

**I. Introduction and review.**

**II. Justification occurs apart from religious rites, even divinely appointed ones. v. 9-12**

- A. Are religious ceremonies (ordinances) necessary for salvation? v. 9a**
1. Who receives the blessings of imputed righteousness? v. 9a 4:6-8 Ps. 32:1-2
  2. The Jews believed the blessing of Abraham is only for the circumcised.
  3. Judaizers in the early church insisted the Gentile believers must be circumcised. Phil. 3:1f Ga. 5:1-4 Acts 15:1-5
  4. Many today believe ordinances are essential to justification.
    - a. Roman Catholicism claims that sacraments convey grace, teaching that baptism and penance are the *instrumental causes* of justification.
    - b. Even some “Protestants” falsely assume baptized infants are regenerate.
    - c. The *Church of Christ* teaches that believers’ baptism is necessary for justification. Acts 2:38
- B. Religious rites have nothing to do with being declared righteous by God. v. 9b-10**
1. What was Abraham’s condition when he was justified?
  2. Abraham was declared righteous (Genesis 15:6) fourteen years before he was circumcised (Genesis 17:9-27).
  3. This proves that circumcision (or any other religious rite) is irrelevant to a man’s status before God.
  4. Don’t overestimate the value of religious ordinances and thereby undermine the gospel. Gal. 5:2-4 6:15
- C. Biblical ordinances are signs and seals of spiritual realities. v. 11a**
1. If religious rites do not contribute to justification, why did God institute them?
  2. Circumcision had value as an outward sign and seal of the justification which had already taken place through faith. Ge. 17:11 Eph. 1:13 4:30 I Co. 9:2
  3. Signs and seals are *not* instrumental in salvation.
  4. Don’t undervalue the ordinances God has established. 6:3f Luke 22:19-20
- D. Abraham is therefore the father of all who believe, whether circumcised or not. v. 11b-12 Acts 15:11**
1. Because he was justified before he was circumcised, he is the spiritual father of all who believe and are justified while uncircumcised. v. 11b
  2. He is also the father of all circumcised believers.
  3. All believers walk in the footsteps of Abraham.
- E. What is the relationship between baptism and circumcision? Col. 2:11-12**
1. Some claim that because baptism replaces circumcision as the covenant sign for the people of God, infants should be baptized.
  2. Infant baptizers fail to recognize the discontinuities between circumcision and baptism, which reflects the differences between the Old and New Covenants.
    - a. Circumcision was a symbol of national and ethnic unity pointing to the outward (typical) national blessings of land and people which were not conditioned upon personal faith.
    - b. Baptism points exclusively to the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant which are enjoyed only by believers. Gal. 3:7,29 Jer. 31:31-34 Heb. 8:8-13

3. Other problems with infant baptism.
  - a. If baptism replaces circumcision, why don't people baptize their servants and employees? Gen. 17:13
  - b. If baptism replaces circumcision, why are women baptized? Acts 8:12
  - c. If baptism is like circumcision, why do Presbyterians look for personal faith in the parents of the infant or in the adult to be baptized?
  - d. If children of believers are members of the covenant community, why don't most proponents of infant baptism allow unconfirmed children to partake in the covenant meal (communion)? Ex. 12:3-4,24 I Co. 11:28

**F. Application.**

1. Viewing religious rites as instrumental in justification undermines the gospel.
2. Can you refute baptismal regeneration? Luke 23:39-43 Acts 10:44-48
3. Don't neglect the New Testament ordinances.

**III. Justification also takes place apart from the law. v. 13-17**

- A. The law has nothing to do with the fulfillment of God's promise. v. 13-15
  1. The promise to Abraham was given through faith apart from law. v. 13 Gal. 3:17
  2. The addition of the law as a condition of the inheritance would make both faith and promise meaningless. v. 14 Ga. 3:18
  3. Those who seek justification by law will be under wrath. v. 15 Ga. 3:10
- B. Justification must be by faith alone. v. 16-17a
  1. Faith is the only instrumentality consistent and compatible with grace. v. 16a
  2. Salvation by grace through faith makes the promise of salvation secure. v. 16b
    - a. If assurance were based upon law, we could never be sure we had done enough.
    - b. Salvation is guaranteed because it is founded upon God's grace and power. 8:29f Phil. 1:6 John 10:28-29
  3. Faith opens the door of salvation to all. v. 16c-17a Ga. 3:9,29
- C. The promises to Abraham had a limited typical fulfillment under the Old Covenant and a boundless fulfillment through Christ. v. 17a, 13a
  1. God's covenant with Abraham, not the law of Moses, is fundamental for understanding the Old Testament.
  2. The promise of a people (Seed) is fulfilled in Christ, and through all believers (an innumerable multitude). v. 13a,17a Ge. 13:16 15:5 17:5 18:18 Ga. 3:16,29
    - a. The typical fulfillment came through Abraham's natural posterity.
    - b. The ultimate fulfillment is in Christ through whom all nations are blessed. Gal. 3:16 Gen. 12:3 22:18
    - c. The promise of many nations is fulfilled through the entrance of Gentiles from every nation into the church (as Abrahams' children). v. 17a Gal. 3:19
  3. The promise of a land is fulfilled in our possession of the entire world. v. 13b Gen. 12:7 13:14-17 15:7,18-21 17:8 22:17-18
    - a. The land of Canaan was only a type and a shadow.
    - b. Abraham looked for a heavenly country. Heb. 11:10,16
    - c. God had promised a universal reign for His people. Ps. 2:8 37:11 Is. 2:1f 9:7
    - d. The worldwide dominion lost by Adam has been regained by Christ and will be fully expressed in the new heavens and earth. Re. 21:1 11:15 Mt. 5:5
  4. The fulfillment of the promise is not to Abraham's physical descendants, but his spiritual seed. Ga. 3:29 John 6:39,44

#### **IV. Concluding Applications.**

##### **Discussion questions for family worship.**

- 1. What groups today teach that religious ordinances are necessary for salvation?**
- 2. How does Abraham's case prove justification takes place apart from religious rites? v. 10**
- 3. What is the benefit of the ordinances which God has established? v. 11a**
- 4. What is the meaning of circumcision? v. 11a**
- 5. What are the New Testament ordinances?**
  - A. What is their meaning?**
  - B. Why are they important?**
  - C. Who should participate in these ordinances?**
- 6. In what sense is Abraham the father of all who believe? v. 11b-12**
- 7. How would you prove that baptism is not necessary for salvation?**
- 8. In what ways does the addition of the law undermine the gospel? v. 13-15**
- 9. Why must justification be by faith alone, apart from law? v. 16-17**
- 10. How is God's promise to Abraham of a land and a people fulfilled in the New Covenant?**