Dear Reader,

I am new to producing reading sermons. So, if you have any suggestions as to how I might improve my format or what I include – please email me at cdanielwilson@gmail.com. **I will warn you, that I do not use short sentences**. I will endeavor to work on this over time, but I don’t naturally write that way. However, you can easily break most of my longer sentences into 2 or 3 smaller ones where I have “…” or “–“ or commas. If you do the work on making it into smaller sentences – feel free to email it to me, and I am happy to share your work with others. I do have some of these available which people have sent me. I will eventually make them available as part of the normal manuscripts.

I have left my sermon manuscript formatted the way I normally write and read my sermons. They are colourful and written in conversational English. If you are a grammar nazi – then you will be frustrated with my punctuation and phrasing. However, once you read it out loud, you will normally be able to tell what I meant to say. SERIOUSLY, READ IT OUTLOUD. You will also see that I use a good bit of bold, italics, underlining and different colours to signal what are the most important things to say, and also to make it easier for my eye to pick up my place in the middle of paragraphs. I would recommend that you keep as many of those things as possible to help you keep your place. However, you will probably want to increase the spacing between lines. I highly encourage you to commit as much of the introduction or children’s illustrations to memory as you can, so that these can be delivered to the congregation with maximum eye contact.

**Where possible, I highly recommend that you listen to the sermon as I preached it at either the Nelson website or the website of North Shore.** I recommend that because that will also help hear the places where I added or skipped over material in the manuscript, and the places where I clarified my meaning. I have edited bits and pieces which I thought most important, but I have not sought to include all the additional material that comes to me while in the pulpit. I would practically have to use a transcription service for that. However, I hope and pray that this sermon will be a blessing to you and to your congregation. To God be the Glory!

Blessings in our Lord, Pastor Daniel Wilson

**My Suggestions for the Order of Service**

Song before the Service: *(#89B)*

Bro & Sis: ***Our only Hope is found in the Lord our God, the Creator & Sustainer of all Things & Savior of those who trust in Him!***Grace be yours in abundance, with Mercy, Peace & Love from God our Father & the Lord Jesus Christ. ***Amen.***

We have the opportunity to WORSHIP and Praise our GOD! What does that look like? *Each should sing with a conscious awareness of the meaning of these words, with emotions which match what you sing…*

We will sing: Ps. **#98 “Sing a New Song to Jehovah” *LET THESE WORDS LEAD YOU TO JOY***

***We will profess our faith using HC Q&A 1*** *pg. 10 of Hymnal Please be seated*

***NOW FLIP OVER TO PAGE 34 of CREEDS Confessions and Liturgical Forms as we Read LD 26***

**Continue to worship and praise our God as we remain seated #175 “O God our help in Ages Past”**

***NOW WE COME TO OUR CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER … Prayer***

**Scripture reading for today comes from: Psalm 32 (which we will also sing)**

**God has given us such a great salvation - so** let us respond to His grace, by generously giving to support God’s kingdom work through His tithes and our additional Free-will offerings! ***( Deacons)***

*Let’s cont. to worship as we sing* **Our Song of Prep: Psalm #32 “***How Blest is He whose trespass has freely been forgiven***”**

***Sermon Text:* Romans 4:1-17 *Sermon Title: LD 26 – Sacraments #2: Seal of Faith***

***Let us now sing a* song of Response Dwelling on God’s saving power *–*#174 “The God of Abraham Praise”**

***May God the Father*** *bless you & keep you,* ***May God the Son*** *turn His face toward you & be gracious to you,* ***May the Holy Spirit*** *lift up his countenance upon you & give you peace!* ***Amen***

***Doxology*: #531**

# Evening Sermon: Sacraments #2 – Circumcision: the Seal of Faith

Text: Romans 4:1-17 Reading: Psalm 32

**Introduction:** Children have you ever seen a police officer? How do you know a police officer is real? You can see from his car and the uniform he wears right? But you can’t always tell from the car, because sometimes police officers use unmarked cars. And there are also officers that don’t wear a normal uniform, such as detectives who wear normal clothes or even an “under-cover” police officer who is secretly trying to catch criminals. So, how would an officer in normal clothes and an unmarked car identify himself as a real policeman? He would show you his ID or badge! His badge acts as a proof that he is a real officer of the police force.

(Review) Last time, we looked at Gen. 17, and we saw that the sign of circumcision was the sign/badge of the covenant. It was like a badge to prove that a particular individual was a member of God’s covenant family. We also noted that it was a private sign between God and His covenant people. When God saw the sign of the covenant – He said, ***this man and his family belongs to me***, when the man and his wife saw the scar of the circumcision, they said, ***We belong to God! He has saved us, and so we worship Him alone***.

*In our text for this evening, the Apostle Paul explains through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit what circumcision really meant in regards to faith:* ***we can summarize our text as follows…***

**Thesis:** ***Circumcision was God’s seal of righteousness by faith for Abraham and his descendants.*** *(REPEAT)*

We will use 3 headings as we work our way through the text… and then we will spend a bit of time connecting this text back to what we looked at last time in Genesis 17. The 3 main headings are a bit longer than normal, so I won’t preannounce them now… **We will just begin:**

***In verses 1 to 8 where we see our first point:***

# Salvation was given to Abraham as a gift *(repeat)*

*In Vs 1-3 - Paul transitions from end of chap 3 explaining that* **Abraham had nothing to boast about!**

I think it is important for a moment to remind you of what we find in chapter 3: Vs.21-31 are Paul’s explanation of how sinners are justified and made righteous by faith alone. ***Look at vs.23-24 READ*** Then at the end of vs.26, Paul explains that God sent His Son to be the Savior of the World so that He could be JUST and yet still be the Justifier of those who put their faith in Jesus. God had to punish sin in Christ, in order to be Just, and Christ had to live the perfect life of obedience so that by faith we might be MADE Righteous by God’s gracious gift.  ***Then look at vs.27 =*** BECAUSE THESE THINGS ARE TRUE**READ 27-28**

 This seems fairly clear to us, doesn’t it? *If Salvation is a gift of God’s grace, then we have nothing to boast or brag about do we?* Well, in chapter 4, Paul goes on to explain this same principle with the example of Abraham. He does this because the Jews of Paul’s day had this idea that the Patriarchs of Israel had something to boast about. They thought that their Fathers in the faith had done something earn God’s favor. So, Paul wants to make it clear that this was NEVER the case, not even with Abraham! ***Look at vs.1-2 READ***

*If Abraham had done something by works, then He could boast, but of course not compared to God’s perfection*: ***Vs. 3***.

*Paul doesn’t expect you to understand that sentence straightaway without understanding the meaning of the word “Credited” – therefore, he goes on to DEFINE that word for you in vs.4-5.* ***READ***

Now, for those of you who have jobs, you know that your salary is owed to you, right? Can you imagine checking your bank account on pay-day and seeing no deposit? So, You call up your boss or the accountant to ask why you haven’t been paid, and they tell you, “Oh, sorry, no gifts are being given out this month!” – You would say, “Excuse me?! I didn’t call about a gift, I called about what you OWED me! You are obligated to pay me for all my hard work!”

***That is what Paul is telling us in vs.4:*** *If salvation is based on what you do, then the word “credited” is the wrong word to use*… **But salvation IS A GIFT, based in God’s grace in Christ, *therefore, credited is the perfect word!***

Now, Paul realized that some Jews might think that Paul was involved in some historical reconstruction. Sadly, that is something that is very popular in our day – where people like to look at history through the lens of the way we think today and they reinvent the facts to match our prejudice. ***But Paul argues that His interpretation was in fact, NOTHING NEW, but rather something rather ancient and confirmed in God’s Word!*** *Paul quotes King David in Psalm 32* ***Look at vs.6-8 READ vs.6 & 7***

*I love that… He doesn’t say, “Blessed is the man who had already paid for his sins…” NO, but blessed is he who has been forgiven and whose sins are covered… Paid for crimes don’t need to be covered! All of Psalm 32 is ABUNDANTLY CLEAR on this point- Salvation and forgiveness for sinners is all by God’s grace!* **Like vs.8**

**So, even King David taught Salvation was a gift of God, not by works. (OT NT salvation by grace)**

***So, The REAL Question then becomes: to whom does such blessedness belong? Who receives such forgiveness?***

*Paul answers that for us in verses 9 to 12,* ***where*** *we see our Second point:*

# Circumcision was owed to Abraham as a seal *(So, Salvation was given to Abraham as a Gift, which further mean that* Circumcision was owed to Abraham as a seal*)*

*I use the word owe here , very carefully – because God gave this sign of the covenant out of His grace to illustrate Christ’s shedding of blood in killing the old man of sin on the cross – to a large degree even this sign was gracious, but I use the word OWE to illustrate the meaning… and that will hopefully become clear as we proceed…*

* 1. **Verses 9-10 – Paul is asking that question: Of Whom is David speaking?** READ vs9

In verse 10: Paul essentially asks: **Which came first, circumcision or righteousness?**

The righteousness credited to Abraham was given by faith BEFORE circumcision. In fact, Circumcision depended entirely upon the covenant and the faith already established with Abraham (in Gen.15)! Had he not believed and not been in the covenant, then the sign would not have been given! **THIS** is the sense in which we can say that Circumcision was owed to Abraham, Not Salvation… Salvation was a gift, but the sign was owed because as we see in verse 11, it signified the salvation Abraham already had…  **READ 11-A …**

* 1. **THEREFORE: The sign was a seal of the righteousness Abraham already had!!**

 THIS IS CRUCIAL TO UNDERSTAND – Circumcision was the seal, the badge of righteousness by faith…

**So, Circumcision was a mark that a particular individual belonged to God by covenant THROUGH FAITH!!**

*WHOA! That means that circumcision was similar to baptism, representing a spiritual reality by a physical sign!*

Indeed like baptism, circumcision was showing that Abraham was a believer by Faith!

**THINK OF the ANALOGY of POLICE:** Sworn in = Cov.Gen15 Badge=circumcision Gen.17

Circumcision was that badge of the believer in the Old Testament – in Christ it was done away with, but it was always intended (according to Apostle Paul) as a seal of righteousness by faith – ***which is why it was even possible for God to call the people to circumcise the foreskin of their hearts!*** Because GOD was always more concerned about the heart! Indeed, it is this meaning of circumcision and the fact that Abraham was saved by faith that changes who we call Abraham’s children – *He is not just the father of his physical descendants, but rather He is father of His* ***spiritual******descendants…***

*Paul deals with this topic from verses 11 to 17 we see our Third point:*

# The Promise was received by Abraham *(& his children)* by faith *(repeat2x)*

* 1. **Paul continues by clarifying who Abraham’s children really are:** *spiritually!* **READ Verses 11b-12**

**Abraham was the spiritual/covenantal father of ALL those who believe and *have His Faith*!!**

 *The Sign is not as important as the Faith – Sign marks people of God, but God saves them through Faith!*

* 1. **In Verse 13-15 – Paul proves this point through the nature & logic of the promise & the covenant.**

**READ 13**: *Note Abraham’s offspring are those who may or may not have the sign, but WHO do have his Faith!*

The important concept that Paul is getting across here is that the promise of salvation – the covenant of salvation was always about faith – righteousness through faith.

And Paul explains why this is such a foundational concept in verse **14-15 – READ…**

*He is saying*, It has to be salvation by faith because it isn’t possible to be saved by works! If anyone had been saved by works (at any time in history) then the whole system of salvation by faith crumbles. If works salvation were possible, then Faith based salvation is not! Indeed, the Law brings wrath, and where there is no law there is no violation – but of course, we know from the Old Testament that the Israelites violated God’s character and law all the time!  ***Therefore***, something had to be done to provide a way of salvation and Paul explains in vs.16-17 that the only way possible was salvation by faith! **READ vs. 16-17**

* 1. **All Abraham’s TRUE children inherit the promises by faith**

I love How Paul summarizes and clarifies the issues here. Abraham is the father of the Faithful – not the consistently holy and obedient, but of those who have FAITH in God, who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

 And Paul says that the promise (the Covenant Promise) is guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring/children who have his faith…

 **Now that leaves us with a problem based on our sermon from Genesis 17 ...**

We now know from this text that the sign of circumcision was more than just a marker of the Old Cov/Ethnic Israel. It was more than a marker of who belonged to the physical descendants of Abraham (or of those from his house).

**Paul has told us that this sign was always a spiritual sign intended to Seal/Identify Abraham as being righteous by faith!**

That is problem #1…

Problem #2 is this: The only children of the Promise/Covenant are those who have Abraham’s Faith… This wasn’t just a family covenant… **it was a faith covenant!** *This means* all other children in the family who never had Abraham’s faith, were not the children of the Promise.

***These two conclusions are problems because they lead us to ask a VERY hard question…***

WHY WAS THE COVENANT SIGN, *THE SEAL OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OBTAINED BY FAITH* GIVEN TO A REPROBATE SON?

 Knowing the spiritual meaning of the Covenant sign, and the fact that without faith a son was not truly a son of the covenant… Why did Abraham circumcise Ishmael?

 Brief answer… **because of the command, wisdom and power of God!**

And we see all of that explained in summary in verse 17… ***read that with me please…***

**What is Paul saying…** Nothing is too hard for God. He is not bound by time, space, or the limitations of man. He even gives life to the dead – and as Paul explains in chapter 5 and in Ephesians 2, ***we were dead in our trespasses and sins and enemies of God – and while you and I were still powerless, Christ died for us – and the Spirit applied His death to rebellious sinners in the grave by giving you and me new life in regeneration and faith!***

God raises the dead… and even more, He calls things into being, that which previously did not exist! ***THAT IS SO AWESOME!!*** God calls out to things which are not, and makes them so!

**What does he mean?** He is telling us that God speaks of those things which do not exist, as if they actually did. He calls things now according to what God plans to make them one day. Paul goes on to use the explanation of Abraham again from Genesis 17 – do you remember last time – when we were in Genesis 17, I said we wouldn’t deal with Abraham’s name change yet. I want you to think about what God did in changing Abraham’s name. **His name was Abram** – meaning exalted father, and that was changed to Abraham – which means father of many. God then said, I **HAVE MADE** YOU A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS! Abraham had one illegitimate son, Ishmael! He was not yet a father of many nations, and yet God calls into existence a reality which had not yet occurred! *He Named Abraham into a reality which God planned to create over several THOUSAND years!* **This is a powerful concept of the Covenant.**

*God is not restricted by time and space, and HE has planned the end from the beginning.*

In His wisdom and power God called Every Old Testament believer from Abraham onwards to put the spiritual sign of salvation by faith (circumcision) the seal of righteousness by faith… on their children to demonstrate again and again for thousands of years… **that Salvation doesn’t depend on man** – But that God Alone saves…

Your faith doesn’t even count as a “work” to earn salvation … and God illustrates that by putting the covenant sign on covenant children PROMISING to Save them ***if they believe***… IT was the very nature of the gracious promise GIVEN to Abraham in Genesis 17: *I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you* ***and*** *your descendants after you for the generations to come…* ***TO*** *be your God* ***&*** *the God of your descendants after you!*

 So, Brothers and Sisters: How can you apply this?

**The First application is this: Children of Believers MAY Never Assume that they are automatically saved!**  As we began to see last time, the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were all commanded to have the sign of the covenant – ***but God chose who would be saved according to His grace and for His glory.*** 50% of the first two generations were not saved. Ishmael and Esau were both excluded from the covenant of salvation. **– Why?! –** They were rejected early on to make it clear from the very beginning that covenant children with the covenant sign could not assume that they were saved!

**The Second Application is this: God is not limited by what does/does not exist, or even by what is possible!** Vs.17: God gives life to the dead, and calls into being that which does not exist. **And it should be no surprise that God’s covenant signs and seals and promises will reflect this awesome part of God’s power and character!** Even as God called Abraham a father of many nations when he had no legitimate children, so God now marks children as His own (with the sign of righteousness by faith) before they even have the power to believe. And that is a glorious comfort for the Christian family – For it reminds you that ***God is sovereign over salvation!***

**GOD can save His people by Faith, by His GIFT, power, Spirit, and by His Cov. Promises!**

AMEN.