

# ROMANS

## STUDY 8 | Romans 4:9-25 (ESV)

*9 Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. 10 How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. 11 He 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, 12 and 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.*

*13 For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15 For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.*

*16 That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, 17 as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. 18 In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” 19 He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. 20 No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, 21 fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. 22 That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” 23 But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, 24 but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, 25 who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*

## INTRO

This somewhat long and intricate passage of Romans can perhaps be summarized simply by saying, ‘God does not change’. Though sinful human history has introduced numerous other complexities into the story, God’s narrative and redemptive plan for the world have remained the same. There is but one true banner for God’s children and it is not found in works of the law, nor outward signs, nor tribe, tongue, or nation. The covenant of faith has preceded them all and God does not change.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

(v.11) *He [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.*

Q: The word 'seal' has numerous meanings. Look up the definition of the NOUN form of 'seal' and explain what Paul means by a 'seal of the righteousness'?

Q2: Why is this outward 'sign' or 'seal' of baptism important for each of the following?

...the individual believer?

...the community of believers?

...the unbelieving world?

(v.11-12) *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, AND 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.*

God's call to Abraham was not only to make him a father to the Jewish people 'according to the flesh' (4:1), but to make him a spiritual father to all – both Jew and Gentile (3:22; 3:29).

Q1: What does Paul say is Abraham's true legacy and the one banner that all his children champion?

Q2: What implications does this 'one banner' have for the following areas...

...The content of what we proclaim to each other and to non-believers?

...Engaging people who are different from us?

(v.14-15) *For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15 For the law brings wrath*

Q1: Paul claims that if adherents of the law achieve righteousness, it nullifies faith and God's promise through Abraham. Why? Explain.

Q2: How does the law 'bring' wrath?

Q3: If the LAW brings transgression, wrath, judgment, and condemnation, what does God's GIFT of Christ Jesus by grace through faith bring?

(v.15) *where there is no law there is no transgression.*

While it's difficult to know the exact nuances of how Paul meant the statement 'there is no transgression,' it's important here to clarify what he does NOT mean. He does NOT mean that non-Jews or non-hearers of God's law are without sin or free from accountability and judgment.

The reason we know this is Paul has repeatedly established throughout this letter that, before a holy God, all mankind finds itself 'without excuse' (1:20); and again, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (3:23). Still later in chapter 5, Paul will go on to explain how death itself is further evidence of sin's inescapable power over all living things. So it's clear Paul does not believe there are people exempt from God's righteous judgment.

Furthermore, Paul has argued that Jewish law is not the only 'law' by which mankind is condemned, but rather that both creation (1:20) and God's moral code written on men's hearts (1:32; 2:15) serve as condemning agents as well. So clearly, in Paul's mind there is no such category as 'non-hearers' of God's law. Instead he would say we all have 'heard God's law' to one sufficiently-condemning degree or another – to ALL through creation itself; to ALL through God's moral law written on every human heart; and lastly, more clearly, to God's CHOSEN PEOPLE through a specific set of commandments revealing a much greater degree of God's holiness and will for our lives.

Look at the following 2 passages, making note of the difference between Abraham and Peter's varying responses of faith to their circumstances.

*(v.19-21) He [Abraham] did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. 20 No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, 21 fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.*

*(Matthew 14:28-33) And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29 He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."*

*(Heb 11:1) Now faith is the ASSURANCE of things hoped for, the CONVICTION of things not seen.*

As opposed to 'blind faith', we see that Christian faith sees clearly both the CIRCUMSTANCES that would seem opposed to its hope and, more-importantly, the PERSON hoped in with sufficient clarity to make the hope reasonable and rational. To phrase it differently, Christian faith is believing in GOD'S faithfulness, not one's own faith or one's own circumstances.

Q1: What circumstances are currently causing you to 'weaken in faith' and doubt God's faithfulness? What does the Gospel promise regarding those circumstances?

Q2: How does the case of Abraham illustrate the difference between only believing in God, and believing God? How can his example help you strengthen your faith?\*

Q3: During the coming week, what is one practical way you can seek to strengthen your faith?

---

\*\* Taken from Redeemer Presbyterian Church's Romans Study Guide

*(v.16) That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.*

*(v.23-25) the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, 24 but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, 25 who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*

Take a few minutes in prayer to both thank God that our promises in the Gospel are ‘guaranteed’, and to ask for Him to increase your faith in HIS faithfulness, not your own.