Ps Sol 12:6). Prior to the purification of the temple by the Maccabees, 2 Macc 2:17–18 states: “it is God who has saved all his people, and has returned the inheritance [τὴν κληρονομίαν] to all, and the kingship and the priesthood and the consecration, as he promised through the law [καθὼς ἐπηγγείλατο διὰ τοῦ νόμου]” (NRSV). (CC)

Whether Paul was aware of the Maccabees text or not, the clause which opens 4:13 marks a striking contrast: “indeed, *not* through the Law was the promise” (οὐ γὰρ διὰ νόμου ἢ ἐπαγγελία). Paul then affirms the positive alternative at the end of the verse: the promise is, rather, “through the righteousness of faith” (διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως). This expression has, of course, been expounded in regard to Abraham throughout the first half of Romans 4. But the “Law versus faith” dichotomy reaches back to 3:19–22, 27, 28, 31. In all cases, righteousness is related to faith and apart from works of the Law. (CC)

Now this is also shown to be true in regard to the promise to Abraham. The addition “and to his seed” is rooted in numerous OT expressions of the promise.^c Here it opens the door to all those for whom Abraham is father as just articulated in 4:11–12, and also hints toward the “our/us” (ἡμᾶς) of 4:24. Paul expands on this idea in Gal 3:16, where he points out that Abraham’s seed is ultimately one, Christ, which points ahead to Rom 4:24–25. But here in Romans 4 the more expansive application, which Paul proceeds to make in Gal 3:29, is more pronounced. This is particularly true in light of 4:16, where the promise is “to every seed” and Abraham is “father of all of us.” (CC)

The specific element associated with the promise in 4:13 is that Abraham is “the heir of the world.” While that exact phrase may not be used in the OT, Cranfield goes too far when he asserts that “nowhere in the OT is the promise to Abraham couched in terms at all close to τὸ κληρονόμον αὐτὸν εἶναι κόσμου.” The notion of inheritance (usually expressed with a verb for “inherit” or “possess” rather than a noun such as “heir”) is pervasive in regard to those who would receive the promises to Abraham (e.g., Gen 15:3, 4, 7, 8; 21:10) and in reference to the promised land of Canaan (e.g., Num 26:53–56; 32:18–19; 33:53–54; Deut 1:8, 21, 38–39). Furthermore, the notion that Abraham, and his seed, would inherit the world: (CC)

succinctly summarizes the three key provisions of the promise as it unfolds in Genesis: that Abraham would have an immense number of descendants, embracing “many nations” (Gen. 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:4–6, 16–20; 22:17), that he would possess “the land” (Gen. 13:15–17; 15:12–21; 17:8), and that he would be the medium of blessing to “all the peoples of the earth” (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). Particularly noteworthy is the promise in Gen. 22:17b that Abraham’s seed would “possess the gates of their enemies.” (CC)

Thus, rather than being an illegitimate expansion, Paul’s phrasing encompasses the implications of the overall promise. Indeed, the OT itself speaks repeatedly of God’s people inheriting the “land/world” (ἡγῆ, e.g., Pss 25:13; 37:9, 11, 22; Is 57:13; 60:21). Sirach 44:21 similarly extends the implications of the promise: (CC)

Therefore with an oath he [the Lord] assured him [Abraham] that the nations would be blessed in his offspring, that he would multiply him as the dust of the earth, and that as the stars he would exalt his offspring, and that he would give them an inheritance from sea to sea and from the River to the end of the earth. (CC)

The initial point Paul makes in Rom 4:13 is that the Abrahamic promise was not received “through the Law” (διὰ νόμου). The referent of νόμος must surely be the revealed Torah, and not merely a “principle” or “system.” It is interesting to notice that Paul just utilized a chronological argument in rejecting a relationship between Abraham’s righteousness and circumcision in 4:9–11. It is interesting to ponder why he does not employ the same type of temporal argument regarding the Law here, especially since he does utilize it in Gal 3:15–18. The most plausible reason is that whereas Galatians was focused more narrowly upon the Mosaic Law, in Romans Paul expands the reach of νόμος beyond those who have received it in revealed form. Despite Jewish assertions to the contrary (see the commentary on 4:2), there is no scriptural warrant for presuming Abraham knew the commands of the revealed Law. He fits among those between Adam and Moses who lived apart from the revealed Law (2:12; 5:13–14). Thus the description of Rom 2:15, where Paul asserts that “the work of the Law [is] written in their hearts,” more appropriately characterizes Abraham’s awareness of the Law, both when uncircumcised and circumcised. If the point, then, is not temporal, on what basis does Paul exclude one’s receiving of the promise “through the Law” (4:13)? (CC)

not come through law. Not on the condition that the promise be merited by works of the law. (CSB)

Paul is thoroughly Jewish in his language, and yet his thought is worlds apart from that of Judaism. He describes the promise given to Abraham and his descendants in a phrase that the Jewish rabbis used: “That they should inherit the world,” and at the same time he brushes aside the Judaic interpretation which made the promise given to Abraham God’s reward to Abraham for his keeping of the Law, his good works. (Franzmann)

The way of salvation through faith in Christ is suited to all classes and conditions of men. None are so good that they can be saved in any other way; and none are so bad that they cannot be saved in this. (CB)

his offspring. All those of whom Abraham is said to be father (vv. 11–12). – This means all believers throughout history. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2) (CSB)

heir of the world.† “World” here refers to the creation, as in 1:20. No express mention of this heirship is made in the Genesis account of Abraham. He is promised “offspring like the dust of the earth” (Ge 13:16) and possession of the land of Canaan (Ge 12:7; 13:14–15; 15:7, 18–21; 17:8), and that all the peoples on earth will be blessed through him (Ge 12:3; 18:18) or his offspring (Ge 22:18). But since, as Genesis already makes clear, God purposed through Abraham and his offspring to work out the destiny of the whole world, it was implicit in the promises to Abraham that he and his offspring would “inherit the earth” (see Ps 37:9, 11, 22, 29, 34; Mt 5:5). (CSB)

As Abraham became the father of many nations, the world would, in a sense, belong to him. (TLSB)

The point he’s making is that an heir doesn’t have to do anything for the stipulation of the will to go into effect. (PBC)

4:14 The form of the conditional in 4:14 is again non-committal (see 4:2). For the sake of argument, Paul proposes, “For if those from the Law [οἱ ἐκ νόμου] are heirs, ...” Dunn suggests the phrase “those from the Law” might describe “those who quite naturally saw their participation in the inheritance promised to Abraham as identical with their membership [in] the covenant

people, the people of the law.” However, the presence of “from” (ἐκ) brings out a more specific possibility, which Dunn also acknowledges, that “the phrase is thus also an abbreviated form of the fuller phrase οἱ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου [‘those from works of the Law’].” This is more consistent with Paul’s use of variations of that formula, particularly in 3:20 and 4:2 (see also Gal 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10 and the excursus “The Background of ‘Works of the Law’ ” following the commentary on 3:9–20). Cranfield suggests that the phrase depicts those who contend that they “have a claim to the inheritance on the basis of their fulfilment of the law.” He concludes this is “confirmed by the parallel protasis in Gal 3:18 (εἰ ... ἐκ νόμου ἢ κληρονομία [‘if the inheritance (comes) from the Law’]).” If so, “the apostle shows that there is something wicked in hoping for an inheritance by the law.”²⁸ However, in light of the identical phrase stated in the singular in 4:16, Moo’s paraphrase is likely the best understanding: “If those who have only the law are heirs ...” 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. As 4:16 reveals, the referent of Paul’s supposition encompasses those who are “from the Law *only*” (ἐκ τοῦ νόμου μόνον), but who are *not also* “from the faith of Abraham” (ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ). (CC)

If, for the sake of argument, those from the Law are heirs, then, 4:14 contends that faith is like a cup which has been poured out and remains empty (κεκένωται); God’s promise is similarly rendered null and void (κατήργηται). These are probably not divine passives. Instead, those who are of the Law alone, that is, who pursue righteousness from works and apart from faith, have themselves emptied what comes “through the righteousness of faith” (διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως), as expressed in 4:13. The promise is similarly made ineffective, not because humans can nullify God’s promise, but because they can seek to attain it “through the Law” (διὰ νόμου), an avenue which Paul has just excluded (4:13; see also 3:27; 9:30–10:5). (CC)

Here Paul does not explicitly state why the promise is not through the Law, but it is certainly evident from his previous statements (e.g., 2:21–27; 3:9–20), as well as in what follows. Here in Romans 4 the case of Abraham simply illustrates that “from the Law” (ἐκ νόμου, 4:14) is not the way it is with the promise of God. It is not about anything which proceeds from Abraham, or us, toward God “through the Law” (διὰ νόμου, 4:13). The promise comes by God crediting it to Abraham and his offspring through the righteousness of faith. “Hence to ask more than the faith of Gen 15:6 is to nullify the promise of Gen 15:5.” Why this is so is expressed in Rom 4:16. (CC)

the adherents of the law. Those whose claim to the inheritance is based on the fulfillment of the law. (CSB)

promise – οἱ ἐκ νόμου means “those who base their relationship on works.” The best example is that found in John 8:39 where the Jews claim Abraham as father but Jesus immediately denies it. They were not children of Abraham because they based everything on physical descent and on human works and worthiness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

The promise is God at work. (Franzmann)

the heirs. Those receiving the blessings promised to Abraham. (TLSB)

4:15 But first, yet another “for” (γάρ) explains that, instead of being a vehicle for receiving the promised inheritance, “the Law brings about wrath” (4:15). Earlier, Paul summarizes how the Law’s continued speaking leaves every mouth silent, holds all the world accountable, and is a means by which humans become fully cognizant of sin (3:19–20). There the phrase “from works of the Law” (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, 3:20) depicts human works done in accordance with the Law with an aim toward righteousness. Now, instead of merely silencing or giving awareness, “the Law”

(νόμος) also actively accomplishes something: it works “wrath” (ὀργή). The reappearance of “wrath” recalls 1:18, where the “wrath of God is being revealed from heaven upon every ungodliness and unrighteousness of people” (see also 2:5, 8). But to contend that “the Law” itself accomplishes “wrath” is shocking, particularly to those who “rely upon the Law and ... boast in God” (2:17). Thus this brief thought regarding the Law, as well as those in 5:20 and 6:14, must be explained further. And so they will be, particularly in Romans 7. At this point, Ambrosiaster makes an important distinction: “The law itself is not wrath, but it brings wrath, i.e., punishment, to the sinner, for wrath is born from sin.” (CC)

Before returning to the faith side of the equation, Paul shoots off one more seemingly tangential phrase: “but where the Law is not, neither is there transgression [of the Law]” (4:15). For Paul the absence of transgression does not equate to the absence of sin. Rom 2:12 has already asserted that one can sin, and perish as a result, apart from transgressing the revealed Law. Thus “while every ‘transgression’ is also a ‘sin,’ not every ‘sin’ is a ‘transgression.’ ” Paul will elaborate further in 5:13–14. At this point, Rom 4:15 hearkens back to 2:23, where those who boast in the Law are charged with dishonoring God “through the transgression of the Law” (διὰ τῆς παραβάσεως τοῦ νόμου). “Transgression” (παράβασις) describes “sin in its relation to law, i.e., to a requirement or obligation which is legally valid or has legal force.” Paul now implies 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.”³⁵ Thus, rather than leading to the promised inheritance, the Law actually makes things worse (see 5:20; 7:7–13). (CC)

Humans inevitably violate God’s Law and are condemned by it. “The Law always accuses and terrifies consciences” (Ap IV 38). (TLSB)

law brings wrath. The law, because it reveals sin and even stimulates it (see 7:7–11), produces wrath, not promise. (CSB)

It does so not because the Law is evil, but because the nature of man is fallen. Apology IV, 38, Tappert: “Paul does not say that by the law men merit the forgiveness of sins. For the law always accuses and terrifies consciences. It does not justify, because a conscience terrified by the law flees before God’s judgment.” Apology IV, 270, Tappert 147: “But without Christ this law is not kept. It always accuses the conscience, which does not satisfy the law and therefore flees in terror before the judgment and punishment of the law.” Apology XII, 88 Tappert 195: “The law will always accuse us because we never satisfy the law of God.” God dealt with Abraham not through law, not on the basis of the law, but on the basis of a promise. Abraham, of course, was sinful. But that did not destroy God’s promise. The promise was not conditioned by fulfillment of the law, it was altogether independent of the law. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

transgression. Overstepping a clearly defined line. Where there is no law there is still sin, but it does not have the character of transgression. (CSB)

The Law stands as a boundary. Without such a boundary, there can be no violation. (TLSB)

But where the promise of God, the grace of God, the Christ of God determine that relationship, there is no transgression either. There the promise given to God’s people through Micah is fulfilled for all people. (Franzmann)

¹⁸Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. ¹⁹You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. (Micah 7:18-19)

There will be men who, believing in the God who justifies the ungodly, will in the beggary of faith turn to God their gracious King (Matthew 5:3) and in meek dependence of faith will inherit the earth. (Matthew 5:5) (Franzmann)

4:16 The reason(s) why the promise is “through the righteousness of faith” (διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως) and not “through the Law” (διὰ νόμου, 4:13) is a question which has been lingering. Paul profoundly articulates his answer in 4:16. This verse also introduces the thoughts he runs with all the way to the climactic end of the chapter. However, Cranfield observes: “The first part of the verse is strikingly elliptic.” The expression “on account of this” (διὰ τοῦτο) usually draws a conclusion from what precedes. But here it primarily points ahead (see the textual note), as Paul goes on to express the reason why the promise is “from faith” (ἐκ πίστεως). This shorthand prepositional phrase occurs twice in the thematic verse 1:17, as well as in 3:26 and, specifically in reference to the circumcised, in 3:30. Additionally, the same thought is encapsulated by “through faith” (διὰ πίστεως) repeatedly (3:22, 25, 30, 31) and “by faith” (πίστει) in 3:28. In essence, Paul “says that only faith can accept the promise. He therefore correlates and connects promise and faith” (Ap IV 50, after citing Rom 4:16). (CC)

In the middle portion of 4:16, Paul specifies two reasons why the promise is received “from faith.” The first expresses purpose: “in order that [it is] in accordance with grace” (ἵνα κατὰ χάριν). Based upon the clause to follow, where “the promise” is the subject, one is intended to assume that “the promise” is the subject (“it”) here as well. Thus “the promise” is “from faith” in order that “the promise” be “in accordance with grace.” In 4:4, “in accordance with grace” (κατὰ χάριν) was excluded when a worker simply received what was owed. Instead, 4:5, by implication, expresses what is “in accordance with grace”: “not working, but believing” is grace. Believing upon a God who declares the ungodly righteous (τὸν δικαιῶντα τὸν ἀσεβῆ) is a further expression of grace, for “his faith is being credited for righteousness” (λογίζεται ἡ πίστις αὐτοῦ εἰς δικαιοσύνην, 4:5). On the basis of 4:4–5, Dunn concludes: (CC)

The interlocking correlatives are ἐκ πίστεως [“from faith”] and κατὰ χάριν [“in accordance with grace”]: God’s gracious outreach to man is of such a character that it can only be received in unconditional openness. Whatever restricts or obscures that openness, and the character of faith as sheer receptivity and dependence on God, denies and restricts that grace. (CC)

The force of the second reason, “so that the promise is certain to every seed” (εἰς τὸ εἶναι βεβαίαν τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν παντὶ τῷ σπέρματι, 4:16), is debated. Käsemann contends that “it is consecutive, offering the conclusion.” Dunn suggests that, as with the previous phrase, “the construction is again final and not merely consecutive.”⁴⁰ His use of “merely” brings up an important point in regard to such categories. Moule points out that “the Semitic mind was notoriously unwilling to draw a sharp dividing-line between purpose and consequence.” Wallace expounds: “In other words, the NT writers employ the language to reflect their theology: what God purposes is what happens and, consequently, ἵνα [‘so that’] is used to express both the divine purpose and the result” (cf. 3:8). Thus this clause, utilizing the comparable “so that ... is” (εἰς τὸ εἶναι), expresses *both why* God does it all “in accordance with grace” (κατὰ χάριν), *as well as his intended result*. Thereby it is God’s gracious intention that his promise be “certain” (βεβαίαν), that is, solid, certain, and guaranteed to every one of Abraham’s offspring. As with Abraham (4:2–3), the fact that the action all goes from God toward us excludes any notion of our works. “If the promise

were conditional on our works, it would not be guaranteed” (Ap XX 10, after citing Rom 4:16). (CC)

Paul refers to Abraham’s “seed” in 4:13 and here in 4:16. He now provides his definition of “every seed” (παντί τῷ σπέρματι). In so doing, he uses the exact same phrasing “not only, but also” (οὐ ... μόνον ἀλλὰ καί) as he did in 4:12 when expressing a similar thought. It is, therefore, most likely that the combination is to be understood in the same manner here, as well as in 4:23–24. In 4:12 Paul speaks of one and the same group; Abraham is the father of “not ... only, but ... also ...” He does so here as well, though in singular or individual terms. The promise is secure 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 all of us” (4:16). This definition both expands and narrows what was the prevalent Jewish understanding of those to whom the phrase in 4:1, “Abraham, our forefather,” applies. (CC)

Moo speaks of Paul’s definition as “a ‘qualified’ universalism.” The universal aspect is encompassed by the expression that he “is father of all of us” at the end of 4:16. But it is also present in “every [παντί] seed” earlier in the verse; the promise is certain to *every offspring*. The narrowing or qualification is that the promise is not simply or automatically to the seed who are “from the Law” (ἐκ τοῦ νόμου). In 4:12, the phrase was “to those not from circumcision only” (τοῖς οὐκ ἐκ περιτομῆς μόνον). Here it is “not to the one from the Law only” (οὐ τῷ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου μόνον). In both places, “not only” (οὐ ... μόνον) is immediately followed by “but also” (ἀλλὰ καί). Being “from circumcision” (4:12) and/or “from the Law” (4:16) are not, in and of themselves, determinative of membership in Abraham’s family. This was explained in regard to circumcision in 2:25–29. Now there is a “but also” for “from the Law” (ἐκ τοῦ νόμου) as well. It is “*but to the one who is also from the faith of Abraham*” (ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ, 4:16). Being his seed does not depend on being circumcised (4:9–12); neither does it “rely upon the Law” (2:17). As 4:14 similarly asserts, the promised inheritance is not in any sense “from the Law” (ἐκ νόμου). Indeed, “the Law” (νόμος) works wrath instead (4:15). As a result, as Paul proceeds to speak of faith in the promise, “the Law” (νόμος) disappears from sight through the end of the chapter and all the way until 5:13. (CC)

At the same time, Paul’s phrasing also means that being circumcised and/or of the Law are not exclusionary. The definitive element, in both places, is being of the faith of Abraham. In 4:12 the “but also” was expressed as “*but to those who also follow [in] the footsteps of the faith of our father Abraham which [he had while he was] in [the state of] uncircumcision.*” Here, Paul simply writes, “*But to the one who is also from the faith of Abraham*” (ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ). Abraham had this faith while uncircumcised, *and* he had this faith while circumcised. Thus one can have this faith while being “from the Law” (ἐκ τοῦ νόμου, 4:16). And one can have this faith while being “without the Law” (ἀνόμως, 2:12). The definitive element for all is being “from the faith of Abraham” (ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ, 4:16). (CC)

it. Salvation. “If the promise were to depend upon our works, it would not be sure.... When would we know that we had received it?” (Ap XX 87) (TLSB)

depends on faith – The grace of God is the efficient cause. Faith is the receiving cause. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

Faith, promise, grace – these three constitute an indivisible trinity. (Franzmann)

Ephesians 2:8-9, “⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.”

A summary of the thought of vv. 11–12. For the close correlation between faith and grace see 3:24–25; Eph 2:8–9. (CSB)

not only to the adherent of the law. Jewish Christians. (CSB)

who shares the faith of Abraham.† Gentile Christians who share Abraham’s faith but who do not possess the law. (CSB)

All who share Abraham’s faith. (TLSB)

4:17 Rom 4:17 points out how Abraham’s faith was in God’s Word of promise. The promise stated that he would not be father of one nation only. Instead, “just as it stands written: ‘I have placed you, and so you are, father of many nations’ ” (4:17). Paul does not quote the first part of Gen 17:5 in which God alters his original name, Abram (“exalted father”), to Abraham (“father of multitudes”), since Paul always refers to the patriarch as Abraham. (CC)

But what does “from the faith of Abraham” (ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ) mean? The remainder of 4:17 introduces Paul’s exposition of that all-important phrase. Thus 4:17 functions as a hinge which “not only” wraps up 4:13–16, “but also” drives ahead to define Abraham’s faith. (CC)

In the remainder of Romans 4, numerous references to God’s Word and his spoken promise convey the basis or grounding of Abraham’s faith. These include “just as it stands written” (καθὼς γέγραπται, 4:17), “according to that which was spoken and now stands in effect” (κατὰ τὸ εἰρημένον, 4:18), “the promise of God” (τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, 4:20), “what was promised [by God] and still in effect, he [God] is powerful also to do” (ὃ ἐπήγγελται δυνατός ἐστιν καὶ ποιῆσαι, 4:21), and “written on his account” (ἐγράφη δὲ δι’ αὐτόν, 4:23). Yet, as in 4:5, Abraham’s faith was not only in *what* God spoke, but also in the God *who* spoke. This emphasis begins immediately after the quotation of Gen 17:5 in the second half of 4:17: “before whom he believed God, the one who makes the dead alive and calls the things not being so that [they] are being.” (CC)

Earlier, Paul described the faith which is being credited for righteousness as “on the One who declares the ungodly righteous” (4:5). In 4:17 Abraham “believed God,” and the content of his faith is also expressed. God is further defined with two phrases connected by one distributive article, “the one” (τοῦ). The first phrase, “the one who makes the dead alive” (τοῦ ζωοποιούντος τοὺς νεκρούς), is affirmed elsewhere. For example, in LXX Deut 32:39 God declares, “I will kill and I will make alive” (ἐγὼ ἀποκτενῶ καὶ ζῆν ποιήσω). LXX Ps 70:20 (MT/ET 71:20) has the psalmist affirming to God, “You have made me alive” (ἐζωοποίησάς με). Similar is 1 Sam 2:6. At the end of this chapter, Paul will assert that this life-giving characteristic of God is exemplified by the resurrection of Jesus (4:24–25). He also extends God’s power over death to give life to all believers; see further the commentary on 8:11 (see also, e.g., 1 Cor 15:22, 36, 45). Here, however, Paul is speaking of what Abraham believed, and he applies this reference specifically to God’s life-giving power over the deadness. (CC)

as it is written – Paul quotes Genesis 17:5 to affirm the universality of grace. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

I have made you. God’s promise, spoken before Abraham’s son Isaac was born, was so certain that it is in the past tense: I have done this. (TLSB)

in the presence of God. God considers Abraham the father of Jews and believing Gentiles alike, no matter how others (especially the Jews) may see him. (CSB)

God personally spoke this promise to Abraham. It did not come through another person. (TLSB)

Paul gives a sort of case history of faith, which is more vivid and more revealing than a definition. (Franzmann)

the God who gives life to the dead. The main reference is to the birth of Isaac through Abraham and Sarah, both of whom were far past the age of childbearing (see Ge 18:11). Secondly Paul alludes also to the resurrection of Christ (see vv. 24–25). (CSB)

God's power is seen in His gift of life and in creation. (TLSB)

calls into existence the things that are not. God has the ability to create out of nothing, as he demonstrated in the birth of Isaac. (CSB)

4:18 *Against all hope ... in hope believed.* When all hope, as a human possibility, failed, Abraham placed his hope in God. (CSB)

Abraham's descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. (TLSB)

For most people hope may be considered wishful thinking: "I hope things work out," "I hope the weather is nice tomorrow." Hope in this sense is limited to what can reasonably be expected. In contrast, biblical hope is the certain expectation of the fulfillment of God's promises, even when such hope is directly contrary to human reason and experience. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 3)

4:19 *not weaken in faith.* Abraham had some anxious moments (see Ge 17:17–18), but God did not count these against him. (CSB)

Abraham did not doubt. Faith may vary in strength, but even weak faith justifies because of Christ's work. (TLSB)

Faith looks at God with open eyes, faith does not "suppress the truth." Faith is open-eyed toward man's impotence. (Franzmann)

considered. Faith does not refuse to face reality but looks beyond all difficulties to God and his promises. (CSB)

a hundred years old. Considered too old to father a child. (TLSB)

body...good as dead – Paul uses the same root nek-, to describe both Abraham and Sarah's dead condition. In the first instance it refers to Abraham's possible impotence because of age, and in the second it refers to the barrenness of Sarah's womb. This deadness left them in a helpless and hopeless situation, humanly speaking. In addition to their physical weakness God had rejected Abraham's efforts to beget his heir by taking Hagar as his wife (Genesis 16). There was only one thing Abraham could do: hope that God could and would give life to the dead. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 3)

barrenness of Sarah's womb. Sarah was ten years younger than Abraham (see Ge 17:17) but well past the age of bearing children. (CSB)

Sarah was 90 (Gn 17:17), past childbearing age. (TLSB)

4:20–21 These things can only be truly said of Abraham as a forgiven sinner. His actions demonstrate some doubts (cf Gn 16). When sins are forgiven, only the fruit of faith remains. (TLSB)

4:20 *strong.* Abraham drew strength and confidence from his faith. (TLSB)

He lived by the word that proceeded from the mouth of God and grew strong on it. (Franzmann)

We should never doubt the truth of what God has declared, on account of any difficulties in the way of its fulfillment; but should expect its fulfillment as certainly as if there were not obstacles in its way. Is. 40:8; 46:10; Luke 21:33 (CB)

gave glory to God. Because Abraham had faith to believe that God would do what he promised. Whereas works are man's attempt to establish a claim on God, faith brings glory to him. (CSB)

4:22 *That is why.* Abraham's faith was "credited to him as righteousness" because it was true faith, i.e., complete confidence in God's promise. (CSB)

was counted to him – *logizo* is used three times in our text (vv 22, 23, 24). It often is used in extra-biblical Greek as a technical term in business and commerce, meaning "credit to someone's account. In our text the usage conveys the idea of "being credited with something for which one has not paid. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 3)

4:23 *not... for his sake alone.*† Abraham's experience was not private or individual but had broad implications. If justification through faith was true for him, it is universally true. (CSB)

God's dealings with Abraham exemplify how God credits to us the righteousness Christ earned. Abraham's faith serves as a prototype for our own faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 3)

This record of Abraham's faith, Paul says, was written for our instruction (cf. 15:4); his faith is a prototype and exemplar of our own. (Franzmann)

What is written in the Scriptures was written for the instruction of men, not only of that age, but of all ages. They are given by inspiration, and are all profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. They should therefore be studied by all who have them; and should be sent to all the destitute that they may be led to believe on Christ, and thus obtain eternal life. (CB)

4:24 *counted to us.* As Abraham was justified because he believed in a God who brought life from the dead, so we will be justified by believing "in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead." (CSB)

A faith that can be reckoned to us as righteousness will have in it the three impulses that lived in Abraham's faith: an open-eyed and overawed recognition of the Godhead of God, and open-eyed

appraisal of the desperation of man, and a desperate lay-hold of the proffered redeeming Word of God, His promise. (Franzmann)

Him who he raised. The Father, working through the Holy Spirit (cf 8:11). The entire Trinity was involved in the resurrection. (TLSB)

4:25 † These words, which reflect the Septuagint (Greek) translation of Isa 53:11–12, are probably quoted from a Christian confessional formula. (CSB)

The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus are, essentially, one act. Jesus was crucified to pay the penalty for our sins. His resurrection demonstrates His power, assures us that God approves of His work, and is a promise of our resurrection (1Co 15:17). (TLSB)

4:13–25 Abraham trusted that God was able to do what He promised. Trials and challenges may tempt us to doubt God's promises. As He did with Abraham, God will strengthen our faith, assure us of His promises, help us to trust, and fulfill all He said He would do. • Lord, I believe. Assure me when I doubt, and strengthen my faith. Amen. (TLSB)