

♦ Romans 4:9-12

“⁹Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. ¹⁰How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. ¹¹He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, ¹²and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.”

Seeing the Absurdities of Addition

It Switches “Befores” and “Afters”

Vs.10 - “...was it before or after...?”

It Confuses Signs and Substance

Vs. 11 - “he received the sign...of the righteousness he [already] had.”

It Exalts Personal Callings into Universal Commands

Vs. 11 - “to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised.”

“We are saved by *grace alone*, through *faith alone*, in *Christ alone*, to *God alone* be the glory.”

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS 06.09.24

Getting Started

Recite this together as a group: **“We are saved by *grace alone*, through *faith alone*, in *Christ alone*, to *God alone* be the glory.”**

For some people, it’s the word “alone” they find difficult to believe, not the words “grace,” “faith,” and “Christ.” What could be challenging about that word?

Digging Deeper (Read Romans 4:9-12)

1. Verse 9 starts out “is this blessing...”. What *blessing* is Paul talking about?

2. Read the full question in verse 9. Some believed the “blessing” of verses 6-8 required circumcision.
 - a) Survey Acts 15 and the book of Galatians and discuss how this idea impacted the early church.

 - b) Do some research on how Jews in Jesus day esteemed circumcision. Share with the group.

3. Read verse 10. Paul says the blessing of salvation is very different than circumcision. He makes that point using some chronology from Abraham’s life.
 - a) What is the argument?

 - b) Examine Genesis 15-17 and discuss the force of his argument.

4. Though it may not seem like it, Paul’s discussion of circumcision is critical for understanding the gospel. It helps especially when we replace the word “circumcision” with things we should do as Christians. What Christian things could we put in the place of circumcision?

5. According to verses 9 & 10, *what* was before and *what* was after? What does that tell you about your relationship with the Christian things you listed in the previous question?

6. Circumcision was a *sign*.

- a) What is a *sign*? What is it not?
- b) Give silly examples of mistaking signs for the thing they signify.
- c) How did some Jews make that mistake?
- d) How can Christians make that mistake too?

7. It is ridiculous to confuse signs with what they point too. It is also ridiculous to confuse our little acts of obedience with the Righteousness of Jesus that keeps us safe and secure. Give examples of how our best acts of righteousness are nothing compared to Jesus' acts and life of righteousness.

8. Read verse 11. We discover that "circumcision" wasn't a sign for everyone receiving the blessing of salvation. Some Jews insisted that it had to be. On Sunday Pastor Jake said that we sometimes take things we are passionate about and make them the standard for whether a person is a good Christian.

- a) Discuss some examples of how you and others have done this.
- b) How does this 'add' to what Jesus did?

9. Do you remember the exercise Pastor Jake left us with to check the tendency to make our callings and passions standards and requirement for everyone else? What was it?

Resources

Romans: *Righteousness from Heaven* | R. Kent Hughes.

www.blueletterbible.org

www.preceptaustin.org