

Genesis 15:5-6 And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 17:9-11 And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.

Romans 4:9-12 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.

Announcements:

1. RCD Kids Volunteer Training: 3/21 11am -12pm
2. Members Meeting March 28th 11-12 right after the service
3. Next Class: Biblical Manhood & Womanhood March 26th
4. Describe the change in ropes and communion.

Genesis 17:1-14 | Father Abraham

Our Kid's have learned a song, and if you grew up in the church I bet you know it too. Father Abraham had many sons, many sons had father Abraham. Okay that part all makes sense. And it follows the promises that we've seen God offer to Abraham so far throughout Genesis. God will make Abraham's offspring like the dust of the ground and like the stars in the heavens. But what about that next verse in this children's song? I am one of them, and so are you! So let's all praise the Lord!

So did all of our kids take a 23&me to find out their jewish heritage? Remember, Abraham is not like Adam, in the sense that we all come from him, nor is he like Noah where God restarted the genetic history of humanity after the flood. He's just a guy in the world. Some people come from him genetically, most don't. But as Christians we are his children. We receive his inheritance. Today we will interpret this section of scripture through the New Testament and show why that song is true of Christians and our kids.

1. Recap: Gen 15

Genesis 15:5-6 And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

About a month ago now we looked at this passage in Genesis 15. Abraham was still experiencing a real doubt about whether or not the offspring that he was promised by God would truly be his own genetic offspring. From his own loins. The Lord walked Abraham outside and shows him the stars, and says your offspring are as certain and numerous as the stars. And Abraham simply believed the Lord. Now here is the critical moment. God looked at Abraham's faith in him, and he counted that belief as righteousness.

Now let's zero in on that word "counted." This is an important word, λογίζομαι (logizomai). It is like our word credited. It has both economic meaning, as in I'll credit your account \$1400. And relational meaning, to store up something about someone in your heart. As in, I've got to give you credit you're a real team player. It logs a permanent record of something as being there. It's like whatever blockchain is.

For God to phrase this interaction this way means righteousness is not the same as faith. It is not as though God is saying, I'm going to treat faith as though it is the same thing as righteousness, and therefore I'm going to look at faith and then think of righteousness from now on. No, he uses the word "counted" or "credited." Meaning he puts something there like a gift, not because of something Abraham did. This is what Paul is picking up on in Romans 4 when he is showing how this very word, logizomai demonstrates the relationship of faith to our justification.

Romans 4:4-5 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness

Righteousness is now the true status of Abraham before God, not because of any desert or debt owed, but because of God's grace received through faith. Why is this so important? A lack of righteousness before God is the greatest single problem facing all of humanity. It is the reason for that most terrible of enemies that we all ultimately face, death. Our relationship to God is and has always been structured in covenantal terms. Where he will be our God and we will be his people. But ever since our first father, Adam, sinned we have degenerated towards unrighteousness leading to alienation from God.

Abraham wasn't able to go back into the garden and un eat the fruit. But, here he believes God and is counted by God as righteous.

Consider this in the context of the promise to Adam and Eve the first people in the garden and then the context of Abraham's promises.

Genesis 1:28 and God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Notice a couple of things, the blessing that God gives to them is a command of how to be. And it is a promise of land, and offspring. Take dominion over creation, and have generations of kids that do the same thing. But by their unrighteousness, they are kicked out of the garden, and their first children murder one another. The question is how can we get back to the garden of fellowship with God, and have hope for generations of ourselves to receive the same thing.

Here Abraham simply believes God, and God looks at him and says I'm going to treat you like your righteous and therefore you will receive all of the benefits of being my people as though you never sinned in the garden. But later does God add a condition upon his promise?

2. Gen 17: Recap

Genesis 17:10-11 This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you

Last week we saw God provided the sign of the covenant to Abraham, circumcision. This is a sign given to Abraham by God and it is to be received by him and his offspring. It is a generational promise, and a boundary marker of God's chosen covenant people. This develops further as God calls his people out of Egypt and leads them to Mt. Sinai and gives to them the Ten Commandments, further showing how it is that they should live as his people.

But the sign and the commandments become twisted into being understood as a mechanism of salvation, and a means of demonstrating human righteousness so that God would then be in our debt. We would fulfill the law, and the fulfillment of the promise would be our due. By the way what I just described to you is the structure of every other religion on earth, as well as the structure of the normal human psyche.

God lays out a path to get to him, and humanity is judged accordingly in its ability to walk the path. This is true of any ideal.

If a culture's ideal is authentic self expression, then you must walk down the road that your feelings dictate, no matter the cost.

But here is a critical feature that was misunderstood regarding the sign of circumcision, simply when it was given.

Romans 4:9-10 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.

Paul brings in a simple matter of fact regarding the timing of Abraham receiving the sign of circumcision. Was Abraham counted righteous before he was circumcised or after. We can easily know this because we've been following the text, he received the sign years after he was counted righteous by faith. In fact he received the sign after he had committed adultery to try and take the promise into his own hands.

Romans 4:11a He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.

First of all, circumcision is not something Abraham developed to gain favor with God, but something he received from God. It is a sign of something greater, a pointer towards the covenant which God extended to Abraham. Secondly, It is a seal of righteousness by faith. It is as though God had placed his mark upon Abraham, sealing by an authoritative stamp his covenant promise.

Here is the point, circumcision, and by implication the whole law, we're not given so that Abraham would have a means of being accepted by God. Righteousness has always been by faith from first to last.

Romans 4:11b 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,

Father Abraham, had many sons. Many sons had father Abraham. I am one of them and so are you. How? By faith in the promise to Abraham, the promise of offspring.

Romans 4:23-25 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.