



Group Discussion Guide

Romans 4:13-25

For groups meeting February 23 evening through March 1 morning.

In the second half of Romans 4, Paul continued to build his case for justification by faith. He wrote that God's promise to Abraham "that he would be heir of the world" came through faith and not through the law (v.13). That phrase points to Genesis 12:1-3, wherein God promised Abraham land, a large family and the privilege of being a conduit of blessing for the entire world (an allusion to the coming of the Messiah). Paul indicated this promise was given apart from the law, and therefore if only those who followed the law were to be considered heirs, this promise would be empty (v. 14). The law is the basis for punishment of sin (v. 15).

Being an heir, or a child of God, is dependent upon faith in Christ. God set up His plan of redemption this way so it would be available to all people, not just those who were the recipients of the law (v. 16). Paul cited Genesis 17:5, which records God's action of changing Abram's name to Abraham so it would reflect His promise of making Abraham the "father of many nations." In addition, Paul pointed out that the promise is guaranteed "in the presence of God ... who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist," (v. 17). Our God brings the dead to life and creates something where before there was nothing. We see this unfold in the biblical record and we experience it in our lives. It's important for us to live in light of this truth and to share it with those around us.

In verses 18-21, Paul writes about Abraham's unwavering faith. This should call us to consider Abraham's actions in following Sarah's idea for him to have a child her servant Hagar. How could Paul know this about Abraham's life and yet still laud him for his strong faith? We must remember that it was not until after these events that God specifically told Abraham he and Sarah would have a son together (Genesis 17:15-21). This is not to excuse Abraham's actions in having a child with Hagar; he should have trusted God to give him a child by his wife Sarah. However, it was after the birth of Ishmael that God moved Abraham back on the right path. Sarah was his wife, and the two of them would have this son of promise *together*. After attempting to do things their own way, Abraham and Sarah believed God to do the impossible. This response and forward movement based on faith is why Paul so adamantly wrote that Abraham did not waver in his faith.

Paul then applied Abraham's faith being counted as righteousness to all who believe God (v. 23-24). In doing so, he again brought forth the importance of "death to life" as wrote that Jesus was crucified for our sin and raised from the dead so that we could stand justified before the Father (v. 25).

Discussion Questions

1. Consider the biblical concepts of faith and law. Why do you think Paul wrote that if those who followed the law were counted as children of God, it would make “faith null and the promise ... void” (v. 14)?
2. The promise of God depends on faith so that the promise of God may rest on grace (v. 16). What does this mean to you? How do we live in light of this truth?
3. Our God “gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist,” (v. 17). What is dead in your life right now that you need to believe God to bring to life? What doesn’t exist in your life right now that you need to believe God to call into existence?
4. How are you encouraged by the Genesis record of Abraham, who “in hope ... believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told,” (v. 18)?
5. Abraham looked at the realities of how age had affected his body and Sarah’s body, and yet “he did not weaken in faith,” (v. 19). What does it look like for us to do the same in our lives?
6. The truth that Abraham’s faith was counted to him as righteousness was meant for us as well. How do we experience this personally and then share this message of faith with those around us?
7. Why do you think Paul called his readers to remember to believe in God “who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,” (v. 24)? How does this reminder move you as you consider your own life right now?