

Extreme Makeover

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Well, Good Morning again to everyone. You know, I've been accused of a lot of things, but someone came up to me the other day and said that every time my wife sees you on DVD, you're smiling. Well, I'm smiling because I have some inside information and so do you! We all have a secret. We know this now and, in the future, we're going to pass that along to other people.

It's really nice watching Rachael's little girl over here. When we sing "Blessed and Happy is the Man", we've done it so many times that we kind of roll by the words, but she is parroting to the song. She's doing a little dance, making sure everyone sees her diapers. It's really funny.

It's great to be here and we have made new friends. We've kind of accidentally done what Les was talking about in the sermonette. It's good to see the Canadian folks. We don't get to see them very often. The Railston's get to escape up there once a month, but we hardly ever get to see them.

I did hear the other day from one of my friends from the Dakotas. My wife is from Minnesota and she says this is a true story of how Canada got its name. Well, a bunch of them got together and they couldn't figure out what to call the country, so somebody came up with an idea and said, "Let's put all the letters of the alphabet in a hat and we'll pull them out and use that." So they all got together and somebody pulled the first letter out and it's "C" and everyone goes, "Aye!" Then they pull another letter out and it's "N", and everyone goes, "Aye!". I'm sure the Canadians never heard that one before.

My wife and I are at the point in our marriage where (we are coming up on 48 years together) and we've been together so long that my wife likes to remind me of the things that I forget. I try not to be forgetful. Well, my wife is not here, so I can tell this story on her. You have to know my wife to appreciate this. We pulled into Wal-Mart one day and she needed to go inside and I said, "I'll wait." I'm sitting in the car and she ran into Wal-Mart. My wife is a high energy person and makes a B-line where she is going. Anyway, she came back out and doesn't have anything; she was a little testy that day anyway. She jumped into the car and slammed the door. The only thing wrong is that it was not our car! I'm a couple spaces over and she jumped in with this old guy and he is sitting there waiting for his wife. So, I can see the shock set in and then I can also see him thinking to himself, "Boy, this is my lucky day. I come with one wife and get to go home with another." I'm sitting there thinking, "My lucky day, too!"

None of that counted, right? The clock starts now? She says, "No, Jack, you're digging your own grave as usual."

I was standing at the checkout counter at a local Safeway one day, not long before the Feast. At the checkout counter, they have all these magazines sitting there and the gossip fliers so we can all keep up with what Brad and Angelina are doing. I didn't know that Oprah had a magazine, but with all of her big bucks, why not? Anyhow, it was a special makeover issue. Then I looked down the rack and there was another whole magazine about makeovers. I didn't even know things like this existed. Of course, we know it's all cosmetic. It's about making peoples' hairdo over, their clothes, their face and everything. They basically pick someone out and it's all done in the spirit of entertainment and they make a different looking person out of that. You know, talk shows have done that for years. We have all these so-called reality shows and they're growing. The only thing I can figure out is that the script writers are so lacking in talent that they can't come up with anything, so they have to use real stories and real people. One program is called, "What Not to Wear". There's another one called "Extreme Makeover" and then there is, "Ambush Makeover". Another one is called, "Pimp My Ride". Another show will make over a house, a car or motorcycle (that's something Rick might want to consider). He rides a Harley. If you are a viewer of Dave Ramsey, he'll do a financial makeover. He has a whole program called "Financial Makeover". I like Dave Ramsey, by the way; I think he gives good financial advice. But in all, I'm not really attacking anything. There's nothing wrong in improving yourself or a situation. But, all these makeover programs have one great failing; they never seem to do any follow-up to what really happens to a person who has been made over. The outside is usually changed, but the inside is not.

If you want a title for this message, it's called "Extreme Makeover". I call it extreme and obviously I'm going to get to God's program and God's plan for making something over. We will get to that in a little bit. I call it extreme because Oprah can't do it, Dave Ramsey can't do it, and a whole bunch of reality shows can't do it. You could fill a think tank full of makeover PHD's, and I'm sure some college actually has a course for that, I don't know. They cannot do it and, in fact, we cannot do it ourselves. That's where God the Father and Jesus Christ come in, because they can get this makeover done. We just can't do it.

That's what we're here to talk about and to picture at the Feast, a true makeover program that God is going to institute and make happen. We know that this spiritual makeover takes place in the heart, a change has to take place. We have heard some of that; we've heard it passionately, and we've heard it through experience of the speakers and in other ways.

Nationally, we've suffered through this change in the administration we have. My wife likes to watch the news. I don't like to watch the news. One of the only reasons I watch the news is to kind of refresh my disgust with what's going on the world. The point is that this administration, or democracy, or dictatorship can get this changed. In a democracy, we try to legislate everything to make all the changes and it just doesn't work. We see that all the time. We just keep making more and more legislation and we keep getting into a bigger mess. In a dictatorship, they just shoot people that disagree with them. That's how they try to make change. Historically, we can look back and see

what the Nazi's did to people; we can see what Stalin did to people. Stalin would line up 1,500 – 2,000 people a day, and sometimes if he was having a bad day, he's pick up the phone and tell his henchmen or whoever, to kill another 6,000 this week. So that's the way they would do it.

But God doesn't do that. We know that. All of us sitting here today can realize and know in our hearts that there has to be some monumental changes in the millennium. We've heard some of that. James painted a very real picture for us, a supernatural picture on how that's going to happen. We know that the earth, the soil, the water, the air and space need to be restored. Has anyone seen that picture on the internet of the satellites flying around the earth? It looks like a beehive. I don't know how they did that, perhaps with infrared imaging or something. The whole point is that there are tons and tons of junk out there. We have a huge mess and we didn't even confine it to the earth. We'd like to extend that into outer space and perhaps other planets, if we could.

We know as James pointed out and other people have talked about, we have to restore the physical health to the planet in order to start working on the spiritual things. One major change that must take place at the human level that will enable all these changes (and should be occurring in our lives), is that change of heart. Steve talked about that and I'll touch on it a bit later. This should be an ongoing process.

If we look at man's history, we can see the huge mess that has been made. I mentioned a little of that already (I'm being kind) and it's a mess. Our cities, our environment, our nation and everything seems to be on a path of self-destruction. We're not doing anything better. You'd think that with all the science, technology, etc., that we'd be doing something better, but we are not. It's just getting worse all the time. This is man-made, it's human nature in action and it's driven from within; from within man's heart. We know that greed drives all that. So this change of heart, this makeover has always been in God's plan. We know that. God has allowed man to write his own history, so we can see these changes as they come about.

I prepared this message in two basic parts, Old Testament and New Testament. You will note the originality of that! In the Old Testament, we're going to look at a brief record of the nation of Israel. I'll be very concise. I told them in the back that I would try to limit my time somewhere between James and Steve. Well, maybe not Steve.

In the New Testament, we're going to look at some of the things that have been recorded for us and we know the examples in the Old Testament are also there for us. But, we're going to look in the New Testament and see that includes us. So we are going to track these things. I know these are broad areas ... Old Testament and New Testament, but we are going to see God working this out right down through time, right down to the day.

We might think this strange, but to picture the spiritual makeover, God uses the ritual of circumcision. I know we have heard scriptural references to circumcision in the past, but let's see some of the lessons.

In the Old Testament, turn to Genesis 17. Starting in Genesis, note that originality again! You know, if I came home some day and told my wife something like, "Honey, someone told me today that they think I'm fairly well organized." She would look at me and say, "A clear case of mistaken identity!" But Genesis 17 is where circumcision is introduced. I'm using the New King James, but sometimes I'll interchange, using the New King James and also the New American Standard. The New American Standard will actually make the translation a bit smoother. But you will notice they're similar.

Genesis 17:1. *When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I [am] Almighty God, walk before Me and be blameless. (NKJV)*

Verse 2. *"And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly."*

Verse 3. *Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying:*

Verse 4. *"As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations."*

So we see right away, there is a covenant involved and it's basically used to signify that relationship with God, and also we see here the first use of Almighty God. You will probably recognize that as El Shaddai. We sing a song to that. Actually, there is some debate among Hebrew scholars of what that really means or how it is pronounced. That is the first use of that. What it is pointing to here is God's sovereignty in this covenant that is being made.

Verse 5. *"No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. (NKJV)*

It is interesting the name change here, because we know God uses names for what a person really is. It's not limited to the time setting this is in, as we will see. Abraham means the father of a multitude of nations or of a powerful multitude. Later on, Abraham is referred to as a friend of God and also the father of the faithful, which is much more important. So the name has implications, as we can see, they are far into the future for God's family and eventually for all mankind.

Verse 6. *"I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you."*

In other words, the descendants are going to play a leadership role among the world's nations, as well as establish that spiritual lineage that we know, later on, will be revealed to us in the New Testament.

Verse 7. *"And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you."*

So again, significantly here, it refers to an everlasting covenant pointing to future fulfillment. Most covenants and most contracts expire. We've all been involved with

contracts at different times. We've had mortgages on our homes, we've borrowed money for cars, we've signed contracts and they expire. When the thing is done, it's done. This one does not expire.

Verse 8. *"Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."*

So we have the material blessings promised. As someone mentioned Deuteronomy 28 the other day. Right before that is Deuteronomy 27, of course, if my numbers are right, and it talks about the curses. There is an implication there for the material blessings and for the protection that God would provide for His people. It all has to do with this covenant.

Verse 9. *And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations."*

Then God introduces this strange symbolic ritual.

Verse 10. *"This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised."*

When I first read this years ago, all I read there was that every male will be circumcised. I'm seeing all these guys in their tents or whatever, hiding under their beds and I could see Abraham saying, "All you guys who's turn it is today to be circumcised, please step forward," so everyone takes a step backwards! We've heard of the Hittites, the Haggites and all the other "ites", well, for a period of time there in my vision of how this was going to take place on the grown men, the Israelites would briefly be called the bowlegged "ites". Ladies, your husband will explain that to you later.

Verse 11. *"And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you."*

We see that this is a reference simply to a layer of skin, and we will see that it is symbolic as we go along.

Verse 12. *"He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised,*

So it's a process that is instituted with the children, with the babies, of course, and that would be pretty easy for them.

Verse 12b. *every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant."*

Looking into the future, if they had to do that to anyone who was bought, children that were bought or maybe children born in their household from people they had bought, there is a subtle hint there that somewhere in the future, the things in this covenant

would be extended to other people besides the Israelites. That is significant when we think about it. In the New Testament, we find out that God sent His message to the Gentiles. God's plan and purpose is for everybody, it's not just for the Israelites, nationally or spiritually.

Verse 13. *"He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant."*

He begins to nail it specifically here.

Verse 14. *"And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."*

He has broken the seal here. Cut off means that he is not going to be considered part of; he's not going to fall within the requirements of the covenant. Then all the males that were circumcised became a sign or symbol of that covenant. There's a whole bunch of symbols and types. I don't have time to expand too much on those. We see the cutting off of the flesh, a layer of skin. We see blood involved. We see a male child, and some commentaries will say that Isaac was a type of Christ and we see a covenant here which is conditional. Back in verse one, He told Abram to walk before Him and be blameless. So, in a moral sense, he had an obligation. He is basically to reflect that moral character of that One who initiated the covenant, here El Shaddai.

So going on then in the Old Testament, it showed that this physical act, this cutting off of flesh really pictures circumcision of the heart and mind.

Turn to Deuteronomy 10. Unlike some of the other speakers I won't mention, I'll give you time to turn there. I'm getting to the point where I'm just days from 71, so I'm just now having to wear my glasses. I'm wearing them so I don't have to do this optical trombone thing.

Deuteronomy 10: 12. *"And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul."*

Verse 13. *"[and] to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?"*

And what falls within the statutes? The holy days; that's what we're observing here. We are observing and keeping these statutes. Looking closely at those two verses where it says, "fear God, walk in all His ways, love God, serve God with all your heart, all your soul." It means all your life. Those were the terms of the covenant. That's what they needed to do. Both parties agree to the terms of a covenant. When we enter into a contract and sign it, our signature verifies, even though sometimes we can't read all the small print, but we agree basically with the contract.

Verse 14. *"Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, [also] the earth with all that is in it."*

Again, it's pointing to that supreme Being and the sovereignty of the One who initiated this covenant.

Verse 15. *"The Lord delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day."*

As Steve mentioned yesterday, God has a purpose in everything He does, with them, with us today and with those He will call and use in the future. There is always a purpose. God always has that big picture that has been mentioned. He always has that in mind.

Verse 16. *"Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff necked no longer."*

So there's an attitude at play here in this covenant and this relationship with God, and attitude is very important, as we will see as we go along. We can't enter a contract with the idea that we're going to purposely default on it. That's an attitude and we can't do that. That is basically dishonest, so we cannot do that.

It's talking about the foreskin symbolized by this layer of skin. It's between them and God and it means not closing themselves off, not having a barrier of being stiff necked, stubborn, this rebellious attitude between them. Like the scripture talks about the "hardening of the heart towards God." Israel did that over and over again. They failed to keep this covenant with God. But the context here is one of loving God with all one's heart. Actually, when we talk about El Shaddai, the God of the Old Testament, we are talking about the One that became Jesus Christ. Is that correct? So what it says is that if they love God with all their heart and He was the central part of the God family in the Old Testament, it should have been central to their thinking and everything they did. It should have been what motivated them. They should have had a desire to honor Him and to glorify Him in everything they did. If that process would have been followed, it would have changed the heart, even of a physical nation. A makeover would have occurred on a physical level with ancient Israel. They would have been a model nation with benefits. That's what God intended them to be.

For another Old Testament example; turn over to Ezekiel, Chapter 11. We have to keep in mind with Ezekiel that this prophet is future tense because Israel was in captivity when he was writing, right? Almost everything he talks about is in vision, it's imagery. In Chapter 10, where it talks about all those images, what it's basically saying is that God removed Himself because of the conduct of Israel. He removed Himself from ruling over them. We know later that He basically divorced the nation of Israel. That was His judgment on them. That's why they were in captivity. If we study the Book of Ezekiel, it's very interesting because most of those that were taken into captivity, some were Israelites, but most were of the leadership. That's interesting because by extrapolation,

by leaders that won't follow God, nations go into captivity, they lose wars and all kinds of things. That always occurs.

Here in Ezekiel, Chapter 11 and beginning in verse 19. Here I'll jump to the New American Standard. Again, it's very close. It begins to talk here about the remedy to the problem that Israel had; the change that they needed.

Ezekiel 11: 19. *"And I will give them one heart, and will put a new spirit within them, and I will take their heart of stone out of the flesh, and give them a heart of flesh. (NAS)*

The problem was, again, disobeying God, hardening their heart stubbornly so they could get their own way. Human nature always works that way.

Verse 20. *That they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people and I shall be their God. (NAS)*

We need to see that they could have, they should have, and thus would have reaped far more blessing; although God intended the lesson to be written. They would have been the example, and it's important to remember that. They could have been the example that God intended them to be. "This is the way to live;" He told Abram, "This is the way, walk in it." If they would have followed that, they could have been the model nation; they could have been a tremendous example representing God to the world, the nations around them.

Verse 21. *"But as for those whose hearts go after their detestable things and abominations (which is what they were doing), I will bring their conduct (King James says, "deeds") down on their heads," declares the Lord God.*

So it's shown from Israel's history that they left God by what they were doing. They got all these detestable things, the abominations, idolatry, spiritual adultery and everything they did; they were getting all this from the people around them, which is exactly what God told them not to do. There is a huge lesson in that for us, and it's an age-old problem. We've all been around long enough, we understand that the word "heart" used in scripture is always referring to the intellect, the will, the very core, the way we think and do things. It's what drives and motivates us. It is typified by this one example here in Ezekiel, man's heart, his will, his inner being is always set to do evil continually. Numerous scriptures show us that. We see that over and over in scripture. Just as these leaders were doing all these corrupt things, they were corrupted by the nations around them. They were leading the people into doing all that and, of course, Satan was right there in the mix, stirring the pot and making all these things happen. He was helping things along and making sure the opportunities were there for them to do these things.

But it's abundantly clear from all this that God is going to have to change man's heart, and as Steve talked about yesterday, by a process. That process, and I'm trying to keep this to a simple point here, is symbolized by this physical act. Picture, if you will, how the

heart must be changed to undergo a spiritual makeover. The same process will have to finally take place in the future. In fact, it has already started in us. We know that. That is why we are here. That's what we are doing.

Another reference along this line is something that we do every year, so it does relate to us. All of this does relate to us. Exodus 12, we do this every year.

Exodus 12:43. *And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: No foreigner shall eat it.*

Verse 44. *"But every man's servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it." (NKJV)*

That's why we say that we need to be baptized members to take the Passover Service. Again, we see the symbolism here. The eating of the Passover, the body and the blood of the Lamb of God, and it's not possible for us to do that without being circumcised in the heart, as scripture shows. It's important that we look at ourselves, that we look at our hearts prior to the Passover, is it not? We need to do this to make sure we are doing that correctly. You notice I didn't say "perfectly". We need to make sure that our hearts are in the right place.

I'm going to expand on that as we go along. We can see in other scriptures, the connection between a covenant, suffering and blood. We do not have the time to go to all those places, but remember, in the Old Testament this was a physical administration to a physical people. The process of changing the heart begins to materialize and takes shape symbolically in this ritual of the act of circumcision, because it is God's purpose and plan to change man's heart. So a spiritual makeover allows and enables us to reach some potential, to follow God's way of life and to develop God's character.

We've seen throughout history looking back just at the Old Testament and the examples we have, that it began with the nation of Israel. God had a plan, a point and a purpose to that, and in the future, man is going to have the same opportunity to engage in the same process that Israel did. They are going to have the opportunity to learn about God, to actually have God's Spirit and understand the things they need to do. They will understand that they need to reject some of their behaviors, reject Satan and follow God. A complete change of heart has to occur.

One last Old Testament example in Jeremiah 9, and here, once again, we see the account where Israel fell into rank adultery. Along with spiritual adultery, they did it over and over again. In Jeremiah 9 (from the New American Bible) beginning in verse 25.

Jeremiah 9:25. *"Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "that I will punish all who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised."*

Then it begins to explain that in verse 26.

Verse 26. *"Egypt, Judah, Edom and the sons of Ammon and Moab," ...*

What he is doing here is lumping Israel (primarily Judah in this particular case) in with the Gentile nations. He's saying, "You're no better than the nations around you, because you're not obeying God. You're hardening your hearts. You're not allowing that circumcision of the heart to take place." Again, it could be on a physical level. You know, we can obey God on a physical level, as was pointed out, but the ultimate goal is to do that on a spiritual level. Remember, later on the Jews scornfully referred to everybody that wasn't like them as "uncircumcised", and yet we'll see they did things themselves as we go along. Continuing in verse 26.

Verse 26b. *"and all those inhabiting the desert who clip the hair on their temple."*

That was a forbidden practice that the Israelites were doing, to mark themselves like that. That's Leviticus 19:27, for you scholars out there.

Verse 26c. *"For all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart."*

None of them were following God.

So just to sum up that history from the Old Testament, we have the whole record for us, proving they were uncircumcised in heart and showing where their real problem was. It was a problem of the heart. They were not obeying God; they were not loving God, they were not doing all those things that God told Abraham to do and to teach people to do. They were demonstrating it by the way were living. They were rejecting God in every way. They were not being the examples they should have been, and again, we're going to see that is very important to God, the kind of example that we set. They, in a sense, had cut themselves off from God, from the one who became Jesus Christ.

So God gives us these lessons in the Old Testament through circumcision, the cutting off of the flesh, which only pictures circumcision of the heart and mind, which is far more important to God than any physical thing we can do.

Now we will go over to the New Testament. We have studied the Acts 15 conference many times where circumcision became a major issue. Paul knew all of these Old Testament scriptures, of course, but at various points in his ministry, he had to explain the spiritual aspects and what it really meant as opposed to the physical act. It was simply a physical act. He had to repeatedly counter that legalistic attitude from the Judaizers, which the scholars were called, many of those that opposed Paul and tried to wreck his ministry at every turn. They wanted a physical means of salvation and that was part of it; a severe keeping of the law and circumcision. That was their answer to salvation. He had to explain that continually. He had to point and teach the people that that was not the purpose of the law, that was not the purpose of doing these things. He had to fight that idea continually. He, too, once had that attitude, you know. He thought that was the thing to do and that's how he knew how to counter it, because he recognized it when he saw it.

Back in the old days, my wife was raised a Catholic all through high school, and when the changes came, she recognized that. She said, "I've seen this before!" She got pretty upset. So, Paul saw that and he knew there was more to it. He knew there was more to living God's way of life than just show.

Part 2. Turning over to the New Testament. This is important because this includes us. There are many, many principals that include us here, so we will see if we can pull these out. Turn to the Book of Romans. There are tremendous lessons here. We all know that the Corinthian Church, the Church of Rome and many of the New Testament Churches had very real parallels to today's society. Those influences are very similar to the influences we have to deal with today on a daily basis. So, it's not hard to see what Paul was up against here, because he has a contingent of Jewish people living in Rome, a contingent of Greeks and there were probably other people there too, part of the Church.

A little bit of background in Chapter one after his salutation, Paul tell them, "Just look around at their so-called enlightened society and see if that was really the way to think, to operate or to live." Towards the last part of Chapter one in Romans, you can see some degenerate things going on, and I don't know if you've ever done it, but sometimes compare that with II Timothy 3, where it talks about perilous times in the last days. It's a very stark parallel. The point there is that it's all linked and it comes right down to us today. It's all linked.

Romans 2, beginning in verse 1, and this again is from the New American Standard.

Romans 2: 1. *Therefore, you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment for in that which you judge another. (There was a self-righteous, hypocritical, judgmental attitude going on here between these Jews and Greeks and others there; all Christians in Rome.) You condemn yourself, for you who judge, practice the same things. (NAS)*

Paul is telling them that they need to look at their own conduct and behaviors before judging others. We know that we need to do that continually in our society. Most of us have enough problems right at home to be judging other people, don't we?

Verse 2. *And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.*

And again, he is referring to the context back in Chapter One.

Verse 3. *But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? (NAS)*

He is talking about hypocrisy here. What did Christ attack most in the gospel? He attacked the hypocrisy of the Jews, of those religious leaders. Paul is really getting on

these people, because they are doing basically the same thing. He is talking to people that should be acting like Christians and aren't. There are bad behaviors going on here.

Verse 4. *Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness (some translations say "goodness") of God leads you to repentance? (NAS)*

In other words, whenever we catch ourselves doing and practicing the same thing, we want to repent of that, don't we? God will usually show that to us and sometimes in a hard way and sometimes He will ease us into that and we can see how we are acting. But it says here, "leads you to repentance" and that's the kindness, and someone said, the grace of God and it's all undeserved.

Verse 5. *But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart (Boy, that sounds familiar!) you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. (NAS)*

Doesn't that point to the future? It certainly does.

Verse 6. *Who will render to each person according to his deeds.*

If you have a reference in your Bible, Paul is quoting some Old Testament scripture here. You know, these folks, especially the Jews, they relied very heavily on the Old Testament. In fact, in some ways, if you want to look at it that way, they made a god out of the Old Testament, out of the prophet scriptures. He is throwing it right back in their face, because he's referencing Psalms 62 and Proverbs 24. He is throwing their logic right back at them. If you would, he's throwing their attitude right back in their face.

Verse 7. *To those, who by perseverance in doing good, seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;*

In other words, living like Christians should be living, persevering in love, hope and faith.

Verse 8. *But to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.*

And that's where it's going to come to. We're going to feel the indignation of God, everyone that has done this in the past, everyone that does it now and in the future.

Verse 9. *There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;*

This is basically the two factions that were arguing here. They were arguing about who's the most righteous.

Verse 10. *But glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

Verse 11. *For there is no partiality with God.*

I like the amplified version of that (verse 11). I still use an old Amplified. Where it says, "*Undue favor unfairness.*" God is not unfair. "*With Him, one man is not different from another.*"

The judgment is going to be same. God uses the same criteria, as the same covenant. You have to remember, these people were talking to Church people. They were under that covenant.

Verse 12. *For all who have sinned without the law, will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.*

Verse 13. (Very familiar verse) *for it is not the hearers of the law who are just before God, but the doers of the law will be justified.*

It's not enough to know it; we need to live it. That's what he's telling them here. This applies directly to us. Again, the Jews just thought that a strict adherence to the law and circumcision was all that was necessary, but we know that's not enough.

Verse 14. *For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do instinctively, (some translations will say "by nature", in other words, a natural carnal man) the things of the law (at least they have comparably high moral standards. They're doing it naturally, even if it is on a physical level) these, not having the law, are a law to themselves.*

Verse 15. *In that you show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience, bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.*

In other words, it is seen by God, who is doing the judging.

Verse 16. *On the day when according to My gospel, God will judge the secrets of men.*

The way all humans have conducted our lives; we can see that in the very tail end of Revelation, around chapter 20.

Verse 17. *But if you bear the name Jew and rely upon the law and boasting God.*

They boasted that they had Abraham for their father and they had the law and all these things and they had circumcision.

Verse 18. *And know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the law*

Verse 19. *and you are confident that you yourself that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those that are in darkness,*

There's a tone of sarcasm here.

Verse 20. *A corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and of truth, you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal?*

Paul is telling them, "You need to turn that spiritual mirror around and look at yourself and see what you're doing."

Verse 22. *"You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?"*

In other words, "What's in your heart? What are you doing?" We know that everything takes place in the heart first. We think of it and then we do it, we follow through on it.

Verse 23. *You who boast in the law through your breaking the law, do you dishonor God?*

Verse 24. *For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written.*

If you have a marginal reference, the reference there is to Ezekiel 16, and if you recall, the narrative in Ezekiel 16 is when God said He basically picked up the nation of Israel out of the dirt, wiped the afterbirth off of them and raised them as His own child and raised up a nation, and they still rebelled against Him. The point is, they failed in their example. They had every opportunity and they failed. Example is very important to God as we will see here.

Verse 25. *For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the law, but if you are a transgressor of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.*

Remember, Paul was not condemning the Jewish segment here. He was rebutting their hypocrisy. They were, in essence, acting like they were again not Christian, uncircumcised, not behaving as they should.

Verse 26. *So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirement of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?*

At least his heart is right.

Verse 27. *And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the law, will he not judge you who, through having the letter of the law and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?*

Verse 28. *For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;*

As we can see here, Paul is really getting after these people. He is flat out telling them that non-Christians are doing a better job than they are. Their heart is expressing it and God is seeing all that. He is rebutting their shoddy example and their hypocrisy.

Verse 29. *But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter and his praise is not from men but from God.*

That's the best state we can be in, to have praise from God. Just as a reference scripture, you don't have to turn there, but Romans 3:30 says, "God will justify the circumcised by faith."

Let's go on to chapter 4. Again, Paul used a lot of Old Testament reference here for these folks. They're feeling very self righteous about what they know, but their hearts are not showing it. Their lives are not showing it.

Romans 4: 8. *"Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account."*

He's quoting Psalm 32:1.

Verse 9. *Is this blessing then on the circumcised or the uncircumcised also? For we say faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness.*

Verse 10. *How then was it credited? While he was circumcised or uncircumcised? (He's making a point here to these folks) Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.*

Verse 11 goes on to explain it.

Verse 11. *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had while uncircumcised,*

He entered a covenant with God. God presented a covenant to him and initiated it. In other words, what he's saying here is that circumcision for Abraham just symbolized the state he was already in. He just had to go through the physical ritual and the symbolism would go down through history.

Verse 11b. *so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised.*

It would have worked either way, but God initiated that for a purpose, to show and express something, that righteousness, a right standing with God might be credited to them.

Verse 12. *And the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also (I just put "will") follow in the steps (of what? ... the conversion process. That changing of the heart, that peeling off of the layers) of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.*

There are very pointed lessons here. It's how we should conduct ourselves as God's people, as Christians, and how important our example really is. Les mentioned some of that in the sermonette, our example here at the Feast, but it carries on way before that and way after the Feast. It's all the time.

Just going on here, you know, the actual act of circumcision is a simple surgical procedure. We've seen some of the symbolism here in the context of this whole subject. We don't have time to turn there, but in II Corinthians 3, again we're talking about peeling off a layer here. Paul used the metaphor of a veil or covering in

II Corinthians 3. Again, we don't have time to go there, but it's very interesting because when we think about the callousness which man has treated his fellow man, sometimes we see this in relationships, between husbands and wives. A callousness may set in. Sometimes it ruins the relationship.

But isn't that how our conversion process works? As we mature spiritually, as Steve talked about yesterday, we learn lessons along the way. There's a point and a purpose that God has for all of our lives, for everything we go through, for everything we experience and endure. We hope we don't go backwards, but gradually those layers come off and sometimes we see more, like Steve was talking about. We begin to see things that we never saw before. I think that's happening in a lot of our lives. It may be that we're getting closer, we don't know, but it does help us. We start seeing things that we never understood before.

What's that scripture over in Ezekiel 9 and verse 4? You put a mark on those that sigh and cry for the things going on around them, right? Basically, I might be paraphrasing that a little bit, but isn't that true? If our hearts are hard and calloused, we don't see or we don't care about the things going on around us. But we do. I think everyone cares very deeply for our country and for the rest of the world, the things that are going on, all the perversions, all the injustices, etc. But, the point is, that sighing should be in our hearts. That's where it should be coming from, not hardening, but behaving like Christians and growing in that heartfelt change.

I just want to remind us that one of the purposes God intended for Israel was to be an example, to be a model nation, and Christ said His disciples were to be a light to the world.

It gives me a great deal of pain to say this, and I'm sure you don't know about this incident, but we know brethren that are setting a horrible example. It's to a point where we are ashamed that we call those folks brethren. It's a mentality. There's a lot of carryover there, but they're treating people very badly. They are not setting a good example like they should.

Let's turn over to Hebrews, Chapter 2. All of this is relevant to what we're talking about. Hebrews 2:10 talks about Jesus Christ bringing many sons to glory, but verse 11 ...

Hebrews 2: 11. For both he who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one: for which reason he is not ashamed to call them brethren.

You can look that word up if you want to, but it means pretty much the same in the English that it means in the Greek as it was translated. It means shameful. It's talking

about Christ and how He is not ashamed of His followers. Sometimes we have to kind of see between the lines of what scripture is telling us, because it says, "He's not ashamed," the implication is there that He can be ashamed, and in some cases, He is ashamed, because it's talking about behaviors here.

If we look at Hebrews, it's talking about the superiority of Jesus Christ. Again, the Jews held the prophets and all that in very high regard, but it's showing in Hebrews here the stature of the Messiah, the character He had and what we're supposed to emulate and the example that He wants us to set. Back in verses 6 and 8, he quotes Psalm 8 where it says, "What is man that you are mindful of him?" This superior Being says that. It's like what is pointed out, there is a purpose that God has for man, that Jesus Christ is working in our lives.

You know, we heard that the same God is offering an inheritance in His Kingdom and salvation. It also says in the context here, in verse 3, that we shouldn't neglect this calling we have been given. The implication again is that we can neglect it, we can let it go. So this whole introductory section of Hebrews points to discipleship and admonishes us in verse 1, "Therefore, give the more earnest heed to the things we've heard," and God has given us to understand. To heed means to do something. We know that; it's very simple. In a word, we are called to emulate that very character of Jesus Christ in the way we live, looking forward to this day, looking forward to God's Kingdom and as was pointed out, even way beyond that. Sometimes perhaps we have lost sight of that.

Just to paraphrase one of the things in Revelation 3, where it talks about the Laodiceans, who are blind, they've lost sight of what they really should be doing. They've allowed that barrier to come between them and Jesus Christ and they have hardened their hearts. You know, Christ says He has to knock at the door in order to be let in. He's not in their lives. They're not doing what they should. If we answered that knock and let Jesus Christ in, we could maybe let Him in to certain behaviors in our lives that we are ashamed of. Steve talked about that a little bit yesterday. Maybe Christ is ashamed of our treatment of others or our marriages. Maybe Jesus Christ is ashamed of our vocabulary. Maybe we need to work on all those things. He says He is going to spew them out. That's an indication that He is ashamed of something!

He says, "When I knock, if you open the door, I will dine with you." What do we all do when we sit around eating and dining? We have a conversation. Maybe what Christ is referring to here is that He needs to have that conversation about what we're doing, how we're acting, how we are conducting ourselves. You have to think, again the implication is there, is Christ going to be ashamed of His Bride? Is it going to be a shotgun wedding? I don't think so. Rick says that my humor is a little whacky sometimes, but I can't see a bride standing there with Christ that has tattoos and dressed in leather and chains. That's not going to happen. But the point here again is there are folks we are not proud of, the things that they're doing. We kind of understand it and we love those people, but it does give us a great deal of pain. The information that came to us about that, we didn't look for by the way. It came to us. You have to

think about the way people are being treated. Do we really think that God and Jesus Christ differentiate the way we treat people in the Church and out of the Church? Not at all! He is judging our conduct, the way we do things. Far too many times we react to the culture around us, the stimuli that we have when we respond emotionally.

Recently I had an example. We picked up an elderly man to take him to services one Sabbath. I backed out of his driveway and hit a car. I looked up and down the block and there was nobody in sight, but by the time got in my car and put in gear and drove backwards, somebody was coming down the street and this lady stopped right behind me. First thing out of my wife's mouth is, "Why didn't that person honk?" Well, it was my fault. My insurance agent, who happens to be my daughter-in-law, told me, "You know, you have to accept liability for that." I understood that and didn't have any problem with it. It was my fault. I recognized that. That's one of the problems we have sometimes. We tend to fall into that fault thing and we blame everyone for our problems and we don't take responsibility for ourselves.

My two granddaughters each have a t-shirt. It's humorous to me. Each t-shirt says, "My sister did it." You know, it's that immature, childlike way of saying, "Well, it's not my fault. I didn't do it." We don't want to be immature spiritually. We want to take responsibility for our actions and what we do. We need to do that.

There is a little thing that I keep on my desk and it deals with this emotional response that afflicts us all. It makes us all sometimes do things, say things, think things that we shouldn't. This little poem actually came from Tony Ventrella. He was a sportscaster for the Seattle Seahawks for many years and they dumped him for no apparent reason. He didn't get bitter about it. He came up with this in a speech he gave and you may have heard this before. It's called "Anyway".

ANYWAY

People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered...

Love them anyway.

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives ...

Do good anyway.

If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies...

Succeed anyway.

The good you do will be forgotten tomorrow...

Do good anyway.

Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable...

Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight...

Build anyway.

People really need help, but may attack you if you help them...

Help people anyway.

Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth...

(Some of us have felt that!)

Give the world the best you have anyway.

That may seem trite, but it's not too bad a philosophy for living. That's what this man did. If you couple that with God's Holy Spirit, which is supposed to reflect God's love working in us, it's a pretty good philosophy. We could make our own "Anyway" list. I'll add one:

Live and behave like a Christian and at some point you will surely be persecuted...

Actually II Timothy 3:12

Yes, and all who desire to live Godly in Jesus Christ will suffer persecution."

Live like a Christian anyway.

We could come up with tons of examples, but I'm getting lots of flashcards back there. Actually Tony Ventrella borrowed that from Mother Teresa. You may recognize that. Here is what she said at the end:

You see, in the final analysis, it's all between you and God.

It was never between you and them.

I think sometimes as Christians, we're in stealth mode. We kind of want to live our lives under the radar. Unfortunately, I think sometimes in the past, we weren't encouraged to live differently than that.

Anyhow, the point is that we can get a glimpse of what people will have to deal with in the millennium. We are going to be kings and priests, right? We talk about multi-tasking today. James made a graphic picture of this the other day. Some of the survivors are

going to be standing there in the end, and one of the jobs we will have almost immediately is caregiver. If you have ever been a caregiver or been around caregivers, that takes a lot of work and that's just going to be the start.

So what is the summation of all this? The only difference with us is that we have been called ahead of time. Our hearts have been circumcised ahead of time. Like Steve said, "We have that opportunity for the makeover now." We are actually going through that. I Peter 4:17: "Judgment begins at the house of God." In a sense, those layers of carnality have been lifted and removed from our lives and we should be operating and acting like we should. We must behave like we understand what that covenant is, we understand that sacrifices have been made. We have been given God's Holy Spirit to overcome this hardened heart we have and it behooves us to live like it, to shed abroad that love from God to other people. Actually, when we are changed, that is going to be amplified, isn't it? We will be able to do that with more and more power. We just have a little bit of God's power now to use. We will have more of that. How much greater will our capacity be then? It might take that whole thousand years to do all this right and do it correctly. Just like James said, "After that and after the Great White Throne Judgment, after that's all done, we're going spiritual." It's going to be a whole new dimension.

We know, also, that God doesn't want to lose any of those hearts that are out there. He doesn't want to lose ours and He doesn't want to lose those that are in the world now. He wants all of them to be the Kingdom and in that spiritual family.

When I worked as an instructor, one of my responsibilities was to develop a lesson plan and develop hands-on practice after that. I always looked forward to the hands-on practice. The point there for us is that the hands-on is coming. It's going to happen and we're going to be there. What a makeover that is going to be!

Let's just turn for one final set of scriptures in Romans 8. We'll wrap this up.

Romans 8: 11. *But if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit which dwells in you.*

Verse 12. *Therefore, Brethren, we are debtors,*

And aren't we debtors? Did we not all go through Luke 14, count the cost and all of that? We know and appreciate what God has given to us. We're here because of what God has given to us.

Verse 12b. *not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.*

With that natural uncircumcised heart.

Verse 13. *For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body (allow that circumcision to take place) you will live.*

Verse 14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.*

It not only defines what you are, but how you conduct yourself, how you act, how we all act in any given situation. I like to visualize that as God's Spirit being kind of a filter for us. The way a filter operates, something on one side comes out purer on the other side. That visual works for me.

If we look at Galatians 5, the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, if we insert a filter in there and we're actually applying God's Holy Spirit and using it on a daily basis, we will do things God's way. We will set that example. We will demonstrate that example. That's exactly what Jesus Christ did. He didn't agree with the hypocrisy of the Jews because He showed what God's law and what God's character looked like. You remember the disciples asked Him, "Show us the Father." He says, "Well, you're looking at Him." He showed what that all looked like.

Verse 18. *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time ...*

This ought to be an anchoring scripture for us because Jesus Christ is more interested in what is going on in our hearts when we are faced with trials. He cares more about what we do and how we act and the outcome of it. He cares more about it than our jobs when we are in a trial. He cares more about it when we are sick. He cares about something more deeply, because all those things are temporary.

Verse 18b. *are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

Verse 19. *For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.*

One translation says that "the creation stands on tip toes waiting for us."

So, Brethren, to my thinking, there is a fabulous makeover coming and we are called to be part of it. We should look eagerly, for that time is coming, that makeover and change of heart that's going to occur very near in the future.