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# Romans

**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.** Romans 4:9

Paul has been addressing David's comments which are found in the psalms and which point to the blessedness of man to whom the Lord does not impute sin. Based on David's words, Paul showed that this blessedness translates into "righteousness apart from works."

Through Paul's observations and by citing the Scriptures, it is verifiable that this state of blessedness can be obtained because David both received it and spoke of it. David was a man under the law, the law which included circumcision as one of its signs of the covenant between God and His people. So Paul now asks an obvious question - "Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only?"

The question is important because if it is only upon the circumcised, then anyone outside of the law will never be free from the sin-guilt they bear. All sins committed will in fact be imputed to them. There would then be... no hope. But Paul asks, "Does this blessedness then come 'upon the uncircumcised also?'" If it does, then there is hope for the world at large and not just those in the nation of Israel and who had been circumcised.

In order to demonstrate that this blessed state does, in fact, come upon those outside of the law Paul will now reintroduce Abraham. Why would he do this? Abraham was the father of circumcision! What could it be about Abraham's justification that will in turn give hope to the non-circumcised world? Stay tuned for the exciting details.

Life application: When things look hopeless and every exit is blocked, remember that God is fully capable of rescuing you from your trials. Those things that you may have overlooked are already known to Him. So trust that His plan is greater than your time of testing. Stand in the confidence of knowing that His hand is upon you and will guide you to broad places.

**How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.** Romans 4:10

Paul has shown as clearly as could be done, that righteousness comes apart from the law and that it is granted by faith alone. Noting this, Paul continues to make his address to those who would still consider the law as a means to an end. His questions are meant to dispel this notion once and forever. "How was it (meaning the blessedness of being declared righteous noted in the previous verses) accounted?" In other words, where or when did this declaration originate? In follow-up he asks "While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised?"

This is an immensely important question. If it was after circumcision, then the circumcision may have had a bearing on the declaration of his righteousness. This then might mean that this same declaration could be available only to those who are circumcised. If so, then anyone outside of the law would be in the same state they were always in - alienated from God and strangers to the promise. But Paul's answer is a note of relief to those outside and it is one which comes directly from an analysis of Scripture itself... "Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised."

Abraham was declared righteous in Genesis 15:6. He simply believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. It wasn't until Genesis 17 that the sign of

his righteousness was introduced. This was many long years later and it had no bearing at all on his state before God. If it had no bearing, then why was it even given? The answer is that it was an outward sign of the change in relationship and was intended for him and his descendants afterwards to remember that relationship and live in a manner worthy of it.

This outward sign was a means of validating what occurred. It had no bearing on what happened, but it gave him the memory of, and the assurance in, the act. As an example to grasp this, let's consider a war hero. He is involved in a great act which saves many lives and which is the epitome of braveness and heroism. Everyone knows it and calls him a hero. This is equivalent to Abraham's faith and God's recognition of it.

After the act, the hero's commander submits him for an award. The award goes through the ranks and arrives at the president's desk. The president approves it - a Congressional Medal of Honor; the highest military award one can receive. The award is then officially presented to the hero on the one-year anniversary of his act. Did the presentation of the award have any bearing on the accomplishment of the act? No. Did the presentation have any bearing on his status as a hero? No, but it does validate it. The award was given as a sign and a confirmation (or validation) of the significance of the deed, but it in no way changes what occurred. This is Paul's point. The circumcision, in which the Jew boasts, has no bearing at all on what was previously granted.

If the war hero's descendants carry around his award and boast in it and yet don't live a life worthy of the act of their father, then the award means less than nothing. In fact, it has become in them as if they weren't even a part of this noble man's family. And now, after more than a chapter of analysis and explanation, we can return to Paul's words at the end of chapter 2 and more fully understand what he meant -

"For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his

uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God." Romans 2:25-29

Life application: Don't let anyone steal the prize from you by insisting that you adhere to some precept found under the law. Circumcision, dietary restrictions, dress codes, etc that are found under the law will only separate you further from God if you attempt to be justified by those things. Stand firm on the fact that Abraham was declared righteous by faith alone and this is how you will also be so declared.

**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, Romans 4:11**

The previous verse reminded us of what Scripture proclaims - Abraham was declared righteous before he was circumcised; long before. To ensure that point couldn't be misunderstood, God waited many long years before giving him the sign of circumcision. This sign is "a seal of righteousness of the faith he had while still uncircumcised."

The sign did nothing to further justify him in God's sight. By this picture, which we derive directly from Scripture, we learn that it is God who defines the parameters and establishes the basis by which a person is declared righteous. And this is shown to be by faith; faith alone. When this faith is properly directed toward God's promises (meaning the work of the Messiah) we are counted as righteous.

Abraham was made the type or pattern of the faithful, "that he might be the father of all those who believe." There is no distinction made in us because there

was none made in him. He simply believed God and received the blessedness of God. As this is the pattern, then it is available to all "though they are uncircumcised, that the righteousness might be imputed to them also."

This wondrous relationship with God is available to all - Jew and Gentile, male and female. It is open to any person of any culture, ethnicity, or race. No person is above another and no person is excluded when mere faith is exercised. This is the very heart of the gospel and is reflected in Jesus' words of John 3:16 - "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."

"Whoever" means just that. All who believe are granted the same inheritance and become Abraham's descendants; adopted into God's family.

Life application: A simple act of faith is all that is needed to change our eternal state. It doesn't matter who you are, if you have accepted Jesus as Lord, you have been declared righteous and stand justified before God. Don't let anyone steal your joy by telling you that more is needed. Your faith has healed you, O child of God.