

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS 4

The apostle having, in the preceding chapters, proved that there is no justification before God by the works of the law, partly from the depraved state and condition that all men are in by nature, both Jews and Gentiles; and partly from the nature of the law itself, which discovers sin, arraigns men for it, and convicts of it, and pronounces guilty before God for it; as also by showing, that it is by another righteousness, which he describes, that men are justified in the sight of God; proceeds in this to confirm the same by an example; and that which he pitches upon is the most appropriate and pertinent he could have thought of, namely, that of Abraham, the father of the Jews, (~~ROM~~Romans 4:1), for in whatsoever way he was justified, his sons surely could not imagine but it must be the right way, nor should they seek another: now that Abraham was not justified by works, he proves (~~ROM~~Romans 4:2), from an absurdity following upon it, that he would have just reason to glory; whereas no man ought to glory before God, but only in the Lord: and by a passage of Scripture, (~~ROM~~Romans 4:3), to which he appeals, he makes it clearly appear that he was justified by faith, for that says, his faith was counted for righteousness. This case of accounting anything to another for righteousness, is illustrated by two sorts of persons, who have different things accounted to them, and in a different manner; to the worker, the reward is reckoned of debt, and not of grace, (~~ROM~~Romans 4:4), but to the believer that works not, his faith, as Abraham's was, is counted for righteousness; whence it follows, that not the worker is justified by his works, but the believer by the righteousness of faith; and this is confirmed by a testimony of David in (~~PSALM~~Psalm 32:1,2), by which the apostle proves the imputation of righteousness without works, in which the happiness of men consists, (~~ROM~~Romans 4:6-8), and shows, that this happiness does not belong to circumcised persons only, but to the uncircumcised also; and therefore is not by circumcision, but by faith, (~~ROM~~Romans 4:9), and which he proves by observing the time when faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness; not when he was circumcised, but before, (~~ROM~~Romans 4:10), the use of which circumcision to him was to assure him, that he should be the father of uncircumcised

Gentiles that believed, to whom righteousness should be imputed, as to him when he was uncircumcised, (^{<B041>}Romans 4:11), who are described by their imitation of his faith, which he had, and exercised before his circumcision, (^{<B042>}Romans 4:12). And this leads on to a fresh argument, proving justification to be by faith, and not by the works of the law, since the promise made to Abraham, and his seed, was not through the law, but the righteousness of faith; and consequently both his and their justification were not by the one, but by the other, (^{<B043>}Romans 4:13), or, if otherwise, both the faithfulness of God, and the faith of his people, would be void, and the promise of grace of no effect, (^{<B044>}Romans 4:14). And this is still further argued from the effect of the law working wrath, which, if justification was by it, it would never do, (^{<B045>}Romans 4:15). The wisdom and goodness of God in giving faith, and not works, a concern in justification, are observed, (^{<B046>}Romans 4:16), whereby it appears to be of free grace, faith only being a recipient, and what gives all the glory to God; and also the promise of eternal life through justification by free grace becomes sure to all the spiritual seed; who are distributed into two sorts, the believing Jews under the legal dispensation, and the believing Gentiles, under the Gospel dispensation; of both which Abraham was father; which is confirmed by a testimony out of (^{<B070>}Genesis 17:4,5), whose faith is described by the object of it, the omnipotent God that quickens the dead, and calls things that are not, as though they were, (^{<B047>}Romans 4:17), and by the nature of it, (^{<B048>}Romans 4:18), believing in hope against hope, resting on the promise of God; and by the strength of it, being not at all weakened by considering, either his own case, or that of his wife's, (^{<B049>}Romans 4:19), and was so far from being staggered through unbelief at these things, that it was strong in exercise, thereby glorifying God, the object of it, (^{<B040>}Romans 4:20), nay, it rose up to a plerophory, a full assurance, (^{<B042>}Romans 4:21), being built upon the power of a promising God; hence, as before observed, his faith was reckoned to him for righteousness, (^{<B042>}Romans 4:22), And now in the same way that he was justified, all his children, his spiritual seed, are justified, whether they be Jews or Gentiles; for what is said concerning the imputation of the righteousness of faith to him, does not concern him only, (^{<B043>}Romans 4:23), but all true believers also; whose faith is described by the object of it, him that raised up Christ from the dead, that is, God the Father, (^{<B044>}Romans 4:24), who is supposed hereby to have been dead, and is represented as the Lord and Saviour of his people; and of whom a further account is given, (^{<B045>}Romans 4:25), as being delivered into the hands of

men, of justice, and of death, for the sins of his people, which he took upon him, and bore, and made satisfaction for, and as being raised again for their justification; so that this is a benefit owing not to the works of men, but to what Christ has done and suffered in the room and stead of his people; which is what the apostle meant to bring this point unto; the blessed effects and consequences of which he relates in the next chapter.

Ver. 1. *What shall we say then*, etc..] The apostle having proved that there is no justification by the works of the law; to make this appear more clear and evident to the Jews, he instances in the greatest person of their nation, and for whom they had the greatest value and esteem,

Abraham, our father; who was not a righteous and good man, but the head of the Jewish nation; and, as the Syriac version here styles him, *athbad aqyr*, “the head”, or “chief of the fathers”; and so the Alexandrian copy, “our forefather”: and was the first of the circumcision, and is described here by his relation to the Jews, “our father”; that is,

as pertaining to the flesh; or according to carnal descent, or natural generation and relation; for in a spiritual sense, or with respect to faith and grace, he was the father of others, even of all that believe, whether Jews or Gentiles: now the question put concerning him is, “what he, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?” for the phrase, “as pertaining to the flesh”, may be connected with the word

found; and to find anything is by seeking to obtain, and enjoy it: and the sense of the whole is, did he find out the way of life, righteousness, and salvation by the mere hint of carnal reason? and did he obtain these things by his own strength? or were these acquired by his circumcision in the flesh, or by any other fleshly privilege he enjoyed? or was he justified before God by any services and performances of his, of whatsoever kind? There is indeed no express answer returned; but it is evident from what follows, that the meaning of the apostle is, that it should be understood in the negative.

Ver. 2. *For if Abraham were justified by works*, etc..] That Abraham was not, and could not be justified by works, is clear from hence, that if this was his case,

he hath whereof to glory; which will be allowed him before men, on account of his pious life and conversation:

but not before God; who saw all the iniquity of his heart, and was privy to all his failings and infirmities: besides, glorying before God in a man's own works, is contrary to the scheme and method of God's grace; is excluded by the doctrine of faith; nor is there any place for glorying before God but in Christ, and his righteousness: if therefore Abraham had not that of which he could glory before God, he could not be justified by works in his sight: but does not the Apostle James say that he was justified by works, (^{<3022>}James 2:21)? To this it may be replied, that the two apostles, Paul and James, are not speaking of the same thing: Paul speaks of justification before God, James of justification before men; Paul speaks of the justification of the person, James of the justification of a man's cause, as the truth of his faith, or the uprightness of his conduct; Paul speaks of works, as the causes of justification, James of them as the effects and evidences of faith; Paul had to do with the self-righteous, who trusted in their own works for justification, James with Gnostics, who slighted and neglected the performance of them. These things considered, they will be found to agree.

Ver. 3. *For what saith the Scripture?* etc..] This answers to *bytkd yam*, “what is that which is written”^{f50}? or what does the Scripture say? which is a way of speaking used by the Jews, when anything is proposed, which seems contrary to Scripture, as here justification by works does. A testimony from Scripture is here produced, proving that Abraham was justified by faith, and not by works: the place referred to is (^{<0156>}Genesis 15:6);

Abraham believed God; the object of his faith and trust were not his riches, nor his righteousness, but Jehovah, the Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, styled in (^{<0151>}Genesis 15:1), “the Word of the Lord”, the essential Word of God, and called his “shield”, and “exceeding great reward”; characters which are very applicable to Christ: and this faith of his in the Lord was not a mere assent to the promise of God, but a fiducial act of faith in him; and was not merely concerned with temporal, but with spiritual things, and particularly about Christ the promised seed:

and it was counted to him for righteousness, the meaning of which is not, that Abraham imputed righteousness to God, or celebrated his righteousness and faithfulness, as some; or that the world reckoned Abraham a righteous person, as others; but that God reckoned him righteous, or imputed it to him for righteousness: and the question is, what

the it is which was counted to him for righteousness? and that this is to be understood, **hnmah I** [, “concerning faith”, as R. Solomon Jarchi says, is out of question; for this is expressly said by the apostle, (~~ROM~~ Romans 4:9). The only one is, whether it means the grace of faith by which he believed; or the object of faith on which he believed, and with which his faith was conversant: not the former, for that is not righteousness, nor accounted so; but is distinguished from it, and is that by which a person receives and lays hold on righteousness; besides, whatever may be alleged in favour of the imputation of Abraham's faith to himself for righteousness, it can never be thought to be imputed to others on that account; whereas the very selfsame it is imputed to others also; (see ~~ROM~~ Romans 4:24); it remains then that it was the promised seed, the Messiah, and his righteousness, which Abraham, by faith, looked unto, and believed in, that was made unto him righteousness by imputation. Now since so great and good a man as Abraham was not justified by works, but by faith in the righteousness of the Messiah, it follows, that none of his sons, nor any other person whatever, ought to seek for, or expect to be justified in any other way.

Ver. 4. *Now to him that worketh*, etc..] The apostle illustrates the former case by two sorts of persons in this and the next verse, who have different things accounted to them, and in a different manner. The one is represented as working, the other not. By the worker is meant, not one that works from, and upon principles of grace. The regenerate man is disposed to work for God; the man that has the Spirit of God is capable of working; he that has the grace of Christ, and strength from him, can work well; he that believes in Christ, works in a right way; he that loves Christ, works freely, and from a right principle; and he that has Christ's glory in view, works to a right end: but the worker here, is one that works upon nature's principles, and with selfish views; one that works in the strength of nature, trusting to, and glorying in what he does; seeking righteousness by his work, and working for eternal life and salvation. Now let it be supposed, that such a worker not only thinks he does, but if it could be, really does all the works of the law, yields a perfect obedience to it; what

is the reward that is, and will be

reckoned to him? There is no reward due to the creature's work, though ever so perfect, arising from any desert or dignity in itself: there may be a reward by promise and compact; God may promise a reward to encourage to obedience, as he does in the law, which is not eternal life; for that is the

free gift of God, and is only brought to light in the Gospel; and though heaven is called a reward, yet not of man's obedience, but Christ's; but admitting heaven itself to be the reward promised to the worker, in what manner must that be reckoned to him?

not of grace: for grace and works can never agree together; for if the reward is reckoned for the man's works, then it is not of grace, "otherwise work is no more work", (^{<5106>}Romans 11:6); and if it is of grace, then not for his works, "otherwise grace is no more grace", (^{<5106>}Romans 11:6); it remains therefore, that if it is reckoned for his works, it must be

of debt: it must be his due, as wages are to an hireling. Now this was not Abraham's case, which must have been, had he been justified by works; he had a reward reckoned to him, and accounted his, which was God himself, "I am thy shield, and exceeding, great reward", (^{<0151>}Genesis 15:1); which must be reckoned to him, not of debt, but of grace; wherefore it follows, that he was justified, not by works, but by the grace of God imputed to him; that which his faith believed in for righteousness. The distinction of a reward of grace, and of debt, was known to the Jews; a the one they called **srp**, the other **rkç**: the former ^{f51} they say is **l wmgñ**, "a benefit", which is freely of grace bestowed on an undeserving person, or one he is not obliged to; the other is what is given, **ydb**, "of debt", in strict justice.

Ver. 5. *But to him that worketh not*, etc..] Not that the believer does not work at all, but not from such principles, and with such views as the other; he does not work in order to obtain life and salvation; he does not seek for justification by his doings:

but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly: or that ungodly one: particular reference is had to Abraham, who in his state of unregeneracy was an ungodly person; as all God's elect are in a state of nature, and are such when God justifies them, being without a righteousness of their own; wherefore he imputes the righteousness of another, even that of his own Son, unto them: and though he justifies the ungodly, he does not justify their ungodliness, but them from it; nor will he, nor does he leave them to live and die in it; now to him that worketh not, that is perfect righteousness; or has no opportunity of working at all; or what he does, he does not do, that he might be justified by it; but exercises faith on God as justifying persons, who, like himself, are sinners, ungodly and destitute of a righteousness:

his faith is counted for righteousness; not the act, but the object of it; which was Abraham's case, and therefore was not justified by works. The Vulgate Latin version here adds, “according to the purpose of the grace of God”.

Ver. 6. *Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man*, etc..] the apostle having instanced in Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, cites some passages from David, king of Israel, a person of great note and esteem among the Jews, in favour of the doctrine he is establishing; who in a very proper and lively manner describes the happiness of such persons:

unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works. This righteousness cannot be the righteousness of the law, or man's obedience to it; for that is a righteousness with works, is a man's own, and not imputed; and indeed is not a righteousness in the sight of God: nor does man's blessedness lie in, or come by it; no man is, or can be instilled by it, nor saved by it, or attain to heaven and eternal happiness by the means of it; but the righteousness here spoken of is the righteousness of Christ, called the righteousness of God; and is better than that of angels or men; is complete and perfect; by which the law is honoured, and justice is satisfied. This is freely bestowed, and graciously “imputed” by God. Just in the same way his righteousness becomes ours, as Adam's sin did, which is by imputation; or in the same way that our sins became Christ's, his righteousness becomes ours; and as we have no righteousness of our own when God justifies us, this must be done by the righteousness of another; and that can be done no other way by the righteousness of another, than by imputing it to us: and which is done “without works”; not without the works of Christ, of which this righteousness consists; but without the works of the creature, or any consideration of them, which are utterly excluded from justification; for if these came into account, it would not be of grace, and boasting would not be removed. Now such who have this righteousness thus imputed to them, are happy persons; they are justified from all sin, and freed from all condemnation; their persons and services are acceptable to God; it will be always well with them; they are heirs of glory, and shall enjoy it.

Ver. 7. *Saying, blessed are they*, etc..] These words are cited from (~~Psalm~~ Psalm 32:1), and contain the proof of the happiness of justified persons. In this citation the singular number is changed into the plural, to take in all sorts of men, Jews and Gentiles, and very agreeably to the sense

of the original; for the word *yrça* may be rendered “blessed are they”, or, “O the blessednesses”; that is, of everyone of them,

whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: such whom God justifies by imputing the righteousness of his Son to them, he removes their iniquities from them, which is meant by their being “forgiven”, and that “as far as the east is from the west”, (^{<29A32>}Psalm 103:12); he casts them behind his back, (^{<23817>}Isaiah 38:17), and into the depths of the sea, (^{<3379>}Micah 7:19), so that they shall never be found more: such whom he clothes with the robe of righteousness, and garments of salvation, (^{<2610>}Isaiah 61:10), “their sins are covered”; from the eye of divine justice, and shall never be seen more, or be brought against them to their condemnation, and therefore must be happy persons. The ^{f52} Jews tell us, that

“on the day of atonement Satan comes to accuse Israel, and he particularizes their sins, and the holy blessed God he particularizes their good works, and takes a pair of balances, and puts their sins against their good works, and weighs the one against the other; and when the two scales of the balances are alike, Satan goes to bring in other sins to overweigh; what does the holy blessed God do? he takes the sins out of the scale, and hides them *wl ç yryprwp tj t*, “under his purple garment”; and when Satan comes and finds no iniquity there, as it is said “the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none”, (^{<2810>}Jeremiah 50:20); and when Satan sees this, he says before him, Lord of the world, “thou hast taken away the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin”, (^{<1882>}Psalm 85:2). Selah.”

The purple garment they explain by *wl ç μymj r l ç çwbl m*, “his garment of mercy”; which is true of the mercy of God covering the sins of his people, through the purple blood of his Son; which is the purple covering of Christ, (^{<2180>}Song of Solomon 3:10), under which the saints go safe to glory, and by which blood their crimson and scarlet sins are blotted out, so as never to be seen more.

Ver. 8. *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*] As he does not to those whom he justifies in Christ, and by his righteousness; for the sins of such he has imputed to his Son, as their surety; and he has bore them, took them away, having made full satisfaction for them; so that these

persons will never be charged with them: they now appear before the throne without fault, and are blameless and irreproveable in the sight of God, and therefore must be eternally happy; for he will never think of their sins any more to their hurt; he will remember them no more; he “will never reckon them to them”, but acquit them from them, justify and accept them; wherefore they must be secure from wrath and condemnation, enjoy much peace and comfort now, and be happy hereafter.

Ver. 9. [*Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision [only]*? etc..] That is, upon the circumcised Jews; are they the only persons that partake of this happiness? the word “only” is rightly supplied, and is in the Claromontane exemplar used by Beza, and in the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions:

or upon the uncircumcision also? upon the uncircumcised Gentiles; do not they likewise share in this blessedness?

for we say, that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. The design of these words with the following, is to prove that the blessing of justification belongs to Gentiles as well as Jews, and that it is by faith, and not by circumcision; which is done by observing the state and condition Abraham was in when justified.

Ver. 10. *How was it then reckoned?* etc..] The Arabic version adds, “and when”; and the Ethiopic version reads it, “when was Abraham justified?” expressing the sense, not the words of the original text, with which agree the following questions:

when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? that is, was he justified, or his faith reckoned to him for righteousness, when he was a circumcised, or an uncircumcised person?

not in circumcision; or when he was circumcised; for when it was said of him, that “he believed in the Lord”, and “he counted it to him for righteousness”, (⁴⁰¹³⁶Genesis 15:6), he was then uncircumcised, and remained so many years after: for this was before the birth of Ishmael, and Ishmael was “thirteen” years of age when he and his father Abraham were circumcised; so that it must be “fourteen” years, or thereabout, before his circumcision, that this declaration of his being a justified person was made; wherefore the apostle rightly adds,

but in uncircumcision; or whilst an uncircumcised person: hence it clearly appears that circumcision could not be the cause of his justification, since it followed it; and if Abraham when uncircumcised was a justified person, as it is certain he was, why may not uncircumcised Gentiles be justified also? and especially when it is observed, that the covenant made with Abraham when uncircumcised, included the Gentiles; (see ^{Ⲁⲓⲛⲃ}Genesis 12:3 17:4-6).

Ver. 11. *And he received the sign of circumcision*, etc..] Or “the sign circumcision”, as the Syriac version reads it, and so the Alexandrian copy, and two of Stephens's; that is, Abraham received at the hands of God, the commandment of circumcision, which was a “sign” or token of the covenant; not of grace, but of that peculiar covenant God made with Abraham and his natural seed, concerning their enjoyment of the land of Canaan; and which was a distinctive sign or badge, which distinguished the posterity of Abraham from other people, and was also a typical one; not of baptism, for circumcision was peculiar to Abraham's natural seed, whereas baptism is not, but was administered to Gentiles as well as Jews; circumcision was confined to males only, not so baptism; circumcision bears no likeness to, nor any resemblance with baptism, whereas there is always some likeness and agreement between the type and the antitype; besides, if this had been the case, circumcision would have ceased when baptism took place, whereas it is certain it did not, but continued in full force with the rest of the ceremonies until the death of Christ; and it is as certain, that “baptism” was administered and continued to be administered three or four years before that time; which fully demonstrates the falsehood of that assertion, that baptism succeeds or comes in the room of circumcision; whereas baptism was in full force before circumcision was out of date: but circumcision was a typical sign of Christ, as all the ceremonies of the law were, and of the shedding of his blood, to cleanse from all sin, original and actual, and also of the circumcision of the heart. And was, moreover,

a seal of the righteousness of faith; or which “sign” was “a seal”; and so it signifies the same as before; **σημεία οὕτω λεγούσι τὰς σφραγίδας**, “signs, so they call seals”, says Harpocratian ^{f53}, and “to be signed”, he says, is used, “instead of being sealed”: or it may be expressive of something else, as that circumcision was a seal, not for secrecy, but for certainty; it being a confirmation, not merely of the sincerity of Abraham's faith, but of his justifying righteousness, which was not his faith, but that which his faith looked to; and

which he had, both faith and righteousness,

yet being uncircumcised: whence it follows, that he was not justified by his circumcision, but by a righteousness which he had before he was circumcised, or otherwise his circumcision could not have been a seal of it: though this clause, “which he had, yet being uncircumcised”, may be rendered, “which should be in the uncircumcision”, that is, in the uncircumcised Gentiles; and the sense be, that circumcision was a seal to Abraham, and gave assurance to him that he should be the father of many nations in a spiritual sense; and that the righteousness of faith which he had, should also come upon, and be imputed to the uncircumcised Gentiles; and accordingly it may be observed, that this seal was continued in full force on his natural seed, until this promise began to take place, and then it was abolished: this seal was broken off when the middle wall of partition was broken down, and the word of righteousness and faith, or the Gospel preaching justification by the righteousness of Christ, was ordered to be published to the Gentile world. It may be inquired whether circumcision being called a seal, will prove that baptism is a seal of the covenant? I answer, that circumcision was only a seal to Abraham of a peculiar covenant made with him, and of a particular promise made to him, and was it to be admitted a seal of the covenant of grace, it will not prove baptism to be such; since, as has been observed, baptism does not succeed it in place, in time, and use; and could this be allowed that it succeeds it, and is a seal of the righteousness of faith, as that was, it can only be a seal to them that have both faith and righteousness, and not to them that have neither; it would only at most be a seal to believers. But, alas! not ordinances, but other things more valuable than they, are the seals of the covenant, and of believers; the blood of Christ is the seal, and the only seal of the covenant of grace, by which its promises and blessings are ratified and confirmed; and the Holy Spirit is the only earnest, pledge, seal, and sealer of the saints, until the day of redemption. The apostle uses the word “seal” concerning circumcision, it being a word his countrymen made use of when they spoke of it, thus paraphrasing on (²⁷⁸⁸Song of Solomon 3:8); they say ^{f54},

“everyone of them was sealed, *hl ym tmytj*, “with the seal of circumcision” upon their flesh, as Abraham was sealed in his flesh:”

that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that is, his circumcision was a seal unto him that he should be

so, which explains and confirms the sense of the former clause; not a father of the uncircumcised Gentiles by natural generation, for so he was only the father of the Jews, but of them as they were believers; and not so called because he was the author of their faith, but because they have the same sort of faith he had:

that righteousness might be imputed to them also; not Abraham's faith and righteousness, nor their own, but the righteousness of Christ received by faith, which is unto all, and upon all them that believe, without any difference of Jew or Gentile. Now when the apostle styles Abraham the father of “all” believers, even of uncircumcised ones, he says no other than what the Jews frequently own. Says one ^{f55} of them, speaking of the Ishmaelites;

“they are the seed of Abraham, who was **μυνy mamh çar**, “the head of them that believe?””

and says ^{f56} another,

“Hagar might bring the firstfruits, and read, as it is said to Abraham, “a father of, many nations have I made thee”, (^{<0175>}Genesis 17:5); for he is **wl wk μl w[h l kl ba**, “the father of the whole world”, who enter under the wings of the Shekinah;”

and says the same writer elsewhere ^{f57}, having mentioned the above passage,

“they said in times past, thou wast the father of the Syrians, but now thou art “the father of the whole world”; wherefore every stranger may say this, “as thou hast sworn to our fathers”, (^{<0175>}Micah 7:20); for Abraham was “the father of the whole world”; seeing, **hnwma dml**, “he has taught the true faith”.”

The apostle reasons on what they themselves allow, to prove that the blessedness of justification comes not only upon the Jews, but upon the Gentiles also.

Ver. 12. *And the father of circumcision*, etc..] So the Jews call Abraham **μyl wmynh çar** ^{f58}, “the head of those that are circumcised”; and **μyl wml çar** ^{f59}, “the head to them that are circumcised”; but the apostle here says, he is a father

to them who are not of the circumcision only; not to the Jews only, in a spiritual sense, and not to all of them, since some were “of Israel”, who were not Israel, not Israelites indeed, or true believers;

but [to such] also [who] walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had, being yet uncircumcised; that is, who have the same faith he had; imitate and follow him in the exercise of faith; walk by faith, as he did when he was uncircumcised, as they are; and so the Jews say ^{f60},

“Abraham is the father of all, **wtnwmab wyrj a myab**, “that go after him in his faith”.”

Ver. 13. *For the promise that he should be heir of the world*, etc..] This promise is thought by some to refer to that of his being “the father of many nations”, (^{<01704>}Genesis 17:4,5 ^{<01717>}Romans 4:17,18); by whom the Gentiles are particularly meant, who are sometimes called “the world”, and “the whole world”, or the elect of God, the believing part of the world; whether among Jews or Gentiles, who sometimes go by the name of “the world” in Scripture: but to this it may be objected, that the promise here spoken of is made to Abraham's seed, as well as to himself; by which is meant not the Messiah, who is indeed heir of the world, and all things in it, but all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles; as appears from (^{<01716>}Romans 4:16); and therefore cannot be both heirs and inheritance too. Others think the land of Canaan is designed, and by a synecdoche, a part of the world is put for the whole world; but that land is never so called, and, besides, the promise of it belonged to those of the law, and to them only, contrary to what the apostle argues, (^{<01714>}Romans 4:14,16). Others therefore consider Canaan as a type of heaven, which Abraham and his spiritual seed are heirs of by promise. But rather, by “the world” here, is meant, both this world and that which is to come; Abraham and all believers are the “heirs” of this world, and of all things in it; “all things” are theirs, and, among the rest, the world, Christ being theirs, and they being Christ's; he is heir of all things, and they are joint heirs with him; and how little soever they may enjoy of it now, the time is coming, when they, by virtue of their right, “shall inherit the earth”; (see ^{<01709>}Psalms 37:9,11); and now they have as much of it as is necessary, and with a blessing, and which the Jews call their “world”. It is a saying in their Talmud ^{f61}, **Æyyj b hart Æml w[**, “thou shall see thy world” in thy lifetime; which the gloss explains, “thou shalt find”, or enjoy

all thy necessities, or what is needful for thee; and of Abraham they say ^{f62}, that

“he was the foundation of the world, and that for his sake the world was created;”

and introduce God saying of him thus ^{f63}

“as I am the only one in my world, so he is the only one, *wml w[b,*
“in his world”.”

And as he and all the saints are heirs of this world, so of the world to come, the future salvation, the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, never fading, and reserved in the heavens; for they are heirs of God himself, and shall inherit all things: now this large and comprehensive promise, which takes in the things of time and eternity,

[was] not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law: not through the law of circumcision, or on the score of their obedience to that, for this promise was made before that was enjoined; (see ^{<600B>}Genesis 12:2,3); nor through the law of Moses, which was not as yet given; nor through the law of nature, nor by any righteousness of the law;

but through the righteousness of faith: by virtue of which they have “all things that pertain to life and godliness”, (^{<600B>}2 Peter 1:3); and have “the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come”, (^{<500B>}1 Timothy 4:8); enjoy with a blessing what they now have, and have a right and title to the heavenly glory.

Ver. 14. *For if they which are of the law be heirs,* etc.] That is, if the Jews who are under the law, and are seeking for righteousness and life by the works of it, should, on the account of their obedience to it, be heirs of the grace of life and of glory,

faith is made void; for if the right to the inheritance is by the works of the law, there is no room for faith; that can be of no use or service;

and the promise made of none effect: if salvation is by works, it is to no purpose for God to promise, or men to believe; for the thing promised depends not upon God's promise, but upon man's obedience to the law; and if that is not perfectly observed, as it cannot possibly be, then the promise of God stands for nothing, and is in course made void. The apostle here argues from the absurdities which follow upon the doctrine of justification

by works, as he does from the different effects of the law, in the following verse.

Ver. 15. *Because the law worketh wrath*, etc..] Not the wrath of man, though that is sometimes stirred up through the prohibitions of the law, to which the carnal mind of man is enmity, but the wrath of God the law is so far from justifying sinners, that it curses and condemns them; and when it comes into the heart and is let into the conscience of a sinner, it fills with terrible apprehensions of the wrath of God, and a fearful looking for of his judgment and fiery indignation:

for where no law is, there is no transgression; *hryb[al w hwxm al wnyac* ^{f64}; a sort of a proverbial expression: had the law of Moses not been given, there was the law of nature which sin is a transgression of; but the law of Moses was added for the better discovery and detection of sin, which would not have been so manifest without it, and which may be the apostle's sense; that where there is no law, there is no knowledge of any transgression; and so the Ethiopic version reads the words, "if the law had not come, there would have been none who would have known sin"; but the law is come, and there is a law by which is the knowledge of sin, and therefore no man can be justified by it; since that convinces him of sin, and fills him with a sense of divine wrath on account of it.

Ver. 16. *Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace*, etc..] Meaning either the promise of being heir of the world, or the inheritance itself, or adoption which gives heirship, or remission of Sin, or the blessing of justification, either and all of these are of faith; not as the cause or condition of them, but as the means of God's fixing and appointing to be the recipient of all and each of them: which is done, "that it might be by grace"; appear to be of the free grace and favour of God, as each of these blessings are: forasmuch as every blessing is received by faith, it is manifest it must be by grace; since faith itself is a gift of God's grace, and lies purely in receiving favours at the hand of God, to whom it gives all the glory of them: and this is done with a further view,

to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed. The promise of the above blessings, particularly of the inheritance which is made in the covenant of grace, ordered in all things and sure, and which could not be disannulled by the law that came after it; this being by faith and of grace,

and not of works, nor at all depending upon them, becomes sure to all believers, to all Abraham's spiritual seed:

not to that only which is of the law; to the Jews, who are said to be of the law, in distinction to the Gentiles who were without it; and designs such of them as were believers in Christ, and to whom the Gospel was the power of God unto salvation; to these the promise was, and was sure, and not to them only:

but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; to the Gentiles, who though they are not by natural descent from Abraham, yet are of the same faith with him, and so are his seed in a spiritual sense:

who is the father of us all; whether Jews or Gentiles, who are Christ's, and so Abraham's spiritual seed, and heirs of eternal life, according to the free promise of grace.

Ver. 17. *As it is written I have made thee a father of many nations*, etc..] The passage referred to, is in (^{Q1706}Genesis 17:4,5); which proves him to be a father not of the Jews only, since they cannot be called “many nations”, but of the Gentiles also; and which must be understood in a spiritual sense, for Abraham was the father of them,

before him whom he believed, [even] God; that is, he was so, either in the sight of God, who sees not as man sees; in his account, he was the father of many nations, long before he really in fact was; or “over against” or “like unto him”, as the word may signify: as God was the Father of many nations, so was Abraham, though not in such a sense as he is; and as God is the Father of us all that believe, so was Abraham; there is some little likeness and resemblance in this between them, though not sameness. The object of his faith is described as he,

who quickeneth the dead: meaning either the dead body of Abraham and Sarah's womb; or Isaac, who was given up for dead; or the Gentiles, who were dead in trespasses and sins; or rather the dead bodies of men at the last day, a work which none but the almighty God can effect; the consideration of which is sufficient to engage faith in the promises of God, and a dependence on him for the fulfilment of them: and who stands further described as he, who

calleth those things which be not, as though they were; so he called Abraham the father of many nations, when he was not in fact, as if he really

was; and the Gentiles his seed and offspring, before they were; and when he comes effectually to call them by his grace, they are represented as “things which are not”, whom he called, “to bring to nought things that are”, (~~1~~1 Corinthians 1:28); they were not his people, nor his children, and he called them so, and by his grace made them so, and made them appear to be so; for as in creation so in regeneration, God calls and brings that into being which before was not: and the phrase seems to be an allusion to the creation of all things out of nothing; and it is a Rabbinical one, for so the Jews speaking of the creation say^{f65}

“*ya l a arwq*, “he calls to that which is not”, and it is excluded; (i.e. all things are excluded out of it, as a chicken out of an egg;) and to that which is, and it is established, and to the world, and it is stretched out.”

Ver. 18. *Who against hope believed in hope*, etc..] Abraham believed the promise of God,

that he might become the father of many nations, being assisted by a supernatural aid: “in hope”; of the fulfilment of it by the grace and power of God: “against hope”: against all visible, rational grounds of hope; Sarah’s womb and his own body being dead, but inasmuch as God had said it, he believed:

according to that which is spoken, so shall thy seed be; his faith rested upon the word of God, which showed the nature of it, and that it was of the right kind.

Ver. 19. *And being not weak in faith*, etc..] Abraham was not weak in the exercise of his faith, on the promise of God; nor was his faith weakened about the accomplishment of it, neither by the length of time after the promise was made, nor by the seeming insuperable difficulties of nature which attended it; for

he considered not his own body now dead. The Alexandrian copy reads without the negative, “he considered his own body now dead”, and so the Syriac version: which makes his faith the greater, that though he did consider his case, yet his faith was not weakened: the phrase, “his body now dead”, is an “euphemism” of the “*merebrum virile*”, which by the Jews, when unfit for generation, is called *tm rba*, “*merebrum emortuum*”^{f66}.

when he was about an hundred years old; not being quite an hundred years of age, wanting a year or thereabout:

neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; how unfit she was to conceive and bear children: now though he might consider these things in his mind, yet they did not dwell upon his mind, nor he upon them; at least he did not consider them, so as to distrust the divine promise.

Ver. 20. *He staggered not at the promise of God*, etc..] There is no reason to stagger at, or hesitate about any of the promises of God, since they are made by him that cannot lie; his faithfulness is engaged to perform them; with him all things are possible; every promise is in Christ, yea and amen, and never did any fail; and yet so it is, that some of God's children,

through unbelief, do stagger at the promises of God; thinking either that they are too great for them, or demur upon them through difficulties which attend them:

but so did not Abraham, he

was strong in faith; nothing moved him, no difficulties discouraged him, he made no demur upon the promise, nor had the least hesitation in his mind about the accomplishment of it; but was fully assured that so it would be, as God had said; and thus he was

giving glory to God; ascribing to him the glory of his veracity, faithfulness, power, grace, and goodness, as all such who are strong in faith do; such persons bring the most glory to God, and are the most comfortable in their own souls. This phrase, *atwnmyhmb apqttal*, “to be strong” or strengthened, or strengthen themselves “in faith”, is to be met with in Jewish writings^{f67}, and is particularly used of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; all the tribes of Israel are not said to be *wtmwmab myqzj*, “strong in their faith”; only the tribe of Levi, when Moses stood in the gate and said, “who is on the Lord's side, let him come unto me”, (^(Exo)Exodus 32:26): whoever is *wtnwmab qzj*, “strong in his faith”^{f68}; and there were none in all Israel but the tribe of Levi, who were “strong in their faith”.

Ver. 21. *And being fully persuaded*, etc..] He had not only faith, a strong faith, but full assurance of faith:

that what he [God] had promised; though it was so long ago, and there were so many difficulties in the way;

he was able, being the Lord God Almighty,

to perform; so his faith rested upon the power of God, with whom nothing is impossible.

Ver. 22. *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*] Not because his faith was strong, and he had a full assurance of it, but because it was right, resting on the promise of God, and relying upon his power and faithfulness to perform it; for though the righteousness of faith is not imputed to any sort of believers, not to mere nominal ones, yet to all such as have true faith, though it may be but weak; for faith, as to nature, kind, and object, though not as to degree, is the same in all true believers, and the same righteousness is imputed to one as to another.

Ver. 23. *Now it was not written for his sake alone*, etc..] This was not left on the sacred records, (^{<BIB5>}Genesis 15:6),

that it was imputed to him; purely on his account, merely for his sake, as an encomium of his faith, and an honourable testimony to it, and for the encouragement of it; though this was doing him a very great honour, and was one design of it.

Ver. 24. *But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed*, etc..] What was written in the books of the Old Testament, was not written merely on account of them who are the subjects thereof, but for the use, learning, instruction and profit of saints under the New Testament dispensation; and particularly this concerning the pulsation of Abraham's faith for righteousness, or of the imputation of the righteousness of faith unto him for justification; which was not Abraham's faith, but that "righteousness" which his faith looked to, and laid hold on: (see ^{<BIB2>}Romans 4:12); for Abraham's faith itself could never be reckoned for righteousness to another, nor indeed was it to himself; but such as believe as Abraham did, they have the same righteousness imputed to them as he had; and truly of the same kind is the faith of Abraham, who believed in "God that quickeneth the dead", (^{<BIB7>}Romans 4:17); and that of ours:

if, or "seeing"

we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; which descriptive of the faith of New Testament believers, and of the object of it; (see ^{<510>}Romans 10:9,10); and which object of faith is further described in (^{<505>}Romans 4:25).

Ver. 25. *Who was delivered for our offences*, etc..] Christ was delivered into the hands of men, and into the hands of justice, and unto death; and he was delivered by men, by Judas, to the chief priests, and by them to Pilate, and by Pilate to the Jews and Roman soldiers to be put to death; and he was also delivered up by his Father into the hands of justice and death, according to his determinate counsel and foreknowledge; but not without his own free consent, who voluntarily laid down his life, and gave himself a ransom for his people: he was delivered to death, not for any offences of his own, for he committed none; nor for the offences of angels, for these were not spared; nor for the offences, of all men, since all will not be saved; but for the offences of all God's elect: he was delivered for these, as the causes of his death, and as the end for which he died; namely, to make reconciliation, atonement, and satisfaction for them; which shows the love of the Father in delivering him up, and the grace and condescension of the Son in being willing to be delivered up on such an account: the nature and end of Christ's death may be learnt from hence, that he died not merely as a martyr, or as an example; nor only for the good, but in the room and stead of his people: we may also learn from hence the nature of sin, the strictness of justice, the obligations we lie under to Christ, and how many favours and blessings we may expect from God through him: who also

was raised again for our justification; he was raised again from the dead by his Father, to whom this is often ascribed; and by himself, by his own power, which proves him to be the mighty God; and this was done not only that he might live an immortal and glorious life in our nature, having finished the work he undertook and came about, but for "our justification". He died in the room and stead of his people, and by dying made satisfaction for their sins; he rose again as their head and representative, and was legally discharged, acquitted, and justified, and they in him. Christ's resurrection did not procure the justification of his people, that was done by his obedience and death; but was for the testification of it, that it might fully appear that sin was atoned for, and an everlasting righteousness was brought in; and for the application of it, or that Christ might live and see his righteousness imputed, and applied to all those for whom he had wrought it out.