

“Jewish Advantages”

Romans the Gospel of God

Romans 3:1-4

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Jeff: Merciful God, we are thankful for this day and for the time You've given us. Lord, we know that our times are in Your hands. And we also know that were it not for Your abounding grace, we would be deserving of nothing—no time, no mercy, no grace—nothing. And yet, because You are rich in mercy, You sent Your only-Begotten into the world that we might have life and have it abundantly, and even enjoy our time in serving. And so Father, this morning we gather together in Your word. And we ask that You will help us to do the very thing that You command us to do, to redeem the time and to do it because the days are evil. We didn't just live in evil days, but we were evil along with the world. So help us to redeem the time, that we might be filled up like a chalice, a chalice filled with Your word, filled to overflowing, that as we go out into the world and encounter others, that word might overflow into their lives, and that You might take it up by Your Spirit, for it is His word that brings it to bear upon their lives in just the way that You would have it brought. Father, we need these things and our families need these things; those around us need them. So we ask that You will bless them. Bless to our understanding these words.

Father, we also pray for those we love. We pray for Bruce. We ask that Your name would be upon him. We're thankful that he has retained his wit and his wisdom. We ask that You'll continue to bless him. And Lord, as the appreciation dinner approaches we pray that that would encourage his heart and be a strength to him. Father, we also pray for those friends of his that are depressed and filled with anxiety. We ask that You will minister to them and that You will alleviate those things.

But not only that, Lord. So many people seem to be depressed and anxious today, as so many people seem to be downcast and downtrodden. Lord, we pray that You will raise them up, especially if they belong to You; raise them up. But Lord, we need some alleviation in our world and in our country, and we ask that You would bring it about. And we know that full and final alleviation of guilt and depression and helplessness, all of these things are going to come only through the gospel. And so we pray that You would bring that gospel of Your Son to bear upon us as a country.

Father, we're thankful for Charlie and that he's back. And we're thankful that the doctors were able to take care of his needs and figure out the issues that he was dealing with so that he is now with us. And Lord, we pray and ask that those things would continue to take care of themselves with the doctors supporting him. And Father, we pray for our brother Ted. We're thankful for him and we look forward with him to the knee surgery and ask that You will not only make it a success, but also a speedy recovery. Bless him and encourage his heart. And Lord, give him stamina as he also has to deal with the pain until then, and even through his surgery until recovery. And so we pray for these things, all of them in Christ's precious and blessed name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

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Jeff: Okay. Well let's return to God's word. We're going to turn to Romans chapter 3 today. And we're going to look at Romans chapter 3, and we're going to look at the first four verses. I know that I have the first twenty verses down on your outline. Just try to pretend that I didn't write that; we'll look at the first four today. So let me ask you to turn with me there to Romans chapter 3. We'll read the first four verses.

But while we're settling in let me remind you. I think that up to chapter 3 that it's important to remind you of the context, especially as we enter into this particular section. It's all tied together in some way, shape or form.

Of course 1:1-17 is the introduction. But it's in verse 18 that you begin to see Paul dealing with two groups, those two groups being the Gentiles and the Jews. It's thought, and I think rightly so, that 1:18 through the end of the chapter deals with Gentiles. There are some indications as to why that is. Not only do the sins that are listed there seemingly characterize the Gentiles and not the Jews, but Paul also refers to them as “they.” He is not himself a Gentile; he's a Jew along with the others. And so the Gentiles are “they.”

In chapter 2 he seems to have spotted someone in fact who is agreeing with him very vehemently. And so he decides that, as Arthur W. Pink used to do when he would go to preach in various places where people would have too strong a view of predestination that he would preach on free will. (*Laughter*) And if they had too strong of a view of free will he would preach on predestination. Something of that nature was in Pink as it was in Paul.

And so Paul sees this Jew agree vehemently with him about the condemnation of the Gentile. And so he looks at this man and he says, “You have no excuse.” And so he says that for the first five verses as he begins to take the Jewish man to task.

Then he decides to gather them together. And in verses 6-11 he talks about every human being. But then he names those every human beings, and he names them Jew and Gentile—Jew and everybody else, and so he's talking about everybody. And his point to them is that everybody is without excuse; everybody will be judged according to the law.

Now it's at that point that the Gentile says, “Wait a second; hold on. We think you messed up at that point because we don't have the law.” And Paul says, “You most certainly do; it's written upon your heart. And so what is in your heart is the law of God, and you violated it.”

Well then, the Jew comes along and says, “But wait a minute. We're instructors in the law; we tell people what the law says. We help them understand what to do and where to go; we're casting light onto their path.” And Paul says to them, “Yes. Well, that's what you think. But the problem is that even while you do that you break the law and transgress the law. So having the law doesn't help you when you break the law. If you're going to have the law and keep the law perfectly that will help you. But you're unable to do that. And so simply having the law doesn't help you.”

And they say, “Well, wait a minute! We have circumcision. And circumcision is a sign that indicates that we belong to God regardless.” And Paul says, “No; actually that's a privilege. And you have not acted on the privilege.”

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And so that leads to our text. And our text is going to be the Jewish response as it were to what Paul just said about having these advantages. But seemingly they are no advantages at all. Okay, so let's read the first four verses.

“Then what advantage has the Jew?” Paul is writing it, but you can almost hear it coming out of a Jewish man's mouth. *“Then what advantage is there in being a Jew? I mean, if circumcision is of no advantage, what advantage is there?”* That's the idea.

“Or what is the value of circumcision?” And then Paul's answer is: *“Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. What if some were unfaithful? Does their unfaithfulness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! ‘Let God be true, though everyone were a liar.’ As it is written: ‘That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.’”*

All right; let me tell you a story. Let me tell you a story about a guy by the name of Bert. Bert was out one evening and happened to meet a man; we'll call him Sig.

(Laughter) And Sig was—

Sig Tragard: He's the hero of the story, right?

Jeff: He's the hero, you know what I mean? These guys aren't treating you well.

Sig: Okay.

Jeff: So Sig's the hero. But we will save that until later. So Bert meets Sig. And it turns out that Sig not only does this job, but also works at—what's the arena called now?

Sig: The PPG Arena.

Jeff: The PPG Arena? Okay. So Sig works at the PPG Arena. And in working at the PPG Arena we didn't know this, but Sig actually mans the door to all the hockey players. I mean, he stands in front of the door, has access to the door where Crosby and Malkin and all those guys go in and out for the game; he mans the door. And he is able to give permission for others to come and enter that door and meet the players. You didn't know that about Sig, did you? *(Laughter)* Sig didn't know that.

So Sig's out one night, and he meets a guy by the name of Bert. And he and Bert hit it off. And Sig says to Bert, “Bert, I'll tell you what. I'm going to give you a pass. And what I want you to do is, I want you to come on a Wednesday night prior to the game, and I'll let you meet all the players; I'll introduce them to you.”

And so Sig gives Bert the pass. It's encased in a lanyard, you know; a Pittsburgh Penguins lanyard; really nice, you know? And so Bert leaves and Bert goes home. And he begins to wear the lanyard all the time; he doesn't want to lose it. And he gets to telling all the people around him what this lanyard is.

He says, “This is a pass to the Penguins. I met this guy. On Wednesday night he's going to introduce me to the Penguins. This pass will get me in.”

And so Wednesday night comes and Bert goes to the arena. And Bert goes to the arena, he goes to the door and says to the guy, “I have a pass to meet the Penguins.” And the guy says, “You can't go in.”

And so he says to the guy, “Well I know this guy; his name is Sig, and he stands at the door. And if you go get Sig he'll be able to come and get me and bring me right in; you'll see. I've got this pass.”

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And so the guy goes. He retrieves Sig and Sig comes up. And you know how Sig is; he’s smiling at him and he’s looking at him. And as he continues to look at him his smile disappears. He walks up to the guy. And Bert says to Sig, “These guys won’t let me in, even though I’ve got a pass.”

And Sig says to Bert, “Bert, did you read the pass? Did you open it up and read what I gave you?”

And Bert says to him, “Of course I read what you gave me.”

Sig says, “Let me see your pass.” And he gives it out and there’s a clear seal along the pass. Sig runs his thumbnail across it and opens it up. And there it says three things. It says that he has to be wearing a certain kind of dress. He’s got to have no bags with him. And he is not permitted to have any cameras. And here is Bert. He’s not in the right dress code, and he has two bags hanging off of him with all of his cameras inside.

And Sig says to Bert, “You didn’t read the pass.” And Bert looks at Sig and says, “Sig, is there no advantage to being your friend? Is there no advantage to having this pass?”

Now that’s obviously a made-up story.

Sig: Really? (*Laughter*)

Jeff: It’s obviously a made-up story. (*Laughter*) But I think that it really gets to the point of the text. Here you have these Jews who are saying that circumcision is an advantage. And they’re treating it as if it were just an advantage, just a pass.

I want to share something with you before we go any further because we’re going to introduce these terms, and I want you to think about them. I want you to think about advantage, and I want you to think about privilege.

When you think about advantage, the etymology is “in front of,” okay? And when you think about privilege you think about the law applied to an individual, okay? If somebody is privileged then he has a particular aspect applied to him individually, okay?

Now I want you to think. You have to think about that with regard to what we’re going to do here, because what they’re arguing for in the text are privileges and advantages. That’s what Paul and his interlocutor are arguing about.

Now the very question is, is there no advantage to the Jew? Is there no advantage to the Jew having circumcision? Is there no advantage?

Now what we find right off in the text is the Jew’s reaction. Paul is saying what he is saying to the Jew. And the Jew is saying, “Paul, is there no advantage then to being a Jew?” And Paul obviously says what he’s going to say. But let’s stop and think about the Jew for just a minute.

What is the Jew saying? The Jew is saying, “Think about it, Paul. Think about who we are. We were Abraham’s descendants. We were called out of Ur of the Chaldeans. We were made a people by God in Egypt. We were brought into the Promised Land. We were given the law. Of course we had circumcision; that was from Abraham. We have all sorts of privileges; we have all sorts of advantages. But you’re saying that we don’t have any advantage at all.”

And Paul says to them at this point, “Wait a minute. You’re taking my words out of context because I didn’t say there were no advantages. In fact there is an advantage to being a Jew. I didn’t say there weren’t.”

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Now here’s the thing that we have to understand. If you go back to chapter 2 verse 25, he says to them that there is an advantage. Look at what he says in verse 25. He says, *“For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law.”* In other words, circumcision is an advantage.

But here’s the point. An advantage doesn’t save you. Think for instance about giving someone an advantage in a foot race. Does the advantage necessitate their winning the foot race? Obviously not. The advantage is something that they’re given beforehand, but it doesn’t guarantee anything.

And what Paul is saying is yes. Circumcision is an advantage. But circumcision doesn’t guarantee salvation.

Think for a minute about the pass that we started with. Sig gave Bert the pass. Bert went around telling everybody, “I’ve got a pass, I’ve got a pass, I’ve got a pass.” But Sig told him right up front, “Don’t forget to read the pass. Read the pass before you come. The pass is going to tell you all the things that you’re supposed to do before you get here.” And instead the guy just went around dangling the pass in front of everybody saying, “I have a pass and you don’t.”

And then he shows up. And then the pass, or the advantage of having the pass, did him absolutely no good.

And that’s the idea. In other words the Jew went around saying, “We have circumcision.” But the fact of the matter is, they did not have the very thing to which circumcision pointed, which is a circumcised heart.

And you can see this. We talked about having a wedding ring, right? We talked about having a wedding ring in the past when we talked about verses 25 ff.—the guy who basically lives like he’s unmarried and says, “I’ve got a wedding ring.” And that means absolutely nothing.

And so what we have is that we have the Jew asking, “Is there no advantage?” And Paul is saying, “Yes, there is an advantage.” But what is the advantage? The advantage is an opportunity.

Ted Wood: That others don’t have?

Jeff: Well, let’s put it this way. There is a sense in which there is an advantage that others don’t have. If you’re a Jew you have circumcision and they don’t, right? Do you—

Ted: I’m not arguing against this.

Jeff: So they have an advantage that others don’t have. Now I do want to stop and think about this for just a minute, because when you think about that kind of thing—having an advantage and not having an advantage—the question is what is that advantage? In other words, how do I think about it? And I think there’s a segment in the Christian church today that thinks about the advantage very much like the Jews were thinking about the advantage, and that is this. I have circumcision and therefore I have all the privileges connected with circumcision, okay?

And that segment of the Christian church is very similar, because that segment of the Christian church says, “I was baptized; therefore I have all of the advantages and privileges of what that means.”

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And you see, there is a similarity between what the Jews thought and what those in the church today might think: that just having the advantage means having the very thing pointed to in the advantage. Just because I have it, well then, I have it.

You see, that’s the criticism of many people about Presbyterians or Anglicans, right?, because of infant baptism. What does a Baptist think about a Presbyterian or an Anglican? He thinks this. He thinks, well, the Presbyterians think that because their children are baptized their children must be saved. Where do they get that from? Well, they get that from Roman Catholicism, because Roman Catholicism does believe that. They do believe *ex opera operato*, that the work is worked out of the work. And therefore to baptize means not only to have the advantage, but all of the privileges. And so Baptist folks look at Presbyterians or Anglicans or anybody else that practices infant baptism and they say, “You guys think that having the advantage means having all of the privileges associated with it. That’s what you think.” Go ahead.

Don Maurer: But wouldn’t the shoe fit on the other foot, too? Evangelicals will say, “Well, I signed a card. I went forward and made a decision. It doesn’t matter now how I live because I did those things; I’m in.”

Jeff: Sounding like a true Presbyterian. (*Laughter*) The shoe is on the other foot; that’s right. And it doesn’t just work one way. But I’m using this because there is such an interface between circumcision and baptism.

Don: Yes.

Jeff: Hold on just a second. Yes?

Brave Man: As the sole Baptist here, that’s not true. All Baptists do not look at Presbyterians, Anglicans and Luther—

Jeff: That’s because you’re an educated Baptist. (*Laughter*)

Bob Busted: But here’s a question. How can it be, in truth, in a day? You don’t need baptism or circumcision to have salvation. How can it be in a day if you don’t need it? Can you have salvation without baptism or without being circumcised? If the answer is yes, then it is of no advantage; it’s just a mark, or it’s just something you want to talk about.

Ted: Spoken by a true Baptist. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: Well, let me say this. There are advantages, right? I mean, if I grow up in an Islamic place in the world I have no advantage with regard to the Christian faith, because God works through means, right? But if I grow up here in America there are churches on every street corner—some good, some bad, right?—I get it. But the point is that the Word is everywhere here, right? There are all sorts of people running around in this country who are willing to talk about the gospel. So I’m in a place of advantage, whereas I’m not in this place. And God works through means. He works through the preaching of the gospel. He works through different means to bring people to salvation. So in that sense it’s an advantage.

In an ultimate sense—in other words, what I do for my salvation—there is no advantage. I don’t do anything for my salvation, right? That’s what you’re talking about, and that point is well taken. Yes?

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Bishop Rodgers: But it’s an advantage to have the remembrance of the sign of God’s faithfulness.

Jeff: Yes.

Bishop: His prevenient work in your life.

Jeff: Yes; that’s right—that sign that is like circumcision, that sign which points beyond itself and seals the authenticity of what God has given.

So that’s what we’re dealing with here. We’re dealing with the Jew who is saying, “There is no advantage.” And Paul is saying, “No, there is an advantage. God works through means; there is an advantage. But you have treated the advantage as if the advantage alone were the thing that you were to possess, because the advantage itself unlocked privileges that you claim to already have.

Bishop: If there were no advantage, why wear a wedding ring?

Bishop: Yeah; that’s right. Unless you’re Scottish. What was the act that said that wedding rings were part of popery? That was a while ago.

Ted: That was a Puritan position. But what does it say if you say you’re a Christian and trust in Christ, but you don’t get baptized, you don’t take the sacrament, you don’t fellowship, you don’t spend time in the Word, you don’t spend time in church? You think you’re a Christian and not go to church. I suspect that theoretically it’s possible. But I would say that ordinarily it is not possible.

Jeff: Yes, but that’s the flip side of this whole thing, right? The flip side of this whole thing is the person who doesn’t do anything. Here we’re talking about the person who has all the advantages, right? He’s got all these things. But he’s treating just having the advantage as if that meant that he has all the privileges associated with it, and he doesn’t.

I mean, when you think about it there are groups who think that just having the advantage of being part of the group is all there is, right? There’s nothing else beyond that. But the Christian church is not that. Go ahead.

Bishop: Having the advantage and not owning up to it and living it responsibly actually puts you in a worse position because you’re violating the very gift of the advantage.

it **Jeff:** Yes; that’s right.

Sig: The thing that comes to mind with the reinforcement that you said, Jeff, in a dramatic way it’s like being white.

Jeff: Okay.

Sig: A lot of white people think that there’s a privilege, and I have my rights. And other people of different colors and different races in America don’t necessarily get those rights because they’re not white. They have to earn them; they have to go beyond. And it’s a caste system, if you will. And I’m sure that the Jews felt that way about the Gentiles, right? “We are superior.”

Jeff: You know, I understand that’s the going argument today. But did you ever read *Hillbilly Elegy*?

Ted: Yes; excellent.

Jeff: Yes, that was an excellent book. And in my mind that kind of puts to bed the lie that just because you’re white you’re privileged. I mean, if you grow up in certain parts

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of the world you’re not privileged. You might be white, but you’re not privileged. And I’d rather leave the whole political argument behind, (*applause*), because I’m just not going to buy into that.

Sig: All I’m saying is that it’s a real factor in our culture. And I think that it reinforces what the Jew might have been thinking.

Jeff: I don’t know, Sig. I disagree with you on that. I think people are quick to forget that we had a black President for two terms. And that seems to be the speak of a country that has dealt pretty well with racist roots that I don’t believe are systemic. I don’t think Fredric Douglas believed that it was systemic, and he was closest to the issue. And I think that today this whole thing about systemic racism is an ideology that has nothing to do with our roots. I think it’s an ideology that’s trying to change America. That’s my position. You brought it up; I’m just saying it. I think there’s a political thing there that I personally am not with. But I’m talking more about the spiritual dimension of it here.
Jim:?

Jim Hamilton: Romans 3:1-4 is what we’re supposed to be doing. (*Applause*)

Jeff: Yeah.

Bryan Whittington: Tying this into Romans 3:1-4 I don’t know how this relates, but you might be able to cast some light on it. If you look at 2 Corinthians 3, starting at verse 7,--

Jeff: Okay.

Bryan: *“If now the ministry of death, carved in letters of stone, came with such glory, and the Israelites did not gaze on Moses’ face because of this glory, which was being brought to an end, will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?”* So I get the idea that there’s absolutely a benefit from it. And there’s also the same author Paul saying that it is a ministry of death. I had never noticed that before.

Jeff: Okay, so let me tie this together. He’s going to go on, and he’s going to actually say this. I’m going to pull your point in because this is actually the next point. What does he say? He talks about the Jews being benefited much in every way. *“To begin with,”* or *“chiefly,”*—that could be first, but it also could be chiefly,--the Jews were entrusted *“with the oracles of God.”* And it’s like he doesn’t go beyond that. So what he’s saying is that they are trusted with the word of God. And that’s exactly what you’re bringing up in 2 Corinthians 3, right?

In 2 Corinthians 3 what you have is that you have the Old Covenant ministry. And the Old Covenant ministry is when Moses receives from God the oracles of God. And remember that his face is aglow. And then he goes down and he gives them to the people, and they ask him to cover up his face. Why does he cover up his face?

It’s interesting what that text says. Look at this.. Look at verses 12 and 13. *“Since we have such a hope, we are very bold—not like Moses who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.”*

Sig: What chapter is that?

Jeff: That’s 2 Corinthians chapter 3, verses 12 and 13. Now what is he saying there? *“So that the Israelites might not gaze upon the glory that was being brought to an end.”*

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What is he saying? What he’s saying is, he’s saying that this glory of the Old Covenant ministry was a fading glory and not permanent.

It’s interesting. If you look at the commentaries and stuff like that you’ll find that it’s amazing, because one commentary after another gives one reason after another as to what that verse means. But here’s what I think it means, and you can take it for what it’s worth. But what I think it means is this. I think Moses covers the glory of the Old Covenant ministry so that the people would not look upon a glory that was fading and become attached to that glory which was being brought to an end. But instead they would be forced to look toward the permanent glory that was to come and supplant that glory in the New Covenant ministry. And that’s why Paul says, “We have this ministry of boldness. Our New Covenant gospel is not veiled. But it’s unveiled; it’s opened.”

And so what he’s saying is this. I think that what he’s saying is that you have to hold this in tension, because what he says to them is that “you have the oracles of God, the living oracles of God.” What he’s saying is, the Word wasn’t different from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. However, we were in the midst of a progressively revealed covenant that did not come to a climax until Jesus Christ. And therefore you don’t stop halfway, right? That’s what the whole epistle to the Hebrews is about—people wanting to go backward in this progressively upward covenant. In the covenant of grace which has different exfoliations—the Noaic and the Abrahamic and the Mosaic and the Davidic, and finally the New Covenant—they who are at the culmination point want to go back to the middle and say, “It was easier back in the middle. We could see stuff; we can’t see anything now. It’s all invisible to us.”

And so the point is that the word of God is not different. But God is teaching them and bringing them along to a climax. It would be like this. It would be like—what’s your name?

Aaron Whittington: Aaron.

Jeff: How old are you?

Aaron: Thirteen.

Jeff: What grade are you in?

Aaron: Eighth.

Jeff: Okay. So it would be like Aaron saying to you, “Dad, I want to go back to third grade, and I want to stay there. I don’t want to go any further.”

And you would say, “Well, that’s crazy,” right? “You ought to keep progressing.” And that’s the way it is with the Old Covenant ministry versus the New Covenant ministry. Does that make sense? So Paul says to them, “What’s the advantage? You have the living word of God.”

You know, one of the things that I want you to think about when Paul says that—and thanks for bringing this up because it’s really important—is that when you have the living word of God, one of the things that you have to remember is that the living oracles of God are the form of the word of God before it takes any other form—before it’s inscripturated, before it’s given in a Theophany. If you could take the word of God back to its foundation, what is it? It’s an oracle; it’s a word spoken. And the word that’s spoken

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is a living word spoken out of eternity by God. And that’s why it’s living, because the word of God never dies. The word of God spoken is always spoken, and it’s living.

And it can be inscripturated. And this is where the liberal gets all messed up. I remember when I was at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary taking classes. I had a professor. He took his Bible and he threw it on the floor and he said, “Am I doing something to the word of God? Am I desecrating the word of God by throwing it on the floor or by stepping on it, or things like that? That’s the trouble with you conservatives; that’s what you think I’m doing. It’s like you’re Islamic.”

And I said, “no, no, no, no, no! That’s not what I think. I don’t think that you just desecrated the word of God, as if this is the codex that Paul himself wrote. This is the text that Paul wrote. But it’s not the book that Paul wrote.”

Now if you pulled out the very codex that Paul wrote and you started to rip it up I would throw myself on you before you could rip the first page. Why? Not because that paper is of any more value than that paper, or that that papyrus is of any more value than any other papyrus. But that’s the living oracle of God. It’s the first one and I want to preserve it because that’s the codex. But you can throw this thing all around if you want because it is the text of that codex. But it’s not the codex itself. I could get another one, right? I could get another one of these; that’s the idea.

And so what I would say to him today is this. If we were having this argument I would say, “But you don’t understand that it is an advantage to have that text.” That’s an advantage to have that text.

But think about that text itself. If that text is an advantage, you can think about our friend Bert, right? Our friend Bert takes the living oracle of God, which is interesting. It’s the only thing Paul mentions. He’s going to mention in chapter 9 that there are other advantages to being a Jew. The only one he mentions here is that this is the word of God.

Think about our friend Bert. You take this home. You set it on your shelf, but you never open it. It’s just like Bert. He went around and showed everybody his pass, but never broke the seal to read what was inside so he could be prepared on the day that he went to the arena. I mean, that’s the way some of us are.

I know what you’re going to say. You’re going to say, “Wait a minute. Are you saying that I need to do something in order to be saved?” No, I’m not saying that at all. What I am saying is that if because you possess advantages you claim to have privileges, then your life will demonstrate that you have those privileges. If your life doesn’t demonstrate that you have the privileges, then you’re just claiming advantages. And you may not have those advantages. Does that make sense, Bishop? Does what I say make sense?

Bishop: Yup. I had an aunt who had a very expensive Bible which she had spread over in her living room, but never read.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bishop: She had the sign; she had the advantage. But it wasn’t active.

Jeff: Yup.

Bryan: I’m horrible. But the law, is it any relation to Moses?

Jeff: Yes.

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Bryan: Is that really talking about circumcision, or that they had the Law, the Prophets and the Word? And then if you go down to verse 4 it says that the Word will justify them on Judgment Day—

Jeff: Where are you?

Bryan: Back in Romans 3—the oracle. You read through and then in verse 4 it says that the words will justify—

Jeff: Well, it’s their words, right? *“That you may be justified in your words and prevail when you are judged.”*

Bryan: Doesn’t that point to that the Jews were saved the same way we are, through faith in Christ?

Jeff: No. Well, yes; Jews and Gentiles are saved by faith in Christ. Let me hit the flow of this argument and then bring that back around.

So the flow of this argument is okay; I’ve got the living word of God. And now the question is this. And here it is; I’ll read it to you. It’s in verse 3. *“What if some were unfaithful? Does their unfaithfulness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means!”* In other words, I want you to think about it this way. Think about what Paul is saying. We often think about what Paul is saying in two different ways. First of all we think about what Paul is saying with something like this. If I possess the advantage but I don’t possess the privilege by virtue of possessing the advantage, is God unfaithful? That is what the Jew would have said. “I possess the advantage. If you say to me that I don’t possess the privileges connected to the advantages, then maybe God is unfaithful. And maybe I shouldn’t trust God.” That’s one way of looking at it.

The other way of looking at it is saying this. “If I possess the advantages, Paul, I can live as I please and still possess the advantages and the privileges. And if I’m unsaved as a result of my behavior then God is unfaithful,” right? “Because if He can’t keep me saved despite what I do, even those He’s given me the privileges connected to the advantages, well then maybe it’s on God, not me.”

And so what God is actually saying through Paul is look, you are willing to accuse God of unfaithfulness, when you in fact are unfaithful. In other words you have the privilege; you have the pass. But you never read the pass. And you’re going to say that because you’re not saved that God is unfaithful. Go ahead.

Matt Reichert: Yes. Can you clarify this in your illustration about the pass? The lost person opens the pass, reads the criteria and says, “I don’t need to do that. I don’t believe in wearing the attire. I’m just going to do two of the three; this isn’t true.” And that’s where he disregards the living Word.

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: If they don’t want to obey then they don’t have the Spirit of Christ.

Jeff: That’s exactly right. And that’s what Paul says earlier on before he talks about the circumcision issue. He says, “You guys claim to be guides, but you break it.” It’s sort of like Bert opening the pass, reading what he’s supposed to do and telling everybody else what they’re supposed to do who have been invited. But he himself doesn’t do it because he’s above that. He’s got the advantage connected to the privilege, but he doesn’t

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actually need to obey it. That’s what Paul is saying. It does you no earthly good to have this if you don’t obey, if you don’t show forth the fruits of having the advantage.

And so let me close this with just an illustration.. I want you to think about David for a minute—David and Bathsheba. Remember this? David commits adultery with Bathsheba. He has Bathsheba’s husband murdered. And remember that Nathan the prophet comes to him, and he tells him that story.

And he says, “I’ve got a story for you. There was a poor man with one sheep, and there was a rich man with many sheep. And the rich man took the poor man’s sheep to feed company.”

And remember what David says. “Who is that man?? And Nathan the prophet says, “You are that man.”

And remember what happened to David. The word of God came to him through the prophet of God in such a way that David all of a sudden realized that he was acting as a person who had advantages without acting on the privileges. In other words he had advantages, but his life didn’t show forth the privileges.

And all of a sudden what happens to him? Psalm 51 tells us what happens to him. All of a sudden he is unsure; he doesn’t have assurance. And he says to God in that psalm, “*Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me*”, right? He’s pleading with God for assurance of his salvation.

And that’s the idea, right? The idea is that if you act as if as if you just have advantages without your life giving forth the reality of the privileges, then maybe you need to reconsider what the advantages have done for you.

In other words, it’s kind of like the foot race again. If somebody says, “I’m going to spot you a mile,” and so they drive you up, sit you down and you’re at the mile marker. And your friend comes around and you’re still sitting at the mile marker, and he says to you, “I thought I spotted you. I gave you the advantage of a mile. I spotted you a mile, and you’re sitting there in a chair?” And you go, “Yeah. Duh!”

Your friend looks at you and says, “Yeah, but you’re supposed to act on the advantage. Take the privilege.”

You go, “So what? I’ve won!” And he runs right on by, right? He runs right on by and leaves you sitting there.

That’s the idea. David was the man sitting there at the mile marker. And all of a sudden Nathan the prophet said to him, “You’re just sitting there. You’re in big trouble.”

And that’s not a works righteousness salvation. That’s a salvation by grace. But it’s a salvation by grace that went into a renewed life. And the two aren’t mutually exclusive.

Okay; the Lord bless you. I’ve got to pray and run, so let me do that now. If you have questions ask the bishop. (*Laughter*)

Father in heaven, thank You for this day. We thank You for your word. We ask that Your hand would be upon us for good. We pray, Lord, that You’ll bless us and strengthen us by Your grace. Father, we ask these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)