

THE BOOK OF ROMANS
"God Quickens Dead"
Romans 4:17-19

May 19, 1985

INTRODUCTION

1. The return to the main subject of earlier verses (vv. 11, 12) is given at the end of v. 16. It is the third time Abraham is given the description of "father of us all."
2. Abraham's fatherhood focuses on faith, a vital subject of this fourth chapter. What Paul says about it is in total harmony with O.T. Scripture (v. 17a). Scripture teaches: a) Abraham was justified by faith. b) Abraham was justified in uncircumcision (before any rite). c) Abraham and his spiritual seed are heirs of the world. Paul's doctrine is not in conflict with the Jew's Bible.
3. Now, a new turn is given. What kind of a God is this in Whom Abraham believed? He is described:-
NOTE: Before the description, see that Paul shows Abraham as a father of faith in God's estimation. "Before" (v. 17a) means "right in front of" (cf. Mk 11:12).

1. GOD MAKES ALIVE v. 17

The verb here is of two parts: "make" and "live." This is God's creative power. A living proof of this is Isaac. It is a thrilling example of God's activity. Consider:-

a. Abraham's call

This name means "father of many," yet he was father of none. At 70, he was given a powerful vision to leave his homeland (Acts 7:2).

b. Abraham's sin

The whole Hagar episode is open to the tent-community. Ishmael's birth at Abram's 86th year was fleshly and not of God (cf. Gen. 17:24-25).

c. Abram's name-change

Abraham means "father of a multitude" (Gen. 17:1-5). This seemed foolish, but God (Gen. 15-19; 21:1-8). It was all God's way of making alive.

2. GOD CALLS REALITY v. 17

The thought here is that God calls non-existent things as though they were existent. This is a basic tenet of faith (cf. Heb. 11:1). This includes:

a. Seeing the unseen

What cannot be seen by men, God accounts as real and definitive. A canoe cannot see what an airplane

observes. ●o with God. It is an honor for God, but dishonor for men.

b. Belief in a covenant.

God promised Abraham the land (Gen. 12:1).

At the border, he promised again (Gen. 12:7). Further promised (Gen. 15:1-21). God saw all this as a reality. It is yet to come.

c. Promises and possessions sure

All the promises, possessions, etc. of God to present-day believers are sure. Why? Because God counts them done now (cf. Rom. 8:30). The non-existent is counted as existent. Only God can do this!

3. GOD PROVIDES HOPE v. 18

a. For belief

Abraham's faith rested upon hope, but was also against external hope. God's promise awakened such supernatural hope. He knew He was dealing with God Who brings life out of death (cf. creation, salvation, resurrection, restoration of Israel, etc.).

b. For purpose

This sort of hope relates to Abraham being "father of many nations." This was God's eternal purpose.

c. For promise

God's Word stood behind the hope. This was assurance from God Himself.

CONCLUSION

Satan hates an active faith in a believer's heart. He opposes it with all His power. Abraham stands as the greatest human character in the Bible to declare God's exaltation of active faith. So be it for you and me.