
Monday, August 15, 2022 ◻ Romans 2:25–3:4

Questions from the Scripture text: About what does v26 begin speaking? When is it profitable? What turns it into uncircumcision? Who might keep the righteous requirements of the law (v26)? As what is his uncircumcision counted? What will this physically uncircumcised man fulfill (v27)? And whom will he judge? Despite their having what? Why? Who is not a Jew (v28)? What, ultimately, is not circumcision? Who is a Jew (v29)? Of what is real circumcision? In Whom? Not in what? From whom do the genuinely circumcised not seek/receive their praise (v29)? From Whom do they seek it? What question does 3:1 ask about the outward Jew? About outward circumcision? What is the answer in v2? What is the greatest advantage/profit that they had? What did some of them not do (v3)? But what doesn't this unbelief do (v3)? Who would be true even if every Jew (and church member) turned out to be a liar (v4)? Whom would the Lord be justified in judging?

Who are true Jews, and what is true circumcision? In these nine verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **the outward signs are only valuable when matched to an inward reality worked by the Holy Spirit**.

Whom signs benefit: believers, v25–27. Signs benefit those who come, by way of that sign, to the thing signified. The problem in v25 is that no one keeps the law! The one who keeps it is the one who is credited with keeping it perfectly through union with Christ. This is the only one who even makes a beginning of keeping it genuinely in their own behavior.

So the uncircumcised man in v26 must be a believer in Christ, and therefore has made a beginning of obedience from the heart. Of course his outward uncircumcision cannot take away the reality of the inward work of God in him! How can letters on a page or a sign upon the flesh compare to that (v27)?!

What real Jewishness and circumcision are: inward reality in Christ by the Spirit, v28–29. So being an outward Jew doesn't make someone Jewish. The true Jew was not someone who merely had external membership in visible Israel. The true Jew was one who had the inward reality of what Israel was supposed to profess.

And true circumcision was not the application of the outward sign, but the change that the Holy Spirit makes in the heart. Baptism functions the same way. The effectual baptism is not what the church does with the water, but what Christ does with the Spirit. Without that, the application of the water is worse than meaningless: it testifies against us.

The chief benefit of church membership and sign: the oracles of God, v1–2. If the inward reality is the chief thing, then what is the point of either membership (being a Jew) or sign (circumcision)? The apostle here asserts that they are very advantageous, and he will give a longer list concerning the Jews in 9:4–5. But here he cuts to the chase: they were entrusted with the sayings of God! The church now holds that glorious place, inheriting not only the Old Testament, but also the apostolic and prophetic writings from Christ, in which He continues and completes the proclamation of His gospel, which is His divine power for salvation.

The honest reality about church membership and sign: not all believe, v3–4. Here is a great warning to us: God is not obligated to save, not even in the church. This should keep us from all presumptuousness. Even if every Jew (not just some) had been lost, God would still be true. Even if every church member (not just some) is lost, God would still be true. He would be perfectly just if He condemned all and saved none.

If the Lord has placed us in His church and placed His sign upon us, let us not think that this has made us safe or good. For these things only benefit us if His Spirit has made us new and given us faith. Even having the gospel itself only benefits us if we believe the gospel—if we believe in the Christ of the gospel. Only then are we forgiven. Only then are we blessed.

What membership do you have? What sign have you received? How can they do you any good?

Sample prayer: Lord, You have given us the great blessing of hearing Your gospel, and receiving the signs that belong to Your people. But, if we do not believe Your gospel and receive the inward reality of the outward signs, then we will be those condemned people who bring shame upon Your Name. So, grant Your Spirit's almighty work upon us, so that we may believe in Jesus Christ and be saved and transformed, which we ask in His Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP51A "God, Be Merciful to Me" or TPH51C "God, Be Merciful to Me"

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So let's hear The Word of God. Romans 2, verse 25, through 3 verse 4 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 an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law will not 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 law.

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly nor's 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, What advantage, then has the Jew or what is the prophet of circumcision?

Much in every way chiefly because to them, we're committed. The oracles of God, for, what if some did not believe? Well, they're unbelief. Make the faithfulness of God without effect. Certainly not indeed let God be true. But every man a liar as it is written that you may be justified in your words and may overcome when you are judged So far, the reading of God's word.

So, hopefully, you remember from a couple Wednesdays ago that there were those who were in verse 17, called Jews and rested on the law and made their boast in God and knew his will and approved. The things that were excellent being instructed out of the law. And what did we hear, when?

What would we find a really considered those passages? Those aren't bad things. It's a good thing to be a call to Jew. Remember the word for Jew comes the word from the word for Judah and what does Jude or Judah mean? It means praise That was the name that Leia gave her son when she finally stopped trying to say.

Well, my husband will see me or the the Lord has heard and He will give me the favor of my husband Simeon or now, my husband will be attached to me, Levi and but son number four, she's had enough experience to know that bearing sons is not going to get her the love of her husband.

She should live for the praise of God. She should live to know him and be loved by him. And he will love us. And that wonderful wonderful name. She says, now I will praise God. Even without the attention of my husband, that I have been trying so hard for a wonderful name.

Jude or or Judah is from which the word Jew comes. And we'll, we'll pick that up in in a moment, but being called a Jew, wasn't bad. Resting on the law wasn't bad. The law told us about Jesus, There's a proper way of resting on the law, it's to rest upon the Jesus that the law tells you about just like there's a proper way to rest upon the gospel.

I'm afraid, there are too many who rest upon what they know about the truth of the gospel, right? They think we've got a really accurate doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, but you're not saved. If just by the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, That doctrine tells you that you're saved by Christ alone.

And so we are prone to the same things taking that which is good and making it to be the object of our hope, and the object of our trust. Instead of Jesus himself, which we saw exposed, didn't we? When he said and our confident that you yourself are and then there were those multiple pairs.

I'm a guide. Everyone else is blind. I am a light. Everyone else is in darkness. I'm an instructor, they're all foolish. I'm a teacher, they're babies and so forth. He said no, the first thing you should have ever done with God's Word is teach yourself first thing. You should have ever done with God's commands is convict condemn yourself so that you'd hope only in Christ and may the Lord help us to do all those things.

But then he comes back and he says circumcision is indeed profitable and that should shock us a little bit coming out of verses 17 through 24. After we've heard all that, we say, we would say, oh, well, the only thing that's profitable is Jesus and that's true in a sense.

But Jesus used circumcision as a means. Didn't he Isn't he? The Lord. Who after Abraham said? How can I know that I will inherit? Because I don't have any children or how cool I know. Can I know that my seed will inherit and he gives him. He gives him the sign of circumcision.

Well in Genesis 15 showed him, the stars in Genesis 17 he gave him a sign that showed that it's not Abraham, having Abraham as father that we need. It's God. Cutting away the dead flesh that we have inherited from our first Father, Adam. It's the spilling of blood to atone for our sins.

Now Jesus has already died and if you believe in him, you discover that your death happened at the cross and that his blood has been shed and that that is the blood by which we have been atoned, but the essence of circumcision was that you have that outward? Sign that confirms to you.

That God is the one who gives you the change of heart. God is the one who would give in the case of circumcision. The Christ whose blood would atone for our sins. Just like baptism shows us. Someone heard someone talk about today just baptism, look, backward or look forward.

You're saying baptism looks forward because you baptized babies. Well baptism looks forward when you baptized adults too because God's not done with us yet and the work of His Spirit and the effect of the life of Jesus is something that still being applied to us. Until until we are perfected in holiness.

Even until we are raised again from the dead and our bodies are conformed figures. But baptism always looks backward, too. Doesn't look backward to the death of Christ. It looks backward to that first, great pouring out of the spirit, it looks backwards to the beginning of when the church on earth.

The gathering of God's people on earth were marked not by circumcision, but by baptism. When the first baptism was made and so just as circumcision was profitable, for those who come to faith in Christ and as a result of faith in Christ, they would obey from the heart. He's a circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law.

And we had a clever child in catechism class. Today. Who asked, did Moses? Keep the law. And someone said, no, which was true. He didn't keep it perfectly and keep it meritoriously, which means he didn't keep it in a good way that earned stuff from God. We can't make God our debtor, right?

We can't do anything good enough that God has to give us good things for it, But Moses did actually keep the law. He believed in the promised Savior and God gave him a new heart and even though he didn't do anything without his own sin, he did do good.

And right things that came from a new nature that he was given for Christ's sake. Now, he didn't have the same conscious experience of union with Christ. He didn't have the same indwelling of the Holy Spirit, in his heart, making him call God Abba, Father, the Holy Spirit alone, of course, gave him life.

But Moses kept the law. So there is actually, there are people who keep the law and those are the only ones for whom circumcision. Does them any good because they've learned not to trust in themselves but to trust only in what God would do to say and their circumcision will confirmed to them.

That God, who gave this sign is the same God who gave the promise and he really does save and he's really working in me. And he's really going to finish cutting away. All of the dead me that I got from Adam. And he will, he will complete his work until I worship him forever in holiness.

But if you are a breaker of the law he says your circumcision has become on circumcision which is to say. If you never come to faith, if you continue living for the things for which Jesus died, and there's no sign on your flesh that can help you. It's through a baptism too, isn't it?

If you get the water poured on you and you get the name of the Triune God and I hope getting to read straight through a bunch of Ephesians. Today was helpful and seeing how important Trinitarian theology is and why that's the name into which we're baptized, but having the water poured on you and the name of the triune God pronounced on you.

That doesn't actually do you. Any good does it unless you believe in Jesus Christ? Unless you have a new nature from him, then it does you all sorts of good because your faith is weak and you're tempted to doubt and you keep sinning and you're frustrated, but it keeps reminding.

You what's been done in you. As a work of God, it was the plan of God as the redemption that Jesus has accomplished already on the cross. It's the redemption that the Spirit is applying to you, the spirit will not fail to finish applying it to you any more than Christ could now fail to have accomplished it on the cross.

The wonderful thing baptism is, if you come to faith in Jesus Christ, otherwise it would testify against you, wouldn't it just like the circumcision of these Jews? You never came to faith testified against them. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law. If you're a junior.

Like what that's impossible. The law requires us to be circumcised but of course God has set aside the ceremonial law and circumcision, never circumcision of the flesh. Never gave the new nature, never gave life from Jesus or goodness from Jesus will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision. Of course, if a gentile is keeping the law again.

Like we said, about Moses not perfectly not deservingly or earning things from God. But he's actually doing good from the he loves God and although he's always got that mixture that we hate and can't wait to be rid of of loving ourselves and wanting in a way that wants praise for us.

And instead of praise for God and all those other motives that we don't want to have, but if you genuinely love God, there's mixed in there with your flesh that which didn't come from you and your flesh that which came from Jesus. And so, there is such a thing, isn't it?

Wonderful that there is such a creature. As the uncircumcised man who keeps the righteous requirements of the law. And of course, is uncircumcision is counted as circumcision. Because he has the inward reality from Jesus that the outward sign of circumcision was always intended to communicate. So baptism, does you good if you have faith in Jesus Christ?

And even if someone who did not receive water, baptism starts to demonstrate that they're believing in Jesus and they actually love God and they have that wonderful mixture of motives that exists only in the hearts of Christians, which is a genuine desire for God's glory. In addition to whatever motives come from their flesh.

If they do that then they are treated by God every bit as much as if they had received water baptism because the spirit is the one the the baptism by from Jesus. By the Spirit is the one that matters and that's the only way you can end up being an uncircumcised man who keeps the law.

So, he says, well not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law judge, you who even with your written code and it's the word for letters, like tracing your letters. Do you ever trace letters? Sophia give her trace letters and write them in your school you might. Well the Jews had a bunch of letters and a bunch of pages and Paul told them if you don't trust in Jesus and you don't love God, all you've got is tracing tracing, doesn't get you to heaven.

Does it that might get you a smile or a sticker from mom or something, but it doesn't get you to heaven. Only Jesus gets us to heaven. So fee fulfills. The law doesn't need judge. You even with your written code and circumcision, who even with the written code and circumcision are still a transgressor of the law.

Free is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor a circumcision that which is outward in the flesh, but he has a Jew. Who's won inwardly and circumcision. Is that of the heart in the spirit. The spirit is the one who does it in our hearts. Not in the letter.

Whose praise? Let's play on words, right? You can hear that against the word Jew, right? Who's praise is not from men. But from God, Isn't it a temptation for every one of us to wish that others would see how good we think we are? And that's a horrible temptation because we're not so good as we want them to think we are.

But there's actually this amazing truth at the end of chapter two. And that is that when God sees the difference that Jesus has made in you, he is pleased with it. Yes, it's mixed with remaining fleshlyness and all of the sin that we get so easily entangled with and have a hard time putting off, but every particle of the goodness of Christ that His worked in our hearts, the love that he's given you for himself, God loves it and God, praises it says, behold how good my son is, how worthy he is.

How powerful is His working by our spirit? In this one That's the real Jewishness. That's the real Jude or Judah. When God sees a work that he's begun in, you not finished but begun in you and he's pleased with it and he praises with it, praises it. If you find yourself, wishing that others would admire your Christianity or acknowledge your Christianity.

One good antidote is to know that God is actually already admiring his handiwork in everyone whom he's brought to faith in Jesus, and whom He's given his spirit. And that, although we feel the smallness of the beginnings of love for him. It is a small infinite beginning because it's something only God, the Spirit could have done and it is actually praise worthy to the extent that it comes from Jesus himself.

There's almost too much to take in, to think that God looks at what's going on in my heart and find something to praise. And yet. It is true. What advantage? Then has the Jew or what is the prophet of circumcision? Much in every way he's gonna give a longer list.

In chapter 9 here, he just gives one part chiefly because to them, we're committed. The oracles of God, It's the Word of God. The speakings of God that he uses to do this work in us. He says for what if some did not believe and that's an understatement, isn't it?

You read your Bible. You don't get the idea that some Jews have not believed. You get the idea that almost no Jews have ever believed at any time and even especially when they were rejecting the Lord, Jesus and agreeing or consenting or even requesting with his murder. And then, even after that, although there were multitude of Jews saved it first.

By the time Paul writes, this, the Jewish nation is a whole has not joined in with the several thousand whom we heard about in the beginning of Acts. And he says, does that mean God didn't give them real advantages. Of course it doesn't. It just shows how great sin is and how completely we are dependent upon grace.

So that when the Lord saves one of my children, I don't say yeah. They had a bunch of advantages and we did pretty good raising them, you know, not perfect, but good enough to call it faithful. And No we say despite all the advantages they had and whatever faithfulness the Lord sustained us to do.

And in opposition to all of the unfaithfulness that remained. Yeah. God has been merciful. He saved them. So for what if some did not believe? Well, there are unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect. Does it mean that being a Jew is a bad thing or ineffective? Or does it make mean that his word was ineffective?

Or that the sign was ineffective? No, God was merciful and God effectively applied it to everyone, whom he intended, right? That's something that rubs people the wrong way, but it's just a fact of Scripture and he's gonna come back to that in chapter 9, as well. Certainly not indeed let God be true.

But every man a liar which means, God would still be faithful if every Jew had been lost. If everyone in the church was a fake Christian which I said to say there's some congregations in which that may actually be the case. But then he says, as it is written that you may be justified in your words and may overcome.

When you are judged or be just or be just when you judge and the reason we say that is because we know where it came from Psalm 51, who wrote Psalm 51, who wrote it. After he sinned with Bathsheba. Okay God wrote it. That's true, it's God's words. But who was the human author, by who's penny wrote, it, It was David.

And he's saying here, even David knew that despite his being born into Israel and born into the tribe of Judah and having the sign of circumcision and being taught, the Word of God that he still deserved hell. And that his only hope was the grace and forgiveness of God.

So would if David had not believed, would God be false. Of course not God was faithful. It was David who had sinned, but God was also merciful and decided to save David. And all of those things that David had all of those advantages, the Word of God, the sign of circumcision membership in the Commonwealth of Israel.

And specifically the tribe of Judah. All those things had great advantage for him because he was also an object of the saving grace of God, who didn't have to do that. A lot of other people from Judah who had a bunch of those things, right? That didn't get saved, but God was not guilty of having failed to save them.

He didn't owe it to them. Our sin is such that despite all of our advantages, We are capable of sinking ourselves lower than the grave into how itself. And if we do that, we are culpable. We are guilty of having done it to ourselves. And so my dear children and my dear wife and my dear brothers and sisters, know that God gives these good things and that they are good.

But that there is not goodness, in us that we should be proud or presumptuous, the goodness is in Him and all of the things he's given us. Tell us that Circumcision tells us that the Bible certainly tells us that baptism tells us that The goodness isn't him And so do not presume that because you have all these advantages that you are saved trust in Him because it is those who have him who are saved.

And let's pray.

Father, thank you for this portion of your word. Thank you for your mercy that you have saved both from among the church that was under circumcision. And from the church as it is in Christ. And led by him from heaven with the sign of baptism and we pray Lord that you would make us not to presume upon the privileges that you have given us.

But to trust in Christ that for his sake, and by his spirit, those privileges would have their effect and that they would indeed profit us. Do that for us. We ask in Jesus name. Amen.