**Romans 4 Overview**

Paul has stated that there is no room for boasting with regard to righteousness by faith because it is apart from the works of the Law and does not require circumcision. His goal now is to show that this is consistent with the Law *(i.e., the scriptures)* and he does this by focusing on the role of grace in justification by faith.

First, he points out from David’s words that righteousness by faith is by grace and, since it is by grace, he therefore concludes that it is not of works. Therefore, with regard to work, there is no place for boasting. Boasting is over what one as achieved or attained by his own effort and not over something that was given to one as a favor.

He then shows that this grace that brings about righteousness by faith is for all Abraham’s seed which includes circumcised as well as uncircumcised. And so, because of this grace, as long as they have faith, the uncircumcised will be justified just as the circumcised. Therefore, with regard to circumcision, there is no place for boasting since the circumcised have no advantage over the uncircumcised.

**Useful Definitions**

1. **Nations** *(ἔθνος)*: in “…father of many nations” is ***ἔθνος*** *(ethnos, G1484)*. This is the word translated “Gentiles”. God made Abraham the father of the Gentiles. To appreciate the significance of this, we must note that Israel is not part of the nations [Num 23:9]. That is, when God was saying to Abraham, “I have made you the father of many nations”, i.e., Gentiles, God was not speaking of the Jews but just the Gentiles.
2. **Blessedness** *(μακαρισμός, makarismos, G3108)***, blessed** *(μα****κάρ****ιος, ma****kari****os)*: Is a derivation of **Grace** *(****χάρις****,* ***charis****)*. It is to have God’s favor upon one. It is to have God’s grace upon one.

**Breakdown of Paul’s Argument**

There are two main sections to this defense.

**First Section Breakdown**

**In the first part [Rom 4:1-17a]**, he shows that righteousness by faith is by grace and not by works and is for the uncircumcised who have faith as well as the circumcised because they are all Abraham’s seed and because of the promise that he would be heir of the world made to Abraham’s seed. This is where the main argument lies.

**Righteousness by Faith is Not of Works Because It is of Grace**

1. Since Abraham was justified by faith, then he wasn’t justified by works.
2. Paul derives this from David’s words.
   1. Understanding the following and keeping them in mind,
      1. For a sinner to be righteous, his sins have to be forgiven.
      2. To be blessed *(μα****κάρ****ιος, ma****kari****os)*, is to be under *God’s*grace.
      3. Grace is not work and work is not grace. *You don’t claim that you are doing a man a favor by paying him what you owe him for a service rendered you.* Therefore, what is said to be of grace *(favour)*cannot be something that one worked for.
      4. Since, from the example of Abraham, the faith of people that have faith in God is counted for righteous, it means that God forgives the sins of people that have faith.
   2. Therefore, when David describes a man whose sins are forgiven and will never be counted against him as blessed *(μα****κάρ****ιος, ma****kari****os)*, i.e., under God’s grace
   3. David is effectively saying that it is on account of grace that a man’s faith is credited to him as righteousness and that the man of faith remains under God’s blessedness, i.e., grace. *(We can see that he remains under that grace, i.e., blessedness, because God will never count his sins against him.)*
   4. *The man whose sins are forgiven is under blessedness, this is why his sins are forgiven.*
3. The blessedness is the basis of righteousness by faith.

**Righteousness by Faith Does Not Require Circumcision—It is for Both Circumcised and Uncircumcised**

1. Is the “**blessedness**” *(μακαρισμός, makarismos)*for the circumcised only or also for the uncircumcised. Whoever has the blessedness will be justified by faith.
2. Since Abraham was circumcised, it may seem that the blessedness only comes upon the circumcised. This is not true.
3. First, righteousness was credited to Abraham before he was circumcised. Therefore, the blessedness did not come upon him because he was circumcised. Therefore, we cannot say that the blessedness comes only upon the circumcised.
4. Second, although he was later circumcised,
   1. Circumcision was a sign, a seal of the righteousness he already had by faith. That is, it did not make him righteous, rather, it was made with him because he was already righteous by faith.
   2. *(And with regard to the promise of heirship for his seed)*Circumcision made Abraham the father of all who have faith—circumcised as well as uncircumcised. And the consequence of his fatherhood is that righteousness would be credited to them all.
   3. God had promised that Abraham’s seed would be heir of the world. Now, to be heir, one must be righteous. Therefore, God was effectively promising to make Abraham’s seed righteous. And if God has promised to make the seed righteous, then he has promised grace for the seed because only by grace is it possible. Therefore, because of God’s promise that the seed will be heir of the world, in order that the promise may be sure, grace is upon the seed of Abraham.
      1. Grace, however, cannot function under the Law
      2. However, the promise cannot be fulfilled under the Law because the Law works wrath and brings about transgression. Under the Law, the promise would have been totally pointless since it would never have been fulfilled.
      3. Therefore, being serious about the promise, God did not make it through the Law but through faith. It is only under faith that God’s grace to make righteous can function.
      4. Therefore, the promise requires righteousness and this requires Grace.
5. Therefore, righteousness will be credited to all Abraham’s seed—circumcised as well as uncircumcised—as long as they walk in faith because, on account of the promise of heirship, grace is upon them all.
   1. They have to walk by faith because the promise that brings grace came through faith and not through the Law,
   2. However, the reason it came through faith and not law is because the Law brings wrath rather than grace and transgression rather than righteousness.

**Summary**

1. With regard to his justification, Abraham has nothing to boast about before God, because from David’s words, when a man is justified by faith, it is on account of God’s grace and not on account of his works,
2. And again there is no place for boasting because grace is equally upon both the circumcised as well as the uncircumcised with the only requirement being faith.
   1. First, Abraham himself was justified while he was uncircumcised.
   2. And second, with respect to the promise of heirship, Abraham’s seed is made up of the circumcised as well as the uncircumcised who have faith. And so, grace which brings about righteousness by faith is upon all the uncircumcised that have faith just as it is upon the circumcised. However, grace brings about righteousness only by faith.

**Second Section Summary**

**In the second part [Rom 4:17-25]**, Paul shows that our faith is the same with that of Abraham’s—his faith and ours is about resurrection from the dead. And since God made Abraham the father of the Gentiles *(the nations)*based on this faith, all who have this kind of faith are Abraham’s children as far as God is concerned.

When God made his promise to Abraham, “So shall thy seed be”, Abraham’s body was “now dead” and Sarah’s womb was also dead. Therefore, believing that God had power to do what he had promised, was believing that God had power to raise the dead. This is just like our faith in God which is about resurrection from the dead. We believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and believe in His promise of resurrection and life given to us in Christ Jesus.

Based on this faith, God made Abraham the father of many nations *(ἔθνος, ethnos, G1484*), i.e., the Gentiles.

Therefore, as far as God is concerned, since based on this faith, God made Abraham the father of the Gentiles, all Gentiles who have this faith are Abraham’s children. Therefore, Abraham is the father of us all—the circumcised *(since they are his natural descendants acknowledged by God)*and all Gentiles that have the same faith as Abraham.

**Summary**

Based on

1. Scripture’s statement that Abraham was justified by faith
2. David’s description of the blessedness of the man justified by faith,
3. The promise of heirship made to Abraham’s seed,
4. God making Abraham the father of many nations *(i.e., the Gentiles)*by faith,

Righteousness by faith is apart from works and does not require circumcision.