**April 6, 2003 Northwest Bible Church Worship Service Alan Conner**

**Rom. 4:11-17
Abraham, Father of all the Faithful**

INTRO
Contrast with the Left Behind series. Summary:
4:1-10 Faith alone justifies: proven by Abraham and David
4:11-17 Faith makes you both a child and an heir of Abraham.

I. FAITH AND THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

A. Faith, not circumcision, establishes one as a child of Abraham (4:11-12).

v.11 The point is that circumcision is not necessary to justification. Rather, in the providence of God Abraham was justified while uncircumcised so he could be identified with Gentile believers who also believe while uncircumcised. Paul now makes a point that would have infuriated the Jews. He opens the door for any uncircumcised man to become a child of Abraham through faith.

v. 12 Abraham is also the father of believing Jews. The word "also" is key because it clearly implies that Jews who are not believers cannot claim Abraham as their father any more. In fact, Christ told unbelieving Jews who claimed that Abraham was their father, "You are of your father the devil" (Jn. 8:44).

B. Faith, not the law, establishes one as an heir of Abraham (4:13-17a). All N/C children of Abraham are heirs of the father’s estate.

v. 13 Here Paul changes his emphasis from circumcision to the law. God’s promise to Abraham to given him and his seed an inheritance was based on faith not circumcision (14 years later), and not the Law (which came hundreds of years later).

v. 14 if the inheritance is by Law, then faith is made void and the promise is nullified. In other words you cannot change the terms of the covenant once it has been ratified. This is the same point Paul makes in Gal. 3:15-18.

v. 15 the only inheritance that the law can give you is WRATH.

v. 16 For this reason, it (the promise of the inheritance) is by faith, in accordance with grace so that the promise can be guaranteed to all the descendants of Abraham, to both Jewish and Gentile believers.
"to those who are of the Law" – Jewish category
"to those who are of the faith of Abraham" – Gentile category

v. 17 "as it is written, ‘A father of many nations have I made you." Rom. 4:17 shows that Paul understands the promise of Gen. 17:5 as being fulfilled by Gentile believers; Gal. 3:8 shows that Paul applies Gen. 15:6 to the Gentile church. Thus, all the spiritual descendants of Abraham will receive the promised inheritance. See Gal. 3:7; 29.

II. THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT IN THE NEW COVENANT

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

Old Covenant phaseNew Covenant phase

- physical land (Gen. 15:18-21)

- physical seed (15:4)

- physical nation (15:5)

- physical circumcision (17:11)

- spiritual land (Heb. 11:16)

- spiritual seed (Gal. 3:16, 7)

- spiritual nation (1 Pet. 2:9)

- spiritual circumcision (Rom.2:29)

III. GLEANINGS FROM THE FATHERHOOD OF ABRAHAM

1) Covenant family. All believers throughout the ages are in the same covenant family of Abraham. One great family of faith.

2) Covenant inheritance. All believers will inherit the blessings of Abraham, we are heirs of the world. 1Cor. 3:22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you. Rev. 21:3-4; 1 Pet. 1:3-6; Rev. 22:4; Lk. 10:20.