

Beware of the False Circumcision

by Santosh Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of true circumcision of the heart, focusing on worshiping in spirit and truth, glorying in Christ Jesus alone, and putting no confidence in the flesh. It highlights the need to boast only in the cross of Jesus Christ, to embrace weakness as a display of God's power, and to rely on the wisdom of God rather than worldly wisdom. The goal is to lead a life that nullifies worldly standards and boasts only in the Lord.

Scripture: Genesis 17:19, Matthew 11:28, 1 Corinthians 1:27, 2 Corinthians 12:9, 1 Corinthians 2:1

Topics: "True Worship", "Boasting in the Cross"

Description

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Transcript

Regarding our last week's memory verse, Luke 17 verse 10, I'd like you to turn there with me. First, I hope we are in the habit of looking at the context for our memory verses. Otherwise, they're just exercises for our memory and not for our spirit.

And we're not in a competition to have the best memory, but we are on a race to know God more intimately, to experience all that He has planned for us in the New Covenant. And I don't plan to speak on this passage, but I encourage you to meditate on it this week. If you haven't been this past week, maybe set it for this week.

And I got this picture as I was meditating on this verse this week. When I got to heaven and Jesus says, well done, good and faithful servant, you made it. What will your response be? He says, I'm an unworthy slave.

I just did what you asked me to do. You asked me to do this and that's all I did. But you know the context is very significant for me.

Because He's talking about forgiveness. He talked about forgiving somebody who hurts you and then comes back about two hours later and does the same thing. And then comes back and you forgive him.

And then comes back two hours later and throughout that day, every two hours, does exactly the same thing and you forgive him. Verse four, if he sins against you seven times in a day. I just did some quick math.

Most of us are awake for about 16 hours a day. You divide that seven times. It's about about every two hours.

Every two to three hours maybe. Seven times in a day, your wife comes and does the same thing. Your husband does the same thing.

Your children do the same thing. At what point will you lose your temper? Get irritated? At time number four? Most of us probably the second time. Didn't I tell you once already? Two hours and you've already forgotten? And when we really see the truth of what Jesus was saying here, we take his words seriously, we realize it's impossible.

I tell you, it is impossible to forgive. Truly forgive from your heart. I think perhaps even the first time.

To forgive as lavishly, as unashamedly, as freely as God has forgiven me. To forgive that way is impossible. Let alone seven times in a day.

But let's say by the grace of God we are truly able to forgive seven times in a day. And you go back and lay your head on your pillow and you look back on that day and you know you've just successfully by the grace of God forgiven your husband every two hours for exactly the same thing that he did. How will you sleep on your pillow? How big will your head be as it rests on that pillow? For all the forgiveness that you afforded your wife or your husband or that person who spoke evil of you.

You say, look I forgave. Or will you say what Jesus was getting to. I'm just an unworthy slave.

You told me to forgive Lord and I forgave. No big head, no proud of me, no looking at my spouse thinking yeah see I forgave you. I'm more spiritual than you.

None of that. And when we can come to the place where we forgive and we don't have to make the other person feel bad for forgiving them. We've understood what it means.

What Jesus commands really meant. And we're not doing God a favor by forgiving others. You know sometimes I know my flesh makes me think that.

I'm doing them a favor by forgiving them. Somehow I think I'm doing God a favor by forgiving them. We're not doing God any favors by obeying him.

He loves it that we obey him. But we just do what we're commanded to do. That's all.

It's that simple. And pride is a sneaky enemy. Pride is a sneaky enemy.

Loves to come in and get us to be puffed up about those things that we did that simply were written in God's Word to do. So be on guard. Be on guard.

He starts in verse 3. Be on your guard. If your brother sins rebuke him. There's a place for that.

And if he repents forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day and returns to you seven times saying I repent forgive him. So you too, verse 10, when you do all the things which I just commanded you

say.

We are unworthy slaves. We have done only that which we ought to have done. Amen.

That's probably a good enough lesson for this week. You think family? I think it is. May we really live it out.

Could you turn with me to Philippians chapter 3, verse 3. In a world that's taken up with a lot of different things, signs of the times, we often receive emails from people saying what does your church believe about the end times? Our reply is pretty standard actually. We believe that one thing is going to be absolutely certain about the end times. Deception will increase.

Not okay, is it the rapture first and this and that. What's the mark of the beast and the antichrist. Is it an actual person and this new world order.

I tell you, real brothers and sisters, the devil would love for you to spend hours and days and weeks and months trying to figure that out and be deceived. One thing that the New Testament is abundantly clear about is that the end times will be characterized by deception. And the devil's goal, if you know, the prime object of his deception, keep a finger in Philippians 3, I'll come back to it.

Let's look at Matthew chapter 24. There will be great deception. It won't be the ungodly who will be deceived.

Because the devil has already led them astray. Matthew 24 verse 23. If anyone says to you, behold this is what Jesus looks like.

There is the Christ. Or there he is in this other place. Do not believe him.

For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders. It's going to happen. You believe that false prophets and false Christs will arise and will do some amazing things.

I don't know, maybe you know, make statues speak. Do some miracles. Genuine miracles.

Will. It will happen. Will show great signs and wonders.

Great signs and wonders. Not, oh your arm was a little shorter than the other and so now it looks the same. Or you have this backache and now it's gone away.

No. Great signs and wonders. False Christ and false prophets.

So as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. That's the devil's audience, target audience in the deception. The elect.

If you believe that you are among the elect, which I hope you are. If you're born again, you're a disciple of Jesus Christ, you're part of his elect and you should know this verse. If you knew that somebody was coming to rob a house and they published the address of the house they were going to rob on a website and you go on that website and you find, that's my address.

The thieves are coming to my home. What would you do? I think you'd be leaving this place, maybe. Or we'd spend time praying, saying Lord, be a wall of fire on my house.

Don't let them steal anything. This has your address on it, your brother, your sister, dear elect. The devil has a target for deception.

I got to deceive Santos, because he's part of the elect. I got to deceive RLCF, because they're seeking to be part of the elect. That verse has my name on it and so I pay attention to it.

I don't want to be deceived. Back in Philippians chapter 3, he says in verse 2, actually let's read verse 1. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me and it is a safeguard for you.

I was thinking recently, I was actually having a conversation, I think it was with one of you, I forget who it was, how many people in Christendom want to hear a new sermon or a new idea. When I hear about new churches that are sprouting up in this area even, I find that it's always, oh this is our new emphasis. We're a church that's like this and this is why you should come here.

It's some new twist on Christianity. It's quite unlike the Apostles. Like Paul who said, to tell you the same thing is no problem for me, because I'm not trying to impress you with some new idea.

I don't mind preaching the same sermon I preached last week or last month. Not because I have, because I've run dry, but because I'm so in tune with the Holy Spirit that he said, speak the same message again. They didn't get it the first time.

That's not a problem for me, Paul says, and it is a safeguard for you. Sometimes hearing the same thing twice, I believe often it's a safeguard for us. I know how I am.

Sometimes it takes five, six, ten times of listening to the same truth before it's become a safeguard for me. And then he says, beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, similar to the words Jesus said, false Apostles, false Christ. Beware of them, and beware of the false circumcision, because we are the true circumcision.

And one of the deceptions that will be present in the end times, as Jesus' return draws near, will be a false circumcision. And I don't know if you've meditated on this. I've been meditating on it for a few weeks now, and I'd like to share something along those lines.

We are the true circumcision. What does it mean to be the true circumcision? Turn with me to Genesis 17. Very quickly, I want you to see where circumcision was brought by God's people, brought by God to his people.

When God was interested in beginning a chosen people for himself, it begins with Abraham. Before that, we had godly men like Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and others that we don't know much about them. But when he starts to create a work, or to form a work that will last forever, that begins with Abraham.

And the moment he starts that people that are set apart for himself, the Israelites, and then Jesus coming as an Israelite, and then when Jesus came, he ended that physical genealogy, as it were, and started a spiritual genealogy that the book of Hebrews tells us about. But that set apart work of God was characterized by circumcision. And so when God told Abraham, he changed his name to Abraham, first of all, here you see in chapter 17.

And then he says in verse 9, verse 5, he says, no longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, father of a multitude, for I've made you the father of a multitude of nations. In other words, God's saying, Abram, my promise is not just for you, it's for your children, and your children's children, and on, including Santos, including you. Because Jesus Christ came through Abraham.

And then he says, now as for you, you shall keep my covenant, verse 9, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. And this is my covenant which you shall keep between me and you and your descendants after you. Every male among you shall be circumcised, and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between me and you.

And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations. A servant who is born in the house, or who is brought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. A servant who is born in your house, or who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised.

Thus shall my covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant, but an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people. He has broken my covenant. Now, you may think, Abraham could have thought and said, well Lord, you know my heart.

Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. Isn't it enough that you know that I'm yours? I'm committed to you? I have faith? Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness, we believe. And Abraham could have argued with God and said, well Lord, I believe in you.

I trust you. Why do you still need this additional covenant of circumcision? Now, we know today that that circumcision, the true circumcision, which is mentioned by Paul in Philippians chapter 3, is no longer this physical cutting off of the flesh. But God valued, in other words, he said it's so serious that if you don't do it, I'm going to cut you off.

You might say all you want, you might pray all you want, worship me all you want, and offer the sacrifices, but if I look down from heaven and see that you're not circumcised, I'm going to cut you off. That circumcision was important to God, that identifying mark. And to this day, as I understand it, the Jews practiced that.

On the eighth day, Jewish boys are circumcised. They still value that promise that was given to Abraham. So this outward circumcision was the identifying mark of God.

And you know, there are some, that's why we believe that every command in the New Testament must be obeyed. You may think, well, is it just a symbol? Is it important? We believe it is in the new covenant, because God looks down from heaven. Yes, he looks at the heart, but there are outward manifestations of what's in the heart that are important to God as well.

We know that's true. And that's the identifying mark. Let me give you another example.

Imagine, you know, some years later, a hundred or so years later, no, five, maybe six hundred years later, when the people of Israel were in Egypt and were about to be set free, God miraculously took them out. After those nine plagues, then there was this plague where the firstborn of every Egyptian was killed by the angel of God. And God told them beforehand, you remember the story, children? You must put blood on the doorposts.

It was a picture of the blood of Jesus that would be shed one day. And as a picture of that, as a symbol of that, he said, you Israelites, I know your mind because you're all circumcised, first of all. Every one of those Jews in Israel, in the land of Egypt, was circumcised.

But he said, I want another mark. I want you to put blood on the doorposts. And when my angel comes and sees the blood on your doorposts, he will know this is not a house where I should kill the firstborn.

But imagine if an Israelite reasoned with God and said, well, God, come on. I mean, really? You know my heart. I honor the Sabbath.

I don't know. Actually, I don't know. Now that I'm thinking about it, I don't know if they celebrated the Sabbath because the command for the Sabbath came later.

Well, they were in the wilderness. But anyway, they were devout Jews. And I could imagine that one of these devout Jews prayed to God and says, well, Lord, you know my heart.

Does the blood really matter? I mean, I'm yours. I'm an Israelite, right? See, I'm circumcised. Do I need to kill the lamb and put the blood on the doorposts? What do you think would have happened to a God-fearing or supposedly God-fearing Jew who didn't put the blood on the doorposts and reasoned with God and said, well, Lord, you know me, right? It's just a symbol anyway, right? You know I'm really yours.

You know my heart. I tell you, I believe with all my heart that firstborn of that family would have been killed. That's how seriously God takes His word.

And I think, as far as we know, every single one of those Israelites put the blood on the doorpost. Now, I say that to say that these things that God commanded as physical things in the Old Testament were valuable, important to God. And today, the true circumcision is just as important to God.

Let's look at that. I'd like you to see one more verse in Jeremiah 4. What is the true circumcision? Here, we're given a little bit of a picture as a prophecy by Jeremiah of what this circumcision looks like, the true circumcision. By now, by the time Jeremiah is speaking these words, the Israelites have been observing the outward commands of the law, including outward circumcision.

Some to some extent, some to a lesser extent, but that was always God's law. And then he talks about, for example, Zion, verse 14, a verse we think about often in this church. Return, O faithless sons, chapter 3, Jeremiah 3, verse 14.

Return, O faithless sons, declares the Lord, for I am a master to you, and I will take you, one, from a city, and two, from a family, and will bring you to Zion. Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding, etc. And you will say, that's a wonderful passage.

I think we should keep reading. It shall be, verse 16, in those days, when you are multiplied and increased in the land, declares the Lord, they will no longer say the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. You know how the Ark of the Covenant was a precious thing to the Israelites? And when it was stolen from them by the Philistines, they were defeated, and it did no good to the Philistines anyway, because they were, they didn't have, they weren't true believers.

But it used to be this physical thing was so important to them, and God had commanded it so. But God was saying, it won't be about that anymore. The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, and it will not come to

mind, nor will they remember it, nor will they miss it, nor will it be made again.

It's no longer going to be just a physical symbol. At that time, they will call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord. Nor will they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart.

You can keep reading, but I'd like to go to chapter four, where he says in verse three, for thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, in this new work that I'm going to do, break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns. Meditate on that verse this week, family, if you will. Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns.

Is there a fallow ground in some area in your life? An area in your life, maybe a particular habit that you have, something that you do, some friendship you have, some little pleasure that's precious to you, that you are not willing to give up, that is a fallow ground in your life, a hardness in your life that God can't break. He says, you break it up. God won't do it for you.

He'll help you, but you must choose to break it up, which means you must be disciplined to give up those habits. You must be disciplined to spend time in God's word, and to spend time in prayer, to build relationships with your spouse, with your children. Break up the fallow ground.

Is there a fallow ground in your marriage, brothers or sisters? Is there a fallow ground in your relationship with your children, or with another brother or sister in the church? Break it up, and don't sow among thorns. Don't sow among thorns. Don't let the cares and this worries of this world, that's what Jesus described as thorns, choke out the word of God.

But then this verse, circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and remove the foreskins of your heart. That's where we're told what the true circumcision is. Now, the physical is no longer that important as the spiritual, the spiritual circumcision of the heart.

This is what Paul is talking about. Now let's go back to Philippians chapter 3, and see that Paul describes, the Holy Spirit describes through Paul, exactly what this true circumcision is. As we think about this circumcision of the heart, you know what the Lord wants to do? What he's been doing in my life has been, I've been meditating on this.

He's been showing me that there is a foreskin in my heart, this extra flesh that's there. Foreskin is basically extra flesh that sits around my heart. Think about the heart is that which is precious to God.

In addition to that, I have this extra flesh that's attached to it. In the three things that he shows us here, there are extra ways that are beyond or outside of God's will for us. And that's where the circumcision must come in.

In this case, I believe it's not an adding, it's a taking away. Please listen to this. There are things in our life, ways of thinking, ideas about these things that God must cut off, that are a hindrance, this extra flesh.

And so what three things? First of all, worshiping in the Spirit of God. There is a foreskin of our hearts related to worship that God wants to cut off. We'll think about that some today.

First of all, worship in the Spirit of God. Secondly, glorying in Christ Jesus. There is a foreskin, there's an added flesh that we put on when it comes to glorying in our heart that God wants to cut off.

And thirdly, putting no confidence in the flesh. Again, there's a foreskin in that area. That foreskin is quite likely that we do put confidence in the flesh and God must cut that off.

So first of all, what does it mean to worship in the Spirit of God? I find that worship is perhaps the most misunderstood word in Christendom. Most people that I met, when they talk about worship, want to come over to this church and let's have a time of worship, oh the worship was really good today. I'll tell you this, more and more I found that in my own life, worship has nothing to do with Sunday morning.

Very little actually to do with Sunday morning. It's there too. We worship all the time because I'm always seeking to dwell in the Spirit of God on Sunday morning and during the week.

But worship has very little to do with what happens on Sunday morning because I'm worshipping in the Spirit of God. Now Jesus talked about this in John chapter 4. Let's turn there, John chapter 4. Now as you're turning there, remember I said that worship is one of the most misunderstood words in the Bible. Most people when they think about worship, they think about singing, they think about assessing what was the mood.

How did I feel emotionally as we were singing that song? Were the chords just right and did the what they call a worship leader? There's no such thing as a worship leader. I'll tell you this, the only worship leader is the Holy Spirit. He'll lead you to give up your body as a living sacrifice.

That's worship. If you're looking to some man to lead you into worship, it's no longer, no wonder you go astray. There's no such thing as a worship leader in the New Testament.

There are song leaders, yes. Praise leaders, yes. But that's not worship.

So worship is not how the songs are and what the singing is like and what the prayer is. Were there speaking in tongues? Was there an interpretation? Or was the music good? Did they sing nice songs that moved me? That's not worship. Because they had all of those things in the Old Testament.

Then Jesus came in John chapter 4 and said in verse 23. It's interesting that he talked about worship to the last person in the world almost that the Jews would ever think about talking about worship to. You know most people think if you want to talk about worship in those days, I'm sure they thought go talk to the Pharisees.

They know about worship. The high priest, he spends all his time in worship in the temple. And then Jesus came and said, Jesus spent very little time actually in the temple as far as I know.

He was in the synagogues and then he was out in the fields talking to the disciples. And yet he was the only person that was truly worshipping at that time in Israel. He says in verse to this woman who had been divorced five times and remarried five times.

And the sixth time she didn't even get bothered to get remarried. She just lived with the man. Sinful situation.

Don't get me wrong. And yet God saw something in that woman's heart. Amidst all the outwardness that was wrong.

Saw that there was a heart that wanted to be circumcised to worship God. And he says to her verse 22. You worship what you do not know.

We worship what we know. For salvation is from the Jews. But even though the Jews were worshipping what they know.

See he was saying you Samaritan woman. You worship what you don't know. You don't really know the true God Jehovah.

The Jews, they do know the true Jehovah. They do know the true God. We do worship what we know.

But verse 23. That's still not true worship. And that's I believe the message that God wants to speak to those of us who think we know what true worship is.

We know who we worship you can say. I know Jesus. He's the one I worship.

And God's message to us. The Holy Spirit's message to us may still be what he says in verse 23. The hour is coming when those who worship what they don't know.

And those who worship what they do know must give up both of those. And worship in spirit and truth. You see that? There's now just not two categories of people.

There's three. Before Jesus came there were just two categories of people. Those who worship what they don't know.

The idolaters. The Samaritans. They created golden calves and all other kinds of idols.

And God forbid that. Said no don't ever do that. Worship what you know.

The true Jehovah. But then Jesus came and said an hour is coming. And now is when I'm going to open up what true worship is.

And the moment true worship is opened up it takes away. It cancels. That's the word used in the new covenant.

It cancels the old. Now if you're still worshipping you can look at those who worship what they don't know and say well I'm better than them. I worship what I do know.

I sing Christian songs. I read from the Bible. And I long to know Jesus.

And I say the name Jesus. And God would still be saying this is still not worship. Have you come out of worshipping what you don't know which is what a lot of false religions do.

To worshipping what you do know which is reading from the Bible and singing to Jesus. The name above all names like we sang this morning. But have you come out of that dear brother and sister to worship in the spirit and truth.

That's what Jesus was saying. And that's the true circumcision. False circumcision which will increase as Jesus the time of Jesus return draws near.

False circumcision is to be satisfied to have the circumcision. It's not no circumcision. So let me use the word circumcision to apply to these three categories.

No circumcision is to worship what you don't know. It's not something that you can have a personal relationship with. It's an idol.

It's not something you can have a personal relationship with. Sadly there are many people who are bound by that. Worshiping what they don't know.

They don't have a personal relationship with. And then you could come to the to you can say well that's no circumcision. But then you could come to a place of circumcision where you worship what you know.

And you can say I have a personal relationship with Jesus. I know him. He is mine and I'm his.

I know him. But that's could still be false circumcision. Because I'm just worshiping what I know.

Based on what I know intellectually. And Jesus says in John chapter 4 the hour is coming. Verse 23.

And now is because Jesus was there right then. Worshiping in the spirit and truth. Part of the true circumcision.

He had inaugurated the true circumcision. So he says the hour is coming and actually now is. I'm sure this woman didn't understand it.

Even you know the disciples weren't there. But whoever else might have heard it they didn't understand it. We understand it now.

And I believe John understood it later on when he wrote this down. When the true worshippers. Jesus is contrasting true worship from both of those other categories.

Those who worship what they don't know. And those who worship what they do know. True worshippers will worship the father in spirit and truth.

For such people the father seeks to be his worshippers. God is spirit and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth. This is a command.

Don't you teach your children you must obey your father and mother. Ephesians 6 verse 1. Don't you teach your children you must honor your father and mother that it may go well with you in the land. Will you allow the Holy Spirit to teach you.

You must worship him in spirit and truth. Otherwise you're in disobedience to his command. God is spirit and those who want to worship him must worship him in spirit and truth.

Any other thing you call worship if it's not spirit and truth is false. It's false circumcision. Now it's true that in heaven we will use words.

It talks about in the book of Revelation. Revelation. Let's turn there quickly.

Revelation chapter 4. And I think this is perhaps why a lot of people in Christendom are misled by what it means to worship here on this earth. Thinking that worship here on this earth also comprises of words because it does comprise of words in heaven. And here's my understanding of that.

In Revelation 4 for example in verse 10 we read about worship. The 24 elders. Well let's read verse 9. When the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne to him who lives

forever and ever then the 24 elders will fall down before him who sits on the throne and will worship him who lives forever.

There's that physical worship. They're bowing down falling down before him who is seated on the throne and will worship him who lives forever and ever and will cast their crowns before the throne saying with words worthy are you our Lord and our God to receive glory and honor and power for you created all things and because of your will they existed and were created. That's going to happen and that is worship we're told.

Bowing down and saying these words and it's good to say these words here on this earth but simply saying those words and simply falling down on our face before him here on this earth may not be true worship. That alone is not the test of it. The test is in our heart.

The test is is this false circumcision of worship stripped away from my heart. Am I truly worshiping in my spirit in the spirit and in truth in my heart then the words are meaningful. Then my actually falling down before God on my face whether it's in in the church meeting or at home uh by myself when I need to go lock myself in the bedroom and fall on my face and worship him because I've just got a fresh revelation of who he is.

But the reason it's it's well there's one more example I think in revelation chapter 11. It's the same thing again revelation 11 verse 15 this the seventh angel sounded and there were loud voices in heaven and again I think a lot of people hear this loud voices in heaven what's called worship and they think well therefore if you want worship on this earth turn up the volume make the electric guitar really loud and the drums louder on top of it and turn up the organ and sing loud and shout and praise because that's what they're going to do with a loud voice saying the kingdom can you hear it brothers and sisters with a loud voice and I'm not going to shout because I'm not trying to be dramatic here please understand the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he will reign forever and ever and the 24 elders again who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worship God saying we give you thanks oh Lord God the Almighty who are and who were because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign etc so there too we see it was falling down on their face and saying these words but you know dear brothers and sisters as I've been meditating on it this is the conviction on this that the Lord has given me the reason those elders and those in heaven can say it the reason those words are meaningful the reason they're falling on their faces before him is meaningful is that they live their lives on this earth living out that reality when they said the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ it was true in their lives while they were here on this earth their kingdom whether it was their thought life their eyes their ears their tongues their jobs their marriages their homes their church experience that kingdom had become the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ for as long as they've lived on this earth and therefore when they said in heaven yes Lord the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of you our Lord Jesus Christ it was actually meaningful there are no lies in heaven I think you know that and it would be completely a lie if God took me self-centered self-seeking full of jealousy full of envy full of bitterness full of seeking my own full of love of money took me to heaven and then said well now you've got to say the kingdom of our Lord is of the world has become the kingdom of the Lord of his Christ and I would know that I spent my entire life living for myself the kingdom my kingdom that God entrusted to me my home my marriage my children my church experience with you all my ministry even had to become Jesus's or what they say in chapter 4 worthy are you our Lord our God to receive glory and honor how can we say that in heaven if we haven't lived it out here on this earth if today I'm not living in such a way where Jesus alone has all worth and all glory and honor and power in my life

it's going to be a lie in heaven and God I don't know what that's going to look like perhaps God will turn me away from heaven and say you know here in heaven you're going to have to say worthy are you Lord God to receive glory and honor and unfortunately you can't say it because you didn't live it out on this earth with the one life I gave you or maybe he'll let me in because I trusted for forgiveness and justification in the blood of Jesus Christ but he'll say Santos you'll have to remain silent for the rest of your existence here in heaven I don't know I'm trying to imagine out of God's mercy he might let me in but wouldn't it be a shame that I'll have to remain silent in heaven because there are no lies in heaven I can't say worthy are you Lord if he hasn't been worthy here on this earth I believe that brothers and sisters I'll tell you why I choose to believe it today because it's changing the way I live my life I want to sing louder than all of you in heaven not because I'll have a louder voice but because it was true about my life here on this earth I have one life I have one May 23rd 2021 to give God so that the words I give him in heaven will be truly meaningful and today can I live for myself today can I live self-centered not giving him the worth that's due his name choosing to worship the things of this earth choosing to be to be content with a soulish experience of worship and not truly give him all the father those who worship God is spirit and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth what does it mean to worship then Romans chapter 12 see in heaven we don't have living sacrifices that we can give anymore my body will be dead my earthly body will be dead I will have a resurrected body in heaven but you know there'll be no flesh to tempt me there there'll be no sin to tempt me there in the presence of God there will be no more opportunities to deny myself and say Lord Jesus you are truly worthy of all and I'll show it to you by denying myself by refusing by denying ungodliness by saying no to ungodliness there will be no ungodliness in heaven to say no to to prove that Jesus was truly worthy today is the day dear brothers and sisters today is the day of salvation now is the appointed time now is when you have a body now is when you have a tongue that you could choose to please yourself with now is the appointed time when you have an ear to choose to please yourself with now is the appointed time when you have eyes to choose to look at what you want to look at now is the appointed time when you have a mind to think about the things that you want to think of in eternity you won't have it in eternity I won't have it now is the day when I can be saved now is the appointed time when I can experience salvation verse 36 of chapter 11 Romans 11 verse 36 I tell you I cannot read Romans chapter 12 verse 1 without starting in chapter 11 verse 36 for from God from him and through him and to him are all things to him be the glory forever and ever amen oh people write songs about these verses but they haven't lived out chapter 12 verse 1 do you want to sing I mean I'm sure if if we sang a song with these words in it from him and through him and to him are all things there's actually a song like that to him be the glory forever amen amen and then you think oh what a wonderful time of worship I had as I sang that song and after the song is over you close the Bible and say amen no he says therefore chapter 12 verse 1 I urge you if you really meant what you just sang in that song dear brothers and sisters I'm I hope you hear you're hearing from the Holy Spirit I hope that's what you're hearing more than even the burden of my heart therefore if you meant every word of what we sang Jesus the very thought of thee with sweetness fills my breast yet sweet of far thy blessed face to see I haven't memorized it fully yet if I really meant it therefore the Holy Spirit says I believe you all meant it when we sang it this morning at least I hope you do even children if you meant it therefore the Holy Spirit says through Paul I urge you by the mercies of God present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God which is your spiritual service of worship because if you don't do it now you can't do it in heaven don't deceive yourself don't just don't let the lie the devil deceive you into thinking that you'll be able to worship in heaven if you didn't begin here on this earth I tell you I fell for that lie for many years I thank God and it's not too late maybe you think well I'm old I've wasted I've been full of this false circumcision for years what do I do today is the day of salvation today if you hear his his voice harden not your heart today you can

have him cut off that false circumcision to cut off that extra flesh that's there all those false understandings of worship and today you can present your bodies as a living sacrifice to him not being conformed to this world and he's not talking about the sin in the world I believe he's talking about the world that's entered into Christendom don't be conformed to how such and such a church does it even if there's a thousand people in that church or ten thousand don't be conformed to the world don't try to build the church the world's way but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove what is the will of God that which is good and acceptable and perfect the next thing he says is glorying in Christ Jesus this is the true circumcision we glory in Christ Jesus a few chapters earlier Romans chapter 8 oh sorry Romans chapter 2 let's read you know here too he talks about what the true circumcision is in Romans chapter 2 let's begin reading in verse 28 Romans 2 verse 28 see just briefly so you know it Romans is a very systematic book it's a wonderful book it's interestingly written Paul the Holy Spirit lays out through Paul very systematically in an organized way the work of salvation and we already read Romans chapter 12 but he starts by talking about the ungodliness you know just gross sin sexual immorality and all those things in chapter 1 and then he talks about religious sin in chapter 2 where you can look at the ungodly people or whoever you think is ungodly says well thank God I'm not like them because I pray to Jesus or I sing to him and I have good times of worship and then he says no there are religious there's religious evil as well religious sinners that's what he talks about in chapter 2 and to the religious sinners he says in verse 28 that he's he is not a Jew who is one outwardly let me paraphrase it because I don't most of us are not Jews maybe one or two in our midst if that but he is not a Christian let me put it this way he is not a disciple who is one outwardly you can say well then does it matter that we dress modestly does it matter that we raise godly children yes it does matter but that yes it does matter but that's not the proof 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 he is a Christian you can say who is one inwardly and circumcision is that which is of the heart by the spirit not by the letter and here this is where what I wanted you to see his praise is not from men but from God where does your praise come from dear brother and sister as a Christian how do you evaluate your standard of Christianity is it based on the fact that you're part of river of life christian fellowship or that you've been a Christian for so long or that you understand certain deep truths or people know you as one who shares God's word or people know you as one who's raised a godly home whose praise is not from men whose glory is not from men but from God who glory in Christ Jesus say Lord I glory in you first of all what you've done for me and I receive glory only from you can you honestly say to your brothers and sisters that the opinion of people whether they praise you because of how good a Christian you seem to be on the outside because that's all they can see they can't see your heart or do you value value as the only thing that's important Lord I'm not a Christian based on what seen on the outside that's that means zero what people see about my outward Christianity is of zero value to God he looks at the heart and he sees what the inside looks like and that's of value to him this is what it means partly to glory in Christ Jesus Galatians chapter 6 there's a wonderful song we hang an old hymn hymn that we sing Galatians chapter 6 forbidden Lord that I should boast save in the cross of Jesus Christ when I survey the wondrous cross upon which the son of prince of glory died one of those verses reads forbidden that I should ever boast save in the cross of Jesus Christ and I think again many Christians sing that song thinking about Calvary but you know this read very carefully this is where those words come from Galatians chapter 6 verse 14 may it never be that I would boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ we're talking about the false circumcision and the true circumcision true circumcision is to boast only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ not boast about anything else not boast about oh well Lord you filled me with the Holy Spirit or you've done this you've done that you've given me grace in this area I've been faithful you've given me victory over sin no that's not my boast I thank God for that but my boast is in the cross of Jesus

Christ and what does it mean to glory in Christ Jesus to make the cross my boast so read so important to read it carefully through which the world has been crucified to me he's not talking about Jesus crucifixion he's talking about the world's crucifixion this is what Paul boasted in you know what brothers and sisters he's telling the church in Galatia you want me to boast about something here's what I can boast in the cross of Christ has caused the world to be crucified to me that means the opinions of the world the things that the world values everything in the world is absolutely meaningless to me has absolutely no effect the cross of Jesus Christ it's still Jesus cross it's through the cross of Jesus Christ that this is possible but the cross of Jesus Christ as it were became a shell thick mail of armor a coat of armor around Paul that whatever the world threw at him or said about him had zero effect on him can you honestly say examine our hearts let's examine our hearts brothers and sisters there's the things that the world values there's the opinion of people in the world is it absolutely dead to you that means um you know i uh imagine that um well let's continue reading because i'll give you an analogy that make may make more sense the other way around and so let's read the whole verse may it never be that i would boast except in the cross of our lord Jesus Christ through which the world has been crucified to me and i to the world what's he talking about for neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision that means this outward the inward doesn't matter but a new creation have you become a new creation so that the world is dead to you and you are dead to the world then you've understood the true circumcision that means you know if you ever driven past this a cemetery imagine that um you walked into a cemetery and just picked some random grave and started yelling at somebody who's whoever name it was on that tombstone started yelling at him and cursing him imagine that somebody did that you would never do that but imagine that somebody did that yelling at that person in the grave and cursing him and swearing at him and calling him making fun of him and all that stuff if if you could look down at that grave and you saw a little bit of a twitch in that dead body what would you say get him out of the grave he's not dead his his eye opened it's like who is this cursing me right now you know the person's really dead because it has absolutely zero effect this is the true circumcision the more people speak evil about you or praise you i mean on the other hand if you go to that grave site and praise this person oh you are amazing man i did this and oh you could dunk the basketball and oh you could preach wonderful sermons oh you could do that and if you see the the the dead person open one eye and look at who it is that's praising me and big smile on his face you know he's not dead and there are so many christians that are living alive in this world where the praise of men influences them and affects them and puffs them up and they long for the approval of the masses and they assess their christianity based on what how big their churches are or things like that forbid it that i should boast except in the cross of our lord jesus christ the true cross of the lord jesus christ not the false cross the cross of jesus christ through which the world has been crucified to me and i to the world you know in in um back in genesis 17 there's one thing i want you to see real quick um after this um right after i stopped reading in verse 14 right but if you continue reading it's very interesting that abraham still doesn't get it in a sense let's not blame him we know all these things because these things are written for our instruction god allowed abraham to make mistakes so that we wouldn't make the same mistakes that's how i look at it god allowed the people in the old testament to fall in different areas so that we would learn the lesson from them you know i say it like this that a foolish man doesn't learn from his own mistakes a sensible man learns from his own mistakes a wise man learns from the mistakes of others you see the three categories a wise man learns from the mistakes of abraham what did abraham do what was his mistake god said to abraham as for sarah your wife you shall not call her name sarai but sarah which means princess shall be her name i will bless her and indeed i will give you a son by her plain whatever language abraham spoke maybe it was aramaic or hebrew or something plain english for us i will bless i will give you a son by her the promise of god he who began a good work in you is faithful to complete it if by the spirit you put to

death the deeds of the body you shall live i will write my laws on your heart um i will make a new covenant with you i will i will i will give you a son by her god tells abraham and i will bless her and she shall be a mother of nations kings of peoples will come from her and then abraham says okay lord but you know i think you got it wrong i know you said i will that you would but i don't think you can actually so here's hagar that's the very next thing you read that god that abraham presents to god let's read it um he laughs it says in verse 17 and um verse 18 abraham said to god oh so you already had ishmael he tried to do it in his own strength and and now god is saying listen i know you got ishmael and you're proud of it see the reason ishmael let me finish my thought here so i don't get ahead of myself uh abraham is sarah's idea it was that's what deceived abraham he had a child with sarah sorry with hagar and that child was called ishmael and i'll tell you this ishmael was something that abraham could be proud of yes he was i don't know about 90 years old when ishmael was born 87 maybe but he did it yeah i know sarah couldn't do it because she was in her 70s but abraham could maybe the 78 year old woman couldn't give birth to a child but the 88 year old man could and so abraham was proud of this ishmael proud of this work that he had accomplished in his own strength and then he says to in verse 18 right after god has said listen i'm not talking about ishmael i'm not talking about that which you can do in your own strength i'm not talking about that which you can get glory out of i want you abraham to get to the place of emptiness and brokenness where you boast only in me not even in ishmael and here he says in verse 18 lord i'm kind of proud of ishmael i look at him and thought man i've never heard of a 80 year old man uh or 90 year old man having a son i've never heard of it in my time aren't you proud of it people i'm sure abraham paraded his son ishmael and says i know i'm 99 years old but look at this son i got i'm proud of it i waited but i got it i did it you know that it's possible for you to come to a life of what you think is victory over sin and you become proud of it i've been there i waited and i fought and i fought and i fought and i fought and i finally defeated that giant but it was my strength and i said lord look i finally overcame are you happy he says no god said no in another passage in galatians he actually says throw out the bond slave with the bond woman get rid of that ishmael get rid of that hagar no no your overcoming sin in your own strength is a stink in my nostrils it's filthy rags you just wipe the table with it and you stuck it in my nose get rid of it sarah your wife will bear you a son and you shall call his name isaac and i will establish my covenant with him this is glorying in christ jesus where i came to an end of myself i couldn't do it see it's possible for us let me give you another example in our marriages maybe you had times where the marriage was rough and went cold for a while but now you've figured it out a little bit you've you've learned to become a good husband or a good wife and it's something you accomplish in your own strength maybe you read some good book that told you how to be a good husband or a good wife and you change some things you started taking her out on dates and you started being a little bit more thoughtful maybe you started doing the dishes or you did this and did that and those are all good things i hope you help our wives brothers and sisters brothers but if it's an ishmael god will say no i'd rather you not do the dishes and go home go in your bedroom and fall on your face and service lord do a miracle in me change my heart i want to come to the place where i'm a loving husband or a loving wife purely because of christ jesus in me and my reputation means nothing i'm no longer doing it just to be appear please uh appear nice in front of others glorying only in christ jesus this is the true circumcision and the last thing he says is that we put no confidence in the flesh second corinthians chapter 12 second corinthians chapter 12 verse 9 but you know the story the context paul had a thorn in his flesh it may have been some you know uh something with his eyes because he had a problem with his eyes and it was so bad that he thought that this was in some way a distraction or a hindrance this was something that was despised in the eyes of the world are there those things that are despised in the eyes of the world in you maybe a disability maybe a weakness maybe you have a stammer or maybe there's something about who you are your appearance maybe for a lot of people in the

world it's their weight for a lot of people it's their complexion or their lack of gift in a world that's vying to be impressive to others god is looking for a people who put no confidence in the flesh and what does that actually mean that means that the things that the world puts confidence in the flesh in are of no significance to me if the world glories in its looks i say looks mean nothing if the world glories in its degrees i say degrees mean nothing if the world glories in the size of their gatherings i say that really means nothing to me not that we don't long that all should come to the knowledge of him as god longs but we don't put value on those things we put no confidence in the flesh chapter 12 verse 9 after he prayed for it three times god said to him my grace is sufficient for you for power is perfected in weakness and when when paul heard that word from god his response was yes bring on more disability bring on more weakness i want to put so little i put want to put no confidence in the flesh and in order for me to put no confidence in the flesh i realize god that you've given me this weakness because if it's like god was telling paul paul if i give you a strength in that area or if i take away that thing which is a disability for you then you'll glory in it you'll have confidence in your own ability i want you to come to the place where you have no confidence in the flesh zero i must confess brothers and sisters i'm not there i'm getting there i have less confidence in the flesh what does that mean i have less confidence in my own ability to follow jesus as a disciple to preach his word to be a husband to be a father to be an elder and a shepherd in this church i have less confidence in my ability in my flesh in my strength to do those things i hope to get to zero then i know that i've understood the true circumcision but the more i have these other confidences in my ability i mean imagine that you had some disability with speaking like moses did as he tells god you had a stammer or something that you get up you think if i was to get up there and and speak people would be distracted by the fact that i i can't pronounce my words correctly or i have a stammer or something like that would you could you you know i'll be honest sometimes i've said lord maybe you must cause me to have a little bit of a stammer or some kind of speech impediment so that when i get up to speak in front of people now i don't know maybe it would be a hindrance but if he thinks it would cause me to put no confidence in the flesh and i say lord give me that disability let me have a thorn in my flesh as well let the things that are inconvenient for me and things that are unimpressive to the world around me remain here lord so that when i get up i'm not convincing people based on oratory and nice words and oh he put all those points together and the words just i love to listen and preach and his voice sounds good and all that no confidence in the flesh means that paul tried his hardest by the power of god and allowed god to keep these disabilities and impediments in him so that let's look at this in um first corinthians chapter one so that uh first corinthians 1 verse 17 christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel not in cleverness of speech if you hear a gospel that includes cleverness of speech it's not the gospel it's a false gospel not in cleverness of speech so that the cross of christ would not be made void these are serious words brothers and sisters bear with me for a few minutes please i want you to see this when we rely on cleverness of speech brothers that's a danger for us in our bible studies if the thing you're about to share to to add on top of what we heard is a clever idea you know what you're really doing it's not just oh it was a clever idea i guess it's not that bad you know what it is it's making the cross of christ void because you brought some glory to yourself you impressed people with that wonderful idea you just presented and you took away from the cross of christ serious words because the word of the is actually foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it's not unfoolishness if there's such a thing or smartness or cleverness it's not cleverness it's power let's skip down um read that passage sometimes but let's read um we preach verse 23 we preach christ crucified which to the jews is a stumbling block and to the gentiles it's foolishness that means it's foolishness to those who worship what they don't know it's a stumbling block to worship to those who worship what they do know but it's the true cross of jesus christ to those who are the called of the true circumcision both jews and greeks christ the power of god and the

wisdom of god because the because the foolishness of god i love this line the foolishness of god is wiser than men all that wisdom you think you have all that knowledge of how theology fits together and this verse connects with that verse that other verse and you know the greek and the hebrew the foolishness of god is wiser than that and the weakness of god is stronger than men and if you think you're strong in your ability to resist temptation you must go from strength to strength which is the weakness of god the weakness of god is stronger than men have you graduated from being a strong christian to the weakness of god if not you haven't grown in your christian life let me say it again if you haven't graduated from being a strong christian to being a christian that's dependent on the weakness of god manifest in your body you haven't grown spiritually for consider your calling verse 26 brethren that there were not many wise according to the flesh thank god there aren't many wise in our midst not many wise according to the flesh not many mighty not many noble but god has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise and god has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong and the base things of the world what's a base thing useless good for nothing put it at the bottom are you at the bottom of the totem pole in your company are you at the bottom of the totem pole in what how other people think of you and your abilities that's a good place to be dear friend god has chosen the base things of the world and the despised god has chosen do people despise you for some reason it's a safe place to be the despised god has chosen the things that are not that's even worse than despise it's like saying river of life christian fellowship no there's no such thing they don't even exist so insignificant that you don't even know they exist the things that are not so that he may nullify the things that are this is the power of god he is nullifying the things that are in the world's eyes through the things that are not in the world's eyes but by his doing you are in christ jesus verse 30 oh wait verse 29 what is the reason for that so that no man may boast before god but by his doing you are in christ jesus who became to us wisdom from god and became and righteousness and sanctification and redemption so that just as it is written let him who boasts boast in the lord and when i came to you brethren verse chapter two verse one i did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom proclaiming to you the testimony of god i understand that to mean that he could have he could have planned out this nice cute little sermon and impressed them with what he had to say he says i imagine the holy spirit saying tear up that sermon paul no i got it i gotta have you preach just this empty sounding boring seeming sermon to them but it will have my power in it it won't be nice modulation of voice and prancing around the stage and impressing people with your three-piece suit or whatever piece suit people wear this day to impress people with it'll have the power of god behind it proclaiming to you the testimony of god not what i did or this thing that i did another thing and how many people i preached to and how many miracles i've done but the testimony of god for i determined to know nothing among you except jesus christ and him crucified i was with you in weakness i put on an ugly shirt so that you won't be impressed by what i wore now i didn't actually but maybe i should have i was with you in weakness and in fear here's mighty apostle paul preaching to a carnal church like the church in corinth and he was there in fear what was he afraid of what they would say about his sermon no he was afraid that he would present to them some earthly wisdom and in trembling before god said lord don't let me impress them with what i say because that will be in the way of the power of god i want them to come in touch with the power of god i don't want to impress them i was with you in weakness and fear and much trembling and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom but in demonstration of the spirit and power why because he had one thing and one thing only that he was interested he didn't want their money he didn't want his reputation in their eyes he didn't want them to think of him as the mighty apostle paul our great preacher he says listen there's only one thing that will matter in eternity your faith when jesus comes back he's looking for faith not whether you listen to good sermons or you were part of a good church listen to your brothers and sisters family of god river of life christian

fellowship especially for us god's not looking to see whether you're a member of this church when he comes i hope you are if god calls you to stay here that you remain here in unity as if god has called you here but he's looking for faith and our desire as elders and teachers in this church is one thing that your faith will not rest on the wisdom of men but on the power of god this is what it means to put no confidence in the flesh that's why paul built churches that's why paul did the work of god could continue the work and he handed on to timothy who handed it on to others other godly men who handed it on to others and now it's been handed on to us and now it's been handed on to you and you must hand it on to the children as well that they see in us parents men who are of the true men and women who are of the true circumcision who worship god in spirit and truth who glory in christ jesus alone and who put no confidence in the flesh i believe he'll lead us this way have faith in god he'll lead us amen amen

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