

The Realm of Righteousness # 12

Romans 4: 9-12

While moving through the book of Romans, it has become evident that Paul dealt with many who sought an alternative means of salvation instead of saving faith in Christ. This chapter deals exclusively with the human approach contrasted by the biblical standard. Paul knew salvation was by grace through faith in Christ alone, and yet he continually encountered those who sought to be justified through other means.

We have established that men typically seek justification one of two ways: through personal works and deeds or through obedience to religious traditions and rituals. We know that neither of these will achieve salvation. Paul dealt with the arguments posed by many regarding personal works and achievement in the opening verses. Our text tonight deals with the argument of justification being achieved through obedience to religious tradition and rituals.

These assumptions and arguments remain today. Many are seeking an alternative route to salvation instead of faith in Christ alone. Let's examine the [assertions](#) Paul makes regarding this faulty approach as we consider: [The Realm of Righteousness](#).

I. The Explanation of Righteousness (9) – [Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.](#) Again Paul seeks to address the faulty approach to salvation and reveal the error it promotes. Consider:

A. The Argument (9a) – [Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?](#) We are aware that Paul was dealing with many who were Jewish or those who had been influenced by their doctrine and teaching. Was salvation reserved only for those who had been circumcised, a religious practice of the Jews in accordance to the law, or was it available to the Gentiles as well, those who did not adhere to the practice of circumcision? In essence Paul dealt with the argument that circumcision was essential for salvation.

- The Jews were convinced that circumcision guaranteed salvation. Most believed a circumcised Jew would never face condemnation of God. They were placing their eternal hope and assurance in this physical observance. For them, circumcision was a permanent mark and could not be removed; thus in their mind, guaranteeing acceptance of God.
- As we have discussed, this sounds absurd to us, but our society and its expectations are no different. We may not rely on circumcision, but many are relying on other religious acts or traditions to gain entrance to heaven. Many today are depending solely upon baptism as a rite of passage and acceptance to God. Some rely on their membership within a local congregation.

Some depend upon memorizing Scripture and passing a test, being assured this will result in salvation. Others require partaking of the sacraments in communion.

B. The Answer (9b) – [for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness](#). Paul makes no mention of the fact that Abraham was circumcised. He doesn't mention his works of obedience or adherence to the commands of God. It was faith that resulted in the righteousness of Abraham. His faith alone secured a right relationship with God, plus or minus nothing. It wasn't his works or religious practices plus faith; it was faith in God alone! [Gen.15:6 – And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.](#)

- The same holds true today. Salvation is not achieved through our works, personal obedience, good deeds, or adherence to the law. Salvation is a work of God's marvelous grace through faith. Faith alone secures salvation. [Eph.2:8-9 – For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ^{\[9\]} Not of works, lest any man should boast.](#)

II. The Examination of Righteousness (10) – [How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.](#) Here Paul closely examines the righteousness of Abraham. Consider again:

A. The Argument (10a) – [How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision?](#) Some of the Jews were willing to accept the concept of faith, but they refused to release the requirement of circumcision. They were asking: When did Abraham express his faith in God? When was he counted righteous because of faith? Did God view him as righteous before the circumcision or only after the circumcision?

- Do you see the danger here? Some may have been willing to embrace faith, but they refused to accept that faith alone was enough. In their minds, God couldn't have possibly declared Abraham righteous prior to circumcision. They believed faith was good, but it wasn't enough.
- Do we not continue to deal with this mentality and approach to salvation today? Many will agree that faith is an essential element of salvation, but they expect other actions or deeds be accomplished along with faith. Many believe it is faith plus baptism. Some believe it is faith plus a confirmation through devoted study. Some believe it is faith plus particular works or deeds. They hold the same argument as the Jews. They may admit that God is pleased with faith, but question when He regards one as righteous. Many feel that it is only obtained after one submits to an act such as circumcision along with faith.

B. The Answer (10b) – *Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision*. I can almost hear the disgusted gasps as this was read publicly among many Jews. Paul emphatically declares that Abraham was counted righteous of God through faith prior to being circumcised. God viewed Abraham righteous while he was still uncircumcised. The father of their faith was actually viewed as righteous in the eyes of God before he submitted to the ritual they viewed essential for salvation. Many would reject this teaching of Paul, but I am certain it caused some to search the Scriptures and examine their faith. Paul clearly revealed that faith alone secured Abraham's righteousness.

- For me this affirms a liberating truth: salvation is obtained by grace through faith! Surely works and religious observances will follow genuine salvation, but they are not a prerequisite of salvation; nor do they secure salvation. I was counted righteous by God the very moment I believed in the finished work of Christ by faith. God didn't demand others works be accomplished along with my faith. When faith is recognized and acted upon, seeing the need for Christ and embracing Him as Lord, salvation is granted that instant! Salvation isn't something we do; it has already been done. We are not working to obtain it, but simply receiving it by faith!

III. The Expression of Righteousness (11-12) – Here Paul deals with how our righteousness is expressed and revealed in our lives. He speaks of:

A. Our Submission (11a) – *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised*; This deals with the submissive obedience of Abraham to God. His circumcision served as a sign and a seal of his relationship with God. It did not secure righteousness, but it bore witness of it. The *sign of circumcision* speaks of the daily reminder Abraham had of his relationship with God. The *seal of circumcision* speaks of an outward reminder of inner importance. Seals were typically placed on documents or scrolls of importance, stamped with the signet of authority. The circumcision reminded Abraham of the inward change that took place through his relationship with the Lord. Each day Abraham was reminded of the need to follow God in obedience, just as he had through circumcision.

- Paul also deals with the association of all who believe by faith with Abraham. The Jews claimed him as their spiritual father, but the Gentiles could associate with Abraham as well. This wasn't promoting worship of men or placing Abraham on a level reserved for God, but it served as a challenge to all people of faith to follow the example of submission and obedience Abraham gave. Just as his circumcision served as a sign and seal of obedience, our submission does also. It doesn't secure salvation, but it is evident in the lives of those who have received salvation.

B. Our Justification (11b) – *that righteousness might be imputed unto them also*: Faith secured righteousness for Abraham. He was counted righteous because of faith. Through faith he was justified in the eyes of God. It wasn't obtained through circumcision or works of the flesh. The righteousness of God was imputed to Abraham through faith.

- The same is true today. We are not justified by our works or deeds. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to our account through saving faith in Him. Our works will never reconcile us to God, but faith in the sacrifice of His Son will. When we trust Christ for salvation through faith, God places His righteousness on our account; trading the guilt and sin we had for righteousness. That is our only hope.

C. Our Sanctification (12) – *And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised*. This serves as a challenge to all, Jew and Gentile alike, to follow the example Abraham left of faithfulness and submission. He surrendered his life to the will of God and grew in his faith as he walked with the Lord. His relationship with the Lord grew and matured as he walked by faith.

- Abraham is one of many examples we find in Scripture. His life challenges all who follow Christ. Being saved and forgiven of sin is wonderful, but it is only the beginning. Following salvation we are to grow in the Lord, becoming more like Him as we walk and serve Him. Our lives are to be lived in submission to Christ, growing and maturing in our faith. We ought to resemble the Lord more today than at the moment we were saved. Abraham's life and faith grew as he walked with God and ours should be no different. Those who are genuinely saved will have a desire to walk with the Lord and follow His will for their lives.

Conclusion: This passage is greatly needed in our day. We live in a religious society that lacks spiritual fruit. Many attend church services and claim association with Christ, but I wonder what they are depending on for salvation. There must have been a moment when they realized their lost condition, trusting Christ by faith for salvation. Doing good works or following religious traditions may promote good morals, but it does not save.

I am glad that I heard the truth of the Gospel and responded to the Lord by faith. Where do you stand today? What are you depending on for acceptance to God? If you are depending on anything but faith in Christ, you are lacking. Follow Abraham's example and respond to Christ by faith!