



THE ACCOUNT OF ABRAHAM (PART I, Sect.2)

Circumcision: Sign or Seal?

Chapter 4:9-12

TERMINOLOGY COMMON TO ROMANS 3:27-31 AND ROMANS 4

Boasting; Boast	3:27	4:2
Works; to work	3:27, 28	4:2, 4-6
Law	3:27, 28, 31	4:13, 14, 15 (2x), 16
Declare righteous; righteousness	3:28, 30	4:2, 3, 5 (2x), 6, 9, 11 (2x) 13, 22
Conclude; credit; charge	3:28	4:3-6, 8-11, 22-24
Faith; believe	3:27, 28, 30	4:3, 5 (2x), 9, 11 (2x), 12-14, 16 (2x), 17-20, 24

Paul's primary Scriptural validation for the teaching of Romans in 3:21-31
(righteousness of God through faith apart from works) will now be the narrative account of Abraham (Gen. 12-24).

Adapted from
Middendorf, *Romans*,
p. 313.

Affirmation from David



Romans
4:6-8

⁶Just as David also pronounces the blessing of the person to whom God is crediting righteousness apart from works. ⁷Blessed are those whose lawless acts were forgiven and whose sins were covered over. ⁸Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD will in no way charge [to his account].

The Holy Spirit, through Paul, is telling you that a person's blessedness lies in the fact that their lawless acts "were forgiven!" In Hebrew, it means that one's sins were "lifted up, taken away!"

Affirmation from David



Romans
4:6-8

⁶Just as David also pronounces the blessing of the person to whom God is crediting righteousness apart from works. ⁷Blessed are those whose lawless acts were forgiven and whose sins were covered over. ⁸Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD will in no way charge [to his account].

Furthermore, your sins “*were covered over.*” This term is a *Divine Passive!*

In other words, God did the covering over...for you!

Affirmation from David

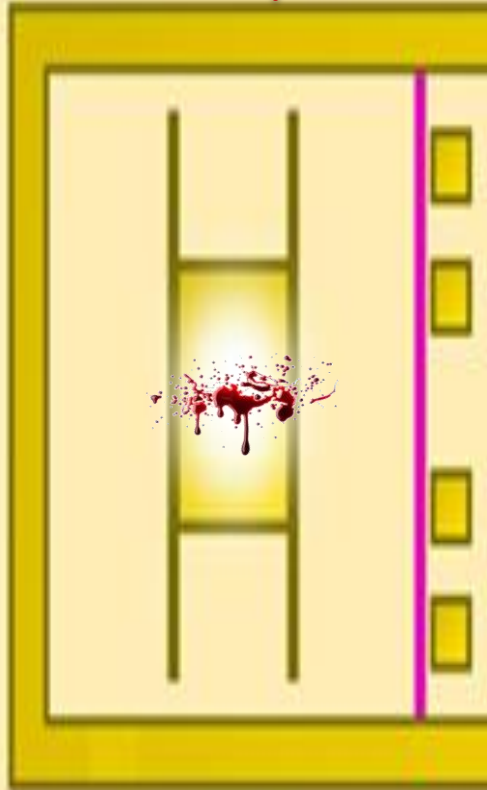


Romans
4:6-8

⁶Just as David also pronounces the blessing of the person to whom God is crediting righteousness apart from works. ⁷Blessed are those whose lawless acts were forgiven and whose sins were covered over. ⁸ Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD will in no way charge [to his account].

The verbs, both in Hebrew and Greek, bring to mind the OT picture of the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement; the blood applied to the “Mercy Seat”; and the sacrificial blood of Lev. 16!!!

Most Holy
Place
יהושב

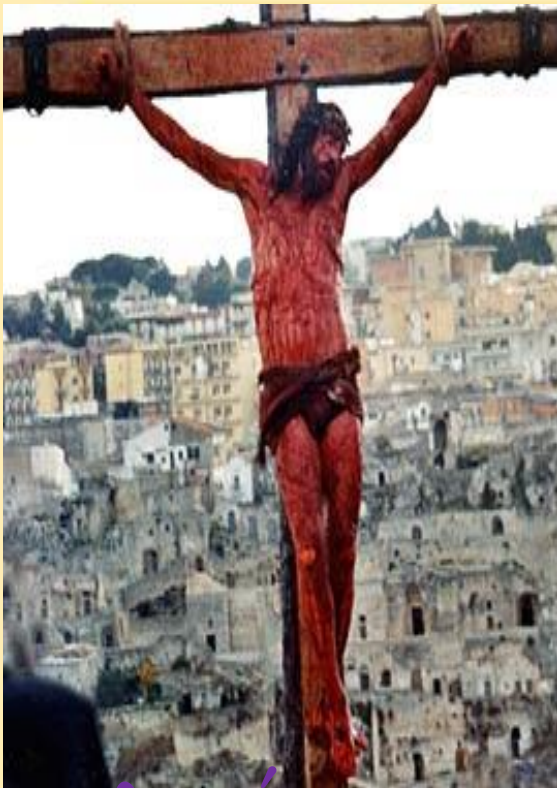


Ark of the
Covenant

⁶Just as David also pronounces the blessing of the person to whom God is crediting righteousness apart from works. ⁷Blessed are those whose lawless acts were forgiven and whose sins were covered over. ⁸ Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD will in no way charge [to his account].

Lastly, David speaks about the Lord not crediting or, better yet, not “*charging*” sin against a person (you)! Thus, your faith in God is credited for a declaration of righteousness...this is a **BLESSING!**

Most Holy
Place



λογίσηται
Ark of the
Covenant

⁶Just as David also pronounces the blessing of the person to whom God is crediting righteousness apart from works. ⁷Blessed are those whose lawless acts were forgiven and whose sins were covered over. ⁸Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD will in no way charge [to his account].

Lastly, David speaks about the Lord not crediting or, better yet, not “*charging*” sin against a person (you)! Thus, your faith in God is credited for a declaration of righteousness...this is a BLESSING!

Circumcision as Sign and Seal



Romans
4:9-12

⁹Is this blessing then upon the circumcised, or is it also upon the uncircumcised? For we are saying the faith was credited to Abraham for righteousness. ¹⁰How then was it credited? While being in [the state of] circumcision or in [the state of] uncircumcision. ¹¹And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith, the [righteousness credited to him] in the [state of] uncircumcision in order that he might be father of all those who believe through uncircumcision, so that the righteousness might be credited also to them,

Circumcision as Sign and Seal



Romans
4:9-12

¹²and [in order that he might be] father of the circumcised, to those not from circumcision only, but to those who also follow [in] the footsteps of the faith of our father Abraham which [he had while he was]in [the state of] uncircumcision.

Paul proceeds by reintroducing the distinction between the circumcised and the uncircumcised (thus, he is referring to the Jew and Gentile)!

Circumcision as Sign and Seal



Romans
4:9

9 Is this blessing then upon the circumcised, or is it also upon the uncircumcised? For we are saying the faith was credited to Abraham for righteousness.

Paul continues with his teaching by using diatribe. You may have noticed that the first part of his question is left unchallenged! Paul doesn't make circumcision and **either/or in relation to the blessing we have just discussed.**

Circumcision as Sign and Seal



Romans
4:9

⁹Is this blessing then upon the circumcised, or is it also upon the uncircumcised? For we are saying the faith was credited to Abraham for righteousness.

So Paul interjects what he has previously asserted (for the third time) as he reminds the church...*we are saying the faith was credited to Abraham for righteousness.*

Paul is replicating the thought of Gen. 15:6 – *“And he believed in YHWH and He imputed it to him for righteousness.”*

Circumcision as Sign and Seal



Romans
4:10

¹⁰How then was it credited? While being in [the state of] circumcision or in [the state of] uncircumcision.

Was righteousness credited to Abraham, “*While being in [the state of] circumcision or in [the state of] uncircumcision?*”

Paul answers: “...not in [the state of] circumcision, but in [the state of] uncircumcision” (v.11).

Let's review Gen. 17.

Circumcision as Sign and Seal



Romans
4:11

*¹¹ And he received the sign of circumcision ,
a seal of the righteousness of faith, the
[righteousness credited to him] in the [state
of] uncircumcision in order that he might be
father of all those who believe through
uncircumcision, so that the righteousness
might be credited also to them,*

It was 400 years before the Law was
given through Moses that Abraham
properly and passively: “...*received*
the sign of circumcision....”

Circumcision as Sign and Seal



Romans
4:11

*¹¹ And he received the sign of circumcision ,
a seal of the righteousness of faith, the
[righteousness credited to him] in the [state
of] uncircumcision in order that he might be
father of all those who believe through
uncircumcision, so that the righteousness
might be credited also to them,*

Notice the word “sign!” The
Scriptural basis is Gen. 17:11!

God said circumcision will be a:

אוֹת בְּרִית = (ot berit) = (σημείον)

Let's review Gal. 3:16-18!

Circumcision as Sign and Seal



Romans
4:11

*¹¹ And he received the sign of circumcision ,
a seal of the righteousness of faith, the
[righteousness credited to him] in the [state
of] uncircumcision in order that he might be
father of all those who believe through
uncircumcision, so that the righteousness
might be credited also to them,*

So the sign of circumcision served a positive function, since it was God's seal of that righteousness for Abraham, as well as for those who similarly received circumcision.

Circumcision as Sign and Seal



Romans
4:11

**This is how our Lutheran
confessors addressed this issue in
the Apology:**

*“By faith his [Abraham] justification
was already accomplished, but
circumcision was added to give him
a sign written in his body by which
he might be reminded and grow in
faith, and through his witness testify
to his faith before others and induce
them to believe.”*

[Ap IV 201]

Circumcision as Sign and Seal



Romans
4:11

ADDENDUM

Beginning in Gen 17, circumcision was received on the eighth day of an infant males life. As a result, the practice of infant Baptism logically flowed from the practice of infant circumcision. This 1,800-year precedent explains why the issue was not a matter of debate in the early church.

Remember Rom. 2:29 – *“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.”*

Circumcision as Sign and Seal



Romans
4:12

¹²and [in order that he might be] father of the circumcised, to those not from circumcision only, but to those who also follow [in] the footsteps of the faith of our father Abraham which [he had while he was] in [the state of] uncircumcision.

It is startling to learn that Abraham is now specifically identified as the father of the “*uncircumcision*.” Notice that Paul states that faith rests upon the God who declares the ungodly righteous (v.5). Now he affirms that the uncircumcised who believe have this righteousness credited also to them!



Romans
4:12

Conclusion

Abraham's fatherhood applies not simply to those who are circumcised, but to those who are circumcised AND who walk in the footsteps of his faith. Since Abraham had faith and was credited with righteousness while uncircumcised, the same is true for the uncircumcised who also follow in the footsteps of Abraham's faith.

The key word is the Greek verb:

λογίζομαι, “to credit; charge.” All works and boasting is excluded. Instead, **FAITH** passively receives a declared righteousness, which is credited to **YOU!**



THE ACCOUNT OF ABRAHAM (PART II, Sect. 1)

Through the Law
or
Through Faith?

**Next
Week**

ROMANS 4:13-17a

