

# CHAPTER 4

The great gospel doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law was so very contrary to the notions the Jews had learnt from those that sat in Moses' chair, that it would hardly go down with them; and therefore the apostle insists very largely upon it, and labours much in the confirmation and illustration of it. He had before proved it by reason and argument, now in this chapter he proves it by example, which in some places serves for confirmation as well as illustration. The example he pitches upon is that of Abraham, whom he chooses to mention because the Jews gloried much in their relation to Abraham, put it in the first rank of their external privileges that they were Abraham's seed, and truly they had Abraham for their father. Therefore this instance was likely to be more taking and convincing to the Jews than any other. His argument stands thus: "All that are saved are justified in the same way as Abraham was; but Abraham was justified by faith, and not by works; therefore all that are saved are so justified;" for it would easily be acknowledged that Abraham was the father of the faithful. Now this is an argument, not only ... *pari* — from an equal case, as they say, but ... *fortiori* — from a stronger case. If Abraham, a man so famous for works, so eminent in holiness and obedience, was nevertheless justified by faith only, and not by those works, how much less can any other, especially any of those that spring from him, and come so far short of him in works, set up for a justification by their own works? And it proves likewise, *ex abundantia* — the more abundantly, as some observe, that we are not justified, no not by those good works which flow from faith, as the matter of our righteousness; for such were Abraham's works, and are we better than he? The whole chapter is taken up with his discourse upon this instance, and there is this in it, which hath a particular reference to the close of the foregoing chapter, where he has asserted that, in the business of justification, Jews and Gentiles stand upon the same level. Now in this chapter, with a great deal of cogency of argument,

**I.** He proves that Abraham was justified not by works, but by faith (v. 1-8).

- II. He observes when and why he was so justified (v. 9-17).
- III. He describes and commends that faith of his (v. 17-22).
- IV. He applies all this to us (v. 22-25). And, if he had now been in the school of Tyrannus, he could not have disputed more argumentatively.

## ROMANS 4:1-8

### THE CASE OF ABRAHAM

Here the apostle proves that Abraham was justified not by works, but by faith. Those that of all men contended most vigorously for a share in righteousness by the privileges they enjoyed, and the works they performed, were the Jews, and therefore he appeals to the case of Abraham their father, and puts his own name to the relation, being a Hebrew of the Hebrews: *Abraham our father*. Now surely his prerogative must needs be as great as theirs who claim it as his seed according to the flesh. Now *what has he found?* All the world is seeking; but, while the most are wearying themselves for very vanity, none can be truly reckoned to have found, but those who are justified before God; and thus Abraham, like a wise merchant, seeking goodly pearls, found this one pearl of great price. What has he found, *kata sarka* — *as pertaining to the flesh*, that is, by circumcision and his external privileges and performances? These the apostle calls *flesh*, <sup><OR></sup>Philippians 3:3. Now what did he get by these? Was he justified by them? Was it the merit of his works that recommended him to God's acceptance? No, by no means, which he proves by several arguments.

I. If he had been justified by works, room would have been left for boasting, which must for ever be excluded. If so, *he hath whereof to glory* (v. 2), which is not to be allowed. "But," might the Jews say, "was not his name made great (<sup><OR></sup>Genesis 12:2), and then might not he glory?" Yes, but not before God; he might deserve well of men, but he could never merit of God. Paul himself had *whereof to glory before men*, and we have him sometimes glorying in it, yet with humility; but nothing to glory in before God, <sup><OR></sup>1 Corinthians 4:4; <sup><OR></sup>Philippians 3:8, 9. So Abraham. Observe, He takes it for granted that man must not pretend to glory in any thing before God; no, not Abraham, as great and as good a man as he was;

and therefore he fetches an argument from it: it would be absurd for him *that glorieth to glory in any but the Lord.*

**II.** It is expressly said that Abraham's faith was counted to him for righteousness. *What saith the scripture?* v. 3. In all controversies in religion this must be our question, *What saith the scripture?* It is not what this great man, and the other good man, say, but *What saith the scripture?* Ask counsel at this Abel, and so end the matter, <sup><1028></sup>2 Samuel 2:18. *To the law, and to the testimony* (<sup><2181></sup>Isaiah 8:20), thither is the last appeal. Now the scripture saith that *Abraham believed, and this was counted to him for righteousness* (<sup><1156></sup>Genesis 15:6); therefore he had not whereof to glory before God, it being purely of free grace that it was so imputed, and having not in itself any of the formal nature of a righteousness, further than as God himself was graciously pleased so to count it to him. It is mentioned in Genesis, upon occasion of a very signal and remarkable act of faith concerning the promised seed, and is the more observable in that it followed upon a grievous conflict he had had with unbelief; his faith was now a victorious faith, newly returned from the battle. It is not the perfect faith that is required to justification (there may be acceptable faith where there are remainders of unbelief), but the prevailing faith, the faith that has the upper hand of unbelief.

**III.** If he had been justified by faith, the reward would have been *of debt, and not of grace*, which is not to be imagined. This is his argument (v. 4, 5): Abraham's reward was God himself; so he had told him but just before (<sup><1151></sup>Genesis 15:1), *I am thy exceeding great reward.* Now, if Abraham had merited this by the perfection of his obedience, it had not been an act of grace in God, but Abraham might have demanded it with as much confidence as ever any labourer in the vineyard demanded the penny he had earned. But this cannot be; it is impossible for man, much more guilty man, to make God a debtor to him, <sup><5115></sup>Romans 11:35. No, God will have free grace to have all the glory, grace for grace's sake, <sup><3116></sup>John 1:16. And therefore *to him that worketh not* — that can pretend to no such merit, nor show any worth or value in his work, which may answer such a reward, but disclaiming any such pretension casts himself wholly upon the free grace of God in Christ, by a lively, active, obedient faith — to such a one *faith is counted for righteousness*, is accepted of God as the qualification required in all those that shall be pardoned and saved. *Him that justifieth the ungodly*, that is, him that was before ungodly. His former ungodliness

was no bar to his justification upon his believing: *ton asebe* — *that ungodly one*, that is, Abraham, who, before his conversion, it should seem, was carried down the stream of the Chaldean idolatry, <sup>GEN</sup>Joshua 24:2. No room therefore is left for despair; though God clears not the impenitent guilty, yet through Christ he justifies the ungodly.

**IV.** He further illustrates this by a passage out of the Psalms, where David speaks of the remission of sins, the prime branch of justification, as constituting the happiness and blessedness of a man, pronouncing blessed, not the man who has no sin, or none which deserved death (for then, while man is so sinful, and God so righteous, where would be the blessed man?) but *the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin*, who though he cannot plead, Not guilty, pleads the act of indemnity, and his plea is allowed. It is quoted from <sup>PSL</sup>Psalm 32:1, 2, where observe,

**1.** The nature of forgiveness. It is the remission of a debt or a crime; it is the covering of sin, as a filthy thing, as the nakedness and shame of the soul. God is said *to cast sin behind his back, to hide his face from it*, which, and the like expressions, imply that the ground of our blessedness is not our innocency, or our not having sinned (a thing is, and is filthy, though covered; justification does not make the sin not to have been, or not to have been sin), but God's not laying it to our charge, as it follows here: it is God's *not imputing sin* (v. 8), which makes it wholly a gracious act of God, not dealing with us in strict justice as we have deserved, not entering into judgment, not marking iniquities, all which being purely acts of grace, the acceptance and the reward cannot be expected as debts; and therefore Paul infers (v. 6) that it is the imputing of righteousness without works.

**2.** The blessedness of it: *Blessed are they*. When it is said, *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked*, etc., the design is to show the characters of those that are blessed; but when it is said, *Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven*, the design is to show what that blessedness is, and what the ground and foundation of it. Pardoned people are the only blessed people. The sentiments of the world are, Those are happy that have a clear estate, and are out of debt to man; but the sentence of the word is, Those are happy that have their debts to God discharged. O how much therefore is it our interest to make it sure to ourselves that our sins are pardoned! For

this is the foundation of all other benefits. So and so I will do for them; for I will be merciful, ~~382~~ Hebrews 8:12.

## ~~403~~ ROMANS 4:9-17

### THE CASE OF ABRAHAM

St. Paul observes in this paragraph when and why Abraham was thus justified; for he has several things to remark upon that. It was before he was circumcised, and before the giving of the law; and there was a reason for both.

**I.** It was before he was circumcised, v. 10. His faith was counted to him for righteousness while he was in uncircumcision. It was imputed, ~~415~~ Genesis 15:6, and he was not circumcised till Romans 17. Abraham is expressly said to be justified by faith *fourteen years*, some say *twenty-five years*, *before he was circumcised*. Now this the apostle takes notice of in answer to the question (v. 9), *Cometh this blessedness then on the circumcision only, or on the uncircumcision also?* Abraham was pardoned and accepted in uncircumcision, a circumstance which, as it might silence the fears of the poor uncircumcised Gentiles, so it might lower the pride and conceitedness of the Jews, who gloried in their circumcision, as if they had the monopoly of all happiness. Here are two reasons why Abraham was justified by faith in uncircumcision: —

**1.** That circumcision might be *a seal of the righteousness of faith*, v. 11. The tenour of the covenants must first be settled before the seal can be annexed. Sealing supposes a previous bargain, which is confirmed and ratified by that ceremony. After Abraham's justification by faith had continued several years only a grant by parole, for the confirmation of Abraham's faith God was pleased to appoint a sealing ordinance, and Abraham received it; though it was a bloody ordinance, yet he submitted to it, and even received it as a special favour, *the sign of circumcision*, etc. Now we may hence observe,

**(1.)** The nature of sacraments in general: they are signs and seals — signs to represent and instruct, seals to ratify and confirm. They are signs of absolute grace and favour; they are seals of the conditional promises; nay,

they are mutual seals: God does in the sacraments seal to us to be to us a God, and we do therein seal to him to be to him a people.

(2.) The nature of circumcision in particular: it was the initiating sacrament of the Old Testament; and it is here said to be,

[1.] A *sign* — a sign of that original corruption which we are all born with, and which is cut off by spiritual circumcision, — a commemorating sign of God's covenant with Abraham, — a distinguishing sign between Jews and Gentiles, — a sign of admission into the visible church, — a sign prefiguring baptism, which comes in the room of circumcision, now under the gospel, when (the blood of Christ being shed) all bloody ordinances are abolished; it was *an outward and sensible sign of an inward and spiritual grace signified thereby*.

[2.] A *seal of the righteousness of the faith*. In general, it was a seal of the covenant of grace, particularly of justification by faith — the covenant of grace, called *the righteousness which is of faith* (<sup>◀516</sup>Romans 10:6), and it refers to an Old-Testament promise, <sup>◀512</sup>Deuteronomy 30:12. Now if infants were then capable of receiving a seal of the covenant of grace, which proves that they then were within the verge of that covenant, how they come to be now cast out of the covenant and incapable of the seal, and by what severe sentence they were thus rejected and incapacitated, those are concerned to make out that not only reject, but nullify and reproach, the baptism of the seed of believers.

2. *That he might be the father of all those that believe*. Not but that there were those that were justified by faith before Abraham; but of Abraham first it is particularly observed, and in him commenced a much clearer and fuller dispensation of the covenant of grace than any that had been before extant; and there he is called *the father of all that believe*, because he was so eminent a believer, and so eminently justified by faith, as Jabal was the father of shepherds and Jubal of musicians, <sup>◀514</sup>Genesis 4:20, 21. *The father of all those that believe*; that is, a standing *pattern of faith*, as parents are examples to their children; and a standing precedent of justification by faith, as the liberties, privileges, honours, and estates, of the fathers descend to their children. Abraham was the father of believers, because to him particularly the *magna charta* was renewed.

(1.) The father of believing Gentiles, *though they be not circumcised*. Zaccheus, a publican, if he believe, is reckoned a son of Abraham,

◀298▶ Luke 19:9. Abraham being himself uncircumcised when he was justified by faith, uncircumcision can never be a bar. Thus were the doubts and fears of the poor Gentiles anticipated and no room left to question but that righteousness might be imputed to them also, ▶301▶ Colossians 3:11; ▶306▶ Galatians 5:6.

(2.) The father of believing Jews, not merely as circumcised, and of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, but because believers, because they *are not of the circumcision only* (that is, are not only circumcised), *but walk in the steps of that faith* — have not only the sign, but the thing signified — not only are of Abraham's family, but follow the example of Abraham's faith. See here who are the genuine children and lawful successors of those that were the church's fathers: not those that sit in their chairs, and bear their names, but those that tread in their steps; this is the line of succession, which holds, notwithstanding interruptions. It seems, then, those were most loud and forward to call Abraham father that had least title to the honours and privileges of his children. Thus those have most reason to call Christ Father, not that bear his name in being Christians in profession, but that tread in his steps.

II. It was before the giving of the law, v. 13-16. The former observation is levelled against those that confined justification to the circumcision, this against those that expected it by the law; now the promise was made to Abraham long before the law. Compare ▶307▶ Galatians 3:17, 18. Now observe,

1. What that promise was — *that he should be the heir of the world*, that is, of the land of Canaan, the choicest spot of ground in the world, — or the father of many nations of the world, who sprang from him, besides the Israelites, — or the heir of the comforts of the life which now is. The meek are said to *inherit the earth*, and the world is theirs. Though Abraham had so little of the world in possession, yet he was heir of it all. Or, rather, it points at Christ, the seed here mentioned; compare ▶308▶ Galatians 3:16, *To thy seed, which is Christ*. Now Christ is the heir of the world, the ends of the earth are his possession, and it is in him that Abraham was so. And it refers to that promise (▶313▶ Genesis 12:3), *In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed*.

2. How it was made to him: *Not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith*. *Not through the law*, for that was not yet given: but

it was upon that believing which was counted to him for righteousness; it was upon his trusting God, in his leaving his own country when God commanded him, <sup><8118></sup>Hebrews 11:8. Now, being by faith, it could not be by the law, which he proves by the opposition there is between them (v. 14, 15): *If those who are of the law be heirs; that is, those, and those only, and they by virtue of the law (the Jews did, and still do, boast that they are the rightful heirs of the world, because to them the law was given), then faith is made void; for, if it were requisite to an interest in the promise that there should be a perfect performance of the whole law, then the promise can never take its effect, nor is it to any purpose for us to depend upon it, since the way to life by perfect obedience to the law, and spotless sinless innocency, is wholly blocked up, and the law in itself opens no other way. This he proves, v. 15. The law worketh wrath* — wrath in us to God; it irritates and provokes that carnal mind which is enmity to God, as the damming up of a stream makes it swell — wrath in God against us. It works this, that is, it discovers it, or our breach of the law works it. Now it is certain that we can never expect the inheritance by a law that worketh wrath. How the law works wrath he shows very concisely in the latter part of the verse: *Where no law is there is no transgression*, an acknowledged maxim, which implies, Where there is a law there is transgression and that transgression is provoking, and so the law worketh wrath.

**3.** Why the promise was made to him by faith; for three reasons, v. 16.

**(1.)** *That it might be by grace*, that grace might have the honour of it; *by grace, and not by the law; by grace, and not of debt, nor of merit; that Grace, grace*, might be cried to every stone, especially to the top-stone, in this building. Faith hath particular reference to grace granting, as grace hath reference to faith receiving. *By grace*, and therefore *through faith*, <sup><4888></sup>Ephesians 2:8. For God will have every crown thrown at the feet of grace, free grace, and every song in heaven sung to that tune, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise.*

**(2.)** *That the promise might be sure.* The first covenant, being a covenant of works, was not sure: but, through man's failure, the benefits designed by it were cut off; and therefore, the more effectually to ascertain and ensure the conveyance of the new covenant, there is another way found out, *not by works* (were it so, the promise would not be sure, because of the continual frailty and infirmity of the flesh), *but by faith*, which receives all from Christ, and acts in a continual dependence upon him, as the great



trustee of our salvation, and in whose keeping it is safe. The covenant is therefore sure, because it is so well ordered in all things, <sup><4235></sup>2 Samuel 23:5.

**(3.)** *That it might be sure to all the seed.* If it had been by the law, it had been limited to the Jews, to whom pertained the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law (<sup><4104></sup>Romans 9:4); but therefore it was by faith that Gentiles as well as Jews might become interested in it, the spiritual as well as the natural seed of faithful Abraham. God would contrive the promise in such a way as might make it most extensive, to comprehend all true believers, that circumcision and uncircumcision might break no squares; and for this (v. 17) he refers us to <sup><4175></sup>Genesis 17:5, where the reason of the change of his name from *Abram* — a high father, to *Abraham* — the high father of a multitude, is thus rendered: *For a father of many nations have I made thee*; that is, all believers, both before and since the coming of Christ in the flesh, should take Abraham for their pattern, and call him *father*. The Jews say Abraham was the father of all proselytes to the Jewish religion. *Behold, he is the father of all the world, which are gathered under the wings of the Divine Majesty.* — Maimonides.

## <sup><4347></sup>ROMANS 4:17-22

### THE CASE OF ABRAHAM

Having observed when Abraham was justified by faith, and why, for the honour of Abraham and for example to us who call him father, the apostle here describes and commends the faith of Abraham, where observe,

**I.** Whom he believed: *God who quickeneth.* It is God himself that faith fastens upon: *other foundation can no man lay.* Now observe what in God Abraham's faith had an eye to — to that, certainly, which would be most likely to confirm his faith concerning the things promised: —

**1.** *God who quickeneth the dead.* It was promised that he should be the *father of many nations*, when he and his wife were now as good as dead (<sup><4311></sup>Hebrews 11:11, 12), and therefore he looks upon God as a God that could breathe life into dry bones. He that quickeneth the dead can do any thing, can give a child to Abraham when he is old, can bring the Gentiles,

who are *dead in trespasses and sins*, to a divine and spiritual life,

☞ Ephesians 2:1. Compare ☞ Ephesians 1:19, 20.

**2.** *Who calleth things which are not as though they were*; that is, creates all things by the word of his power, as in the beginning, ☞ Genesis 1:3; ☞ 2 Corinthians 4:6. The justification and salvation of sinners, the espousing of the Gentiles that had not been a people, were a gracious calling of things which are not as though they were, giving being to things that were not. This expresses the sovereignty of God and his absolute power and dominion, a mighty stay to faith when all other props sink and totter. It is the holy wisdom and policy of faith to fasten particularly on that in God which is accommodated to the difficulties wherewith it is to wrestle, and will most effectually answer the objections. It is faith indeed to build upon the all-sufficiency of God for the accomplishment of that which is impossible to anything but that all-sufficiency. Thus Abraham became *the father of many nations before him whom he believed*, that is, in the eye and account of God; or *like him whom he believed*; as God was a common Father, so was Abraham. It is by faith in God that we become accepted of him, and conformable to him.

**II.** How he believed. He here greatly magnifies the strength of Abraham's faith, in several expressions.

**1.** *Against hope, he believed in hope*, v. 18. There was a hope against him, a natural hope. All the arguments of sense, and reason, and experience, which in such cases usually beget and support hope, were against him; no second causes smiled upon him, nor in the least favoured his hope. But, against all those inducements to the contrary, he believed; for he had a hope for him: *He believed in hope*, which arose, as his faith did, from the consideration of God's all-sufficiency. *That he might become the father of many nations*. Therefore God, by his almighty grace, enabled him thus to believe against hope, that he might pass for a pattern of great and strong faith to all generations. It was fit that he who was to be the father of the faithful should have something more than ordinary in his faith — that in him faith should be set in its highest elevation, and so the endeavours of all succeeding believers be directed, raised, and quickened. Or this is mentioned as the matter of the promise that he believed; and he refers to ☞ Genesis 15:5, *So shall thy seed be*, as the stars of heaven, so innumerable, so illustrious. This was that which he believed, when it was counted to him for righteousness, v. 6. And it is observable that this

particular instance of his faith was *against hope*, against the surmises and suggestions of his unbelief. He had just before been concluding hardly that he should go childless, that one born in his house was his heir (v. 2, 3); and this unbelief was a foil to his faith, and bespeaks it a believing against hope.

**2.** *Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body*, v. 19.

Observe, His own body was now dead — become utterly unlikely to beget a child, though the new life and vigour that God gave him continued after Sarah was dead, witness his children by Keturah. When God intends some special blessing, some child of promise, for his people, he commonly puts a sentence of death upon the blessing itself, and upon all the ways that lead to it. Joseph must be enslaved and imprisoned before he be advanced. But Abraham did not consider this, *sy katenoes* — *he did not dwell in his thoughts upon it*. He said indeed, *Shall a child be born to him that is a hundred years old?* <sup>κ177</sup>Genesis 17:17. But that was the language of his admiration and his desire to be further satisfied, not of his doubting and distrust; his faith passed by that consideration, and thought of nothing but the faithfulness of the promise, with the contemplation whereof he was swallowed up, and this kept up his faith. *Being not weak in faith, he considered not*. It is mere weakness of faith that makes a man lie poring upon the difficulties and seeming impossibilities that lie in the way of a promise. Though it may seem to be the wisdom and policy of carnal reason, yet it is the weakness of faith, to look into the bottom of all the difficulties that arise against the promise.

**3.** *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief* (v. 20), and he therefore staggered not because he considered not the frowns and discouragements of second causes; *sy diekritis* — *he disputed not*; he did not hold any self-consultation about it, did not take time to consider whether he should close with it or no, did not hesitate nor stumble at it, but by a resolute and peremptory act of his soul, with a holy boldness, ventured all upon the promise. He took it not for a point that would admit of argument or debate, but presently determined it as a ruled case, did not at all hang in suspense about it: *he staggered not through unbelief*. Unbelief is at the bottom of all our staggerings at God's promises. It is not the promise that fails, but our faith that fails when we stagger.

**4.** *He was strong in faith, giving glory to God, enedynamothe* — *he was strengthened in faith, his faith got ground by exercise* — *crescit eundo*.

Though weak faith shall not be rejected, the bruised reed not broken, the smoking flax not quenched, yet strong faith shall be commended and honoured. The strength of his faith appeared in the victory it won over his fears. And hereby he gave glory to God; for, as unbelief dishonours God by making him a liar (<sup>619</sup>1 John 5:10), so faith honours God by setting to its seal that he is true, (<sup>403</sup>John 3:33. Abraham's faith gave God the glory of his wisdom, power, holiness, goodness, and especially of his faithfulness, resting upon the word that he had spoken. Among men we say, "He that trusts another, gives him credit, and honours him by taking his word;" thus Abraham gave glory to God by trusting him. We never hear our Lord Jesus commending any thing so much as great faith (<sup>400</sup>Matthew 8:10 and 15:28): therefore God gives honour to faith, great faith, because faith, great faith, gives honour to God.

**5.** He was *fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able to perform, **plerophoretheis*** — was carried on with the greatest confidence and assurance; it is a metaphor taken from ships that come into the harbour with full sail. Abraham saw the storms of doubts, and fears, and temptations likely to rise against the promise, upon which many a one would have shrunk back, and lain by for fairer days, and waited a smiling gale of sense and reason. But Abraham, having taken God for his pilot, and the promise for his card and compass, resolves to weather his point, and like a bold adventurer sets up all his sails, breaks through all the difficulties, regards neither winds nor clouds, but trusts to the strength of his bottom and the wisdom and faithfulness of his pilot, and bravely makes to the harbour, and comes home an unspeakable gainer. Such was his full persuasion, and it was built on the omnipotence of God: *He was able*. Our waverings rise mainly from our distrust of the divine power; and therefore to fix us it is requisite we believe not only that he is faithful, but that he is able, that hath promised. *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness*, v. 22. Because with such a confidence he ventured his all in the divine promise, God graciously accepted him, and not only answered, but out-did, his expectation. This way of glorifying God by a firm reliance on his bare promise was so very agreeable to God's design, and so very conducive to his honour, that he graciously accepted it as a righteousness, and justified him, though there was not that in the thing itself which could merit such an acceptance. This shows why faith is chosen to be the prime condition of our justification, because it is a grace that of all others gives glory to God.

## ROMANS 4:23-25

### THE CASE OF ABRAHAM

In the close of the chapter, he applies all to us; and, having abundantly proved that Abraham was justified by faith, he here concludes that his justification was to be the pattern or sampler of ours: *It was not written for his sake alone*. It was not intended only for an historical commendation of Abraham, or a relation of something peculiar to him (as some antipaedobaptists will needs understand that circumcision was a *seal of the righteousness of the faith*, v. 11, only to Abraham himself, and no other); no, the scripture did not intend hereby to describe some singular way of justification that belonged to Abraham as his prerogative. The accounts we have of the Old-Testament saints were not intended for histories only, barely to inform and divert us, but for precedents to direct us, for ensamples (<sup><del>1</del> 1 Corinthians 10:11) for *our learning*, <sup><del>15</del> Romans 15:4. And this particularly concerning Abraham was written *for us also*, to assure us what that righteousness is which God requireth and accepteth to our salvation, — for us also, that are man and vile, that come so far short of Abraham in privileges and performances, us Gentiles as well as the Jews, for the blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles through Christ, — for us on whom the ends of the world are come, as well as for the patriarchs; for the grace of God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. His application of it is but short. Only we may observe,</sup></sup>

**I.** Our common privilege; it shall be imputed to us, that is, righteousness shall. The gospel way of justification is by an imputed righteousness, *mellei logizesthai* — *it shall be imputed*; he uses a future verb, to signify the continuation of this mercy in the church, that as it is the same now so it will be while God has a church in the world, and there are any of the children of men to be justified; for there is a fountain opened that is inexhaustible.

**II.** Our common duty, the condition of this privilege, and that is believing. The proper object of this believing is a divine revelation. The revelation to Abraham was concerning a Christ to come; the revelation to us is concerning a Christ already come, which difference in the revelation does not alter the case. Abraham believed the power of God in raising up an Isaac from the dead womb of Sarah; we are to believe the same power

exerted in a higher instance, the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The resurrection of Isaac was in a figure (<sup><sup>S119></sup>Hebrews 11:19); the resurrection of Christ was real. Now we are to believe on him that raised up Christ; not only believe his power, that he could do it, but depend upon his grace in raising up Christ as our surety; so he explains it, v. 25, where we have a brief account of the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection, which are the two main hinges on which the door of salvation turns.

**1.** He was *delivered for our offences*. God the Father delivered him, he delivered up himself as a sacrifice for sin. He died indeed as a malefactor, because he died for sin; but it was not his own sin, but the sins of the people. He died to make atonement for our sins, to expiate our guilt, to satisfy divine justice.

**2.** He was *raised again for our justification*, for the perfecting and completing of our justification. By the merit of his death he paid our debt, in his resurrection he took out our acquittance. When he was buried he lay a prisoner in execution for our debt, which as a surety he had undertaken to pay; on the third day an angel was sent to roll away the stone, and so to discharge the prisoner, which was the greatest assurance possible that divine justice was satisfied, the debt paid, or else he would never have released the prisoner: and therefore the apostle puts a special emphasis on Christ's resurrection; it is Christ that died, *yea, rather that has risen again*, <sup><sup>R84></sup>Romans 8:34. So that upon the whole matter it is very evident that we are not justified by the merit of our own works, but by a fiducial obediential dependence upon Jesus Christ and his righteousness, as the condition on our part of our right to impunity and salvation, which was the truth that Paul in this and the foregoing chapter had been fixing as the great spring and foundation of all our comfort.