

Romans 4:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

Analysis

Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

Paul states his conclusion: dia touto ek pisteōs (διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ πίστεως, "therefore from faith"), hina kata charin (ἵνα κατὰ χάριν, "in order that according to grace"). Faith and grace are correlative—faith is the receiving mode for the giving mode of grace. The purpose clause emphasizes security: eis to einai bebaian tēn epaggelia (εἰς τὸ εἶναι βεβαίαν τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν, "in order that the promise might be certain/firm/sure").

The promise's certainty depends on it being panti tō spermati (παντὶ τῷ σπέρματι, "to all the seed")—both tō ek tou nomou (τῷ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου, "to that from the law," i.e., Jewish believers) and tō ek pisteōs Abraam (τῷ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ, "to that from faith of Abraham," i.e., Gentile believers). Abraham is patēr pantōn hēmōn (πατὴρ πάντων ἡμῶν, "father of all of us"). If inheritance depended on law-keeping, no one could be sure of receiving it (since all fail). But by grace through faith, the promise is secured for all who believe, regardless of ethnicity.

Historical Context

Paul's vision of one family of Abraham, encompassing both Jewish and Gentile believers united by faith rather than divided by Torah observance, was revolutionary. This theological foundation undergirds his practical appeals for unity between these groups in Romans 14-15. The certainty of the promise based on grace rather than works provides assurance that transcends ethnic identity and religious performance.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. Why does the promise need to be by grace through faith to be 'sure' to all, and what would make it uncertain?
2. How does defining Abraham's seed by faith rather than ethnicity or law-keeping expand and transform covenant membership?
3. What assurance does it give you that your inheritance depends on God's grace received through faith rather than your performance?

Interlinear Text

διὰ	τοῦτο	ἐκ	πίστεως	ἵνα	κατὰ	χάριν	εἰς
Therefore	G5124	it is of	faith	that	it might be by	grace	to the end
G1223		G1537	G4102	G2443	G2596	G5485	G1519
τὸ	εἴναι	βεβαίαν	τὴν	ἐπαγγελίαν	πάντων	τῷ	
G3588	might be	sure	G3588	the promise	all	G3588	
	G1511	G949		G1860	G3956		
σπέρματι	οὐ	τῷ	ἐκ	τοῦ	νόμου	μόνον	ἀλλὰ
the seed	not	G3588	it is of	G3588	the law	to that only	but
G4690	G3756		G1537		G3551	G3440	G235
καὶ	τῷ	ἐκ	πίστεως	Ἄβραάμ	ὅς	ἐστιν	πατὴρ
to that also	G3588	it is of	faith	of Abraham	who	is	the father
G2532		G1537	G4102	G11	G3739	G2076	G3962
πάντων	ήμῶν						
all	of us						
G3956	G2257						

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 2:8 (Faith): For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Romans 9:8 (Covenant): That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Galatians 3:22 (Faith): But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Titus 3:7 (Grace): That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.