**Lesson 10: God Fulfilled His Promise**

**Text: Romans 4:13-25**

**Introduction**

In the closing verses of chapter four, Paul continues to use Abraham as an example of one who was justified by faith. He demonstrates how Abraham’s situation is similar to our situation as modern day believers. The word “promise” shows up for the first time in these verses and is used four times (v. 13, 14, 16, 20). God made a promise to Abraham that includes three parts: He promised numerous descendants (Genesis 12:2), land (Genesis 13:15-17) and that he would be a blessing (Genesis 12:3). The fulfillment of the promise extends beyond those of Jewish descent to Gentiles who would be justified by faith. Abraham simply had to believe in order to receive the fulfillment of the promise. To do so, he had to look past the impossible circumstances related to his age and the deadness of Sarah’s womb to believe that God was still sufficient to fulfill His promise. He is the God who can bring life out of death! We will see in this lesson how this applies to our lives.

1. **The fulfillment of the promise did NOT depend on Abraham’s ability to keep the law. (v. 13-16)** 
   1. Jews believed that Abraham’s obedience secured God’s blessing.
   2. It was not Abraham’s obedience, but rather faith that secured the promise. (v. 13)
   3. If the fulfillment of the promise hinged on keeping the law, it would never be fulfilled since man is incapable of keeping the law. (v. 14)
   4. The law only produces wrath. (v. 15) It proves that man is sinful and holds him accountable for his sin.
      1. The law makes sin a *transgression*. The word *transgression* means a “passing over; violation” (Gingrich). Paul is not stating that sin does not exist in the absence of law. Stealing is wrong even though a society may not have written laws against it. This was not the case with the Jews. God gave them clear, specific commandments. They knowingly violated these commandments. This is why Paul states that the law brings God’s wrath.
      2. “Rather than rescuing people from the sentence of condemnation, it confirms their condemnation. For by stating clearly, and in great detail, exactly what God requires of people, the law renders people even more accountable to God than they were without the law” (Douglas Moo).
   5. Since the promise could not be secured by keeping the law, it had to be secured by grace through faith. (v. 16) Paul’s reference to the “seed” in this verse is not limited to the physical descendants of Abraham. It is referring to Jews and Gentiles alike who would receive righteousness by faith.
2. **The fulfillment of the promise did NOT depend on the ability of Abraham and Sarah to produce children. (v. 17-22)**
   1. Paul quotes Genesis 17:5 to support his claim that Abraham is the father of all believers. (v. 17a)
   2. Given their physical inability to have children, Abraham had to believe God for the fulfillment of the promise. His faith was in God for the following two reasons: (v. 17b)
      1. God is able to quicken the dead. This fits the context very well because it was God who overcame the deadness of their physical inability to produce children. It is also God who raised Jesus from the dead. It is God who quickens sinners. (Ephesians 2:1)
      2. God calls things that are not currently in existence as though they were already in existence. This part of verse 17 speaks of God’s omnipotence and omniscience. He created the universe out of nothing. He spoke and it was created. In the context, God referred to Abraham as the father of many nations because He knew that Jews and people from the various people groups of the world would believe.
   3. Abraham had a steadfast confidence that God was able to do what He promised. (v. 18; Genesis 15:5)
   4. He looked at the greatness of God, rather that the bleakness of his physical situation. (v. 19)
      1. Abraham and Sarah were past the time of procreation.
      2. The word *deadness* in reference to Sarah’s womb was not the normal way of describing a woman’s inability to have children. Paul purposefully chose this word rather than “barrenness” to highlight the fact that God is able to bring life from death.
   5. Abraham did not *stagger* (waver) regarding the promise of God. (v. 20)
      1. This does not mean that he did not have moments when he doubted. It means that doubt did not define his overall approach to the promise of God.
      2. His faith grew to the place of confidence. Faith grows stronger as it is exercised.
      3. This brought glory to God.
   6. He was fully persuaded that God would deliver on His promise. (v. 21)
   7. Paul concludes his reference to Abraham with a final reference to Genesis 15:6. (v. 22)
3. **Central Idea: The fulfillment of the promise to Abraham depended on God’s ability to do that which was humanly impossible.**
4. **Using the example of Abraham, Paul makes application to Christians. (v. 23-25)** 
   1. It wasn’t just for Abraham’s benefit that it was recorded that righteousness was credited to his account by faith. It is the same for all who believe! (v. 23-24) God is still the object of faith. He did that which was humanly impossible. He raised Jesus from the dead.
   2. Jesus died on the cross for our offenses and rose again so that we might be justified. (v. 25)
      1. The verb translated *was delivered* is in the passive voice of the verb and indicates that the Father handed His Son over to die in the place of sinners.
      2. He was raised again that we might be justified. There is a connection between Christ’s resurrection and our justification. We could not be justified if He did not rise again. The fact that He rose again declares that He has power over sin and death. He is alive and able to save any who would come to Him by faith.
5. **Application: You must trust God to do that which is humanly impossible.** 
   1. Salvation is humanly impossible.
      1. You cannot keep the law.
      2. You cannot bring life out of death.
   2. God is able to save any who will simply believe. Justification is based on grace through faith alone.
   3. There many other situations in life that require simply trust in the Lord. In what area is God calling you to trust Him? If He can bring life out of death, doesn’t it stand to reason that He can work in your life situation?
   4. Your faith will grow as you continue trusting the Lord.

**Conclusion**

The fulfillment of the promise did not depend on Abraham’s ability to keep the law nor on his ability to produce children. The fulfillment of the promise rested completely upon God. Abraham’s part was to believe. Peace comes to those who will believe. We will see this great truth as we begin chapter 5.