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Judgment upon Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Hazor and Kedar, and Elam. Abraham, the father of the circumcised and the uncircumcised faithful.

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

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Transcript

Jeremiah chapter 49, concerning the Ammonites, thus says the Lord. Wail, O Heshbon, for Ai is laid waste. Cry out, O daughters of Rabbah.

Put on sackcloth, lament, and run to and fro among the hedges, for Milcom shall go into exile with his priests and his officials. Why do you boast of your valleys, O faithless daughter, who trusted in her treasures, saying, Who will come against me? Behold, I will bring terror upon you, declares the Lord God of hosts, from all who are around you, and you shall be driven out, every man straight before him, with none to gather the fugitives. But afterward I will restore the fortunes of the Ammonites, declares the Lord.

Concerning Edom, thus says the Lord of hosts, Is wisdom no more in Teman? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom vanished? Flee, turn back, dwell in the depths, O inhabitants of Dedan. For I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the

time when I punish him. If grape-gatherers come to you, would they not leave gleanings? If thieves came by night, would they not destroy only enough for themselves? But I have stripped Esau bare, I have uncovered his hiding places, and he is not able to conceal himself.

His children are destroyed, and his brothers, and his neighbours, and he is no more. Leave your fatherless children, I will keep them alive, and let your widows trust in me. For thus says the Lord, if those who did not deserve to drink the cup must drink it, will you go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, but you must drink.

For I have sworn by myself, declares the Lord, that Bosra shall become a horror, a taunt, a waste, and a curse, and all her cities shall be perpetual wastes. I have heard a message from the Lord, and an envoy has been sent among the nations. Gather yourselves together and come against her, and rise up for battle.

For behold, I will make you small among the nations, despised among mankind. The horror you inspire has deceived you, and the pride of your heart, you who live in the clefts of the rock, who hold the height of the hill. Though you make your nest as high as the eagles, I will bring you down from there, declares the Lord.

Edom shall become a horror, everyone who passes by it will be horrified, and will hiss because of all its disasters. As when Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring cities were overthrown, says the Lord, no man shall dwell there, no man shall sojourn in her. Behold, like a lion coming up from the jungle of the Jordan against a perennial pasture, I will suddenly make him run away from her, and I will appoint over her whomever I choose.

For who is like me? Who will summon me? What shepherd can stand before me? Therefore hear the plan that the Lord has made against Edom, and the purposes that he has formed against the inhabitants of Timan. Even the little ones of the flock shall be dragged away, surely their fold shall be appalled at their fate. At the sound of their fold the earth shall tremble, the sound of their cry shall be heard at the Red Sea.

Behold, one shall mount up and fly swiftly like an eagle, and spread his wings against Bosra, and the heart of the warriors of Edom shall be in that day like the heart of a woman in her birth pains. Concerning Damascus, Hamath and Arpad are confounded, for they have heard bad news, they melt in fear, they are troubled like the sea that cannot be quiet. Damascus has become feeble, she turned to flee, and panic seized her, anguish and sorrows have taken hold of her, as of a woman in labour.

How is the famous city not forsaken, the city of my joy? Therefore her young men shall fall in her squares, and all her soldiers shall be destroyed in that day, declares the Lord of hosts. And I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall devour the strongholds of Ben-Hadad. Concerning Kedar and the kingdoms of Hazor that

Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon struck down.

Thus says the Lord, rise up, advance against Kedar, destroy the people of the east, their tents and their flocks shall be taken, their curtains and all their goods, their camels shall be led away from them, and men shall cry to them, terror on every side. Flee, wander far away, dwell in the depths, O inhabitants of Hazor, declares the Lord. For Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has made a plan against you, and formed a purpose against you.

Rise up, advance against a nation at ease, that dwells securely, declares the Lord, that has no gates or bars, that dwells alone, their camels shall become plunder, the herds of livestock a spoil. I will scatter to every wind those who cut the corners of their hair, and I will bring their calamity from every side of them, declares the Lord. Hazor shall become a haunt of jackals, an everlasting waste, no man shall dwell there, no man shall sojourn in her.

The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning Elam, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah. Thus says the Lord of hosts, behold I will break the bow of Elam, the mainstay of their might, and I will bring upon Elam the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and I will scatter them to all those winds, and there shall be no nation to which those driven out of Elam shall not come. I will terrify Elam before their enemies, and before those who seek their life, I will bring disaster upon them, my fierce anger, declares the Lord.

I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them, and I will set my throne in Elam, and destroy their king and officials, declares the Lord. But in the latter days I will restore the fortunes of Elam, declares the Lord. After declaring the Lord's judgement upon the Egyptians, the Philistines and Moab, in Jeremiah chapter 49 we move to Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar and Elam.

Ammon's position after Moab is a natural one as the two nations were related through Lot. Both of the nations arose from incestuous relations between Lot and his daughters. Ammon was a Transjordanian tribe living to the north of Moab in land that was disputed at various points in Israel's history.

Much of their region was under the control of Israel's Transjordanian tribes at key points in their history. Disputes over the ownership of the land can be seen in the story of Jephthah in Judges chapter 11. King David had also famously besieged Rabbah in 2 Samuel and subjugated the Ammonites.

During the reign of Jehoiakim, the Ammonites would assist the Babylonians in harassing Judah. 2 Kings chapter 24 verse 2 And the Lord sent against him bands of the Chaldeans and bands of the Syrians and bands of the Moabites and bands of the Ammonites and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by

his servants the prophets. In Jeremiah chapter 27 verse 3 we see that the Ammonites were one of the nations plotting rebellion against Babylon in 594 BC.

Baalist, king of the Ammonites, had also supported Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, against Gedaliah, the governor of Judah. The prophecy concerning the Ammonites begins by speaking about this disputed territory. They had dispossessed, in the name of their god Milcom, land that formerly belonged to the tribe of Gad.

In a rhetorical question, the Lord asked whether Israel has no sons or no heirs that this land should be given into the hand of Milcom and his people. Although they had dispossessed Gad, the time would come when they would be dispossessed. Rather, their capital would become a desolate mound.

Its associated villages would be burned down. And later in time, Israel would dispossess the Ammonites. We see this fulfilled, I believe, in 1 Maccabees chapter 5 verses 6-8.

Then he marched against the land of Ammon, where he met a large and powerful army under the command of a man named Timothy. Judas won many battles against them and finally defeated them. He captured Jazar and its surrounding villages and then returned to Judea.

A similar judgment upon Ammon can be read in Ezekiel chapter 25 verses 1-7. Therefore, behold, I am handing you over to the people of the east for a possession, and they shall set their encampments against you and make their dwellings in your midst. They shall eat your fruit and they shall drink your milk.

I will make, rather, a pasture for camels and Ammon a fold for flocks. Then you will know that I am the Lord. For thus says the Lord God, because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the malice within your soul against the land of Israel.

Therefore, behold, I have stretched out my hand against you and will hand you over as plunder to the nations. And I will cut you off from the peoples and will make you perish out of all the countries. I will destroy you.

Then you will know that I am the Lord. In Ezekiel, Ammon is being judged for their response to the destruction of Judah and the way that at that point they treated Judah as an object of derision and as prey. The prophecy here in Jeremiah likely dates from before the fall of Jerusalem.

But it speaks of a coming judgment upon the land of Ammon, a judgment upon their people, but also upon their priests and the officials and the God who is over them all, Milcom. Like its brother Moab, Ammon is judged in part on account of its pride, its self-confidence, its boasting in its valleys and its security, not believing that anyone could come against it and truly threaten it. Yet the Lord will bring them to account.

This likely came to pass in 582 BC. However, the time would come when Ammon would be restored. Edom comes next.

The land of Edom went from the river Zered in the north to the Gulf of Aqaba in the south, but it also included the land of Seir. It was below Judah and Moab. It had the Arabah Valley on the west and the Syrian Arabian Desert on the east.

However, by this point it seemed to have extended to the southeast, down into what is now Saudi Arabia, in Dedan. Later, the Edomites would become known as Idumaeans, and after the Nabataeans took over their original territory, they largely lived in the southern region of Judah. Edom was associated with Esau, who took over the region from the Horites.

As Edom is associated with Esau, Jacob's brother, there are twin dynamics between Israel and Edom, something that we see particularly in Genesis chapter 36. Edom had been involved in the plot against Babylon in 594 BC. Edom was associated with wisdom, and it's quite likely that a lot of the wisdom literature had some connections with the land of Edom.

Many have suggested that the Book of Job has an Edomite provenance, and various passages in the Book of Proverbs too. Timan, which is mentioned at the beginning of the oracle against Edom here, was a northeastern region of Edom, whose capital was Basra. Timan was the firstborn son of Esau's firstborn son.

In the Book of Job, we have Eliphaz the Timanite. After the downfall of Jerusalem, the Edomites prayed upon Judah, rejoicing in Judah's demise. We have reference to this in Lamentations chapter 4 verse 21.

Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, you who dwell in the land of Uz. But to you also the cup shall pass, you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare. An extended judgment upon Edom is found in the Book of Obadiah in verses 5 to 16.

It uses very similar imagery to the Book of Jeremiah, but it seems to be addressed to a slightly later period. You have no understanding. You were like one of them.

For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you. Your deeds shall return on your own head.

For as you have drunk on my holy mountain, so all the nations shall drink continually. They shall drink and swallow, and shall be as though they had never been. Obadiah verses 1 to 4 are also largely similar to verses 14 to 16 of this chapter in Jeremiah.

Edom later seems to have been dispossessed by Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, in the mid-6th century. We can read a description of the aftermath of this destruction in Malachi chapter 1 verses 2 to 5. I have loved you, says the Lord. But you say, How have

you loved us? Is not Esau Jacob's brother? declares the Lord.

Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country, and left his heritage to jackals of the desert. If Edom says, We are shattered, but we will rebuild the ruins, the Lord of hosts says, They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called the wicked country, and the people with whom the Lord is angry forever.

Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, Great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel. Edom is going to be stripped clean and laid bare. It will have no hiding place from the Lord's judgment.

There will be nothing left behind. However, as the Edomites are killed, the Lord tells them in a very arresting statement to leave their fatherless children to him. He will preserve them, and that their widows should trust in him.

The Edomite men will perish for their sins, but he will preserve their women and children. Edom must not think it unjust that it is suffering such judgment. Nations that have not sinned in the way that Edom has are having to drink the cup of the Lord's judgment, and so Edom has no grounds for any complaint.

Once again, Edom is a proud nation that is going to be brought low. It thinks itself great and secure, but it will be made a wasteland. The Lord compares himself to a lion coming out of a thick forest to prey upon the animals of the pastureland.

The shepherds, the kings of Edom, will be powerless to protect their flock, the people committed to their charge. The judgment declared here over Edom is declared in pretty much the same form over Babylon in chapter 50 verses 44-46, details being changed to make it appropriate to the object of the oracle. The Lord has made against Babylon and the purposes that he has formed against the land of the Chaldeans.

Surely the little ones of their flock shall be dragged away. Surely their foes shall be appalled at their fate. At the sound of the capture of Babylon, the earth shall tremble, and her cry shall be heard among the nations.

The next judgment is upon Damascus, the chief city of the Syrians. The Syrians, or the Arameans, were the main threat to the northern kingdom of Israel until the rise of the Assyrians. They were an Assyrian province then, before being taken over by the Babylonians.

Carthage and Hamath were both important territories during this period, strategic for the Assyrians, the Egyptians and the Babylonians, the three major powers that were competing for dominance of that region from the 8th to the 6th century BC. This prophecy might be dated from around 605 BC, when Babylon defeated the Egyptians at Carthage. Next there are judgments upon Kedar and Hazor, northern Arabian people, here called people of the east.

The fulfillment of these prophecies likely occurred around 599 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar attacked the Arabs in the desert. These peoples controlled large numbers of cattle, many of them gained from plundering other peoples. But now they, who have ravaged many other peoples over their history, will be preyed upon themselves.

Their camels will become plunder, and their herds of livestock a spoil. They are advised to flee and to find some place to hide themselves. The final word of this chapter is addressed to the Elamites.

The Elamites were one of the descendants of Shem in the Table of Nations in Genesis chapter 10, that also mentioned in chapter 14, as King Chedulehoma of Elam and the kings who were with him fought against Abram and his allies. Elam was situated to the east of the Tigris in modern day Iran. The Elamites and the Medes lived in what would later become Persia.

The attack upon the Elamites that's being prophesied here probably occurred in 596-595 BC. Later on, in Acts chapter 2, in the list of the peoples present on the day of Pentecost, we have another reference to Elamites. Walter Brueggemann draws attention to the series of verbs that express the Lord's purpose here.

I will break, I will bring, I will scatter, I will terrify, I will bring evil, I will send, I will set. Elam will be scattered, refugees from the nation being dispersed to all different parts of the world. Throughout, the Lord underlines the fact that He is the one that is bringing this judgment upon them, and when He has consumed them, He will set His throne in Elam.

The destruction of Elam will be a demonstration of His sovereignty. However, as in the case of Egypt, Moab and Ammon, there will be a mitigation of Elam's judgment. The time will come in the latter days when Elam's fortunes will be restored.

A question to consider, the prophecies of these chapters would mostly be delivered to a Judahite audience. Beyond mere prediction, what lessons could the people in Judah gain from the judgments declared upon their neighbors? Romans chapter 4 Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works. Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.

How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised, but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

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. For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

That is why it depends on faith, 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. 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. In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations.

As he had been told, so shall your offspring be. He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead, since he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

That is why his faith was counted to him as righteousness. But the words it was counted to him were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also, it will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. In Romans chapter 4 Paul turns to the example and the character of Abraham.

There has been some debate in the last couple of decades about the translation and meaning of the opening statement of Romans chapter 4. Richard Hayes, N.T. Wright, Stanley Stowers, Douglas Campbell and a number of others have argued for translations along the lines of What then shall we say? Have we found Abraham to be our forefather or to become our forefather according to the flesh? And there are various suggestions which are all slightly different. They have in common though their emphasis upon the character of Abraham's paternity, whether that be considered as his paternity of the Jews, that the Jews have discovered Abraham to be their forefather according to the flesh, or have not as the case may be, or of believing Gentiles, or some have considered it as a reference to the way in which he obtained paternity. Did Abraham become our forefather through the flesh, through works and this sort of thing? Typically the verse has been taken along the lines in which it is interpreted in the ESV.

What then shall we say was gained by Abraham our forefather according to the flesh? Or maybe, what then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found in this matter? In this way of phrasing it there may be an allusion to the Old Testament expression, so and so found favour in the eyes of the Lord. The strength of the more recently proposed readings is found in the way that they frame the chapter less as principally an exploration of the question of how individuals are saved, with

Abraham as a selected example from the Old Testament, and much more as an investigation of the character of the family of Abraham. Abraham isn't just a typical believer, but he is the father of the family of the people of God.

Romans 4 then is much more concerned with the question of the shape and the constitution of this family than it is with questions of personal salvation abstracted from that. Abraham is indeed an example of faith, but for Paul he is a very great deal more than this. However, there is no need to play these things off against each other.

For Paul's argument, Abraham is both father of the faithful and an example of faith, and he is the latter precisely because he is the former. As exemplar of faith, he is especially significant because he is the father of the faithful, and the principle of like father like son applies. I'm not persuaded of the more recently proposed readings, although I do appreciate the way that they make the reader more attentive to the fact that Abraham's importance to Paul's argument is not as a random example of a man of faith in the Old Testament, but as the father of the family of the people of God.

The works of the law are things that chiefly mark out Jews from Gentiles, things like circumcision and the dietary requirements. However, Paul's concern is not restricted to things like circumcision. He is concerned about anything that would suggest that Abraham or anyone else receives the gifts of God's grace on the basis of something about them.

Although it would come under the same strictures and condemnation, Paul's concern probably is not about people trying to earn their salvation. What he is challenging seems to be more subtle than that. It may be instructive to reflect upon Paul's enumeration of the things that marked him out as a Jew in Philippians 3, verses 4-6.

If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless. We should observe that many of the things that Paul lists here aren't about anything that Paul himself did.

Rather, they concern Paul's Jewish status and ancestry. These are things that he once believed set him apart from Gentiles as an especially fitting recipient of God's grace. The pre-conversion Paul, like Jews of that time more generally, could have spoken at length about the greatness of God's grace.

It wasn't that they lacked a theology of divine grace, believing that salvation was to be earned or merited. Rather, it was because they believed that God's grace was somehow more appropriately given to certain persons. God is indeed profoundly gracious, but there was something about Abraham that made him a fitting recipient of grace.

Being an observant Jew does not earn you God's grace, but it does mark you out from Gentiles, tax collectors, sinners, and the rest, as someone to whom God's grace will more appropriately come. We should also note, looking at ourselves, that most of our claims about our superiority and worth, our beliefs that we are somehow greater than or marked out from others, are based as much upon unearned factors of identity, rather than things that we have done. It may be our family, it may be our class, our nationality, our wealthy background, our race, our neighborhood, our physical appearance, or something else like that.

All of these things can sustain a sense of entitlement, even to things that we would readily acknowledge to be gracious gifts. Such things can also lead to some sense of greater entitlement to God's grace than others, to a belief that we are set apart from others by virtue of some factor of our identity. However, Paul rules out the possibility of any such boast before God.

God's grace is not received according to anything that marks us out from others. On the contrary, it is received entirely apart from any worth in the recipient. We all stand on the same level ground of utter unworthiness before God.

Paul turns to the scripture itself to substantiate his point. He goes back to Genesis chapter 15, where God makes a covenant with Abraham and promises him a multitude of offspring. In verse 6 of that chapter, we are told that Abraham believed God and was considered to be in good standing with God on that basis, as one who believed God's promise.

He then proceeds to unpack a term that introduces Genesis chapter 15, where God announces that Abraham's reward shall be very great. Now the term reward can be used in the sense of pay, but Paul shows that such a meaning cannot be sustained in this instance. Such pay is received as the earned recompense for the work that someone has undertaken.

It is not a gift, but something to which the worker has a claim. Yet the person who has done nothing to earn pay through labour, but simply believes in the one who justifies the ungodly, by the very faith by which he believes the promise of God, he is reckoned to be in right standing with God. The whole logic of work and reward breaks down.

God simply does not operate on such a basis when considering or declaring people to be in good standing with him. The expression, him who justifies the ungodly, here is an astonishing one. We should recall texts like Exodus chapter 23 verse 7, I will not acquit the wicked.

The claim that God justifies the ungodly, that he vindicates unrighteous persons, or declares them to be in good standing with himself, is nothing short of scandalous. Although part of the meaning of the term ungodly might be a reference to those outside

of the covenant of Israel, that simply cannot be the entire meaning, as we see from what follows. Paul now brings forward another witness, King David.

In Psalm 32 verses 1-2, David writes as one, whose lawless deeds are forgiven. The Lord does not count David's genuine lawlessness against him, but graciously considers him to be someone in good standing with himself. David had violated the law.

The law gave him no standing for an appeal before God, because the law clearly stood in condemnation over him. He acknowledged himself that his deeds were lawless. David's standing before God boiled down to the sheer grace of God in not counting his sin against him.

He was justified apart from works, declared to be in good standing with God apart from any worth on his part. Paul looks more closely at the example of Abraham, paying a special attention to the chronology. The reckoning righteous of Abraham that Paul has referenced, God's reckoning Abraham to be in good standing with himself, occurred back in Genesis chapter 15.

However, Abraham did not receive the sign of circumcision until chapter 17. This suggests that circumcision was never the basis of Abraham's good standing with God. Rather, circumcision referenced something more basic.

Abraham already had good standing with God, by the faith through which he received the gracious promise of God given to him apart from worth. Circumcision functioned as a seal of that standing, a standing that he already enjoyed by faith. It was like the ring that symbolizes and seals a couple's loving union.

It isn't the basis for the loving union, but is a sign and a seal of it. This foundational narrative of Israel actually undercuts supposed Jewish exceptionalism in relationship to God. The Abraham of Genesis 15 is actually the paradigm of the Gentile believer, more than the Jewish believer, although the Abraham of Genesis 17, who is a man of faith marked out by circumcision, is the paradigm of the Jewish believer.

And so Abraham stands for both the Jewish and the Gentile parts of his family. Paul now develops this point. Abraham was promised that all peoples would be blessed through him, that he would be the heir of the world.

However, this could never be fulfilled within the Jewish exclusivism of the bounds of the law. Indeed, if things had happened that way, it would have nullified the promise originally given to Abraham. It would have made the blessing exclusive to one people, confining the riches of God intended for the entire world to a single nation.

It would also have given Jews a ground for boasting in their worth over other peoples. What is more, the law is powerless to bring about the promise. Even worse, the law in many respects exacerbates the problem.

By placing a lot of commandments before Israel, commandments which they broke, it served to multiply transgressions of which other peoples outside of the law weren't guilty. Rather than granting Israel a special good standing with the Lord, the law actually had the opposite effect. It singled them out for particular judgment on account of their closeness to him.

As the Lord declares to Israel in Amos chapter 3 verse 2, You only have I known of all the families of the earth. Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. The law clearly can't be the basis upon which the promise is fulfilled, not merely because of its exclusionary character, but also because of its wrath-bringing character.

For this reason then, faith must be the basis, because it is faith that appropriately corresponds to promise, which is of grace, guaranteeing the blessing to all of its designed recipients, all of those circumcised or uncircumcised who share the faith of believing Abraham. The means by which the promise is put into effect is by God's giving of life to the dead, raising up belief in Israel, and calling into existence things that are nonexistent, making Gentiles, who were formerly not a people, members of the people of God. Once again Abraham is an example of this.

The specific promise that Abraham believed concerned God's raising up of seed for him. However he was old and his body was dead, as far as fleshly fruitfulness might be considered. More particularly Sarah's womb was barren.

Yet faced with this situation he was steadfast in faith in God's promise and did not waver. He was confident that God would fulfil his word. It was precisely God's power and promise to act in the situation of Abraham's utter powerlessness and incapacity that he trusted in, and it was by this trust that he enjoyed good standing with God.

We should observe the way that Paul expresses all of this. He has described Abraham's faith in the Lord's promise of a son in a way that strongly invites the reader's recognition that Abraham's faith is precisely a resurrection faith. God will raise up the promised seed from the deadness of Sarah's womb and Abraham's body.

In the type of the raising up of the son from the deadness of the womb, Abraham might also be seen to be believing, not only in the God who would raise Jesus from the dead, but also, under a figure, in the resurrection itself. Moving into his conclusion, Paul presses the analogy between our father Abraham's resurrection faith and our faith in the resurrected Lord, Abraham's promised seed. Scripture records that Abraham's faith was counted to him as good standing or righteousness with God.

Paul claims that this statement wasn't just written for Abraham's sake alone. Paul might be saying more than just that Abraham is an example of faith to all of us and that we will also be accounted righteous as we show the same sort of faith. He's definitely not saying less than this.

Rather, Paul might be implying that Abraham, as the father of the faithful, enjoyed a graciously given standing before God by faith and that Abraham's standing is one that all of his children participate in. Children who are distinguished by the fact that, whether they are circumcised or uncircumcised, they exhibit the likeness of their father Abraham, walking by faith and enjoying Abraham's blessing with him. The chapter ends with the statement that Jesus our Lord was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

We might, throughout this chapter, have wondered how God could be just and still not count people's trespasses against them and how God's grace, given entirely without respect to the worth of its recipients, might itself be justified. In a deeply pregnant statement, which will be partially unpacked in the coming chapters, we discover that it is through Christ that this occurs. Abraham's resurrection faith was a faith in God's power to act to bring about his promise in the deadness of his own immediate situation.

Our faith is in the God who raised Jesus from the dead. However, if Abraham's example applies to us, his children, our faith isn't just in the fact of the resurrection of Christ in the 1st century AD, but also in the power of the resurrecting God graciously acting on the basis of his son's work in the deadness of our own situations. A question to consider.

How might we deepen our sense of our being children of Abraham? What might we gain from a greater awareness of this fact?