

Have You Been Circumcised?

by Anton Bosch

The sermon explores the significance of spiritual circumcision for Christians as a sign of their covenant relationship with God and the call to holiness.

Scripture: Genesis 17:23, Deuteronomy 10:16, Jeremiah 6:10, Acts 7:51, Romans 2:28, Philippians 3:3, Colossians 2:11

Topics: "Spiritual Circumcision", "Covenant Theology"

Description

Anton Bosch delves into the significance of circumcision in the Old Testament as a sign of the covenant between God and Abraham, emphasizing that while it was not a condition for entering the covenant, it was essential for remaining a beneficiary of God's blessings. He draws parallels between physical circumcision in the Old Testament and spiritual circumcision in the New Testament, highlighting the importance of having a circumcised heart and ears to hear and understand God's Word, and to submit humbly to Him. Circumcision symbolizes not only the laying aside of negative traits but also embracing positive attributes like worshiping God in Spirit, rejoicing in Christ, and having no confidence in the flesh.

Transcript

"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" (Genesis 7:14).

The covenant that God made with Abraham was a unilateral covenant, meaning that all the conditions and requirements to fulfill the covenant were the responsibility of God alone. In fact, Abraham was asleep when the covenant was made. (Genesis 15). But God did require one thing from Abraham and his descendants and that is that they bear in their flesh the sign of the covenant - circumcision.

Circumcision is a perpetual reminder to every Jewish male that he is different and that he is a beneficiary of God's blessings through the covenant with Abraham. This small part that the Israelites had to play was a negligible contribution to the totality of the covenant and yet, failure to fulfill that small aspect would break the covenant and result in excommunication.

God did not tell Abraham to be circumcised before the covenant was made. Nor did He make circumcision a condition which had to be fulfilled in order for the covenant to be established. God made the unilateral covenant and once He had established the covenant, He told Abraham to be circumcised as a result of, and as evidence of, the covenant. Although circumcision is not required for an Israelite to enter the covenant, it is required in order to remain a beneficiary of the covenant. While circumcision was primarily a

sign of the covenant, it also symbolized cleanliness and holiness (Isaiah 52:1; Leviticus 19:23). It thus connects God's covenant and blessings with a need for holiness.

The same principle was followed in the giving of the Law. God first brought them out of Egypt and having brought them to Himself (Exodus 19:4), required them to live holy lives. Once again, He did not make holiness a condition to their redemption, but a result and a sign of it.

So the question is: If you are a Christian, have you been circumcised?

Now, don't avoid the question by reminding me that circumcision is Old Testament. Are you sure? Sometimes we far too quickly discard the Old Testament practices without paying attention to the meaning of those practices. Before you accuse me of preaching Law, allow me to remind you that for every physical practice, law, and custom of the Old Testament, there is a spiritual equivalent in the New Testament.

Christians ought also to be circumcised; not physically but spiritually: "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" (Colossians 2:11). Just as physical circumcision represented the evidence of the covenant and of holiness, so believers should have their hearts circumcised as evidence of the New Covenant and of the resultant holiness. "For 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; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God" (Romans 2:28).

The Old Testament speaks of two main areas in which we should be circumcised: Our ears and hearts. In fact, Stephen abraded the religious Jews because they were "uncircumcised in heart and ears" (Acts 7:50).

"To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Indeed their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot give heed" (Jeremiah 6:10). Circumcised ears hear, receive and understand the Word of God while uncircumcised ears don't. Have your ears been circumcised? Do you hear God's Word or are you like the Jews of Jeremiah and Stephen's time who could not hear nor understand spiritual things? A sign of being born again is a desire for the Word of God and a capacity to hear and understand God's Word. It is a cause for deep concern when so-called believers are not able to hear or receive the Word of God.

Uncircumcised hearts speak of rebellion, hard-heartedness and a stiff neck. "Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer" (Deuteronomy 10:16). Just as an uncircumcised ear is evidence of not being born-again, so is a rebellious spirit and an inability to submit to the Lord. People who boast of being "free thinkers", "independent spirits" or any of the other euphemisms which they use to make rebellion sound good are confessing that they do not have the evidence of the New Covenant either.

In Leviticus 26:41 God calls upon Israel to humble their uncircumcised hearts in order that He may fulfill the promises to the fathers. The Lord no doubt calls on the church to do the same today in order to participate in the many blessings He has promised us.

Abraham was circumcised at the age of 99 (Genesis 17:23). Circumcision at that age must have been a very painful experience, yet he obeyed. So too it may be painful to submit our rebellious spirits before the Lord or to cut off our unholy lifestyles. But that is what the Lord requires of all who would be true sons of God and participants in the covenants and the blessings. That seems like a small price to pay.

Circumcision is not only a sign of the laying aside of negative things but also of embracing positive things. "For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3).

So, do you hear God's Word, are you humble and submissive before Him, do you worship God in Spirit, do you rejoice in Jesus, and have you laid aside all confidence in the flesh? If so, you have been circumcised and are a participant in the blessings of God.

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