

Romans 4:9-12

***Abraham Justified Before Circumcision***

<sup>9</sup> Does this blessedness then *come* upon the circumcised *only*, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.

<sup>10</sup> How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. <sup>11</sup> And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had while still* uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, <sup>12</sup> and the father of circumcision to those who not only *are* of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham *had while still* uncircumcised.

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Having dealt with \_\_\_\_\_ coming by faith and not by works or the keeping of the law, Paul now addresses the issue of salvation and \_\_\_\_\_. Abraham remains the object of consideration because he is the one to whom God first gave the rite of circumcision.

Genesis 17:9-11 And God said to Abraham: “As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. <sup>10</sup> This *is* My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; <sup>11</sup> and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.

<sup>9</sup> Does this blessedness then *come* upon the circumcised *only*, or upon the uncircumcised also?

For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.

So Paul asks, “Does this blessedness (salvation, a right \_\_\_\_\_ with God) then *come* upon the circumcised *only*, or upon the uncircumcised also?”

The answer to us seems so obvious that we wonder why the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to address it so thoroughly. But that is because we are not \_\_\_\_\_. Not only did most Jews believe that their circumcision \_\_\_\_\_ them, it was

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commonly taught by their Jewish teachers. The Jewish *Book of Jubilees* says, "...everyone that ... is not circumcised on the eighth day ... belongs to the children of \_\_\_\_\_; ... (he is destined) to be destroyed and slain from the earth."

A Midrash is a Jewish \_\_\_\_\_ on the Old Testament. In the *Midrash Millim* it says, "God swore to Abraham that no one who was circumcised should be sent to \_\_\_\_\_." To most Jews, circumcision was their \_\_\_\_\_ ticket to escape the flames of hell and to dwell forever in heaven.

Perhaps this helps us understand why the \_\_\_\_\_ Council in Acts 15 had to deal with the question of whether Christians should be circumcised. Many Jews were being saved and some of them carried into their new Christian \_\_\_\_\_ the idea that a person could not be saved without circumcision. Therefore they wanted to say that salvation came by Christ \_\_\_\_\_ circumcision. But the Jerusalem Council said, "\_\_\_\_\_. Salvation comes by Christ \_\_\_\_\_, and it said that uncircumcised Gentiles should not be required to be circumcised or otherwise keep the \_\_\_\_\_."

Therefore Paul turns the argument back to Abraham. He asks, "\_\_\_\_\_ was Abraham made righteous?" **While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised?** The answer is easy to find in Gen. 15 through 17. Comparing the events in these chapters, we discover that when God declared Abraham righteous, Abraham was \_\_\_\_\_ years old. At that time, Ishmael had not even been conceived. When Abraham was circumcised, Ishmael was 13 years old and Abraham was \_\_\_\_\_. Therefore, Abraham was

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<sup>10</sup> How then was it accounted?

While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised?

Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.

saved for at least \_\_\_\_ years before he was circumcised. In all probability, Abraham was saved either when the Lord first \_\_\_\_\_ him at age 40 or when God \_\_\_\_\_ the covenant with him at age 75. Regardless of which time is the exact moment when Abraham believed God and God credited Abraham with righteousness, it definitely happened a \_\_\_\_ time before God gave Abraham the sign of circumcision. Paul gives a succinct answer to his question: **Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.**

Do not think that the discussion and argument here is unimportant for us today. For while there are few that think today that circumcision confers salvation, the exact same logic is applied to other practices more closely tied to Christianity. This is especially true of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Both of these practices are treated by many who call themselves Christians just as circumcision was by the Jews.

For instance, there are those that believe that salvation comes by means of the act of \_\_\_\_\_. This teaching is not merely that baptism is an expression of God's grace and man's faith but that the actual act of baptism \_\_\_\_\_ righteousness in and of itself. In the book *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, the author says that a \_\_\_\_\_ (such as baptism) "possesses the power of effecting...righteousness" and goes so far as to say that it does so without the mediation of a person's \_\_\_\_\_. In another place, the same book, which bears the official approval of the Vatican says, "Baptism effects the forgiveness of all punishment of sin, both of the \_\_\_\_\_ and the temporal."

The Catholic Church is not the only one that holds to such a doctrine. Some \_\_\_\_\_ churches believe that baptism places a person into the New \_\_\_\_\_, even if the person has not come to personal faith in Christ. Therefore they baptize \_\_\_\_\_ and teach them that they are secure in their salvation because they are a part of God's covenant people because of their \_\_\_\_\_.

Some attribute similar "magical" power to \_\_\_\_\_. They believe that the elements of the Lord's Supper actually become (in their \_\_\_\_\_ if not in their appearance) the literal \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, when one partakes of those elements, he is partaking of the body and blood of the Savior and is being \_\_\_\_\_ with Christ. This act of receiving the body and blood of the Lord and uniting the partaker with Christ is also believed to impart \_\_\_\_\_ regardless of the faith of the recipient and apart from any specific act of \_\_\_\_\_ in the life of the recipient. \_\_\_\_\_ bars a person from Communion, and therefore blocks them from receiving the grace that comes by eating the bread and drinking the wine.

Beliefs and practices such as these are no different in \_\_\_\_\_ from the Judaizers of Paul's day, with whom he did battle in \_\_\_\_\_ and at the Jerusalem Council. The point is that salvation only comes by \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_, and not of ourselves, not of \_\_\_\_\_. One cannot be saved by circumcision, baptism, communion, church membership, or anything else. Only as we confess with our mouth that Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_ and believe in our hearts that

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         of all those  
 who believe,  
 though they are  
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 them also,

12 and the father  
 of circumcision  
 to those  
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God raised Him from the dead will we be saved – given the righteousness that belongs to Christ as a free gift of God's grace.

So what good is circumcision (or baptism or communion)? Each is good as a \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_. A sign communicates to \_\_\_\_\_ and a seal is a guarantee to \_\_\_\_\_. Circumcision was a sign to other peoples that the Jews were in covenant with God. It was a seal to each Jew that his relationship with God through faith was \_\_\_\_\_, and it was an outward mark of God's \_\_\_\_\_ circumcision of the man's \_\_\_\_\_. So Abraham *received the sign of circumcision,* and *a seal of the righteousness of the faith* but the faith and righteousness came while he was *still uncircumcised*, so that Abraham would also be the *father* (forerunner) of everyone else who came to \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ, even though they were *uncircumcised*.

Although it is technically correct to say that Abraham, when he was made righteous, was an \_\_\_\_\_, (for Hebrews are descendants of Jacob, and the name Jew originated during the exile) nevertheless, Abraham also remains the *father of the circumcision*, the \_\_\_\_\_, who are not only Jews but who *walk in faith* as Abraham walked even before he was circumcised.

Abraham remains the true father of all who are of faith, made \_\_\_\_\_ by the grace of God through the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ, which righteousness is \_\_\_\_\_ to them through faith in God's Dear Son.

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Romans 4:13-17

***The Promise Granted Through Faith***

<sup>13</sup> For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. <sup>14</sup> For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, <sup>15</sup> because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all <sup>17</sup> (as it is written, “I have made you a father of many nations”) in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;

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The fulfillment of God’s **promise to Abraham** came not through the outward act of \_\_\_\_\_ or **through** Abraham’s keeping of **the** \_\_\_\_\_. It came through the **righteousness** that was credited to Abraham by means of his \_\_\_\_\_. As we have seen, God accounted Abraham’s faith as righteousness \_\_\_\_\_ before God told him to be circumcised and \_\_\_\_\_ of years before the giving of the law. Therefore, neither of these could have played any part in Abraham’s being declared righteous.

The promise refers to the \_\_\_\_\_ God made with Abraham, recorded in Gen. 12:2-3.

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<sup>2</sup> I will make you a great \_\_\_\_\_;

I will bless you

And make your \_\_\_\_\_ great;

And you shall be a \_\_\_\_\_.

<sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you,

And I will curse him who curses you;

And in you \_\_\_\_\_ the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

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That covenant promise was expanded or clarified to include

1. A Great \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 15:18-21 On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—<sup>19</sup> the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites,<sup>20</sup> the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim,<sup>21</sup> the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

2. A Great \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 13:16 And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, *then* your descendants also could be numbered.

3. A Great \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 12:3b And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

4. A Great \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 22:18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, ...

Paul makes clear the fact in Gal. 3:16 that God said "seed" rather than "\_\_\_\_\_ " and points out its importance.

Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.

Earlier in this same chapter, Paul calls this "the \_\_\_\_\_" to Abraham. In other words, Abraham understood that One would come as His descendant who would bring about the fulfillment of all these promises God had made. Although Abraham did not know His name nor yet that He would be called the \_\_\_\_\_, it was indeed Christ that Abraham believed would come and be a blessing to all the people of the earth.

Abraham believed this so completely that he was confident that God would bring it to pass even if it meant \_\_\_\_\_ the dead to life again. The book of Hebrews offers us insight that this faith is what strengthened Abraham to be willing to sacrifice \_\_\_\_\_, because Abraham believed that God could raise Isaac from the dead.

Hebrews 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,<sup>18</sup> of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called,"<sup>19</sup> concluding that God was able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

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\_\_\_\_\_ even made mention that Abraham anticipated His coming.

*John 8:56 "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad."*

*14 For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect,*

Paul now points out that if the fulfillment of the promise came by keeping the law, then there would be no reason for faith and the promise would never be fulfilled. The reason is simple: no person can perfectly keep the law. Abraham could not. He broke the precepts of the law, even though he had not received the law in his \_\_\_\_\_ about Sarah. David could not. He committed \_\_\_\_\_ and adultery.

Paul basically says, you cannot have it \_\_\_\_\_ ways. If God's blessing and righteousness come through the law then no one has it, and no one gets it. But if it comes by faith, as the Scriptures say it did to Abraham, then you cannot tack on the \_\_\_\_\_ of the law.

So why was the law even given if it could not bring men to righteousness?

*Galatians 3:19,24 What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made... <sup>24</sup> Therefore the law was our \_\_\_\_\_ to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

*15 because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.*

The law does not bring salvation; the law brings \_\_\_\_\_, wrath. The law draws the line in the sand and says, "Do not cross this!" It \_\_\_\_\_ the just standard of God but provides no \_\_\_\_\_ for obeying it. But in making the standard clear, the law also \_\_\_\_\_ the sin of the person who crosses the line. Transgression is revealed by the law as well.

A person walking on a neighbor's land is trespassing whether there is a sign or not. But the sign shows everyone that a trespass is taking place.

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<sup>17</sup> (as it is written, “*I have made you  
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Much has been said about faith,  
specifically Abraham’s faith. Righteousness  
was credited to Abraham through his faith.  
But faith \_\_\_\_\_ cannot bring  
righteousness. It must be according to  
\_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ makes righteousness  
possible. \_\_\_\_\_ allows it to be applied  
to our account.

If faith on our part without the grace  
of God could bring salvation, faith would  
just be another \_\_\_\_\_, something we  
ourselves could do. If we believed that  
Jesus is God’s Son but Jesus had not died  
to pay for our sins, we would still be \_\_\_\_\_.  
God’s forgiveness came because His Son  
paid the sin \_\_\_\_\_. Faith appropriates God’s  
grace individually to the one who \_\_\_\_\_.

*Ephesians 2:8 For by \_\_\_\_\_ you have  
been saved through \_\_\_\_\_, and that not  
of yourselves; it is the gift of God,*

When Abraham lived, the world was  
not yet \_\_\_\_\_ into Jews and Gentiles.  
Although the Jews call him “\_\_\_\_\_”  
Abraham,” Abraham really is the father of  
all who believe in Christ, Jew and Gentile  
alike. The promise has been made \_\_\_\_\_  
by God Himself, and note the apt  
description of Him here:

*who gives life to the dead*

*and*

*calls those things which do not exist as  
though they did;*

This is the God of \_\_\_\_\_, and  
the God of the \_\_\_\_\_!

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## Romans 4:18-25

<sup>18</sup> who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, *“So shall your descendants be.”*<sup>19</sup> And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb.<sup>20</sup> He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,<sup>21</sup> and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.<sup>22</sup> And therefore *“it was accounted to him for righteousness.”*

<sup>23</sup> Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him,<sup>24</sup> but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,<sup>25</sup> who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

In these verses, Paul completes his reference to Abraham as the perfect example of salvation by grace through faith in the Old Testament. In 4:1-8, he demonstrated that salvation is by faith rather than \_\_\_\_\_. In 4:9-17 he shows that salvation is by grace and not by \_\_\_\_\_. In verses 18-25, Paul tells us that salvation comes by God’s \_\_\_\_\_ and not by man’s efforts.

What was Abraham’s faith like?

REFERENCE	PROMISE	HOW LONG ABRAHAM WAITED IN FAITH	WHEN FULFILLED
Gen. 12:2	An heir	60 years	Abraham was _____ yrs old
Gen. 12:2	A nation	Rest of his life	_____ years later
Gen. 12:3	Your _____ shall bless whole earth	Rest of his life	At Christ’s death and resurrection
Gen. 15:5	Innumerable descendants	Rest of his life	In the _____ Kingdom
Gen 15:18	Land from River of Egypt to Euphrates	Rest of his life. Abraham never owned more than a burial plot for Sarah and himself	In the _____ Kingdom

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And this faith was not easy for Abraham. Consider the insightful explanation of Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse:

“Now Abram was an Oriental. He was used to the *conversation* of the Orientals. Furthermore, he was strategically located *beside* the roads of the camel caravans that carried the commerce of the ancient world between Egypt and the North and East. He owned the wells, and his flocks and herds were great. The Scripture says that “Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold” (Gen. 13:2). When the caravans of the rich merchants came into the land, either from the north or from the south, they stopped at Abram’s wells. The servants of Abram took good care of the needs of the camels and the servants of the traders. Food was sold to the travellers. And in the evening time the merchants would have come to Abram’s tent to pay their respects. The questions would have followed a set pattern. How old are you? Who are you? How long have you been here? When the trader had introduced himself, Abram would be forced to name himself: Abram, father of many.

“It must have happened a hundred times, a thousand times, and each time more galling than the time before. “Oh, Father of many! Congratulations! And how many sons do you have?” And the answer was so humiliating to Abram: “None.” And, many a time there must have been the half concealed snort of humor at the incongruity of the name and the fact that there were no children to back up such a name. Abram must have steeled himself for the question and the reply, and have hated the situation with great bitterness.

“... Father of many – father of none. The possibilities were varied, and I believe that it is possible to detect in the psychology of the narrative the fact that there was much gossip about it. The servants who heard the jokes and who saw Abram’s embarrassment repeated the details with embroidered variations. It was a world of cloth and goat skins, where all lived in tents, and where there was little privacy from the eyes and none in the realm of the ears. There must have been many conversations on the subject – who was sterile, Abram or Sarah? Was he really a full man? Oh, he was the patriarch; his word was law; he had the multitude of cattle and the many servants, but – he had no children, and his name was ‘father of many.’”  
(*God’s Remedy: Romans 3:21-4:25* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954], pp. 311-12)

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 contrary to hope,  
 in hope believed,  
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<sup>19</sup> And not being  
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 hundred years old),  
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<sup>20</sup> He did not waver  
 at the promise  
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 He was also able to perform.

<sup>22</sup> And therefore  
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**Hope** is the \_\_\_\_\_ of having a desire fulfilled. The point of the passage is that Abraham long passed the place in which there was any reasonable human expectation that the things that God had promised would happen. In spite of that, Abraham believed! Abraham believed, and God \_\_\_\_\_!

**Not being weak in faith** does not mean always being free from question and \_\_\_\_\_. Abraham did question; he did doubt. But Abraham did not allow his questions or doubts to \_\_\_\_\_ his faith. In spite of all the “impossibilities,” that his own body was \_\_\_\_\_ for reproductive purposes and that Sarah also was unable to have children, still Abraham believed God.

Abraham was \_\_\_\_\_ in his faith; **he did not waver** or move back and forth between belief and skepticism. He clung to **the promise of God**, his faith being **strengthened**. Abraham’s steadfast faith brought **glory to God**.

Abraham knew that it was the one true and Living God who had made these promises to him. He remained \_\_\_\_\_ that God had the power to do everything He had promised, and that He would.

Therefore (in light of all of the above about Abraham’s faith) that faith became the \_\_\_\_\_ for the righteousness of God that would be offered through Christ’s death upon the cross to be credited to Abraham, making him \_\_\_\_\_ before God and a recipient of the gift of eternal life.

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<sup>25</sup> who was  
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Now the Holy Spirit makes it clear through Paul the reason that all this detail about Abraham's life and faith was ever written in the Scriptures. It was written for \_\_\_\_! Because the same way that righteousness was imputed to Abraham, it is imputed to us.

The righteousness of Christ becomes ours when we \_\_\_\_\_ (have faith) in God who raised Jesus from the dead. And we see the essence of true saving faith, true Christian faith. Biblical faith is not just believing what we desire will happen; it is believing \_\_\_\_\_ and what God has \_\_\_\_\_. It is believing that God can and will do what He has \_\_\_\_\_. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Saving faith is believing that Jesus died for me, because of my offenses, my sins, and that God raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus' resurrection was \_\_\_\_\_ to complete our justification because after His blood was shed, it had to be offered to God in heaven to make \_\_\_\_\_ for our sins.

So, on that glorious resurrection day, having appeared to Mary in the garden and forbidding her to touch Him, because He had not yet \_\_\_\_\_ to the Father, Jesus told her to tell His disciples that He was ascending to the Father. Thus,

<sup>12</sup> Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own \_\_\_\_\_ He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. Hebrews 9:12

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

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