

With the rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, the tables have been turned. Instead of being upon more privileged ground with superior revelations from God than the Gentiles, a Jew must now come to God on the same ground that the Gentiles always had available. The Law was not abolished by the Cross but was established, for God honored its righteousness by providing His Son as a ransom for those who could not keep it. But in doing so He also proclaimed that none except Jesus Christ had kept it or could keep it. All others could only come on the principle of faith, for all have sinned and as sinners their works and righteous acts are useless. Faith is the means by which the sinner appropriates to himself the offer and promises God makes to him. Faith itself has no saving virtue. It is what is believed that saves. There is only one Faith for faith to believe.

Now Paul speaks of Abraham. Why? The Jews held Abraham in highest regard and rightly so. God does too. There were many Jews in Rome and many of the Gentile Romans knew of the Old Testament scripture and some had become proselytes of the Jewish faith. Some had become believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and were in the assembly at Rome. The mix of their Jewish faith and Christian faith must have been confusing. So what has Abraham to do with the Faith Paul has just presented? Everything! Abraham was justified by faith, not works, **before** the Law of Moses was even given,. Paul here releases us from the apparent conflicting messages from God's word and resolves the confusion. He does this by citing a highly regarded spiritual ancestor common to both Jewish and Gentile believers who had placed their faith in Jesus Christ, Abraham. He believed God and his trust was counted to him for righteousness. Now Abram, later renamed Abraham by God, demonstrated his faith before men and God by his works. James makes that point, James 2:16-26. Faith without works is dead. But the works simply result from and publically declare the reality of the person's faith in Christ. in the inward heart.

Ephesians 2:8 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. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Paul again cites more than one prestigious witness, David.

Psalms 32 A Psalm of David, Maschil.

1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. 3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. 4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. 5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto

the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. 6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found:

Paul has removed the confusion. The blessedness of being counted righteous before God by faith did not come by the Law of Moses given to Israel. It didn't even come by the rite of circumcision, originally given Abram and later included in the Law of Moses. That rite was given Abram as a sign recognizing his faith believing God's promises to him that he would be the father of a multitude. Each male of that blessed multitude would be marked as part of that multitude by circumcision. Abram's faith in God was prior to circumcision, therefore circumcision has no saving virtue before God. It didn't bring blessing, but was a reminder of God's covenant of favor upon Abram and his descendants, through faith.

Then Paul makes what should have been an obvious point. But the Jews overlook it in their pride and loathing of the Gentiles. Abram's faith was first exercised when he was a Gentile. God appeared to him and called him in Ur of the Chaldees, Genesis 12:1-4; Acts 7:1-8. By believing God and acting upon his belief Abraham became **the father of all them that believe**. This faith was commemorated by the institution of circumcision long after he first believed (about 25 years). In fact God told him to be circumcised just before he miraculously fathered the heir by his wife Sarah as promised. Since this promise was given and believed long before Abram had any idea of circumcision Paul shows the principle of faith as the way to please God and be counted righteous applies to all mankind, not just Jews. What a gracious, merciful, good and blessing God.

Paul goes on to emphasize that God's blessings upon Abram or his descendants did not come through the Law. They came long before the Law. They came solely through faith in His promises. These were simply verbal promises to Abram at first, God's word. Later God incorporated them into a formal covenant sealed by sacrifices. See all of Genesis 15. He gave even more promises later.

Ironically the Law was given because Abraham's Israelite descendants did not lay hold of God's covenant with Abraham and value it for what it was, **promises**. They instead chose to exercise that very basic instinct of all sinful humanity – "all that you say **we will do**." "Doing" trumped receiving a free gift by faith. Still does for too many souls and their deceived and deceiving teachers. As was said above our "doing" **results** from our faith. Circumcision is neither a requirement for salvation nor witness to faith. Similarly, baptism is an intentional public witness of one's personal saving faith, not a requirement for salvation. Paul's other epistles clearly establish that truth. Have you put your trust in Christ alone and not in your works? Can others see our faith by our works? Can God?