



12.
'Guaranteed!'
Romans 4.13-25

Background

Having referenced both Abraham and David in the previous verses (4.1-12), Paul spends the rest of the chapter speaking about Abraham.

The gospel is fundamentally a promise. And Paul's reason for focussing on the experience of Abraham to such an extent is partly because it was to Abraham that the promise of the gospel first began to be worked out. The very first articulation of the promise, of course, was in Gen.3.15, but it was in the story of Abraham that the promise of the gospel begins to be expounded.

Paul's focus on Abraham is driven partly also by the fact that the experience of Abraham well illustrates the main components of the gospel. The promise of God. The experience of blessing. The reality of faith. The crediting of righteousness. The imparting of new life.

The passage really hinges round two major themes – the promise of God and the power of God.

The first part of the passage explores the promise of God – what it is, how it is experienced, etc. There is, of course, no specific text in Genesis where God promised that Abraham 'would be heir of the world': but he was promised the land (hence the phrase 'the promised land') and the rest of Scripture (eg [Heb.11.8-10, 13-16](#)) makes it clear that the promise of that portion of land on the earth's surface was but a symbol of the promise of the earth – the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells.

Much is made of the fact that Abraham believed the promise: and the promise was not just of the land but of a *line*: and it's that latter aspect of the promise of God which Paul elaborates on in the passage, insofar as it was effectively the promise by God of *life* (in the line of his descendants) to a man who was (in terms of his reproductive capacity) long since 'dead'.

That, of course, is the promise of the gospel – life being imparted to those who are 'dead' in our transgressions and sin (see [Eph.2.1-5](#)). And so alongside the promise of God, Paul is at pains to stress the power of God to do what on the one hand is impossible and what, on the other, He has promised.

Read the whole passage, and if short of time concentrate on '**days**' (3), (5) and (7).

1) Monday 8th April – promised the earth

Read [Romans 4.13](#)

“.. the promise that he would be heir of the world ..” (Rom.4.13)

We sometimes speak of a person ‘promising the earth’ – but that’s precisely what the Lord did! The lavish promise of a generous God that His people will enjoy the new heaven and new earth where righteousness dwells. *Gifted* to believers, not earned.

Read [Matt.5.5](#): what’s meant by ‘inheriting the earth’?

Read [Heb.11.8-10](#): in what ways might it be evident to others that you live in this world ‘like a stranger in a foreign country’?

Prayer: *You lavish good gifts on Your people, Lord – and all so utterly undeserved! Grant me grace to show such generosity towards others in all that I say and do today.*

2) Tuesday 9th April – worthless

Read [Romans 4.14-15](#)

“.. because the law brings wrath ..” (Rom.4.15)

‘The law brings wrath’ in that all of us are in breach of its terms – and therefore facing condemnation: the law spells out what’s right and what’s wrong, and shows you’re a transgressor. If God’s promise is tied to your keeping the law, you might as well bin it!

What steps can you take to remind yourself continually that you are a ‘transgressor’?

To what extent is God’s law designed to impress on us the fact that we are all transgressors?

Prayer: *How thankful I am that You have delivered me from wrath, Lord Jesus – and that at a cost I can never quantify. May my whole life be an expression of my thanks.*

3) Wednesday 10th April – guaranteed

Read [Romans 4.16](#)

“.. so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed ..” (Rom.4.16)

The only way our enjoyment of God’s generous promise can be guaranteed is if there are no strings attached, no conditions to be met by us, no criteria we have to satisfy. In short, by grace alone, whereby God Himself undertakes to meet every condition.

What difference does it make to you knowing that the promise of God is now guaranteed?

How do you address that nagging thought which comes to us that at least to some extent our standing before God must be dependent on our performance?

If your salvation is guaranteed, how can you avoid becoming complacent, casual and careless when it comes to the law of God?

Why does Paul emphasise that 'those who have the faith of Abraham' are his 'offspring'?

Prayer: You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast because they trust in You, for You, the Lord, are the Rock eternal and great is Your faithfulness.

4) Thursday 11th April – gospel 101

Read [Romans 4.17](#)

".. the God who gives life to the dead .." (Rom.4.17)

The gospel is all about God – who He is, what He's like, how He works. And the promise of the gospel affirms the extraordinary power of God: He creates out of nothing and makes the dead live. Abraham believed in such a God: make sure you do too!

Why is it so important for understanding and benefiting from the gospel to grasp that God gives life to the dead?

What has been your experience of God effecting for you things which humanly speaking were, if not impossible, at least highly unlikely?

Prayer: I'm glad to praise You again today, O Lord, all glorious in Your power and gracious in all Your ways. I was dead in trespasses and sin and You made me alive!

5) Friday 12th April – hope against hope

Read [Romans 4.18-22](#)

".. fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised .." (Rom.4.21)

The promise of God and the power of God go hand in hand. His promise is extravagant: and His power is extraordinary. Humanly your situation today may be hopeless – as that of Abraham and Sarah was hopeless. But God can do the impossible!

Read [Heb.11.1](#): how can you cultivate that *confidence* in what you hope for, and that *assurance* about what you do not see?

What does Paul mean by saying that Abraham didn't 'weaken in his faith', when clearly there were moments when he did waver?

What have you found helpful in terms of bolstering your faith when you've begun to waver a bit?

Read [Dan.3.16-18](#): what helped make the friends of Daniel ‘fully persuaded’ about the delivering power of God?

How do you counsel and help those who, against all hope, have ‘believed’ that God would heal a loved one and have been left devastated when He didn’t?

Prayer: You, O Lord, are mighty to save! How glad I am that for You nothing is impossible! In my darkest times help me to rest assured that You will meet my needs.

6) Saturday 13th April – resurrection life

Read [Romans 4.23-24](#)

“.. for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead ..” (Rom.4.24)

Laying hold of the promise of God is the key to being reckoned as righteous by God. He made a ‘dead’ man (Abraham) live through the line of his descendants: He raised His dead Son Jesus from the tomb and imparts that resurrection life to His disciples.

Why is righteousness ‘credited’ to those who ‘believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead’?

How would you answer someone who argues that death is final, and that Jesus could not have been raised from the dead?

Prayer: Even as You raised Your Son from the dead, so in Him You have raised me from the tomb of my transgressions and made me alive! What mercy You have shown me!

7) Sunday 14th April – right with God

Read [Romans 4.25](#)

“delivered over to death for our sins and .. raised to life for our justification” (Rom.4.25)

Here’s why God’s promise comes with a total guarantee: the price has been paid, the conditions met, in the death that Jesus died in the place of His people: His being raised to life is the confirmation that there’s nothing more to pay. You can be right with God!

Why is the resurrection of Jesus as significant and necessary a part of God’s salvation for us as His crucifixion?

In what ways can the Sunday worship of God’s gathered people serve to assure believers that through Jesus they are right with God?

Read [Matt.6.12](#): is our enjoyment of God’s forgiveness contingent on our forgiving others – and are there people today you need to forgive?

How would you answer someone who asked what the significance is of the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead?

Prayer: Our sins, Lord Jesus, are many, but Your mercy is more! Fill my heart with praise today that I may delight in Yourself with gratitude, wonder and love. I worship You!