

Before we start with Chapter 3, I would like to go back to last week's text and deal with question in verse 26 that I posed in last week's sermon.

if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?

The question is, "What is meant by "an uncircumcised man keeping the righteous requirement of the law"?"

Is this just a hypothetical statement? I would paraphrase the verse like this- IF AN UNCIRCUMCISED MAN WERE TO KEEP THE RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENT OF THE LAW (He really can't and won't, but if he did...)

Or is this a historical statement- simply referring to Christ's completed work that justifies a man? I would paraphrase it like this-

IF AN UNCIRCUMCISED MAN KEEPS THE RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW BY REFERRING TO CHRIST'S COMPLETED WORK TO MEET THOSE RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENTS AT THE TIME OF ATONEMENT (The uncircumcised man **will** not, and **need** not, keep the righteous requirement of the law since Christ has already done that for him. He will meet the requirements through Christ. This view would say that this verse is not talking about a believer's behavior but Christ's completed work.)

Or the third option, is this talking about the habitual behavior of a saved person?

Or to put it another way, is this referring to the fruit of Godly living? I would paraphrase it this way- IF AN UNCIRCUMCISED MAN KEEPS THE RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENT OF THE LAW BY BEARING THE FRUIT THAT COMES FROM WALKING ACCORDING TO HOLY SPIRITS LEADING.

Let me show you from scripture why I believe the third view is the correct one.

First I want to make it very clear that a person cannot fulfill the righteous requirements of the law carnally, naturally. If we were to try to do it in our old nature it would require 100% perfection which no one would do. So we must understand first that we cannot do it naturally. But can it be done supernaturally? Can and will Christ do it through us? What does scripture say?

Another thing we must understand in considering how a person can meet the righteous requirements of the law is that when a person is regenerate, he receives **two things**. He receives the **forgiveness of sins** and he receives **the power to live a new life**. So all of an elect person's sins have been paid for, once and for all, by Christ.

Romans 4 says 7 "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered;
8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin."

To understand how a believer can meet the righteous requirements of the law we must first understand this. A forgiven sin cannot be punished **twice** since it already has been punished **once**. The sin of an elect person has been forgiven. It has already been punished. God's righteous decree has already been carried out on that sin. It would be unjust to punish it twice.

If our sin is brought up at all at judgment, it can only be used as proof of what Christ has produced in His child. It may be evidence of the **before** and **after**, but these works will not be held against us. They can't be if we are truly an elect person.

So what is left, once all of an elect person's sin is paid for and forgiven, all that is left is the fruit of what the Holy Spirit is doing in us.

How can the fruit of a faithful life NOT meet the laws righteous requirements? How could it be possible that those works that **are a result** of the Holy Spirit's work within us, **how could they not be** pleasing to the **Source** of the

work? If we love God and love his people because of God's work in our hearts, why should that **not meet the law's requirements** of loving God and loving people? The inconsistent works of our old nature, the acts of sin, are not being held to our account. That judgment has already happened. We will be judged based on the acts consistent to the new nature.

Now as soon as I say this, it is important to say that any tolerance of known premeditated sin in our lives, any complacency about it, any comfort with it may well be evidence that we aren't elect. So we better not take this concept and separate it from the context of faith and obedience. At the same time it is something that **is true** of the elect to the Glory of God.

Let's look at some more scriptures.

This is what Jesus had to say:

Matt 5: 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. 19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever **does** and **teaches them**, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness **exceeds** the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now, what does Christ mean by this? How will a believer exceed the righteousness of a Pharisee? How does He expect his listeners to apply what He just said. Is He appealing to the **behavior of the participant** or **their trust in what Christ has done**? What will the **righteousness look like that exceeds the**

righteousness of the scribes? He goes on to explain what He means.

21“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ 22But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.

Christ goes on from here to extend the law’s demands to that which goes on in the heart and mind of a man. He addresses **human behavior** in thought and deed. So how will a believer’s righteousness exceed the Pharisees? The believer will have a heart that is now in love with the law and compliant to it because of their gratitude to the **Law Giver**. They will be children of the new covenant and God has put **His law in their hearts**. They comply to the law in spirit and letter. They are people with changed hearts. Their obedience will be from the inside out. They will be changed people living changed lives. In that way a believer’s righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribe and Pharisee.

Now Christ could have said here that “Your righteousness will exceed the Pharisees because you will have faith in Christ and the righteousness Christ has will count for you”. But that is not what He said. It is true, but that is not what He said. He went on to describe human behavior, regenerate behavior. We know that the behavior he describes is **proof positive** that a person **HAS** totally put their faith in the righteousness of Christ. And the work of Christ has put the believer in a righteous status with God. He has been made righteous. He has been justified. So the work he describes has no merit in it to **earn** salvation. But it is nonetheless fruit of one who **has** salvation.

Let's look at Romans 8. Note in verse one that there is no condemnation to **those who are in Christ**, and then to restate what he means he says that it is **those who walk according to the Spirit, not the flesh. (He is showing here that what Christ did once for all and what he does in us each day cannot be separated.) Those in Christ walk in the Spirit.** And the law of the Spirit set us free from the law of death.

Rom 8:3-6 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: **He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.** For those who **live** according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who **live** according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

See here that there was a sin obstacle that we could not overcome. Christ did that for us. He condemned sin in the flesh and paid the full penalty for it. Now that the penalty for sin is gone in an elect person's life, we get to live in the power of the new life. The sin is covered and all that is left for the final judgment of believers is what Christ does through us as we live according to the Spirit. We see this more in Gal 5.

Gal 5:16-23 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. **But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.** Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,

idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told [you] in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such there is no law.

I think it is pretty clear in these three passages that when we walk in the Spirit, Christ fulfills the righteous requirements of the law through us. Christ condemned sin in the flesh. He took care of its penalty on the cross. And he gave us resurrection power to live a new life, a life in the Spirit. The question is not so much how can we who are wretches possibly fulfill the righteous requirement of the law. The question is really how could Christ NOT fulfill the righteous requirement of the law through us in our day to day lives? I believe we have underestimated the power of the Gospel, the power of the Christian life, the power of the Holy Spirit for too long.

The more I study the more I am convinced of a simple truth. There is bad theology about works and there is good theology about works. Bad theology will inevitably miss the mark by either taking away the necessity of good works, (of obedience), or by ascribing merit to the works. In other words, bad theology will either say you don't really need to stop committing known premeditated sin. You don't really need to obey. It doesn't matter.

Or it will say, you must do good works and those good works in some way earn salvation for yourself.

Good theology will say that good works, (or obedience), are absolutely necessary but they do nothing in winning one's salvation or meriting one's salvation.

There is no such thing as a powerless salvation any more than there is a powerless resurrection. The gospel is powerful. And that is why we can minister to each other

with discernment, with correct judging, and we can do it with great confidence. We can do it knowing that the God that gave us the Gospel stands behind His Gospel with His power. He DOES change lives. That is the business He is in. And we must walk in the faith that His promises are true.

Romans 3

Now Paul knows the Jewish audience. He has faced them over and over again in Acts. So he already knows what unstated objections the Jews have to what Paul is proclaiming. In the next 8 verses we will see three of them.

Verses 1 and 2 answers the objection that Paul is belittling the fact that God had covenanted with the descendents of Abraham.

Verses 3 and 4 answers the objection that Paul is calling into question God's promises toward the Jews.

And verses 5-8 answers the objection that Paul is maligning the character of God.

The objection that Paul is belittling the fact that God had covenanted with the descendents of Abraham.

¹What advantage then has the Jew, or what *is* the profit of circumcision?

Advantage- superior, extraordinary, surpassing, uncommon

1b1) pre-eminence, superiority, advantage, more eminent, more remarkable, more excellent

Profit- 1) usefulness, advantage, profit

What good is it?

The question is, since circumcision **doesn't** save and those without the covenant **can** be saved, what good is it to be a Jew? If true salvation isn't gained by those things that

Jews do, what advantage is there in that? If non Jewish obey-ers can be superior to Jewish disobeyers, why be a Jew at all? If circumcision doesn't save, what is gained by being of the nation that did such a thing?

The objection is likely that, if Paul is saying that being a Jew didn't save a Jew spiritually, then being a Jew was no benefit at all. If it was no benefit, then all the great promises in the OT are just hogwash according to Paul. Paul goes on to show that he can't be caught in this trap. The accusation is not true.

²Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.

Paul says there is great advantage. What is the advantage? Well, the biggest one, the chief one is that they were given the very words of God. If you were a gentile in the Old Testament time there was only one place to go to find out what the God who created heaven and earth said. You had to go to the Jews and ask them. Only they knew. Only they had the words of God. What an enormous advantage that is.

While Paul is saying that being a Jewish descendent does not save a person spiritually, he is not saying that there isn't an advantage to being a Jew or that they were not a nation blessed above all others.

Now- the objection that Paul is calling into question God's promises toward the Jews.

³For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect

Did not believe- faithlessness The Greek Word is apiste'o
Thayer Definition:

1) to betray a trust, be unfaithful

This same word is used in II Timothy

II Tim 2:13 If we are faithless,
He remains faithful;
He cannot deny Himself.

The Jewish argument would be that if being a Jew didn't save the Jewish person, then God was not faithful to his promises.

Paul is saying that even though the Jews didn't live up to their end of the covenant, God was and is faithful to his. Their faithlessness didn't nullify God's faithfulness. God's judgment was still right. God never promised to spiritually save every blood relative of Abraham. The Jews misunderstood that. That was not God's promise. There was an **advantage** to the Jews but they didn't take **advantage of it**. God was never unfaithful to them. But their unfaithfulness produced effects that were not favorable. Was the advantage lost because God was not true to His covenant? Absolutely not. It was not taken advantage of because men are sinful. The relationship that God had to the Jews gave the Jews an advantage. But it did not give them license to sin. And as typical of mankind, the Jews thought they could use it as a license to sin. They expected God to be biased in His judgment, to be a respecter of persons. But God is not.

⁴Certainly 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."***

God will always do as He says he will do. He will always live up to His end of any covenant. He always does what He promises.

This is one thing you can bank on. God and God's Word will always tell the truth about a topic. If the Bible portrays a person's situation in one way and the person involved describes it in a different way, believe the

Bible and believe what the Bible says about how that situation is remedied. If we say something different than what God says, we know who is wrong. We know who is lying. And we know what the truth is.

This text has been talking about judging hypocritically. God never does so. If you were to put God on trial for what He has said, all His words would prove true. He would be justified by what He said and did. If man were able to put Him on trial, He would always win. The fact that our world thinks to put God on trial and have him come out losing is just our utter foolishness. He would always overcome in a just court. He is Himself, JUST.

Now the the objection that Paul is maligning the character of God.

⁵But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.)*

Now who is the "our" in this verse? Is it the Jews, the Gentiles, or both. No matter what we decide, it is true of all parties.

Dr Barnhouse tells the story of buying a white lace piece of cloth for his wife that was very pretty. He asked why it cost so much and the clerk at the shop brought out a black piece of felt. She then laid a piece of the lace on the felt and the felt brought out all of the detail and beauty of the workmanship of the lace. He compares our unrighteousness to the black felt. Some would argue that our sin glorifies God... it shows his utter goodness against the backdrop of our evil. In that sense it serves a very good purpose. How could God possibly punish us for being so useful. Aren't we helping God by our wickedness? Isn't our usefulness good? Aren't we serving His purposes? Why would God punish that

which in a sense helps his cause? Wouldn't it be unjust for God to punish sin?

Paul says "I speak as a man". Paul is laying out a philosophical argument here. He is just stating what someone might say using their human logic. For some this could have been an honest question.

The objecting Jew may misunderstand what Paul is saying and think that since God uses evil to display His grace, since he uses sin in such a way, God has now put himself in a bind. He can't judge something good and now with what they understand of Paul's preaching- evil is good.

⁶Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?

Paul doesn't answer the question philosophically as much as he refutes it by a known fact. God **will** judge the world. The Jew believed this fact. This fact stands as a direct contradiction to the philosophical question. You can't believe that since doing evil is a useful good that God can't judge it// **and** that God will judge the world. Those ideas are mutually exclusive. So it must be that the idea proposed philosophically is wrong.

Just because something serves to make God's righteousness more visible does not make that same thing good. This is the difference between utilitarian goodness and intrinsic goodness. Something evil can be used for good in a utilitarian sense and not be intrinsically good at all. So being **used for good** does not make something **good**. Every evil would have some such utilitarian use. If God were limited by such a thing, **He could never judge any evil**. And that is simply absurd. Evil is evil because it violates God's intrinsic goodness, it refuses to do what God says. Evil is not declared evil because it can serve no useful purpose. It is evil because it is anti- God. Having a good purpose does not make something good.

It is interesting that Paul doesn't answer every philosophical nuance of the question. He just holds up an absolute fact. He knows that this will be enough to answer the sincere listener. And the insincere listener can never be convinced.

⁷For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner?

Paul restates the argument slightly differently. This time he uses the flawed reasoning about lying. He is saying that if my lies make God's truths look more true, why am I judged for doing evil. Aren't I actually doing something good? The answer is obvious to any onlooker. The wickedness is not measured by **how it can be used** but by what it is. If it is evil, any benevolent use will never make it less evil.

⁸And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come"—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.

Paul goes on to show his enemies false reasoning. They say that because Paul says what he says he is actually supporting this false line of reasoning. But they are slandering him. They are twisting the truth. They were charging Paul with a false charge based on their misunderstanding of salvation by grace, not law. They were saying that his teaching was granting a license for sin. We like to sin. God likes to grant grace. The more we sin the more God shows off his grace. Therefore sin ends up being a good thing according to Paul. That is what he was being accused of. But it wasn't true.

Basically he is saying that anyone who would twist his words in this way should go to Hell. They deserve it. They are playing games in order to cling to their evil. He could not possibly have refuted this any stronger.

And anyone who reads Paul and teaches a strain of antinomianism is doing the same thing. He or she is

basically saying that Paul's teaching not only allows but encourages evil. May it never be. That is not nor never will be what salvation is for. The Gospel is powerful and it always will be.

I would like to close by simply reading what Paul has already said about the Gospel. Chapter 1 verses 16,17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."