

## **Genesis 17:10-14 – A Sign on the Body**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: God called Abraham to walk obediently before his face. In order to walk obediently Abraham had to have faith in Jesus Christ, for no one can walk obediently without having faith in Christ. God gave faith to him to believe. God knew also that because of doubts and other weaknesses that would creep into Abraham's life from time to time, he had to strengthen Abram to walk obediently. So God promised him many children, godly children, and even great children. God further encouraged him by promising to keep the same blessings for his children long after Abraham died. That's what we covered last time. But God was not done blessing Abraham and his descendants yet. Your loving God knows how man is prone to forget his promises when he gets too busy, or when he gets into tribulations 苦难. So God gave a sign of the covenant that man would always remember... a sign that had great significance -so Abram would remember all God did for him in the past, how God was presently keeping him, and all God promised to do for him in the future. This sign is the subject that God wants you to hear today.

Our headings are: **Need for the Sign, Nature of the Sign, and Neglect of the Sign.**

Our goals are: That you **will be thankful for all the ways God makes obeying the terms of the covenant easier and that you will learn to enjoy and use all these blessings.**

### **Need for the Sign**

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;

1. First of all, **circumcision is not the covenant**, though it is called the Covenant of Circumcision. (Moslems believe that circumcision is the covenant.) But the Covenant was: Walk before me and be blameless (which means "have faith in Jesus Christ"). God simply used the sign to refer to the covenant. (Just like the Geneva Convention was not about Geneva, but about war.) John 8 said Abraham had faith in Christ. Hebrews 11 confirms this. Moslems believe that the rewards come as a result of obeying the sign, not by having faith in Jesus Christ. They miss the point.

2. Now why was there a need for the sign?

a. Remembrance of God's Work for you: Man is prone to forget the terms of the covenant and forget God's promises. So God gave Abraham circumcision, just as a sign is usually given when something significant takes place. Today, you exchange rings to show a sign of fidelity 忠实, faith, and loyalty at weddings. Gideon Bible distributors have a lapel pin 翻领别针 to identify their critical work. Policemen have shields and they have the authority to stop you. Circumcision reminded Abraham of God's promises, and at the same time circumcision reminded him that his heart needed to be circumcised and humbled by God.

Deuteronomy 10: 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. 16 "Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.

b. Assurance. Circumcision reminded Abraham that Christ would do Abraham's duty and satisfy God's justice. Abraham was credited with Christ's righteousness. Abraham could not circumcise his own heart and even if he could, he would not circumcise his own heart. He loved his sins too much.

Deuteronomy 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.

3. All men and boys (since women could not have the sign by the very nature of it) had to have the sign of the covenant. Even the Lord Jesus was circumcised to fulfill all obedience for you.

4. It is true that circumcision was not visible to the world, but it was God's act on man. It was not just what you were saying to the world, but really what God was saying to you. This is why it is important to put the mark of the covenant on children. It is not what the child is saying, but what God is saying to the child.

### **Nature of the Sign**

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. 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. 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.

1. Circumcision was the cutting off of the foreskin of the male reproductive organ with a knife or razor 剃刀 (implements of iron or glass), on any baby boy on the 8<sup>th</sup> day after birth, or any man who came to faith from a foreign country. (Some Biologists have argued scientifically that there is higher clotting 凝固 power on the 8<sup>th</sup> day after birth so it is the perfect time to circumcise the boy.) But maybe it was God's way of helping man who might want to defer the painful procedure if they were adults.

2. Israel developed an interesting custom that when they had circumcised the baby, or man, they would take the foreskin and put in into a bowl of sand to remember the promise that Abram's descendants would become like the sand on the seashore.

Romans 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to 转嫁给 them also,

It is also interesting that the seed of man would flow through where the blood was shed to give life to the new children. Further, you know that in circumcision the foreskin died, and the death of that foreskin resulted in cleanness. And this was a picture of Jesus who would shed 流出 his blood and die to make you clean. This is why Jesus is properly called "your circumcision."

Colossians 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,

3. Not only infants, but all those who were members of a Christian household had to be circumcised as well. Even Egyptians circumcised themselves during Joseph's rule there. Even slaves were accepted as God's children. If a foreigner refused to be circumcised, after one year in Israel he was sent back to his homeland. No man was ever forced to embrace the true religion of God, so no foreigner was ever obliged against his will to submit to its ordinances 法令.

4. Today, of course, baptism is the initiation rite 仪式 into the covenant of our Lord Jesus Christ. Refuse it; refuse Christ. This is why it is wrong to marry someone who is not a believer. How can the body of covenant child be joined with the body of an unbeliever who refuses Christ? (Of course it is not wrong to be joined with a non-believer if you become a Christian after you were married. In such a case, the believer is called to live with and love an unbelieving spouse – even to death.)

5. And God always demanded and gave a sign. Because Jesus came and died as your circumcision, that bloody sign has passed away and you are now given a non-bloody sign. But there will always be a sign of the covenant. God is gracious...and gives the sign now to women and girls as well.

### **Neglect of the Sign**

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."

1. God hates those who hate his covenant and prescribes a remedy for them. He literally demanded the circumcising of their whole body – execution – of those who refused his mark during Abraham's time. According to Jewish history, when a child grew up who had not be circumcised and he then rejected the privilege of God's mark, he was executed

Jeremiah 4:4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, And take away the foreskins of your hearts, You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My fury come forth like fire, And burn so that no one can quench it, Because of the evil of your doings."

Yes, both circumcision of the body and the heart were required by God—and judgment was meted out 公正的处理 on those who rejected God's demands. The father who refused to let his son be circumcised was literally saying that no blood was needed for purification – and he was therefore mocking the blood of Jesus Christ. So it is with the parent who refuses to baptize his child.

Consider the severe consequences that God threatened on a father for failing his child!

Exodus 4:24 And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the LORD met him and sought to kill him. 25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, "Surely you are a husband of blood to me!" 26 So He let him go. Then she said, "You are a husband of blood!" —because of the circumcision.

2. Historically, if you chose not to take the sign of baptism for yourself and your children, you were expelled from the Church of Jesus Christ. Only in the last couple of generations has this teaching sounded strange and baptism has been treated as a non-essential of the faith. And remember that circumcision has been replaced by baptism. Read again!

Colossians 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, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

3. The Apostles in Jerusalem confirmed that circumcision was not necessary, implying that baptism has replaced circumcision. On the contrary, baptism is commanded.

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." **28** For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things...

Matthew 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

## **Conclusion**

Circumcision was a sign that man needed to remember what God would do for him in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ would circumcise his heart by his death and resurrection. The result of man remembering that act would give him strength during his trials in life. He would know that his salvation was secured and trials will come to an end. While circumcision was painful and bloody – it was a necessary part to understand that cleanness came at a great price to the Lord. Those who rejected circumcision (the death of Christ and the sign) rejected God's offer of life and died in their sins.

### **Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:**

1. You deserved, like the foreskin, to be cut off and die. Every generation that passed through that circumcised organ that was covered with blood recognized what they deserved. Do you recognize what you deserve? Today, of course, the bloody sign, circumcision, was replaced by the non-bloody sign, baptism. So every time you see someone baptized you must recognize and remember how you were washed in the blood of Christ and are now clean.
2. Abram did not expect contentment from his circumcision but from Christ who died for him. And neither are you to trust in your baptism and look at it superstitiously. Rather, you too must trust in the one who died for you.
3. The applying of the sign of the covenant is for you and your children as visible testimony that the Lord has marked you and you are being joined to the covenant community. Children are given special rights and privileges as part of the covenant community. They are brought under the covenant of the household of faith. But only faith in Christ (as Abram did in John 8:53) makes the sign of complete value to you.
4. If God were so severe on those who spit at his sign, imagine what he might do with those who reject the terms of the covenant.
5. Praise God that by remembering what he has done for you, you can find great assurance as you face this world and its fleshly challenges and trials.

Finally, since baptism has replaced circumcision, you and your children ought to be baptized. But baptism is only for those who believe that Jesus Christ died for their sins. If you believe that Jesus died for your sins – which makes you a child of God – then you ought to be baptized.