

## ***“One Last Attempt!”***

### **Romans The Gospel of God**

Romans 2:25-29

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**Jeff:** Before Don starts Don informed me this morning of some very important news that we could all do without. *(Laughter)* And that is that Abba is getting back together for a reunion tour.

**Don Rimbey:** I heard that.

**Jeff:** And a new album. The world won't be the same.

**Don Maurer:** Indeed.

**Jeff:** Indeed. Let's pray that that doesn't happen. *(Laughter)* Go ahead, Don, *(Music)*

**Jeff:** Our gracious Father in heaven, we are thankful as we bow before You this morning—thankful for so many things—for life and breath and the food we take into our bodies, the families that we enjoy, the friends that we share memories with. All of these things are a joy to us. And yet none of them compare to the life in Jesus Christ and all of the benefits that flow from that union with Him. Father, we are thankful for what we have in Him. But we're also thankful for what He came to do. Not only did He come to bring salvation to us—sinners in Adam,—but He also came to cast light upon the Old Testament, to help us to see what was always the case as it pertained to You, that You are not only one God but three Persons in that one God, and all working toward our redemption, as You sovereignly chose to do so long ago.

Father, as we bow before You today we recognize that You are independent and have no need of creation. And yet You created. And yes, when it fell You redeemed it. And so Father, we bow, thanking You, praising You, that we are Yours by the grace of Jesus Christ.

So Father, as we open Your word we pray that You will work in us that which is pleasing in Your sight. For we know that by Your Spirit You use Your word, which is His word, to do a work in our lives that we couldn't possibly imagine, too wondrous for us to behold. And for that we give You praise.

And Father, we come to You, not only thinking about the glorious nature of the triune God and the wonder of redemption, but we also now ask that You'll be with those for whom we care. And we think about Ted Wood. And Lord, we ask that You'll preserve him throughout the surgery. Give him a spirit and a sense of calm, a sense of being held by Your hand as he goes into the surgery. And Father, we certainly pray that You'll give him recovery—a speedy one at that.

Father, we pray for our brother and friend Charlie, and ask that You will enable the doctors to figure out what's happening in his body, that they might correct it.

Father, we are also thankful for our brother Bruce. And Lord, we are delighted with the Blessing Board and how they have chosen to honor him and his life and his ministry in Your service. And so, Father, we pray that that would be a huge success, humanly speaking. But we pray, Father, that it would go toward Your honor and Your glory ultimately.

Father, as we gather today, we ask that Your hand would be upon us for good, that You would open our eyes to the truth of Your word, that You would help us to see it clearly, that we might follow You and love You and embrace Your word by faith, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

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**Jeff:** All right. Well, let me say a couple words to you as Don makes his way back to his seat. Do you have your Bible?

**Don Maurer:** Yes.

**Jeff:** I'll have him read. Don, I'll have you turn to Romans 2:25 to the end of the chapter, which is verse 29. You can go there if you'd like. While he makes his way back to his seat let me just take you through where we are in terms of the argument. Sometimes it's easy to get lost in the midst of this.

But in 1:1-17 we find that Paul introduces this letter. And there's a lot to that, especially in Romans 1:16-17. It functions as the ruling verses for the entire book.

But then in 1:18 he enters into his argument. And here he deals with the Gentiles. And that takes us through the end of the chapter. He indicates that he's talking about someone other than the Jews in various ways. And I pointed some of those ways out to you. For instance, the way in which he uses the pronoun “they, they, they, they, they, they.” It's a repeated use. And so the idea is that Paul is not talking about us—the Jews,—but he's talking about them. He's talking about some other group, and that other group is the Gentiles.

And Paul can see in the back of the room this Jew shaking his head and given his Amen and loving what he's saying, because you know how that goes. When you're in a church and you hear something that somebody else needs to hear, you are robustly amening. (*Laughter*) And that is what the Jews are doing; they're amening Paul.

And so Paul turns his sights on them. And in chapter 2 starting at verse 1 and going through verse 5 Paul says, “Don't think this isn't for you, because it is.” And then in verses 6-11 he talks about “*every human being*.” And at the end of that section he mentions Jew and Gentile both. So he's been talking about both Jews and Gentiles, Gentiles and Jews.

Now the Gentiles get a little indignant at this point because they say, “Wait a minute, Paul. How can you be saying this about us? Because the Jew has the law and knows better, he's been told. But we haven't been told; we don't know the law. So how can all of these things—judgment in particular—apply to us?” And so Paul explains to them that they had the law, and that it was written internally in their hearts.

And then the Jew, having listened to this, turns around and says, “Wait a minute; how can that pertain to us? Because we do have the law, and we are guides and keepers of it,” and so on.

And Paul says, “Yes, you're guides and keepers of it, and you're teachers of it. And you break it. And that puts you under the same judgment as them.”

Now that takes us to verse 25. And Paul is going to stay with the Jew at this point and continue his argument, because they have one last-ditch effort that they're trying to put forward as a way of saying, “But we're different. We're different from the Gentiles; we have x; we have this; we have something else.” So Don, why don't you read 2:25-29 to us and we'll get started?

**Don Maurer:** Okay. “*For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law.*” (*He clears his throat.*) *That's not a part of the text.* (*Laughter*)

**Jeff:** The grunting?

**Don:** Yeah, right.

**Jeff:** Okay.

**Don:** Okay, I'll start again. “*For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law. But if you are a breaker of the law your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if the uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not*

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*his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly. And circumcision is that of the heart—in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not from men, but from God.”* This is the word of the Lord.

**Brave Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Don:** I think Sig broke the mike.

**Sig Tragard:** It just died.

**Jeff:** It died, Don.

**Don:** Okay; all right.

**Jeff:** All right. So now what? We’ve come now to this last part of the argument. And we’re going to enter into chapter 3. In chapter 3 Paul is going to say, “Let me speak to both of you again.” And he’s going to gather up condemnation to them both, that all who are in Adam die. That’s going to be the theme of chapter 3. But now he’s bringing this segment of the argument to an end, where he is basically dealing in an imaginary way with first the Gentile, then the Jew, then both, then back to the Gentile and then the Jew. And now he winds it up staying with the Jew.

What is the last-ditch effort to maintain that they are different from the Gentile and righteous, that they have a leg up, as it were, that they are not under the law’s condemnation? Well, you read it in the text, or Don read it for you. And that is *circumcision*. They said, “Circumcision is what makes us different.”

Now what is the nature of circumcision? Let’s start there. Well, the Jew says that the nature of circumcision is that it doesn’t make us like the Gentiles. It actually separates us from the Gentiles. Circumcision marks us as belonging to God. That’s what circumcision does.

And so having this mark, that seal upon us, distinguishes us from all other people. And therefore we’re different. So say what you will, Paul. We’re marked. That’s what they would say. They would say that their circumcision marks them as heirs of Abraham.

I mean, think about that. If you go all the way back to the beginning of the Scriptures, all the way back to Genesis chapter 15, God makes a covenant with Abraham. You can actually go all the way back to chapter 12. But in chapter 15 He makes a covenant with Abraham. And in chapter 17 He gives him circumcision.

So at the very beginning of the Bible they can appeal to Abraham. “We’re children of Abraham, and therefore heirs of the promise.” And so they say, “Paul, look; we’re marked as heirs.”

Now before going further I just want to say a word about this, because I think it’s an important place to stop, because just like last time I said to you that this could easily apply to us. So now too this could apply to us.

What do I mean by that? Well, I think that if you think a little bit about the parallel to circumcision, which is baptism, you realize that we could have this same attitude today about our baptism. How do you know you’re different from all other people? Well, I was baptized. And my baptism marks me out and sets me apart as different. And therefore I belong to God by virtue of my baptism.

And so the first thing I want to do as we think about that is that I want you to see the connection that one could make between circumcision and baptism, in order for you to understand that there’s an argument to be made here, that a practical argument can be made, that we could actually argue in the same way. And it would be dangerous for us to

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do so. So I want you to feel the weight of the argument not just for the Jew. But I want you to feel it for yourself and for us.

So let's think about this. The text applies to us. How? Through baptism.

Now I want you to think about that for just a minute. And I want you to think about the present text with me.

Baptism in the New Testament is an extension of circumcision. Now some of you are going to say to me, “I don't know if I believe that or not. I don't know if I believe that they are that closely related.” And I'm going to argue—because the Scriptures argue—I'm going to argue that they are not only closely related, but I'm going to argue that circumcision actually gives way to baptism.

Now let me put it like this. When you think about the covenant structure of the Scriptures, one of the things that we have in the Old Testament are sacraments. So the sacraments are two in number. And the sacraments are Passover and Circumcision.

Now when you get to the New Testament what do you find? In the New Testament you find Jesus celebrating Passover and then saying, “Okay, this is the last Passover. Now we're going to celebrate the Lord's Supper.” And so Passover gives way to the Lord's Supper; it actually comes out of it. And circumcision gives way to baptism.

Now there is a reason for this. Yes?

**Paul Sedlock:** I don't know if you're going to get into it.

**Jeff:** What's that again?

**Paul:** If you're going to get into it, that's awesome. I am going to say this. How are you getting from Passover to the Lord's Supper in that passage?

I wasn't going to get into that sacrament. But let's just pause for a minute, okay? When you go to the Gospels you can go to any number of the Gospels. Let's go to the Gospel of Matthew, and I think it's chapter 26. And in verse 17 you find that “*Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Where will You have us prepare for You to eat the Passover?’*” And then He gives them the instructions. And they go and they set things up for the Passover. And then in verse 26, “*Now as they were eating,*”—as they were eating the Passover,—“*Jesus took bread. And after blessing it He broke it and gave it to His disciples and said, ‘Take and eat; this is My body.’*” And then you get the institution of the Lord's Supper. So the Lord's Supper grows out of the Passover.

**Paul:** It's based on that ceremonially, basically.

**Jeff:** Yes. And so this is Jesus saying to them, “Look. That which you ate in the Old Testament while the destroying angel passed over your house because you smeared its blood on the door, what was in that typology is now revealed in Me. This Passover lamb is My body broken for you.” That's the idea. Yes?

**Bishop Rodgers:** It's really revealing and sealed with the Resurrection. But it's because of the risen Lord's Supper, with His own body after the Resurrection.

**Jeff:** Yeah. Ironically though, the risen Lord's Supper is something we do in remembrance of His death until He comes. You know, it's a striking kind of contrast between the tension of remembering His death, and that it is the risen Lord's Supper. That's a striking tension. Yes, sir?

**Gary Craig:** That's why some of the churches, like Catholic churches, use unleavened bread for Communion, right?

**Jeff:** Well there are churches that obviously try to use the elements that would sync up with the Passover meal. Yes. Okay?

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Okay; so circumcision and baptism. Let me give you a couple of places, a couple of coordinates that will help you to see the inter-relationship between these two. First I want you to go to Philippians chapter 3 and verse 3. Now this is that place in Philippians where Paul is really hammering hard on who? On the Judaizers—those who are following him around, saying, “This guy has no idea what he’s talking about. He didn’t keep the law,” and so on.

And this is what he says to them in verse 3. I’ll actually start in verse 2. “*Look out for the dogs; look out for the evildoers; look out for those who mutilate the flesh.*” Those who practice circumcision are who he’s talking about—“*those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the circumcision.*”

“Beware of the mutilators of the flesh.” Who is he talking about? He’s talking about the Jews who practice circumcision. And then he goes on to say, “*For we*”—Christians—“*are the true circumcision.*” Isn’t that interesting? “We’re the circumcision.”

Now go with me to Galatians chapter 3 and verse 27. And in 3:27 this is what he says. Now you notice the connection. He says, “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring—heirs according to the promise.*”

Now what did he just say? If you are baptized you are heirs of the promise of Abraham. Wait a minute! I thought that was what the Jews claimed in regard to circumcision. And it is. “We are Abraham’s children because we are circumcised.”

Paul says, “No, no, no, no, no; you’ve got it wrong. If you are baptized you’re Abraham’s heir.”

**Tom Hansz:** Isn’t it that our hearts are circumcised through baptism?

**Jeff:** So it was always the case back in the Old Testament that circumcision was to indicate something more than the flesh. So too in the New Testament; baptism is to indicate something more than the flesh. But we’ll get there. Don’t jump ahead of me, Tom.

**Tom:** Sorry.

**Jeff:** Ease off; back off. *(Laughter)*

**Tom:** I will.

**Jeff:** You’re smelling the right scent though; that’s good. Thanks for spoiling it, though. *(Laughter)* All right. So now I want you to go to a text that brings these ideas together. I want you to go to Colossians chapter 2 with me for a minute. In Colossians chapter 2 and in verses 11 and 12 I want you to notice this. Would somebody read that—11 and 12 of chapter 2?

**Sig Tragard:** “*In Him also you were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands—by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ—having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*”

**Jeff:** Now here’s what we have in that text. We have the *ordo salutis*. Sorry, not the *ordo salutis*; we have the *ordo historia*—the history of salvation. We have the accomplishment of redemption in the Person of Christ—His death, His burial and His resurrection. And there is obviously more than that—His perfect life. And after His resurrection there is His ascension and the outpouring of the Spirit, and so on. But this encapsulates what He did. He died, He was buried, He was raised to life.

So how is it that those things are then tied off to things that we find in the text? Well, the death of Christ is referred to as what? The circumcision of Christ. The burial is tied

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off to baptism. And the Resurrection is tied off to baptism. In other words, what Paul is saying is this. He is saying that in the Old Testament circumcision pointed to one and the same Person who fulfilled the promise of Abraham, just like in baptism. Baptism points to one and the same Person who fulfilled the promise of Abraham. And who is that Person who fulfills the promise? It's Jesus Christ.

And so he not only talks about circumcision, but he talks about the circumcision of Christ. In other words, the death on the cross is described as a circumcision. And so the circumcision of Christ is the death of Christ, the baptism is the burial, and the baptism is also the resurrection. And so it's a beautiful picture of how both signs point to one and the same Person, Jesus Christ, and the promise held out to us in the Abrahamic covenant, fulfilled in Jesus.

So there's a sense in which—and I'm obviously not going to go into this unless you have questions—but I just want to tie the circumcision and baptism together. If you want to talk about that, that's on you. But all of this is to say that we could treat our baptism like the Jews treated their circumcision. Yes?

**Sig:** When John the Baptist was doing his thing in the Jordan, and Jesus comes out along with all these others, was that the first time Jews got baptized? Was it a new thing with John?

**Jeff:** Well, we have this idea that there was a proselyte baptism. And—

**Sig:** Converting to Judaism.

**Jeff:** Yes. There is this proselyte baptism, this baptism that was in practice and in play. I'm not sure I go in that direction—that the baptism of John the Baptist was this proselyte baptism. I actually think that John, being a prophet, understood passages like Ezekiel 36—you know, that the washing with clean water would be the sign of the New Covenant. And he begins to baptize. And I think that his baptism comes out of an understanding of the Old Testament prophecy, more so than this sort of practice of the Jews at the time. Yeah, Gary?

**Gary Dunbar:** In the prophecy of Daniel in chapter 9 it talks about the Anointed One being cut off.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Gary:** Does that happen in Revelation, or is that referring to what you were just saying here?

**Jeff:** Well, I think the Anointed One who is cut off in the book of Daniel is Jesus Christ upon the cross for us. Now obviously, once you move into a more dispensational, pre-millennial view of Daniel and the book of Revelation, there is going to be a parting of ways. But I think the seventy weeks of Daniel is not pointing to some eschatological time beyond us. I think the seventy weeks is actually pointing to the cross. But that is definitely for another time. *(Laughter)* Thanks, Gary and Tom. *(Laughter)* Yes?

**Don Bishop:** In Genesis 15, before God instituted circumcision,--

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Don:** He has the covenant with Abraham too. It's the birds that He passes through.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Don:** God Himself takes the oath.

**Jeff:** Yes. The fact of the matter is that if the Jews were thinking right, the Jews could have said, “Hey! God promised in Genesis 15 that the promises were ours, and this is a sign of that,” right? And they were doing something a little different than that.

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And you’ve got to think about this for a minute. They were doing something a little different than saying, “The promise is ours. Circumcision is a sign of that promise.” What they were doing is something a little different.

Now *Paul’s response to them*. But before we get to that, with Paul’s response to circumcision, he gets it. What does he get? What does Paul get about that? Here’s what Paul gets. Let me put it like this. Paul understands that they are not thinking about the promise that was offered. They are thinking about the sign itself.

Let me put it this way. I’ve got this wedding ring, okay? And let’s say that I never go home. I never spend any time at home. I cheat on my wife. I do all kinds of terrible things to break my marriage vows. But when somebody asks me and says, “Are you married?”, I say, “Duh! Ring!”—you know, something like that, right?

And somebody who knows me says, “Wait a minute! You don’t live like you’re married.”

And I say, “I have a ring, don’t I?” And I keep saying, “I have a ring, and it’s all about the ring.” No, it’s not all about the ring, because the ring points to something else. For me and for married folks the ring points to the covenant vow that was made on the day of marriage. The ring is only a sign that points to that. And it’s only good insofar as it reminds me of that.

If I just put all my investment into “I’ve got a ring,” I have nothing. And you see, that’s the problem with the Jews. And Paul understood that. “We’ve got circumcision.”

“What about the promise?”

“Who cares about the promise? We’ve got circumcision!”, you know? That sort of thing, right? And so it became all about the sign.

And so Paul says, “Look! Circumcision is of no value to you. It’s only of value to you if you obey the law.”

Now at that point they could have said, “Time out, big P! Huh-uh!” You know, if they were thinking right they would have said, “The law only drives us to the promise, bro.” And so the sign of circumcision is a sign of that promise. And the law was only given that we might remember that we need the promise, and the world around us too. That’s what they should have said if they were thinking.

But Paul knows they’re not thinking. He knows that for them it’s all about the signs, all about circumcision. And so he’s arguing with them subtly, and they don’t get it. He says, “*Circumcision is of value if you obey the law.*” And they should have said, “Time out” at that point. And instead they had no idea what to say.

And in fact Paul presses the argument. But he says, “If you break the law it’s like you’re actually uncircumcised.” And you know, you can actually hear them. They’re like “No-o-o!” (*Laughter*) But what is he saying? By saying that you are like an uncircumcised person, you’re like a—

**Don Maurer:** A Gentile.

**Jeff:** And so he says, “Look. If you obey the law”—which we’ve already established in the previous verses that you don’t, even if you call yourself a teacher,—“the fact of the matter is that circumcision is of no value to you unless you keep the law, unless you obey the law. And you don’t. So it’s like you’re a Gentile.” So that’s what he says.

I want you to think about that with the ring illustration. The ring is only of value if you keep the covenant that you made. If you don’t keep the covenant that you made the ring is of no value to you. It’s like you are not married; it’s as simple as that, right? Okay, that’s what he’s saying to them. It’s like you’re a Gentile.

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Paul actually flips the argument around. He says, “Could not the uncircumcised through obedience be considered circumcised?” Now that’s hypothetical; it’s not going to happen. He has already established that every other people group—Gentiles—have broken the law. You know, he’s driving it. “I’m just asking a simple, innocent question.” (*spoken in a W. C. Fields kind of voice*) (*Laughter*) And so he’s driving the point home.

Now *what then is the nature of circumcision?* Circumcision is only—I shouldn’t say only. But it’s a sign and a seal of the covenant that God made with Abraham.

Now I said that I shouldn’t say *only*, because it’s sort of like this. It’s like a father bringing a son into his study one day. And he’s a rich man, and he says to his son, “Son, I want you to know that all that is mine is going to be yours someday. And so I’m going to give you this ring. And this ring is going to be a sign to you and a seal to you of the inheritance that is yours. So every time you look at this ring I want you to know that there’s a treasure behind it. But I also want you to know that the ring itself is part of that treasure.”

So for us baptism is part of that treasure. Baptism is a part of the treasure that we have. But let’s say that the young man forgets the inheritance and only has the ring. Well, there’s value in having the ring, but not anywhere near the value of the treasure itself, right? All right now; that’s the idea.

I’m not going to spend time with these, other than to say that the sign points beyond itself. I mean, anybody who is going to Virginia Beach for a vacation doesn’t stop at the sign that says, “Virginia Beach 100 miles,” and say, “Hey, we’re here!”, right? Nobody does that; it’s a sign that points beyond itself. And so no one should stop at circumcision; they should see what’s beyond it.

And the seal authenticates. In other words, having the ring that the father gave to the son is an authentication that the treasure, that the inheritance is for him someday. So it’s a seal. And it’s a sign and a seal that points beyond itself.

And so what’s the nature? Well, that’s the nature. The nature of circumcision is that it’s a sign and a seal that points beyond itself.

*What’s the value of circumcision?* Well, we’ve been putting all the pieces together. So we’ve got the ability now to talk about the value. But before I do that, let me ask you. Do you have any questions? Do you understand? Does it make sense? I knew it! Don Maurer has a question; let the record show. (*Laughter*)

**Don:** In verse 25, Jeff, where it says that “*your circumcision has become uncircumcision*”, if you break the law, what does that have to say to us?

**Jeff:** Say that again, that last part.

**Don:** What does that have to say to us as Christians? I mean, in light of the very precious doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, whereas Christians we will not be out of God’s favor?

**Jeff:** Yeah. But think about it like this, Don. We talk about the preservation of the saints or the perseverance of the saints. But an aspect of that is that we persevere in the benefits that we receive in Christ. And one of the benefits that we receive is sanctification. In other words, to put that practically, we do the good works that God prepared in advance for us to do.

But let’s say that our lives are remarkably deficient in terms of evidence. And let’s say, as the expression goes, that we “live like hell,” but proclaim Christ. There is no evidence for what comes out of our mouth. And so if we then say, “Well, I’m baptized”, if somebody walks up to us, if you have a bold enough friend who comes up to you who is



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not a believer himself and says, “You know, I hear you talking about Jesus every once in a while. But you don’t live like any Christian I’ve ever met.”

And at that point the guy looks at his friend and says, “Yeah? Well you don’t know it, but I’ve been baptized.” And at that point what is he doing? He’s saying, “The reason for my talk about Jesus is dependent upon the fact that I’ve been baptized.” And what is he doing? He’s not tying baptism back to anything other than that it’s sort of like the wedding ring without the commitment. Does that make sense?

Don: Yeah. It’s just that we all break the law every day in thought, if not word and deed. And I’m just wondering how that all ties in.

**Jeff:** Well, I think it ties in when you think about faith and repentance, right? I mean, it ties in because—well, let me just start off with this.. I’m drawing a circle on the board, Don.

**Don:** Okay.

**Jeff:** And that represents union with Christ. And when I talk about union with Christ—and you know this well,—I’m talking about forensic benefits. I’m talking about justification; I’m talking about adoption; I’m talking about those sorts of things. But I’m also talking about the renovative benefits that we possess in Christ. And those renovative benefits are renewal and washing benefits like sanctification, like new birth, like perseverance, like glorification. All of those things fall under that particular category. All of these things, though, are in the circle.

**Don:** Sure.

**Jeff:** So I can never have a life that is absolutely devoid of the renovative, and cling then to the forensic and say, “Yeah, but I’m justified, so I can live like the dickens. It doesn’t matter because I’m justified.” And Paul is going to say, “No, no, no, no, no. You totally misunderstand salvation.” Salvation is the forensic and the renovative.

And then the question is, what happens if I stumble and fall? Well, you know that the Westminster Confession talks about this. The Westminster Confession has some beautiful passages that remind us that one may actually enter into the depths of sin and still be found in Christ. I’m just going to read them to you because they’re worth it. But Don, while I find it, is that making sense?

**Don:** Yes, it is.

**Jeff:** Okay. So this first one comes from chapter 17. And I want you to listen to this; this is the third section. It says, *“Nevertheless they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins, and for a time continue therein, whereby they incur God’s displeasure and grieve His Holy Spirit, come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened and their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgment upon themselves.”* And yet that’s under “The Perseverance of the Saints.”

**Don:** Mm-hmm.

**Jeff:** And then “Of Assurance” has a very similar statement in Section 4; this is assurance now. *“True believers may have the assurance of their salvation in diverse ways shaken, diminished and intermitted, as in negligence in the preserving of it, by falling into some special sin which woundeth the conscience and grieveth the Spirit, by some sudden or vehement temptation, by God’s withdrawing the light of His countenance, and suffering even such as fear Him to walk in darkness and have no light. Yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God and the light of faith, the love of Christ and the brethren, the sincerity of heart and the consciousness of duty, out of which, by the*

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*operation of the Spirit, this assurance may, in due time, be revived, and by the which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.”* Oh man, that’s good stuff, isn’t it?

**Bishop:** Yep.

**Don Maurer:** Mm-hmm.

**Jeff:** Who said that the Westminster Confession isn’t pastoral? (*Laughter*) That’s pastoral; pastoral riches there, right?

**Don Maurer:** Amen.

**Jeff:** So anyway, does that help?

**Don:** Yes. Thank you, Jeff.

**Jeff:** Yeah, okay. So *the value of circumcision*. It has no value in and of itself. Circumcision has no value in and of itself, nor does baptism have value in and of itself. It’s just like the wedding ring. What’s its value? Its value is in its function—to point beyond itself as a sign and a seal. That’s what its value is; it’s a pointer.

Then to whom does it point? It points to Christ. Circumcision’s value is when it points to Christ and when Christ is believed—there it is, Tom!—in the heart. In other words, when you think about circumcision it points beyond itself. And that pointing beyond itself leads us to Christ. And when it leads us to Christ and He finds us, that is the regenerated heart.

So in the Old Testament when Moses would say, “Circumcise your hearts!”, he was saying, “Look beyond circumcision to what circumcision is to point to.” It’s to point to a renewed heart. And that renewed heart is only found in embracing the promise to which circumcision points.

And the same is true of baptism. You know, it would be an easy thing for us to tell our children growing up in our household, “You’ve been baptized. Now look beyond your baptism to that to which it points. Baptize your hearts; circumcise your hearts.” That’s the idea.

So Paul goes on to say that an outward Jew is not a Jew. This is why he talks about the inward Jew. The Jew who is one inwardly is the true Jew. And if you put what we’ve been saying together, that’s the idea. And so a true Jew is a believer.

And I just want to take you back to Galatians chapter 3. And look at this. This is strangely profound when you think about what we just said. “*Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.*” In other words, if you exercise faith, you are a child of Abraham.

Now listen to this. “*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham.*” And then he quotes from Genesis chapter 12: “*In you shall all the nations be blessed.*” That’s the gospel!

And then this. “*So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith*”—Abraham, the believer. It’s just a beautiful thing to me; think about it.

And that takes us back to Philippians 3:3. We are the true circumcision. The person who is baptized is a true child of Abraham. And that’s the value of circumcision.

Now what about *the place of circumcision*? Well, it is a covenant sign extended by baptism. Why? Here’s the point that I would make to you. Why do we start with circumcision and then move to baptism? Well, I can think of at least one reason. I can actually think of two reasons.

The first reason is that circumcision is a bloody sign. And when you think about the Old Covenant you think about the continual offering of sacrifices. But baptism is a bloodless sign, and rightfully so when you think about Christ, right?

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But I think there’s something else. And that is that there is an enlargement of the covenant in Christ. *“There is neither Scythian nor barbarian, Jew nor Greek, male or female”*, right? And so now circumcision is not simply restricted to males. But Paul says implicitly that your whole house is baptized. And so it’s an enlargement of male now to female. And it’s an enlargement of the covenant. And so that’s the place of circumcision in the covenant as it points forward to Christ. I’ll stop there; we’re out of time.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Don Maurer’s talking watch goes off.

**Jeff:** At least you could put music on that thing, Don. *(Laughter)*

**Sig:** At some point, Jeff—obviously not today because you don’t have time,—but at some point would you discuss the circumcision and the covenant that God made with Abraham when He cut the animals in half, saying, “If I don’t keep My covenant this will be what happens?” He’ll be severed; He’ll be cut in half. Is there a correlation to circumcision, that if we don’t keep the covenant that we will be cut off?

**Jeff:** I’ll tell you what I’ll do. Let’s deal with that in Romans 4.

**Sig:** Okay.

**Jeff:** That will be a great place to deal with that.

**Sig:** So I’ll mark that down in Romans 4. We might get there in 2022. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** You know, we are moving at a fairly good clip.

**Sig:** We’re done with 2 now; I guess we’re done with 2.

**Bishop:** Luther was really put down under what he called the *unfectung*. And he would say, “I am baptized.”

**Jeff:** Yes. And that is the Lutheran response. You know, some people take that phrase wrongly, as if Luther is saying that it all started with my baptism, right? You’re the Lutheran scholar. Tell me if I’m right about this. But I’ve always taken him to mean that I can point to this part of the treasure that signifies the whole.

**Bishop:** Absolutely.

**Jeff:** So it’s like a synecdoche. I point to this because of this.

**Bishop:** He was reaching out to something that God did.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Bishop:** It wasn’t what he did. He was a mess; that’s what I was getting at. No matter how messy I am, God in His grace has reached out and claimed me as His own.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Bishop:** And that’s what it’s all about.

**Jeff:** It’s sort of like that young man. He’s in despair because he’s living in another part of the world. And he looks at the ring and he says, “I have the treasure. How do I know I have it? I have the ring,” right? That’s the idea. Luther was quite penetrating; I love Luther; he’s a great guy.

**Bishop:** Yeah.

**Jeff:** I envy you for getting to spend your life with him; that’s great. Anything else? Of course, I envy you in the most holy way that I can. *(Laughter)*

All right; let’s pray. Father, thank You again for this day and for Your word, and for reminding us that we have no place to stand in and of ourselves before You. But we are wholly destitute of righteousness. And it’s because of unrighteousness that we use to live a part of and in that Your wrath is revealed. And yet You revealed a righteousness that is apart from the law that was for us in Jesus Christ, and we praise You for that. We are so thankful that we stand in Christ who has forgiven our sins. And Father, we ask now that You’ll bless us as we go out into the world. Strengthen us and cause us to be a strength to

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others as we point them to the same Christ who saved us. Father, we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.