

Philippians Series

Lesson #062

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Dean Bible Ministries

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The New Circumcision

Philippians 3:1–5



Php. 1:27, “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, [NKJV]

Php. 1:28, “and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.”

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στήκω *stēkō*

**2 plur pres act indic
to stand, stand firm,
steadfast, singleminded,
dependable**

συναθλέω *sunathleō*

**3 pres act ptcp masc nom pl
to work together with
contend/struggle along with
BDAG, participle of means,
“with one mind by working
together for the faith of the
gospel”**

In ch. 3 the focus is on standing firm against error.

Part of the primary role of the Pastor-Teacher:

Eph. 4:11, “And He Himself [Christ] gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastor-teachers, [RD]

Eph. 4:12, “for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of service, for the edifying [building up] of the body of Christ, [RD]

Eph. 4:13, “until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; [NKJV]

Eph. 4:14, “that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,” [NKJV]

Part of the primary role of the Pastor-Teacher:

Titus 1:9, “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” [NKJV]

Php. 3:1, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.” [NKJV]

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Php. 3:1, “for the rest, my brothers, you all rejoice in the Lord. For me it is not tedious to continue to repeat what I am writing to you.”

1. Again he repeats rejoice (also in 4:4).

Php. 2:18, “For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.”

Php. 2:28, “Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.”

Php. 3:2, “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!” [NKJV]

2. Three times he repeats: Beware! Watch out!

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βλέπω *blepō*

2 plur pres act impera

“to see” in this case, to watch out for something.

“watch out for dogs”

“dogs”

A derogatory term the Jews used for Gentiles.

Paul flips it on them, calling them dogs.

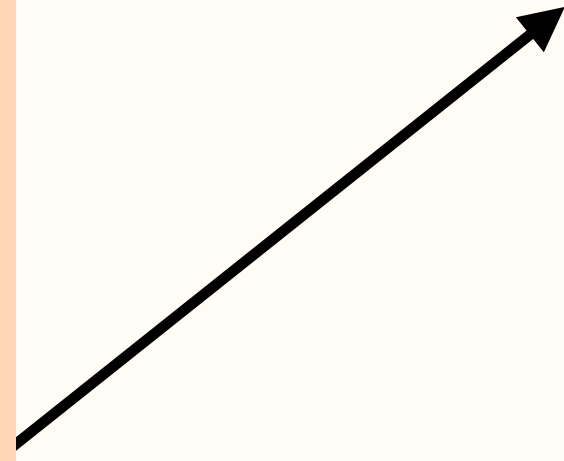
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Isa. 56:10, “His watchmen *are* blind, they are all ignorant; They *are* all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.”

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“deceitful workers”
(2 Cor. 11:13)

Matt. 23:25, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.”

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Php. 3:3, “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,” [NKJV]

What the Bible Teaches About

Circumcision



1. Circumcision is the removal of the foreskin of the male's genital organ.

מול (mûl) II, v. circumcise, let oneself be circumcised, be cut off; v. used 31 ✕

מולָה (mûlâ) n. circumcision.

περιτέμνω (peritemno), v. to circumcise; 14 ✕ Acts–Jude

περιτομή (peritomē), n. circumcision; 34 ✕ from Acts–Jude

2. Circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant.

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Gen. 17:10, “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;”

Gen. 17:11, “and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.”

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Gen. 17:12, “He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, 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.

Gen. 17:13, “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.”

Gen. 17:14, “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.”

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Gen. 17:26, “That very same day Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael;”

But why the *male* only?

1 Cor. 11:3, “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”

Eph. 5:23, “For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.”

- a. Separation to God;**
- b. Because sin came from Adam, the man, the head of the human race.**
- c. Because the man is the head of the home.**

d. In Israel, the tribe of Levi was the designated priestly tribe, only male Levites served. This continues that *distinct role of the male* focus in the Old Testament.

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Gen. 17:11, “and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.”

3. Circumcision was already practiced as part of different cultures in the Ancient Near East (ANE).

4. Second, circumcision was commanded in the Mosaic Covenant. But the reason was different than the Abrahamic Covenant.

Lev. 12:3, “And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.”

Circumcision was a requirement for partaking of the Passover. Any non-Israelite, including servants or slaves, were prohibited from eating the Passover if they were not circumcised.

Ex. 12:48, “And when a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. (Ex. 12:44)

5. Circumcision in the Abrahamic Covenant was a sign of that covenant and thus a sign of being Jewish. This was mandatory for all Jewish males.

Under the Mosaic Covenant, circumcision was a sign of submission to the Law of Moses. Under the Mosaic Law it was mandatory for those [Jew or Gentile] who desired to be part of the nation, the commonwealth of Israel.

Circumcision had nothing to do with justification, eternal salvation, or spiritual life.

6. Circumcision in post-Second Temple Judaism (after AD 70).

Ezek. 16:6, “And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ Yes, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ ”

Ezek. 16:2, “Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations,

Ezek. 16:3, “and say, ‘Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem: “Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.

Ezek. 16:4, “ ‘ “As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths.

Ezek. 16:5, “ ‘ “No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born.

Ezek. 16:6, “ ‘ “And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ Yes, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ ” ’ ” [NKJV]

Comments on Ezek. 16:6

Rabbi Matia ben Cheresh used to say, “... But as yet they had no commandments to perform, by virtue of which they might merit redemption. ...

“God therefore assigned them two commandments: the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, and circumcision, which they were to perform so as to merit being saved, One cannot obtain reward except by deeds.”

~Mekhilta Bo, Chap. 5

“As the Ezekiel exegesis demonstrates, the central symbol of the circumcision ritual was its blood. Regularly, therefore, we find reference not only to the salvific nature of the rite in general, but more specifically, to the saving merit of circumcision blood. Nowadays, a blessing accompanies the symbolic placing of wine on the lips of the baby boy just after the circumcision wound has been cauterized.”

~Jacob Neusner, et al ed., *Encyclopedia of Judaism*, 92

“At any rate, the symbolic value of circumcision as an act of salvation is evident throughout our second century sources. It is the sign of the covenant that saves. ...

It is the paradigmatic salvific example of a good work, practiced in every generation from Abraham onward. As such, it has commanded the universal allegiance of Jews throughout history.”

~Jacob Neusner, et al ed., *Encyclopedia of Judaism*, 92

7. The Mosaic Law mandated circumcision for every male child on the eighth day.

Lev. 12:2, 3

8. The spiritual significance of circumcision is related to dedication and submission to God and His plan.

Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16, and Deut. 30:6

Lev. 26:41, “and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt—”

**Deut. 10:16, “Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart,
and be stiff-necked no longer.”**

Context

Deut. 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,

Deut. 10:13, “and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?”

Deut. 30:6, “And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.”

Ezek. 36:25, “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

Ezek. 36:26, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Ezek. 36:27, “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”

Jer. 9:24, “ ‘But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the LORD.

Jer. 9:25, “ ‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will punish all who are circumcised with the uncircumcised’ ” — Compare Acts 7:51

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מִן בְּעֶרְלָה literally, circumcised with the foreskin, i.e.,
“circumcised yet uncircumcised”

Acts 7:51, “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.

Acts 7:52, “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers,

Acts 7:53, “who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.”

New Testament Issues

9. In the early church there were some among the Jews that taught that salvation was not possible unless a person was circumcised.

Acts 15:1, “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’ ”

Acts 15:5, “But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.’ ”

10. Paul argued that it was not the outer physical circumcision that was significant, but the inner, circumcision of the heart.

Rom. 2:28, “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;

Rom. 2:29, “but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”

11. Circumcision was a major distraction taught by the Judaizers, which Paul was correcting in “Galatians.”

Gal. 3:3, “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?” [NKJV]

Gal. 5:1, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

Gal. 5:2, “Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.

Gal. 5:3, “And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.

Gal. 5:4, “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”

Gal. 5:6, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.”

Gal. 5:11, “And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased.”

Gal. 6:15, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.”

Col. 2:11, “In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,”

Gal. 5:12, “I could wish that those who trouble you would even castrate themselves!”

Col. 3:9, “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

Col. 3:10, “and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

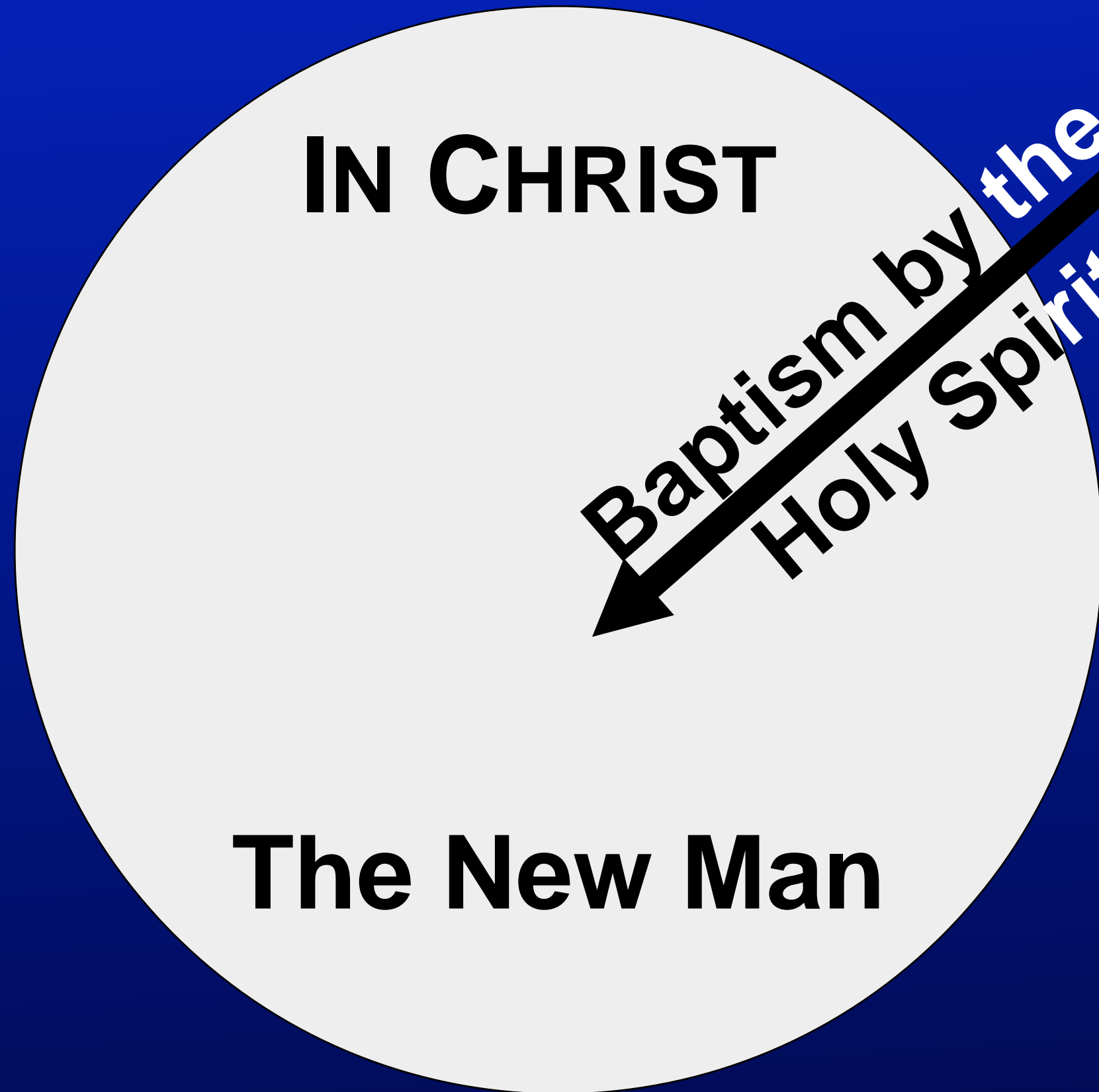
Col. 3:11, “where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ *is* all and in all.”

**Eternal
Realities**

**Temporal
Realities**

“POSITIONAL TRUTH”

ACTS 16:31



IN CHRIST

**Baptism by the
Holy Spirit**

The New Man

**Eternal
Realities**

**Temporal
Realities**

“POSITIONAL TRUTH”



**Baptism by the
Holy Spirit**

**“Walking by the
Holy Spirit”
“Walk as children
of light”**

12. The true circumcision is that which is spiritual, in Christ.

Php. 3:3, “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

Php. 3:4, “though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:”

13. When Jesus died, it was the end of the Mosaic Law. Therefore, there is no basis for circumcising Jew or Gentile based on the Mosaic Law.

However, Jewish males are still under the eternal covenant made with Abraham and thus are still required to circumcise their sons on the eighth day.

Paul refused to have Titus, a Gentile, circumcised, but Timothy, who was a Jew (through his mother), was required to be circumcised (Acts 16:3).

14. In some theological systems the attempt is made to make circumcision analogous to baptism.

Circumcision under the Mosaic Law (ML) was a commitment as citizen of Israel to obey the ML. The parents had the 8-week-old son circumcised as a sign of their commitment, not his.

Believers' baptism is the decision of the individual who has trusted in Christ as savior and is a symbol of what has already transpired spiritually in the baptism by the Spirit. No where does the New Testament relate baptism to circumcision!

15. Church Age believers, Jew and Gentile believers, are the new circumcision.

Php. 3:3, “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,” [NKJV]