

# DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME IV // ALL NATIONS  
AUGUST 22, 2021

GRACE  
FELLOWSHIP

**Discussion Starter:** Briefly summarize why salvation by grace is better than by works.

**Key Text:** *“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. <sup>14</sup> For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. <sup>15</sup> For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. <sup>16</sup> 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, <sup>17</sup> 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.”* (Romans 4:13-17)

One day Emperor Frederick the Great visited Potsdam Prison. He spoke with the prisoners, and each man claimed to be innocent, a victim of the system. One man, however, sat silently in the corner of his cell. The ruler asked him, “And you, sir, who do you blame for your sentence?” He responded, “Your majesty, I am guilty and fully deserve my punishment.” Surprised, the emperor shouted to the prison warden: “Come and get this man out of here before he corrupts all these innocent people.” The ruler can set a prisoner free only after he confesses he did wrong.

In today’s text, Paul continues making a persuasive case to the Jews that it’s only when we confess our sin, turn to God in repentance, and place our faith in Christ that we can find forgiveness and righteousness. In 4:13-17, he makes five arguments:

- 1. God made promises to Abraham—including the promise of righteousness coming by faith—centuries before God gave the law to Moses; therefore, righteousness cannot come through the law.**

*“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”* (v.13). The promises God gave Abraham had nothing to do with the giving of the law or Israel’s keeping of the law since God didn’t give the law until centuries later. So, salvation cannot come through the law.

- 2. If God’s promises to Israel were only for those who could perfectly follow the law, then the promises would be void since no one can perfectly follow the law.**

*“For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void”* (v.14). Paul now argues that even if the promises had somehow been contingent on keeping the law, then faith doesn’t matter, and the promises would be void anyway since no one can keep the law!

**Discuss:** Summarize in your own words Paul’s first two arguments found in v.13-14.

3. **The law cannot deliver the promises of God since nobody can keep the law perfectly; on the other hand, if no law existed, then there would be no sin since you can't break a law that doesn't exist.**

*"For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression"* (v.15). The Jews' argument that keeping the law results in righteousness backfires on them since they could not keep the law. As a result, the law becomes a vehicle to deliver God's wrath to us!

**Discuss:** Why is it bad news if righteousness comes by our keeping God's laws, such as the Ten Commandments?

4. **Since human effort cannot secure God's promises, the promises must be secured by faith in God's grace, and everyone—whether Jew or Gentile—who comes to God by faith is considered to be Abraham's offspring.**

*"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"* (v.16). Since Abraham was declared righteous by God for his faith, everyone who comes to God by faith is Abraham's offspring. This includes both Jews and Gentiles who believe in God. In this sense, Abraham is the father of everyone who believes.

**Discuss:** How does it make you feel knowing that God's promise of forgiveness and righteousness is *guaranteed* to those who trust in Christ?

5. **The God who gives life to the dead and calls into existence things that were not there before promised that Abraham would become the "father of many nations" (Genesis 17:5), including all people whose faith is in God.**

*"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"* (v.17). Paul's reference to God giving life to the dead may be an allusion to God bringing Abraham's and Sarah's bodies back to life-giving form even at the ages beyond child-bearing years—100 and 90, respectively. Paul's reference to God calling into existence the things that do not exist may be an allusion to Isaac—Abraham's and Sarah's promised miracle child and the nations that had never yet existed springing into existence, including the nation of Israel.

**Discuss:** What are some truths you've learned thus far about salvation by works vs. salvation by grace through faith?

#### **For Further Study:**

*The Grace Awakening* by Charles Swindoll

"What Does it Mean to be Saved by Grace?" article at [www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)

*The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* by Bruce Demarest