

Romans 4:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

Analysis

Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; Paul begins his application: Genesis 15:6 was not written δι' αὐτὸν μόνον, "because of him alone"). The historical narrative about Abraham has universal significance. The verb εγράφη (ἐγράφη, "it was written") uses the divine passive—God caused it to be written. Paul's hermeneutical principle appears here: Old Testament Scripture, while historically particular, is theologically universal. Abraham's justification is both historical fact and typological pattern.

This move is crucial: Paul is not allegorizing or spiritualizing away the historical Abraham. Genesis really happened. But God orchestrated history and Scripture with didactic intent—Abraham's story is our story. The chronology (justification before circumcision), the means (faith not works), the object of faith (God who gives life to the dead)—all foreshadow the gospel. Paul reads the Old Testament Christocentrically and ecclesialogically: it points to Christ and instructs the church. Genesis 15:6 was written for Abraham's sake, but not for his sake alone.

Historical Context

Jewish interpretative tradition read the patriarchal narratives as exemplary stories for Israel. Paul takes this further, seeing Abraham as the pattern for all believers, Jew and Gentile. His use of 'it was written' invokes the authority of Scripture while expanding its application beyond ethnic Israel to include all who believe. This

typological reading was revolutionary but grounded in the text's own emphasis on Abraham as father of 'many nations.'

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What hermeneutical principle is Paul establishing about how to read Old Testament narratives, and why does it matter?
2. How can Abraham's story be both historically true and typologically significant for all believers?
3. What other Old Testament narratives might Paul's principle illuminate as patterns for understanding the gospel?

Interlinear Text

Οὐκ	ἐγγράφη	δὲ	δι'	αὐτῷ	μόνον	ὅτι	ἐλογίσθη	αὐτῷ
not	it was	Now	for	to him	alone	that	it was imputed	to him
G3756	G1125	G1161	G1223	G846	G3440	G3754	G3049	G846

Additional Cross-References

Romans 15:4 (Parallel theme): For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

1 Corinthians 10:11 (Parallel theme): Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

1 Corinthians 10:6 (Parallel theme): Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

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