

## Abraham's Persuasion

It's not everyone who can be persuaded by the good news he hears. Only those who are willing to do the will of God will be able to be persuaded to do it, even as Abraham had an obedient heart to respond to what God said to him. So Abraham is the father of the faithful doers of the word they hear, since faith comes by hearing. Faith means being firmly persuaded by the message one hears, which conveys the truth to a hearer who is willing to do what he hears, knowing that the message is coming from God.

Faith is the persuasion which comes from God to inspire a person to respond to the good news of salvation in doing the works prepared for him or her to do, as it was with Abraham when he first heard His voice and was persuaded to leave Ur and go to the land God would lead him to, not to stay in Ur and be a good person. A person is saved for only one purpose, which is to do the will of the One who calls him out of darkness and into His marvelous light. Whatever is done without faith (being persuaded by God) is sin, since one says what he is doing is God's will when it's not, since it is not being done by faith. Faith is faith only if what one does is being obedient to God.

Salvation is not hearing what one must do to be saved and not doing it, since faith without works is dead, as Jms 2:14-26. As a body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. The rich young ruler wanted to hear what he had to do in order to have eternal life, but he was not willing to do God's will, since he would not do what he had to do to have it. So obviously, he could not be persuaded by what he heard he must do. If he had done it without faith, he would have been greatly disappointed, since he could not have taken up the cross in vain, as there can be no salvation apart from Jn 12:25-26. He would have been as powerless as the Jews who were circumcised, but without the faith of Abraham to walk in his steps and do the deeds he did (Jn 8:39).

Rom 4:9-12 — The Gentiles would be saved in the same way as Abraham was, since Abraham was not circumcised. Circumcision did not even come into the picture until 13 years later. So the Gentiles are saved without having to undergo circumcision as an initiation rite. There was a division in the first church in the issue over circumcision, since the first converts to Messiah's Body were Jews who had already been circumcised on the eighth day as infants. Acts 15:1,5 shows that this party demanded that the Gentile converts be circumcised under the Law of Moses. They would compel Gentiles to be circumcised upon initiation into Messiah's Body when before, all the Jews were initiated into it only by baptism, since they were already circumcised on the eighth day.

But as for the Gentiles, it was *not* necessary for anyone to be circumcised under the Law anymore, since circumcision was 430 years before the Law was given. All the uncircumcised from now on would not have to be circumcised as a requirement for salvation as Acts 15:1,5, but later, as was Abraham (Gal 3:16-29).

Paul in Rom 4:9-12 showed the way Gentiles would have to be saved first and then circumcised later as Abraham was, for Abraham had no knowledge of circumcision from the time of Genesis 15 until Genesis 17, thirteen years later. So Paul is instructing that since Abraham, as an uncircumcised Gentile, was justified long before his circumcision was commanded, it is expected that the uncircumcised Gentiles should also partake of salvation in Messiah without even a hint of what circumcision means, since it must only be done when the time comes that the sign would be valid in their lives, according to how one's faith would grow and increase to bear the mark it signifies.

So Abraham is truly a father of both the faithful Jews and the Gentiles who are saved without circumcision. Later, the Jews grow to see what it meant when they were ritually cut as an infant, and what it will mean for a Gentile who was not physically cut as an infant, when both the uncircumcised and the circumcised come to the mature faith which is not expected at baptism, but is gradually revealed as one grows up in Messiah.

“When” in Rom 4:10 asks: When was Abraham justified — when he was circumcised or when he was uncircumcised? It was when he was yet uncircumcised. So for Gentiles, the circumcision of the heart that comes later can accompany the physical act of circumcision, but for Jews it is purely a spiritual act, since they have already gone through a physical act. The Gentiles didn't yet have that spiritual maturity when they were justified, but in that way they are likened to Abraham.

If Paul relaxed the Law here, it was for the purpose of Gentiles being saved and coming into the covenant, knowing that in time it would be revealed to them as it was to Abraham. So Paul gave instruction that Gentiles should not be circumcised as before in old Israel under the Law, but could be circumcised now not under the Law, but by the faith of Abraham when they were ready to take the sign of the covenant (Gen 17:1-14).

Abraham's justification was before the Law and circumcision were in existence, as Rom 4:11-12, so verse 12 is all we have said thus far about the father of the circumcised, and also of those likened to Abraham when he was justified by faith. Abraham's prior justification was before the Law of Moses or circumcision, not under the Law, but as a sign of the covenant God made with Abraham (Gen 15:17-18,5,6).

Paul was establishing the New Covenant for Gentiles who were not circumcised in infancy as the Jews were (or as Gentiles are today for reasons of hygiene), to clear up the mess before the great influx of Gentiles came into the church. So Paul took them back to 430 years before the Law of Moses made circumcision the Law for all converts to Israel's God, and this was the very initiation rite for their entry into the covenant.

Paul shows that Gentiles could now be admitted to the faithful followers of Yahshua the Messiah without regard to the Law of Moses or circumcision until revelation came later, as it did to Abraham (Jn 14:21; Gal 3:16). The Jews identified the Law of Moses and circumcision with Abraham, but Gal 3:16-29 shows us the way in the New Covenant. They forgot about Abraham's justification and initiation, so Paul wrote in Rom

4:9-12 to remind the Judaizers of the circumcision party who would compel circumcision without faith, which is sin (Gal 3:10-13).

So Gal 3:17 is the awakening factor of the continuing covenant of Abraham (Gal 3:17-19; Gen 17:1-14). The Law which came 430 years after does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God so as to make the promise void. Gal 3:18 — It is not by Law, but by promise. So what value was the Law? (Gal 3:19)

The Law is no longer in force as to the means of salvation, but is annulled only as to the means of salvation (Gal 3:19,21-29; 2:15-21; 3:1-5,6-9). So the uncircumcised Gentiles came into the picture in Gal 3:8, through Abraham who was uncircumcised (Gal 3:14).

Gal 3:17-19 — The only aspect of the Law which is nullified is to be saved by keeping the Law. But now we are saved so we *can* keep it (Rom 8:4).

So the seed of Abraham, those who belong to Messiah (Gal 3:27-29), are the sons of God (verse 26), who is the Father of all who believe, both the uncircumcised and the circumcised. Abraham was justified by “faith alone” or “faith only” — that is, faith without the Law — and circumcised later, also without the Law of Moses. Gen 17:14 is after Acts 2:38. So at the time Abraham was justified without circumcision, the rite did not even exist, but came later, after his faith was developed to the point of the test coming later in Genesis 22.

### **To the Third and Fourth Generation**

Circumcision is both the sign and the seal of the covenant all males make to pass on to their male infant children, to remember the covenant made with Abraham (Gen 15:17-18; Acts 26:6-8). Circumcision was made obsolete under the Law. Gal 5:2-6 speaks of the circumcision that is under the Law, compelled by the Judaizers, but circumcision without faith is useless (Gal 5:11,12,18).

Gal 6:12,13,15 — A new creation, not under the Law of Moses, but as Abraham was circumcised 430 years before the Law, and 13 years after he was saved, as a sign of the covenant, which will be fulfilled by the sons of God (Gal 3:26) who pass this faith on to their children's children, to bring about the promise made to Abraham (Gen 18:19).

Rom 4:12 — Abraham found favor with God by faith without the Law of Moses, before he was circumcised. We are now saved by the same kind of faith as Abraham had before he was circumcised:

- 1) Leave something;
- 2) Enter something;
- 3) Become something.