

(17) "A Seal of the Righteousness of Faith": Faith and Circumcision (4:9-12)

Romans: The Outwork of the Righteousness of God

Justification!—Line of Thought

- The Way of Works Is Blocked (1:18–3:20).
- There Is Another Way (and the Only Way): Justification by Grace through Faith (3:21-26).
- The New Way Requires Exclusivity (3:27-31).
 - Exclusivity: Faith Alone, Not Faith Plus Works.
 - Universality: All Are Saved in the Same Way.
 - Connectivity: The Law Is the Pointer to the Faith.
- The New Way Was Illustrated by the Life of Abraham (and David) (Ch 4).
 - Abraham Was Justified by Faith, Not Works (4:1-8) .
 - Abraham Was Justified as a Gentile, Not a Jew (4:9-12).
 - Abraham as Justified by the Promise, Not the Law (4:13-17a).
 - Abraham Was Justified by Hope, Not Circumstance (4:17b-22).
- The New Life Was Necessitated by the Law (Ch 5).

Chronology as the Key

- ⁹ Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." (Gen 15:6) ¹⁰ How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; ¹¹ and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, ¹² and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised. (Rom 4:9-12 NAU)

The Timeline of Abraham

B.C.	Age	Act	Scripture (Gen)
1946	0	Born to Terah in Ur of the Chaldeans.	11:26-30
1876	70	Receiving the Promise; Exodus from Ur.	11:31—12:3
1871	75	Leaving Haran; Entering Canaan.	12:4-9
c.1867	c.79	Going to Egypt; Lying and Losing Sarah.	12:10-20
1862	84	Defeating 4 Kings from the East; Giving Tithe via Melchizedek; <u>Justification</u> by Faith.	14:1-16, 17-24; 15:1-21
1861-1860	85-86	Taking Hagar; Having Ishmael.	16:1-15
1847	99	Promised Isaac; <u>Circumcision</u> ; Receiving God & Angels; Interceding for Lot; Lying to Abimelech; Sarah Was Protected.	17:1-27; 18:2-15; 16-31 20:1-18
1846	100	Having Isaac.	21:1-7
c.1842	c.104	Sending Out Ishmael.	21:8-21
1810	136	Binding Isaac; Sarah died.	22:1-19; 23:1-20
1806	140	Marrying Isaac to Rebecca.	24:-67
1786	160	Seeing Grandsons Esau and Jacob born.	25:19-26
1775	175	Sending Out Sons by Keturah; Death.	25:1-11

Adding Nothing to Faith

- “⁹ Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, ‘FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.’ (Gen 15:6)” (Rom 4:9)
- The Scripture Apparently Tells the Universality of Salvation by Faith to All Who Believe, in the Way Abraham Did.
- Paul Expected the Jews to Add in Other Factors to Faith, Such as Circumcision, as the Criteria for Salvation (in Order to Exclude the Gentiles from It).
- Similarly, Some Christians Would Add in Baptism and Communion to Faith, as the Criteria of Salvation (to Exclude Those Who Do Not Belong to Certain Visible Church).

Abraham Justified as a Gentile

- “¹⁰ How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised” (Rom 4:10)
- Righteousness before God Was Credited due to the Faith of Abraham in God’s Promise.
- It Happened When He Was 84 Years Old, Way before His Circumcision at the Age of 99.
- Abraham Was Justified by Faith, When He Was Still an Uncircumcised Gentile!

What Is Circumcision Then?

- “¹¹ and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith” (Rom 4:11a)
- A Sign Is a Pointer to a Thing, Not the Thing Itself.
 - Circumcision and Baptism Are Pointers.
 - The Real Acceptance into a People of God Were by:
 - For Israel: The Sovereign Election of Abraham by God.
 - For the Church: The Regeneration by the Holy Spirit.
- A Seal Is a Confirmation of Ownership.

Why the Timing Was Essential?

- “Which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,”
- (Rom 4:11b)
- Abraham Was the Father of All Who Believed, Jews or Gentiles.
- Righteousness Can Be Credited to All Who Believed, Jews or Gentiles.

The Father of All Who Believe

- **“¹² and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.” (Rom 4:12)**
- Abraham Became Circumcised (and a Jew) after He Was Saved as Gentile, through Faith.
- He Is the Father of All Believers before He Became the Father of the Jews.
- Abraham Was Saved in the Way the Gentile Would Be Saved Today.
- Jews Would Have to Be Saved in the Way Gentiles Are Saved: By Faith Alone.

Lessons and Applications

- Every Detail in the Bible Is Important in a Way; Chronology Is Extremely So Here.
- Salvation Is by God's Sovereign Election First, for the Jews and the Gentiles in the Church.
- Internal/Spiritual Conversion/Regeneration Is the Real Watershed of Salvation; External Sign and Seals Are Pointers to the Real Thing.
- Owning the Righteousness Is by Faith, the Ceremonies Are Confirmations, for the Believer and the Public (Human or Angelic).

Lessons and Applications

- Be Grateful to God for His Design to Save All of His Elect from the Bondage of Sin.
- Recognized that Salvation Is by Faith Alone, and Nothing Should Be Added. A Little Addition Would Spoil All.
- The Way of Salvation Is the Same for All People (by Faith Alone); the Jews Would Have to Be Saved in the Ways Gentiles Get Saved, Not the Other Way Around.