

## INVERTED PARALLELISM OF ROMANS 4:1–25

### Abraham's Faith in God's Promises, Credit to His Account in Heaven, and His Eternal Inheritance

Romans 4:1–25 is inverted parallelism (ABA' pattern): **A** Faith Is Credited as a Righteous Act (4:1–12); **B** this Righteous Act of Faith Is Rewarded with Inheriting the World (4:13–16); **A'** Faith Is Credited as a Righteous Act (4:17–25).

The center **B** is also inverted parallelism (ABB'A' pattern). "All the descendants . . . who are of the faith of Abraham" in the center **B** (16) correlates with "the one who . . . believes in Him" in **A** (4–5) and "those who believe in Him" in **A'** (24).

#### FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISE OF A SON AND MANY DESCENDANTS IS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM'S ACCOUNT AS RIGHTEOUSNESS

##### • APART FROM WORKS (4:1–8)

- A** Rom 4:1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?  
4:2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God.  
4:3 For what does the Scripture say? "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS" (RCL).  
4:4 Now to the one who works, his pay is not credited as a gift, but as an amount owed (RCL).  
4:5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness (RCL).  
4:6 just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works (RCL):  
4:7 "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED.  
4:8 "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."

##### • APART FROM CIRCUMCISION (4:9–12)

- 4:9 Is this blessing then upon the circumcised, or upon the uncircumcised also?  
For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS" (RCL).  
4:10 How then was it credited? While he was circumcised or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised (RCL);  
4:11 and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them (RCL),  
4:12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.

#### INHERITING THE WORLD IS THE REWARD PROMISED FOR ABRAHAM'S FAITH (4:13–16)

- B** Rom 4:13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of [by means of] faith [a result-means relationship],  
4:14 For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified;  
4:15 for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation.  
4:16 For this reason it [the promise of inheriting the world] was made on the basis of faith (RCL), that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

#### FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISES OF BEING THE FATHER OF MANY NATIONS (GEN 17:4–6), OF MANY DESCENDANTS (15:5), AND OF A SON (15:4; 17:15–22; 18:9–15) IS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM'S ACCOUNT AS RIGHTEOUSNESS (ROM 4:17–25)

- A'** Rom 4:17 (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.  
4:18 in hope against hope he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE."  
4:19 And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, Now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb;  
4:20 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God.  
4:21 and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.  
4:22 Therefore also IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS (RCL).  
4:23 Now not concerning him only [*di* + accusative] was it written that "IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM" (RCL),  
4:24 but also concerning us [*di*' + accusative], to whom it will be credited, to those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead (RCL),  
4:25 who was delivered up with reference to our transgressions [*dia* + accusative] and was raised with reference to our justification [*dia* + accusative] (RCL).

#### RIGHTEOUSNESS IS METONYMY FOR THE GIFTS (REWARDS) CREDITED TO HIS ACCOUNT

##### • RIGHTEOUSNESS IS CREDITED WITHOUT DOING GOOD WORKS

He found God's righteousness (3:22), justification (4:2), and righteous gifts (4:3) through faith. Abraham was justified (acquitted) not by works but by faith (implied in 4:2 from 3:19–31). Abraham believed *non-salvation* promises of a son and many descendants (Gen 15:4–6).  
*Application for Today: work receives payment or wages; faith receives gifts (implied). God credits righteousness to our accounts for believing non-salvation and salvation promises. A fortiori logic: If happy because guilt of sin is forgiven, how much more if penalty is forgiven? Psa 32:1–2 are not salvation but restoration to fellowship verses. David was happy (1–2) because his discipline was removed (3–4) after confessing his sin and being forgiven (5).*

##### • RIGHTEOUSNESS IS CREDITED WITHOUT BEING CIRCUMCISED

Both. As in 4:3, this is a *fortiori* logic from the lesser to the greater: If righteousness is credited for believing easier promises, how much more for believing harder soteriological promises? He was not circumcised when he believed the promise of Gen 15:4–6 and received credit. Abraham believed the promise of Gen 15:4–6 at age 85 and was circumcised at 99 (17:24).  
*Application for Today: God credits righteousness to all who believe His non-salvation and salvation promises. Abraham is the father of racial Jews (cf. John 8:53; Acts 7:2). He is also the father of all who believe (4:11) and walk in the footsteps of his faith (4:12).*

#### CAN'T INHERIT WORLD THROUGH OBEDIENCE, CIRCUMCISION, OR WORKS OF THE LAW

Paul introduces a stunning promise not in the OT that Abraham will inherit the world. "Righteousness of faith" is a genitive of means in which B (faith) produces A (righteousness). One way to make a promise worthless is to set impossible conditions for its fulfillment. Verses 14–15 are the dead center of the parallelism. Law brings violation and God's wrath. Faith (a decision) is compatible with grace (gifts).  
*Application for Today: all spiritual descendants are co-heirs of the world with Abraham. Abraham is the father of racial Jews and the spiritual father of all believers.*

#### POINT OF TURNING: PAUL ADDS TWO NEW PROMISES ABRAHAM BELIEVED (4:17–22)

**AND ELABORATES ON GOD CREDITING RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE CHURCH AGE (4:23–25)**  
The promise that he will be "the father of a multitude of nations" (Gen 17:4–6) and have a son (17:15–22) are believable because God has the power to raise the dead and to create *ex nihilo*. Though fulfillment seemed impossible, he believed these two new promises *in addition to* God's earlier promises of a son and as many descendants as the stars in the sky (15:4–6). Don't ignore reality. Think long and hard about impossible situations *without having doubts*. It was impossible for them to have a child; she was 90 and he was 100 (Gen 17:17). As he thought about the difficulties his faith grew stronger and he glorified God beforehand. He was fully convinced that God had the ability to keep His promises. So God credited more righteousness to Abraham's account for believing these two promises.  
*Application for Today: God credited righteousness to Abraham's account in heaven and also credits righteousness to our accounts for believing His non-salvation and salvation promises. A fortiori argument (3–24) of crediting righteousness for faith in non-salvation promises ends. Paul returns to the subject of justification by faith (4:25–5:21). Dia + accusative has the sense 'with reference to, about, concerning' in 4:23, 24, 25 (see Lampe, A Patristic Greek Lexicon II.4).*