

Romans 4:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

Analysis

Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. Paul now pivots to his most explosive question: Is this blessedness exclusive to the circumcised (epi tēn peritomēn, ἐπὶ τὴν περιτομήν) or does it extend to the uncircumcised (epi tēn akrobystian, ἐπὶ τὴν ἀκροβυστίαν)? The metonymy is clear: circumcision = Jews, uncircumcision = Gentiles. The entire structure of ethnic privilege is at stake in this question.

Paul returns to his touchstone text: "faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness" (Gen 15:6). But now the chronological question becomes urgent: when was it reckoned? The answer will demolish any claim that circumcision is necessary for justification. This is not academic theology but pastoral urgency—the church at Rome was experiencing tension between Jewish and Gentile believers, and Paul must establish that both stand on identical ground before God: faith alone, not circumcision plus faith.

Historical Context

Circumcision was the covenant sign given to Abraham in Genesis 17, marking Jewish identity and separating Israel from the nations. The Judaizing controversy that plagued Paul's ministry centered on whether Gentile converts must be circumcised to be saved (Acts 15). By demonstrating that Abraham was justified

before circumcision, Paul undermines the Judaizers' entire position and establishes the church as a community of faith transcending ethnic boundaries.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. Why does Paul frame this as a question about 'blessedness' rather than simply asking about justification?
2. How does the inclusion of Gentiles without circumcision affect Jewish identity and covenant promises?
3. In what ways do modern Christians create similar 'circumcision' requirements—external markers that supposedly validate one's standing with God?

Interlinear Text

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------|--------------------|-------------|---------------------------|---------------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| ὁ | μακαρισμὸς | οὖν | οὗτος | ἐπὶ | τὴν | περιτομὴν | ἢ |
| G3588 | blessedness | then | Cometh this | upon | G3588 | the circumcision | only or |
| | G3108 | G3767 | G3778 | G1909 | | G4061 | G2228 |
| καὶ | ἐπὶ | τὴν | ἀκροβυστίαν | λέγομεν | γάρ | ὅτι | Ἐλογίσθη |
| also | upon | G3588 | the uncircumcision | we say | for | that | was reckoned |
| G2532 | G1909 | | G203 | G3004 | G1063 | G3754 | G3049 |
| τῷ | Ἀβραάμ | ἡ | πίστις | εἰς | δικαιοσύνην | | |
| G3588 | to Abraham | G3588 | faith | for | righteousness | | |
| | G11 | | G4102 | G1519 | G1343 | | |

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 3:14 (Faith): That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Colossians 3:11 (Parallel theme): Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

Ephesians 3:8 (Parallel theme): Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

Romans 4:3 (Faith): For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

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