

Romans #17

Four times in this immediate context of Romans 4:13-16, the word "for" (because) is found, verses 13, 14, 15, 16. These repeated appearances show that a conclusion has been reached based upon an earlier conclusion which was reached. These conclusions find their base in Paul's quotation that Abraham "*believed God and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.*" As such, Abraham is the father of both them who are circumcised and them who are not (Rom. 4:11f).

The first "for" in the text reads, "*For not through the law was the promise to Abraham or his seed that he should be heir of the world*" (Rom. 4:12). The writer shows that the promise was given to Abraham before either the law or circumcision was revealed and that already it had been said, "*And Abraham believed God and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness*" (Gen. 15:6).

The second "for" follows Romans 4:13 and reads, "*For if they that are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is made of none effect*" (Rom. 4:14). The writer labored diligently in an earlier chapter to show how none were made righteous by the law but that if such is now the case, then being justified by grace has been invalidated: God will not take anything into account in man's justification aside from perfect obedience.

Now, if that were true, the apostle continued that the promise is made of none effect. To explain why that would be true elicits his third "for." "*For the law worketh wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there transgression*" (Rom. 4:15). The promise is made of "none effect," valueless, if inheritance is of the law, for the law worketh wrath. The "wrath" the law worketh is spiritual death for "*the wages of sin is death*" (Rom. 6:23). And, upon whom would this "wrath" fall? It would fall upon all for "*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:23). Thus, rather than all nations be blessed in Abraham's seed, all nations would be cursed, that is, if the blessing to all nations came through the law. Still, the writer showed that "*where there is no law, neither is there transgression.*"

Some might ponder "*if sin is not imputed when there is not law*" and "*where there is no law, neither is there transgression,*" why would God give law when transgression and sin, and ultimately death, would result from the revelation of law?" Law was given for man's benefit. Were there no law, chaos would reign supreme. Paul told Timothy, "*The law is not made for a*

righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners” (1 Tim. 1:9a). Galatians were told, *“What then is the law? It was added because of transgression till the seed should come”* (Gal. 3:19). In addition to this, it must be acknowledged there are things which with God are inherently right and wrong and the very nature of them demands they be revealed.

Finally, Paul gives his fourth “for.” *“For this cause it is of faith, that it may be according to grace; to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed”* (Rom. 4:16). The “it” of which Paul wrote is attaining the blessing promised through Abraham’s seed, the blessing of righteousness being pronounced. It is of faith that it might be of grace, that the reward might not be of debt, but of grace. Such is sure to all the seed because forgiveness is possible by grace through faith: the law provided no full forgiveness!

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