

## Justification and Circumcision

*Romans, Part XXI*

Romans 4:9-12

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### I. The Gospel of Double Imputation

Jesus endured God's just wrath for us. Hence, our *certificate of* \_\_\_\_\_ – the document that summarized the many ways in which each of us has violated God's law – was nailed to the cross (cf. Col 2:14). Our \_\_\_\_\_ was imputed to Christ and His righteousness credited to us (2 Cor 5:21). This is the Gospel of Double Imputation.

### II. Justifying both Jew and Gentile by Faith

<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.

#### A. Justification apart from circumcision (9-10)

First, Paul insists that *justification is by faith alone* distinct from the rite of circumcision. Abraham's justification *preceded* his circumcision. Therefore, it is not necessary to be circumcised in order to be saved, in order to be set right with God.

#### B. Circumcision a sign and seal of justification (11a)

What was the function of circumcision, then? Circumcision was a physical guarantee that God's promise was reliable. It was the *sign* of God's covenant with Abraham that \_\_\_\_\_ the promise of righteousness through faith in the coming Seed.

#### C. Abraham the Father of All Who Believe (11b-12)

So what does this mean? It means that Abraham is the father, the archetype, of all those who believe though they are uncircumcised and of all those who are circumcised and walk in genuine faith. As Paul wrote in Romans 3:29-30:

<sup>29</sup>Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also,

<sup>30</sup>since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

### III. Justification and Circumcision

#### A. Abram's sons by faith not circumcision (Jer 9:26; Jn 8:34-41; Gal 3:29)

Who are the true sons of Abraham? Paul makes it quite clear that \_\_\_\_\_ *is the key*. Those who are truly sons of Abraham are those who *walk in the steps of Abraham's* \_\_\_\_\_ (12). Without \_\_\_\_\_, in other words, circumcision was empty.

#### An Outline of Romans

- I. Introduction
  - A. Opening Greeting (1:1-7)
  - B. Travel Plans (1:8-15)
  - C. Theme (1:16-17)
- II. Credenda: "The Righteous by Faith" Shall Live
  - A. God's Wrath vs. Unrighteousness (1:18-3:20)
  - B. The Revelation of God's Righteousness (3:21-4:25)
  - C. The Triumph of God's Righteousness (5-8)
  - D. The Universality of God's Righteousness (9-11)
- III. Agenda: The Righteous "Shall Live by Faith"
  - A. Transformed not Conformed (12-13)
  - B. Patient not Proud (14-15:13)
- IV. Conclusion
  - A. Paul, Minister to the Gentiles (15:14-21)
  - B. Travel Plans (15:22-33)
  - C. Closing Greetings and Benediction (16)

So Jeremiah announced God's judgment on Israel and the surrounding nations, "For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart" (Jer 9:26b). When certain Jews boasted that, as sons of Abraham, they were no one's slaves,

<sup>34</sup>Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. <sup>35</sup>And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. <sup>36</sup>Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. <sup>37</sup>I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. <sup>38</sup>I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father." <sup>39</sup>They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. <sup>40</sup>But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. <sup>41</sup>You do the deeds of your father [the devil - 44]."

It is those who are Jews inwardly, who imitate the faith of our father Abraham, who are justified in the sight of God and true sons of Abraham. Paul writes in Galatians 3:

<sup>26</sup>For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup>For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ... <sup>29</sup>And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

#### B. Circumcision in the new covenant (Acts 15:1-35; 1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6; 6:15)

In the new covenant, circumcision no longer serves as a sign of God's covenant with His people. This was an early point of dispute within the Christian community and precipitated the first-ever Church Council in Jerusalem. There were some Jews who said, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). Again, they said, "It is necessary to circumcise [these Gentiles], and to command them to keep the law of Moses" (15:5). The Jerusalem Council disagreed and concluded, by the Spirit, that circumcision is no longer necessary. As Paul says:

- 1 Cor 7:19 - Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.
- Gal 5:6 - For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.
- Gal 6:15 - For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

#### C. Circumcision and baptism (1 Cor 1:18)

Baptism in the new covenant, like circumcision in the old, serves the as the sign and seal of God's covenant with His people. So does the blessedness of forgiveness come upon the baptized only, or upon the unbaptized also? Is the forgiveness of sins limited to those who have been baptized? Certainly not! \_\_\_\_\_ is the essential thing; \_\_\_\_\_ is the sign and seal of that which faith lays hold of – the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Hence, the thief on the cross was justified though not baptized. Calvin writes that Paul is careful "to distinguish faith from the sacrament, not only so that no one may be satisfied with the one but not the other, as though [the sacrament] were sufficient for one's justification, but also to prove that faith alone may fulfill every requirement" (Calvin, 90).

### IV. Conclusion

<sup>23</sup>Now it was not written for [Abraham's] sake alone that [righteousness] was imputed to him, <sup>24</sup>but also for us. [Righteousness] 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. (Rom 4:23-25)