

Abraham's Justification and His Circumcision (vv. 9-12)

VERSE 9 Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also

(ὁ μακαρισμὸς οὖν οὗτος ἐπὶ τὴν περιτομὴν ἢ καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ἀκροβυστίαν; [*d.a.w/noun nom.m.s. makarismos blessing + conj ou + pro.nom.m.s. houtos + prep epi + d.a.w/noun acc.f.s. peritome + conj e or + conj. kai also + prep epi + d.a.w/noun acc.f.s. akrobustia uncircumcision*]?)?"

For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS (λέγομεν

γάρ, Ἐλογίσθη τῷ Ἀβραάμ ἡ πίστις εἰς δικαιοσύνην. [*pres.act.ind.1p. lego + conj gar + aor.pass.ind.2s. logizomai + d.a.w/noun dat.m.s. Abraham + d.a.w/noun nom.f.s. pistis + prep eis + noun acc.f.s. dikaiosune*])."

VERSE 10 How then was it credited (πῶς οὖν ἐλογίσθη; [*adv pos how? + conj ou + aor.pass.ind.3s. logizomai*]?)

While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised (ἐν περιτομῇ ὄντι ἢ ἐν ἀκροβυστίᾳ; [*prep en + noun loc.f.s. peritome + conj. e or + prep en + noun loc.f.s. akrobustia*]?)

Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised (οὐκ ἐν περιτομῇ ἀλλ' ἐν ἀκροβυστίᾳ; [*neg ouk + prep en + noun loc.f.s. peritome + conj. alla + prep en + noun loc.f.s. akrobustia*]);

VERSE 11 and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness

of the faith which he had while uncircumcised (καὶ σημεῖον ἔλαβεν περιτομῆς σφραγίδα τῆς δικαιοσύνης τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐν τῇ ἀκροβυστίᾳ [*conj kai + noun acc.nt.s. semeion sign + aor.act.ind.3s. lambano + noun gen.f.s. peritome + noun acc.f.s. sphragis seal + d.a.w/noun gen.f.s. dikaiosune + d.a.w/noun gen.f.s. pistis faith + d.a.gen.f.s. e which + prep en + d.a.w/noun loc.f.s. akrobustia*]), **so that he might be the father of all who believe**

without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them [εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πατέρα πάντων τῶν πιστευόντων δι' ἀκροβυστίας, εἰς τὸ λογισθῆναι [*καὶ*] αὐτοῖς [*τὴν*] δικαιοσύνην [*prep eis + d.a.w/pres.act.infin. eimi + pro.acc.m.s. autos + noun acc.m.s.*

pater father + adj.gen.m.p. pas + d.a.w/pres.act.part.gen.m.p. pisteuo + prep dia + noun gen.f.s. akrobustia + prep eis + d.a.w/aor.pass.infin. logizomai + pro.dat.m.p. autos + noun acc.f.s. dikaiosune]),

VERSE 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 (καὶ πατέρα περιτομῆς τοῖς οὐκ ἐκ περιτομῆς μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς στοιχοῦσιν τοῖς ἴχνεσιν τῆς ἐν ἀκροβυστία πίστεως τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀβραάμ [conj kai + noun nom.m.s. pater + noun gen.f.s. peritome + d.a.dat.m.p. ho “to those” + neg ouk + prep ek + noun gen.f.s. peritome + adv. monon only + conj. alla + conj. kai also + d.a.w/pres.act.part.loc.m.p. stoicheo walk; conduct + d.a.w/jnoun loc.nt.p. ichnos footstep + d.a.w/noun gen.f.s. pistis + prep en + noun loc.f.s. akrobustia + d.a.w/noun gen.m.s. pater + pro.gen.m.p. ego + noun gen.m.s. Abraham]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 9-12

1. Paul brings the timing of Abraham’s circumcision in relationship to his justification by faith into the forefront.
2. We must keep in mind the preeminence of Abraham in Jewish tradition.
3. “This blessing” refers to the forgiveness of pre-salvation sins and the non-imputation of the unpardonable sin in conjunction with saving faith that brings to the individual the imputation of +R.
4. The Jewish position is that an uncircumcised person cannot enter the kingdom of God.
5. So Paul once again exposes the fallacy of the Jewish position relative to circumcision and salvation.
6. Rhetorically, Paul poses the question: “Is this blessing on the circumcised or on the uncircumcised also?”
7. The knee-jerk response of the Jew would be that it is only reserved for one who is circumcised.
8. What follows in the timing of Abraham’s circumcision exposes the Jewish distortion with respect to circumcision; namely, that it is essential to eternal blessedness.
9. “For we say” is to be regarded as an assertion that cannot be questioned—it is an established fact recognized by Jews and Christians.
10. That is, it is something universally accepted by all who hold that Scripture is God’s word.
11. And that is, what is quoted from Gen. 15:6.
12. “Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness” means that Abraham gave God faith in the promise of a coming Messiah and God credited his faith as righteousness.
13. This is equivalent to “Abraham was justified (e.g., saved) by faith.”

14. Having asserted this admitted premise, Paul proceeds to the issue which is pivotal at this point, “How then was it credited?” (v. 10a).
15. Stated another way, “under what circumstances as to Abraham’s status” was faith credited as +R.
16. Was it “while he was circumcised or uncircumcised?”
17. Had Abraham been in a condition of circumcision then his justification would not have the same cogency in the present argument.
18. Hebrews after him who were justified by faith were in a state of circumcision.
19. Paul’s answer: “Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised” is something that the Jews completely missed!
20. So what is affirmed in Gen. 15:6 means that circumcision was no factor at all in Abraham’s justification.
21. Abraham was born in 1946 BC and was called by God when he was 75 years of age (Gal. 3:8; Acts 7:2).
22. We do not know at what age he became a believer, but it was well before his circumcision at age 99.
23. Also, it should be pointed out that circumcision as a divinely authorized ritual did not even exist until it was instituted by God (Gen. 17:10-27).
24. We learn from verse 11 that circumcision as a ritual was instituted as the “sign” of the Abraham Covenant.
25. He received this “sign” in his flesh by a simple surgical procedure.
26. The words “a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised” indicates authentication.
27. A seal presupposes the existence of the thing sealed, and a seal does not add to the content of the thing sealed.
28. A sign points to the existence of that which it signifies, whereas a seal confirms and guarantees the genuineness of that which is signified.
29. In Gen. 17:10-14 circumcision is clearly stated as the sign of the covenant.
30. God reiterated the covenant on these occasions: Gen. 15:4-6, 18-21; 17:1-21 after its initial offer in Gen. 12:1-3.
31. The implication of the fact that Abraham had justifying faith before the seal/sign was instituted is stated in vv. 11b-12.
32. The purpose was that Abraham might be the father of all who believe even in uncircumcision based on +R imputed to those who exercise faith.
33. Verse 12a includes circumcised Jews who like Abraham attain justification by faith while circumcised (all Jewish males on the 8th day).
34. Abraham was the very first Hebrew to be circumcised so fittingly he is “the father/ancestor of circumcision.”
35. In v. 12b Paul takes the discussion to another level with the phrase “who also follow in the steps of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.”
36. The “steps” of Abraham are the three adjustments to God: Ph 1 justification, Rebound, and the maturity adjustment.
37. He functioned under the viewpoint and operational will of God.
38. Included is his willingness to drastically alter his lifestyle from living in a prosperous city (Ur) and separating from his relatives (part of the agreement; see Heb. 11:8).

39. He lived by faith and cracked the maturity barrier at age 100 (25 years after his call) when he passed the faith-test in regards to an heir (see below).
 40. His greatest application involved Isaac (Heb. 11:17; Jam. 2:21-23) where he achieved the designation “friend of God.”

Eternal Inheritance thru Faith (vv. 13-17)

VERSE 13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants [seed] that he would be heir of the world was not through [the] Law, but through [the]

righteousness of faith (Οὐ γὰρ διὰ νόμου ἢ ἐπαγγελία τῷ Ἀβραάμ ἢ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ, τὸ κληρονόμον αὐτὸν εἶναι κόσμου, ἀλλὰ διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως [*neg. ou + conj gar + prep dia + noun gen.m.s. nomos law + d.a.w/noun nom.f.s. epagnelia promise + d.a.w/noun dat.m.s. Abraham + conj e or + d.a.w/noun dat.nt.s. sperma seed, descendants + pro.gen.m.s. autos + d.a.w/noun acc.m.s. kleronomos heir + pro.acc.m.s. autos + pres.act.infin. eimi + noun gen.m.s. kosmos + conj alla + prep dia through + noun gen.f.s. dikaiosune + noun gen.m.s. pistis*]).

VERSE 14 For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified (εἰ γὰρ οἱ ἐκ νόμου κληρονόμοι, κεκένωται ἡ πίστις καὶ κατήρηται ἡ

ἐπαγγελία [*part. ei if + conj gar + d.a.w/noun nom.m.p. kleronomos heir + prep ek + noun gen.m.s. nomos + pf.pass.ind.3s. keno make void, of no effect + d.a.w/noun nom.f.s. pistis + conj kai + pf.pass.ind.3s. katargeo render ineffective, void + d.a.w/noun nom.f.s. dpagnelia promise*]);

VERSE 15 for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is

no violation (ὁ γὰρ νόμος ὀργὴν κατεργάζεται· οὐδὲ δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος οὐδὲ παράβασις [*conj gar + d.a.w/noun nom.m.s. nomos + noun acc.f.s. orge + pres.dep.ind.3s. katergazomia accomplish, bring about + adv. ou where + conj. de + neg. ouk + pres.act.ind. 3s. eimi + noun nom.m.s. nomos + adv. oude neither + noun nom.f.s. parabasis transgression*]).

VERSE 16 For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace (διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ πίστεως, ἵνα κατὰ χάριν, [*conj. dia + pro.acc.nt.s. houtos* “For this reason” + *prep ek + noun gen.f.s. pistis + conj. hina + prep kata + noun acc.f.s. charis grace*], **so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants** [εἰς τὸ εἶναι βεβαίαν τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν παντὶ τῷ σπέρματι, [*prep eis + d.a.w/pres.act.infin. eimi + adj.acc.f.s. bebaios guaranteed + adj.dat.nt.s. pas + d.a.w/noun dat.nt.s. sperma seed*], **not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all** [οὐ τῷ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ, ὅς ἐστιν πατὴρ πάντων ἡμῶν [*neg ou + d.a.dat.nt.s. “to those” + prep ek + d.a.w/noun gen.m.s. nomos + adv. monon only + conj. alla + conj. kai also + prep ek + d.a.w/noun gen.f.s. pistis + noun gen.m.s. Abraham + pro.nom.m.s. hos + pres.act.ind.3s. eimi + noun nom.m.s. pater + adj.gen.m.p. pas + pro.gen.m.p. ego*]),

VERSE 17 (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") **in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist** (καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι Πατέρα πολλῶν ἐθνῶν τέθεικά σε, κατέναντι οὗ ἐπίστευσεν θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶοποιούντος τοὺς νεκροὺς καὶ καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα [*conj. kathos just as + pf.pass.ind.3s. grapho + conj. hoti + noun acc.m.s. pater + adj.gen.nt.p. pollon many + noun gen.m.p. ethnos nation + pf.act.ind.1s. tithemi make, appoint + pro.acc.s. su + prep katenanti in the presence of + pro.gen.m.s. hos + aor.act.ind.3s. pisteuo + noun gen.m.s. theos + d.a.w/pres.act.part.gen.m.s. zopoieo make alive, give life to + d.a.w/adj.acc.m.p. nekros dead + conj. kai + pres.act.part.gen.m.s. kaleo call + d.a.w/pres.act.part.acc.nt.p. eimi; “into being” + neg. me + conj. hos + pres.act.part.acc.nt.p. eimi “not exist”*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 13-17

1. In verse 13 the argument for justification by faith versus works moves from the topic of circumcision as a non-essential for salvation to the antithesis between *law* and *promise* (cf. vss. 13, 14, 16, 22, 23, 24).
2. Proof was derived from the OT that justification is by faith.
3. “The promise to Abraham” is that through his “seed” all nations of the earth would be blessed.
4. The question in reference to Abraham’s seed is answered by Gal. 3:16 where the “seed” is clearly Christ.
5. Abraham’s seed refers to the promised Messiah (Gen. 12:3c “And in you all families of the earth will be blessed.”).
6. The initial iteration of the Abrahamic Covenant is found in Gen. 12:1-3 when Abraham was called while living in Ur (age 75).
7. The messianic promise was that Abraham and his seed would inherit the world (the use of “seed” in v. 13).
8. This will be realized at the establishment of the 1000 year reign of Christ followed by the new creation (earth 2).
9. The realization of this promise “was not through law”, that is, obedience to a moral code.
10. “Law” here is a reference to commandments demanding obedience and so applies to all law which articulates right and wrong behavior from the divine viewpoint.
11. Of course the Mosaic Law is the most articulate and impressive revelation of moral behavior as it came directly from God.
12. Law here should not be confined to the Mosaic era.
13. Here “law” is taken in the sense argued for in 3:31.
14. The antithesis between promise and law to be valid must here refer to law as that which defines sin.
15. The Mosaic Law came 430 years after the promise.
16. Paul asserts that to be “heir of the world” is “through the righteousness of faith” (e.g. through a righteousness that comes by faith).
17. In v. 14 there is again a hypothetical 1st class condition which pits law against promise.
18. If salvation and its blessing of inheritance of the world are via law then “faith” is made of no effect and “the promise is nullified.”
19. The promise is related to the coming seed of Abraham (Jesus Christ) in which all families of the earth can be blessed.
20. What law does for the individual is it brings wrath (e.g., the wrath of God; v. 15a) as it exposes the individual as falling short of +R.
21. A moral code must exist to define transgressions and where there is no law there is no violation and therefore no punishment (wrath).
22. “The Law” here with the definite article refers to the Mosaic Law that defines sin and punishment.
23. In the absence of law there is no violation and no punishment to match the violation.
24. V. 15b (“but where there is no law, there is also no violation”) explains v. 15a (“for the Law brings about wrath”).
25. Again, the Law’s wrath is the wrath of God which brings punishment for sin.
26. Here the wrath is the wrath that comes due to lack of + R for those who rely on the works of the law.

27. "For this reason" is an inference drawn from the inability of law (works) to produce the desired results-forgiveness and justification.
28. Only faith in the promise can achieve salvation.
29. Faith is compatible with grace and not the works of law.
30. And faith correlates with the promise of heirs of the world via the coming seed of Abraham now fully realized as of the 1st Advent.
31. "The descendants" of Abraham in v. 16 fall into two classifications: Jews ("those who are of the Law") and Gentiles "who are of the (same) faith of Abraham."
32. Abraham is the designated pattern of Ph 1 salvation and so he "is the father of us all."
33. Only by faith based on God's grace can the Ph 3 promise "be guaranteed to all the descendants" who follow the example of Abraham.
34. The appeal to Scripture in v. 17 is to corroborate the phrase "who is the father of us all" as well as vv. 11 & 12.
35. Here the stress is upon the world-wide community or right and privilege in the fatherhood of Abraham.
36. This universality is an ethnic one as per "a father of many nations have I made you."
37. This in a fashion surpasses the expression in vv. 11 & 12 which has Abraham as the father of the circumcised and the uncircumcised who are believers.
38. On each occasion when the covenant was presented to Abraham he exercised faith.
39. The quote here is from Gen. 17:5 where the Lord modified Abraham's name and instituted the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant.
40. The promise given on this occasion was met with faith "in the presence of Him who he believed."
41. The two clauses which follow in verse 17 "who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist" are descriptive of the divine attribute of omnipotence.
42. The first "who gives life to the dead" has in view the life-giving ability by which God can raise the dead to life.
43. In Scripture this is regarded as the peculiar index of divine omnipotence Paul indicates in Eph. 1:19, 20.
44. It is because Abraham had faith in this attribute of God raising the dead that he could have believed in the promise of fatherhood of many nations.
45. Resurrection of the righteous dead (believers) is the only thing that makes the promise meaningful, as Abraham is not the father of the dead!
46. Only in this way could Abraham be the father of many nations and with the converts from those nations throughout history could Abraham see the end result.
47. The second clause presents more of a difficulty.
48. It has been interpreted as God's ability to create out-of-nothing.
49. The translation "and calls into being that which does not exist" is misleading.
50. It should read: "and calls the things not existing as existing."
51. So in this formula the non-existing things are regarded as existing.
52. These things do not yet exist, but since they are determined by God they are "called" by Him as having existence.
53. The certainty of the future realization is just as secure as if they had come to pass.
54. And this includes all events from the call of Abraham to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth onward to the eternal state.

55. What God determined and promised should come to pass, though not fulfilled, and is spoken of as if they had been fulfilled.
56. The things were not in the category of the possible but in the category of determined certainty (Heb. 11:1 “Now faith is the assurance *of things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”).