

HEIRS OF THE PROMISE

How Justification by Faith Gains Us the World

Romans Series
PBC 2025

Text: Romans 4:13-17a

In the first half of chapter four, Paul highlights the great blessing that God has given to everyone who has been justified by faith, ***which should inspire unquenchable joy in us*** (4:1-12).

Often, **our justification fails to bring us joy** because we view justification by faith mainly as a doctrine we must believe, rather than a truth we must experience.

However, there is a second danger Paul discusses in 4:13-25: *because we haven't seen the full extent of the blessing that comes when we believe, **our justification does not give us hope to sustain us in this life.***

Paul stresses the promise God made to Abraham when he believed, because he wants his readers to understand that when they are justified, ***they also become heirs of this same promise God made to Abraham.***

Paul's point is that ***the promise changes everything for believers.*** We might face poverty and hardship on earth, but that poverty is temporary, and our suffering is momentary. One day, we will inherit the earth and rule over it with King Jesus!

The truth of this promise will ***empower us to live confidently, joyfully, and purposefully as heirs of the world,*** not as impoverished spiritual paupers who have no idea of the immense wealth that is ours!

I. What does it mean to be an “heir of the world?” (4:13)

*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.*

A. The nature of the promise – an irrevocable covenant.

A covenant is a formal agreement between two parties that is official, binding, and deeply relational.

B. The content of the promise – a guaranteed future inheritance

1. **A Seed** – a son and a **royal posterity** that would become a great nation of royal rulers (Gen 12:1-3; Gen 17:1-14; Gen 22:15-18) who would one day rule the earth with Abraham’s greater Son!
2. **A Land** – a **royal kingdom**, better than Ur, whose builder and maker is God. (Gen 15:12-21; Gen 22:15-18) This kingdom would be established by God, marked by righteousness, flavored by peace, and would never be destroyed!
3. **A Blessing** – a **royal prerogative** from God to mediate blessing to the nations as their benevolent rulers. (Gen 12:1-3; Gen 22:15-18)

C. The future fullness of the promise – an eternal kingdom on earth

1. A city/temple whose builder and maker is God (Rev 21-22)
2. A kingdom that will fill the earth, be marked by righteousness and peace, and will stand forever! (Isaiah 11; Daniel 2, 7)
3. A Messiah King who redeemed us and now rules with us over the nations in a kingdom filled with blessing for the nations and glory and honor for King Jesus! (2 Timothy 2:11-13)

Note: This kingdom is global in scope, righteous in character, terrestrial in location, and instructive in mission.

D. The present enjoyment of the promise – blessing, power, and mission

1. We have been given every blessing there is to get from the Spirit in the spiritual realm in which we now live! (Eph 1:3)

***Ephesians 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,*

2. We have been given all things by God through Christ – everything that now belongs to him, also belongs to us! (1 Cor 3:22-23)
1 Cor 3:22-23 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours,²³ and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.
3. We have been made Royal Priests who belong to God and whose mission is to proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light! (1 Pet 2:9-10)
1 Peter 2:9-10 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

So even though we don't fully enjoy these blessings now, they are fully ours! And one day they will be physically present in our lives.

II. On what basis does “inheriting the world” happen and why? (4:14-16)

*For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the **promise** is void.¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the **promise** may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring*

Paul's argument here is this: If justification is obtained by faith, then so are all the benefits that come from that justification! Including being made an heir of the promise.

A. ***How the Promise is Obtained – through the righteousness of faith!***

*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. For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the **promise** is void.¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.*

- Not by the Law because the Law brings wrath.
- But by the righteousness that comes from faith, because it brings grace and mercy.

B. ***Why God designed it this way: so that the promise would rest on His mercy (grace) rather than Abraham's merit (4:16).***

*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,*

III. Who gets this amazing inheritance and how? (4:16)

*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,*

- To receive Abraham's inheritance, you need to be related to him! You must be a descendant who qualifies as an heir.
- Paul does not highlight sharing Abraham's circumcision as what qualifies someone to inherit the promise. Instead, he emphasizes Abraham's faith! In other words, only those who share Abraham's faith will inherit the promise – whether Jew or Gentile.
- And when you and I believe in God like Abraham did, not only is righteousness credited to us, but we also become heirs of an enormous inheritance (the world) that God promises to us!

IV. How do we know the promise will be fulfilled? (4:17)

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.

- ***How do we know that the promise will come true in the end?***
- Paul points us to three things that gave Abraham confidence in the promise and that will do the same for us: ***God is good at making the impossible possible!***

A. The promise is recorded in Scripture – "as it is written"

B. The promise was made in Person in the context of a personal relationship – *"in the presence of the God in whom he believed"*

C. The promise rests on God's power, not just on His mercy – *"I have made you the father of many nations"*

Two realities about God that make the impossible possible!

1. The God of Abraham brings to life what is dead! (v. 17)
2. The God of Abraham calls into existence things that don't yet exist! (v. 17)

Conclusion: How should we live as “heirs of the world”?

*1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be **steadfast, immovable, always abounding** in the work of the Lord, **knowing** that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

- We should be steadfast in our faith – strong/firm in our belief!
- We should be immovable in our joyful confidence – unwavering!
- We should be fervent in our labor and abounding in our effort in accomplishing the mission of the gospel – actively engaged!
- We should be confident that using our lives in this way is not empty and useless, but rather abundantly fruitful in both this life and the next.