

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Romans 4: 13-16

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week we will continue reading Romans chapter 4, from verses 13-25. Today we will read verses 13-16.

Genesis chapter 17 records the sixth appearance of God to Abraham. God changed his name from Abram to Abraham, that is, from “exalted father” to “father of many nations.” We know that Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot twelve sons, who became the twelve tribes of Israel. Therefore, the nation of Israel came from Abram. To the nation of Israel, Abram truly was an exalted father. But how could Abraham become the father of many nations? It was because God foretold here that 2,000 years later, from Abraham's descendants would come Jesus Christ, who would become the Savior of the world. Whoever believes in Him will have their sins forgiven and receive eternal life. People from every nation who follow in Abraham's footsteps of faith and are justified by God become the descendants of Abraham by faith. Thus, Abraham becomes their father in the faith—he becomes the father of many nations.

In this sixth appearance, God also established the covenant of circumcision with Abraham, meaning that every male among Abraham's physical descendants must be circumcised on the eighth day after birth. This group of circumcised people later received the Law through Moses and became the chosen people under the Old Covenant. In verses 11–12, which we read last week, Paul declared that Abraham is the father of all who believe without being circumcised, and also of those who are circumcised and walk in the footsteps of Abraham's faith. Here we see that Paul intentionally downplays the physical mark of circumcision and emphasizes the necessity of walking in the footsteps of Abraham's faith. Only such people are truly Abraham's descendants. For whether circumcised or not, all are justified before God by faith—this has nothing to do with human works.

Verse 13: "For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."

"The promise that he would be the heir of the world"—let us first examine the promise God made to Abraham. With each appearance, God's promises to Abraham became more specific and richer. In the third appearance, recorded in Genesis 12:7, God clearly stated that His main promise to Abraham was descendants and land. We have already seen that the descendants include Abraham's physical offspring, the Jews, and also his spiritual descendants—the saints of the New Covenant.

As for the promise of land, this became more specific in God's fourth appearance to Abraham, recorded in Genesis 13:14–15, "And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: 'Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.'" God told Abram that all the land he could see would be given to his descendants. By the fifth appearance—when Abraham was justified by faith—the promise became even clearer. Genesis 15:18 says, "On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: 'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates.'" From the south to the River of Egypt, and from the north to the Euphrates River.

When King Solomon ascended the throne, during Israel's most glorious era, God's promise to Abraham was completely fulfilled. 1 Kings 4:21 says, "So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life." However, Israel's later history shows us that because they were stiff-necked and repeatedly rebelled against God, they eventually lost the promised land.

Yet Paul says Abraham and his descendants would inherit the world—not just that plot of land in Palestine, but the whole world. Clearly, Paul's mention of "descendants" refers not only to the Jews but also to the descendants of faith—the saints of the New Covenant. These saints, by believing in Jesus and following Him, become Abraham's spiritual descendants. When Jesus ministered on earth, He told

His disciples in Matthew 5:5: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” The Chinese Union Version says “inherit the land,” but the KJV say “inherit the earth,” which matches Paul’s words — “the world.”

We know that due to man’s fall, Satan usurped the earth and became the prince of this world. But Jesus promised in John 12:31–32, “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” This was spoken before Jesus went to the cross. When Jesus died on the cross, the world was judged, and today, people are continually being drawn to Him. This is also the mission of the church: to seek out the sons of peace who belong to God and bring them home to the Father. When Jesus returns, He will establish the millennial kingdom, and the overcomers will reign with Him.

Revelation 20:4 says: “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God... And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” Here we see the victorious saints reigning with Christ in heaven.

As for the physical descendants of Abraham—the Israelites who are still alive—when Christ returns, they will all be saved. Amos 9:11 foretells, “On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old.” At that time, God will restore the nation of Israel, and they will worship God on earth. Their role is described in Zechariah 8:22–23, “Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”’” At that time, the Jews will lead all nations in worshipping God. So, from Paul’s simple statement that “Abraham and his descendants will inherit the world,” we see a profound truth hidden behind it.

Paul continues: “Not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.” Paul emphasizes again: Abraham and his descendants will inherit the world not through

the law. When God made this promise to Abraham, the law had not yet been given. As Galatians 3:17 says, "And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect." The promise came first—it cannot be annulled by the law which came 430 years later. God's promise will certainly be fulfilled and cannot be rendered void.

God's promise is fulfilled through righteousness by faith. In other words, Abraham's descendants are not only justified by faith, but must also live out a righteous life through faith—only then can they inherit the world. Being a descendant is related to life, but that alone is not enough. They must grow to maturity and live out a testimony of righteousness to inherit what God promised.

Verse 14: "For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect."

Paul introduces a new term here: "heir." Heirs are different from descendants. A descendant who has matured in life and is legally eligible to inherit becomes an heir. In the previous verse, Paul spoke of Abraham's descendants inheriting the world—this means that when they become heirs, they can legally inherit the promises. Heirs are not only related to life but also to the growth of life.

The Jews had the law given by God, and they were people of the law. If only those of the law could be heirs, then the promise would be based on the law, and faith would be useless—made void. And if the promise truly were based on the law, only those who kept the law could receive it. But since no one can fully keep the law, God's promise would be nullified.

Verse 15: "Because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression."

The law brings about wrath. The law reveals sin, and sin provokes God's wrath. Humans are born with a sinful nature, so sinning is natural. Without the law, people

would not realize their behavior crossed a boundary—there would be no transgression. We must admire Paul’s precision. He didn’t say, “Where there is no law, there is no sin,” because sin is defined as falling short of God’s purpose and calling for humanity. Even without the law, sin remains evident.

But “transgression” is different—it’s defined as crossing a line. The law sets God’s boundaries. Without it, one cannot determine if someone crossed a line—thus, no transgression. But when the law comes, the boundary is set, and whoever crosses it must be judged, thereby stirring God’s wrath.

Paul uses verses 14–15 to show that becoming an heir and inheriting the promise is not based on the law. This leads us to his conclusion in verse 16.

Verse 16: "Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham."

Becoming an heir—that is, growing in spiritual stature to inherit the promised world (as in verse 13)—is of faith and by grace. In Greek, these phrases are “of faith” and “by grace,” meaning that inheritance is rooted in faith and flows through grace, ensuring the promise applies to all of Abraham’s descendants.

To become heirs who inherit the promise, Abraham’s descendants must grow—and this growth comes by faith and through grace. “Faith” from God’s side is supply; from our side, it’s reception. Through faith, we receive God’s supply to grow. “Grace” is God’s arrangement of environments so that through these experiences, we may enjoy His provision. So growth happens by faith and through grace. Once someone becomes an heir, they can inherit the promise. And this promise is for both the Jews under the law and the Gentile believers who follow Abraham’s faith.

In summary, from verses 13–16, Paul paints a picture of how Abraham and his descendants inherit the world. In Genesis 22:18, God promised, “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.” Galatians 3:8 explains that when God said this to Abraham, He was preaching the gospel to him. And Galatians 3:16

further clarifies: “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.”

So when God made promises to Abraham, He was actually preaching the gospel—because Abraham’s seed is Christ. And Christ, in eternity, is God. When Christ completed eternal redemption and established the mercy seat, He opened the way into grace. Abraham, by faith, entered this realm of grace. His physical descendants (the Jews), if they follow his footsteps of faith, may also enter this realm. His spiritual descendants (New Covenant Gentile believers) may enter by faith as well. Thus, all of Abraham’s descendants who enter the realm of grace must grow by faith and through grace into heirs, and finally inherit the promised world.

Dear brothers and sisters, Paul clearly tells us here: every believer in Jesus Christ is not only justified by faith, but must also grow by faith and through grace into heirs, able to inherit the blessings promised to Abraham—namely, to reign with Christ when He returns and to rule over the world that God created.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for letting us see the grace of redemption You’ve given us and the wisdom of salvation You’ve granted. Through faith, we are saved by grace, forgiven, and justified by You. But that is just the beginning. As long as we remain in the realm of grace, growing by faith and through grace, we can mature into heirs and inherit the promises You gave to Abraham. You desire that in every saint, the original purpose and mission of man may be restored—to express God, represent God, and rule over all that God has made. For such a great grace, we once again offer our thanksgiving and worship. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.