



The Sermon

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Genesis 17:9-27

"The Sign of the Covenant"

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TRANSCRIPT

So, beginning in verse 9, Genesis chapter 17, verse 9, "God said further to Abraham, 'Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants.'" In other words, they are to be circumcised as well. "A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.

"Then God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.' Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, 'Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?' And Abraham said to God, 'Oh that Ishmael might live before You!' But God said, 'No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. As for Ishmael, I have

heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.' When He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

"Then Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all the servants who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's household, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the very same day, as God had said to him. Now Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. In the very same day Abraham was circumcised, and Ishmael his son. All the men of his household, who were born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him." This is the reading of God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, immutable, all-sufficient, invincible Word. Let us go to Him in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, as we look into Your Word today, we need to be taught, we need to be instructed, beginning with me, down to each and every one gathered here today, and who are listening by livestream. Lord, shine light onto this passage so that we can see it most clearly, that we may understand what You would have to teach us, and more than that, that we may walk in a manner worthy of Your calling. So, bless us, your people. We are a needy people, in need of Your truth and in need of Your grace, in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

The title of this message is "The Sign of the Covenant," and in these verses we see the sign of the covenant. We see the first mention of circumcision in the entire Bible right here. This is a subject that will be the focus of much of the attention of the Bible in the unfolding of Scripture. There's what's known as progressive revelation, a truth would be taught earlier in the Bible somewhat dimly mentioned, but as Scripture unfolds, more light and more truth and more instruction is given, until by the time you come to the New Testament it becomes distinctly clear. And that certainly is the case with circumcision.

Probably no one here today has been circumcised. Certainly the women have not been circumcised. And at first glance, this might seem to be an impractical topic. Like of all the Sundays I come to Trinity Bible Church and Dr. Lawson is preaching on circumcision, give me something relevant for my life. I mean, I'm not going to apply this literally to my life. So, what is there for us to learn for today from this passage? Well, there's much; and I trust that you'll stay tuned and find out.

We find ourselves in John chapter 17, and the Lord is repeating His – I said John, didn't I? I could read many of your lips and I thought it was, "I love you," but then I realized you were saying, "Genesis." I don't know why I keep saying John. I love the gospel of John.

But, Genesis chapter 17. And this is not the first mention of what's known as the Abrahamic covenant. It was mentioned earlier in John and – all right. I know when you're laughing with me, and I know when you're laughing at me, okay. So, I need a church of repenters right now, okay, you're laughing at me. Well, I've given you ample reason because I'm stuck in John.

The first mention of the Abrahamic covenant Genesis 12 and then Genesis 15, so this third time we have mentioned the Abrahamic covenant. But here is the first time the sign of the Abrahamic covenant is mentioned, which is circumcision, which was of great significance to Abraham and to his descendants. Everything in the Bible's important, there's nothing that's unimportant. There's nothing that's trivial in the Bible. There's nothing that's frivolous. There's nothing that's superficial. Everything in the Bible is of great importance or God would not have put it there. But it's also important for you and me, and so we need to learn what that is.

So I want to walk through these verses with you. And I like having an outline. I like having footsteps to walk us through a text of Scripture. And the first thing that I want you to see is, "The responsibility upon Abraham."

It's in verses 9 through 16, and it's a major cluster of verses. And now for the first time, there is stress, this responsibility that is laid upon Abraham.

And so, in verse 9, "God said further to Abraham," – that word "further" indicates this is a continuation of verses 1 through 8 – 'Now as for you,' – we're getting to the "you" – 'you shall keep My covenant.'" Now to this point, everything has been dependent upon God; and this is what we call a unilateral covenant, meaning it is God and God alone who institutes this covenant and brings this covenant to pass. That's why it is repeatedly referred to in this section as it is in verse 9, "My covenant," not, "our covenant." "It's My covenant," God says.

And in verses 1 through 8, which you looked at last week, seven times you will see these two words, "I will." In verse 2, "I will. I will." Verse 5, "I will." Verse 6, "I will." Again in verse 6, "I will." Verse 7, "I will." Verse 8, "I will." All of this is on the shoulders of God, and God will bring this to pass.

But all of this grace being lavished upon Abraham and his descendants is not without personal responsibility. Grace always makes demands upon the one who receives grace. And that is so true in the New Testament, that whenever we receive the grace of God, we are never free to live however we want to live. There are duties in responsibilities that come with grace. Grace is free, but it will cost you everything to follow God and to live in a manner worthy of your calling. And that is the big idea that we see taking place here after God has said seven times, "I will, I will, I will bring this to pass."

Now in verse 9, for the first time, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant." "You will," – as verse 1 says, what you looked at last week – "you will walk before Me and be blameless." "My grace should be sufficient motivation for you to walk in a manner worthy of your calling and to walk blameless in the midst of a sinful and adulterous generation; otherwise, you know nothing of the grace of God; otherwise, I doubt you have received the grace of God." And in the New Testament we would say justification

always, always leads to sanctification, that regeneration always leads to sanctification and a changed life. And so here, even as this unilateral covenant is being given, Abraham is not without responsibilities and duties. "And you shall keep My commandment," – and really more accurately translated – "you must keep My commandment. It is obligatory upon you."

Now, what is a covenant? We've already talked about this. But a covenant is a binding contractual agreement between two parties, and it is between God and Abraham. And just to quickly tell you four things about this covenant. Number one, "it's unilateral," as I've already spoken of that, meaning it is designed by God and God alone, it is executed by God and by God, and all the terms are established by God. There's no negotiation with God and Abraham and point/counterpoint talking this through and we agree to come to middle ground for what the contract will be. No, it's all God.

Second, "it's eternal." This covenant is an eternal covenant and it will be specified so at the end of verse 13, "for an everlasting covenant." So this isn't just for the Old Testament and this isn't just for a period of time, and then it will be annulled and rescinded and replaced. No, this is an eternal covenant.

Third, "it's a gracious covenant," meaning it is solely by God's goodness, based upon nothing in Abraham. I mean, remember Abraham was a moon-worshiper, a pagan of all pagans, a heathen of all heathens, living in Ur of Chaldees. And even he lies to Pharaoh about his wife. I mean, he's got a track record that would not make you want to hire him if you were looking for a spiritual person to work for you. I mean, he has blemishes and sin just like anyone else. So this is a gracious covenant that God chooses to enter in on based solely upon God's sovereign choice, by His grace.

And then the fourth thing I would say to you, "it's a demanding covenant," in that it demands something of Abraham. It requires something from him; not an order to enter into the covenant, not an order to keep the covenant as far as keep the contract going. But nevertheless, there is responsibility that comes with entering into this covenant.

And so, he continues here in verse 9. He says, "You and your descendants after you throughout their generations." And again, this extends into the physical descendants of Abraham and future Jews.

Verse 10, "This is My covenant, which you shall keep." He's repeating verse 9 here at the beginning of verse 10 which doubly reinforces this by the repetition of it. And to keep His covenant means to obey the covenant. "And it is between Me and you and your descendants after you," – because it's eternal – "every male among you shall be circumcised." The first time the word "circumcised" or "circumcision" is found the entire Bible, and it will be the dominant word in all these verses. It's mentioned ten times in these verses. As I read the text, no doubt your ear picked up on that.

"To be circumcised" is mentioned in verse 10, verse 11, verse 12, 13, 14, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 – total of ten times. So there's no way to read this passage and plow around the boulder and just kind of ignore circumcision and move on. It's almost like the internal structure of this passage, and circumcision, as probably all of us know, is the cutting of the foreskin of the male organ. Cutting of the skin, the foreskin, and it creates a mark on the male organ that's not identifiable or seen by anyone else, because clothing covers it. It's only seen by the parents of the eight-year-old as they would bathe and clothe the little baby, and by that person who is circumcised for the rest of his life, as in private he would bathe and clothe himself.

So, verse 11, "And you, even you Abraham, shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin." It's so important, though Abraham is ninety-nine years old now. We know that from verse 1, even at that advanced age; and He gives the reason why: "it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you." This word for "sign" in Hebrew means a distinguishing mark, an identifying mark. It's like a banner, a sign, a banner that'll fly over you. It'll be a constant reminder to you.

So, just to raise two questions, number one, "Who will see this sign?" and number two, "What does this sign mean?" Well, who will see the sign? I've already told you who will not see the sign. Every person, because you will be clothed. You're not going to be walking around exposing yourself, so no other person is going to see this sign of the covenant. No, this is for you to see it when you're alone by yourself and you down and observe, and it's to be a constant reminder to you of something. And for a period of time your parents will see it, but no one else will see it. So that's who will see this sign, it'll be very restricted.

So, what does it mean? What does this signify? A sign signifies something. Well, number one, it signifies that you're a member of the nation of Israel, that you are a part of a nation that has been set apart from the other nations unto God; and that's the meaning of the cut that will be put into the male organ. It visibly represents what God has done, that God has set you apart. God has made a cut and has set the nation of Israel apart; and to this nation and for this nation, God has specific purposes, unique purposes, to take the message of the knowledge of God to the ends of the earth. God will give divine revelation, not to Egypt, and not to Assyria, and not to the Babylonians or to the Medes and Persians, or to the Canaanites. God will give truth, divine revelation, special divine revelation. To this nation God will give the Law and the Prophets and the covenants and the temple - all of that. And so it signifies that you are a part of a covenant nation that God has set apart from the world unto Himself.

But there's more to it. It must be deeper than you're just a national citizen of a geopolitical state, that within the nation you must be one whose heart is circumcised. And this must take place around the world outside of the nation of Israel. There must be a heart circumcision in order to enter the kingdom of God. And so I want to take you on a little bit of a journey right now, and I don't know how long this is going to take.

So I want you to come to the book of Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy chapter 10, and I need you to turn quickly with me as we go through these verses. But in Deuteronomy chapter 10 and verse 16, I'm going to go ahead and read it while you're still looking for it: "So circumcise your heart, and

stiffen your neck no longer." And to circumcise your heart means that you must make the deliberate choice to set your heart apart from loving the world and the things of this world, and that you now give your heart to God, and you give your heart to be set apart to loving God more than anything in this world.

He says, "Circumcise your heart," - and in the second half of the verse, verse 16 - "and stiffen your neck no longer." To be stiff-necked means you're resistant to give God your heart. And ox, if it did not want to submit to its master's yoke, would hunch up his shoulders and stiffen his neck so that a yoke could not be put on around the neck, that you're unwilling to humble yourself to your master, you are unwilling to come under the yoke and submit yourself to the authority of your master, you are stiff-necked. And that's why Jesus said in Matthew 11 and verse 28, "Come unto Me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me." And so, what this call here is to set your heart apart for God.

Verse 12 tells us to fear the Lord your God, and to walk in all of His ways and love Him, and to serve Him," - and verse 13 - "and to keep the Lord's commandments," all that is involved in circumcising your heart. It's not enough that you would have the external physical circumcision, you must humble yourself within the nation and give your heart to God. "You must" - Deuteronomy 6:5 - "love the Lord your God with all of your heart and all your soul and all of your might and all of your strength," in order to be a true Jew, in order to be a true believer.

Now come to Deuteronomy 30 and verse 6, and we see that this is something that God must do, that it is initiated by grace, it is a work of grace, it is what God must do in the heart. God must open the heart. God must by sovereign grace perform open heart surgery; and that is what every conversion is, and it must continue in reality throughout one's journey on this earth with God, to continue to walk before Him.



In Deuteronomy 30 and verse 6, "Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants," - why? - "to love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul, so that you may live," so that you may live the abundant life, so that you may live eternally with God. And it won't happen unless your heart has been pierced and cut deeply and come under the knife of deep Holy Spirit conviction of sin. And that knife is the sharp two-edged sword of the word of God.

Hebrews 4, verse 12, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. For there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." It's the ministry of the word of God in the heart. It's to comfort the afflicted, but it's also to afflict the comfortable and to expose sin, to bring about repentance and confession of sin that accompanies true, saving faith. So, this physical circumcision is just the surface. The reality, it just pictures the reality of what must take place in every person's heart. And that was true not only of Abraham and Jews long ago, it's also true of Gentiles today.

Come with me to Jeremiah, the book of Jeremiah. And I'm not covering every verse that I could possibly cover, but Jeremiah chapter 4 and verse 4, and we read - God speaks through the prophet. Verse 3 says, "For thus says the Lord," - verse 4 - 'Circumcise yourselves to the Lord and remove the foreskin of your heart. You have a calloused heart. You have a thick heart. You have a heart that has built up resistance against God, because you have become so at home in the world and been squeezed into the mold of the world, that your heart has become insensitive towards God.' - and so, God says through the prophet Jeremiah - 'You must circumcise yourselves to the Lord and remove this thickness, this foreskin around your heart. Peel back the layers of your heart that are hindering your love for God.'

Same book, Jeremiah chapter 9 and verse 23, Jeremiah 9, beginning in verse 23. This is an incredible passage, an incredible passage. I mean, we have to

see this passage. Verse 23, Jeremiah 9, "Thus says the Lord, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on the earth; for I delight in these things,' declares the Lord. - now watch this, verse 25 - 'Behold, the days are coming,' declares the Lord, that I will punish all who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised."

How can you be both? How can you be circumcised and yet be uncircumcised? Oh, you can be physically circumcised, but not be spiritually circumcised. And in a sense, physical circumcision means nothing, it's just an inflicted scar, mark; it's not going to really get you anywhere. It is spiritual circumcision that is absolutely necessary to enter into the kingdom of God.

So, verse 26, "Egypt and Judah, and Edom and the sons of Ammon, and Moab and all those inhabiting the desert who clip the hair on their temples; for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart." To put it another way, you can be a US citizen and not know the Lord. You can be a member of a church and not have your heart circumcised. That's Judas.

Now come to Acts 7. We're fast-forwarding through a lot of verses, and we come to Acts 7, and this carries over into the New Testament. And in Acts 7, Stephen gives this extraordinary walk through the Bible. It begins with Abraham in chapter 7, verse 2, and this thing builds and builds. It's the greatest walk through the Bible you'll find in Scripture, and it comes to the crescendo in verse 51 as he's standing before the Sanhedrin, the seventy Jewish leader who preside over the nation, plus the high priest. And in verse 51, he says, "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did." And he looks back over the centuries and says, "As a nation, you have been uncircumcised of heart for generations and for centuries, and you continue to go through the mechanical routine of circumcising your little baby boys on Day Eight. But your heart has been

far from Me, and your little baby has grown up to have his heart far from Me because you're not circumcised of heart. Unless you're circumcised of heart, you're stiff-necked and you are resisting the Holy Spirit of God." It's a strong indictment. No wonder they stoned him to death. He said, "You men do not know God."

Now come to Romans chapter 2, Romans chapter 2 and verses 28 and 29; and this just bleeds through the pages of the New Testament as well. And in Romans chapter 2 and verses 28 and 29, Paul makes a very careful distinction here. He says, "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly," – meaning you're not a true Jew in God's eyes if all you are is just a physical Jew – "nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh," – meaning true circumcision, real circumcision has nothing to do with the body. 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."

It's very clear here. Outward circumcision, you're not a true believer if that's all you have, as Paul addresses the Jews. You only are a true believer if God has pierced the heart with the sharp two-edged sword of the word of God, unsheathed and wielded by the omnipotent Holy Spirit. That's why it says in Acts 2:37 – don't turn to it – but it says, "They were pierced to the heart," *katanussó*. It's used of a butcher plunging the knife to inflict the deathblow to the animal. The Spirit of God plunged the sharp knife of the word of God to the depth of the soul and cut through the layers that have been built up of indifference towards God.

Come to Philippians, Philippians chapter 3. And in Philippians chapter 3, let me start in verse 2, verses 2 and 3 in Philippians 3: "Beware of the dogs," – he's not talking about physical dogs, he's talking about spiritual dogs, he's talking about the false teachers. Dogs used to roam the streets of ancient towns going from trashcan to trashcan, dump, where the maggots and the flies – and would eat the trash, and consume even the maggots, and then would run around town and eliminate, and they would just spread disease everywhere. And Paul calls these Judaizers who said that every adult to enter the kingdom must be physically circumcised, and was putting

the New Testament church back under the Law and saying, "Unless you are physically circumcised as an adult, you have no admission into the kingdom of God, you are not born again."

And so, Paul says in verse 2, "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision." That's what it was, it was only the external. It's false, it's counterfeit, it's bogus, it's fake. But look at verse 3: "For we are the true circumcision." Paul's writing this to a Gentile church who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, no confidence in a physical circumcision. Even these Gentiles Paul says this to, "You are the true circumcision." And if the apostle Paul was standing right here today and could preach to you today, he would say, "If you are a true believe in Jesus Christ, you are the true circumcision, and the Spirit of God has pierced your heart and brought Holy Spirit conviction, and you have repented of your sin, and you have had your heart set apart from the world, and the world has lost its glitter and lost its luster, and your heart now has been set apart to God, and you're living for another world to come, and your heart now belongs to God, your heart now belongs to Christ." That's what it is to be the true circumcision.

Come to Colossians. I have just one more. I'm bypassing a lot. Colossians chapter 2. And with expository preaching, every expositor must be a theological expositor. He must teach sound doctrine as he preaches through passages of Scripture. And that's part of the challenge of taking in twenty verses, because there's doctrine all along the way, and you have to stop and open up the doctrine and trace it out throughout the Scripture to show the true meaning that's in this narrative.

So as God is telling Abraham to be circumcised, there's far more on the table than just going through the external motions of going to Ismael age thirteen and now circumcising him and now circumcising yourself. There's a far more profound, deeper spiritual reality that we must see, that your heart must be circumcised. And if you're in the kingdom it's because you've come under the knife of the word of God and the Spirit of God. And in that sense, we all come limping into the kingdom because we have been smitten by the

sharp sword of the word. When you enter the kingdom it is as though you've come out of surgery and you've suffered a heart wound.

So in Colossians chapter 2 and verse 11, "And in Him" - we know who the "Him" is. The "Him" is, verse 8, "Christ"; verse 9, "the one in whom the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form"; verse 10, the "Him" is "the one in whom you have been made complete, and He is head over all rule and authority." We know who the "Him" is, it is the sovereign Lord Jesus Christ.

"And in Him you were also circumcised." Now again, he's saying this to a Gentile church. "You also were circumcised" - now listen to this - "with a circumcision made without hands." He's not talking about a little eight-day boy and the father taking a knife and cutting his foreskin. No, that's not the circumcision he's talking about here that is true of every believer. He says, "You were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh" - and there he's referring to flesh as the sin nature and the dominate desire of the heart for sin. No, there was something that was so significant that happened in your new birth, that you were cut off from your previous lifestyle. You were cut off from your previous pursuit of sin. You were actually converted and transformed, and now heading in a new direction. And he says at the end of verse 11, "by the circumcision of Christ." It was made with invisible hands. It was made by the Great Physician of the soul Jesus Christ.

And so, this is the question that I have for you before we go on any further: "Has your heart been circumcised?" I'm going to put it in the negative and then I'm going to put it in the positive. First, the negative. If your heart has never been circumcised, then you're not a true believer. If all you did was just parrot a prayer, walk an aisle, raise a hand, join a church, buy a Bible, but your heart was bypassed, you've not yet become the true circumcision. All right, I just put that in the negative, but you need to know that.

Put it in the positive. If you have been circumcised, it has brought about a dramatic change in your life, some more than others; and there are a lot of

factors that determine whether someone grows spiritually more than someone else. There are a lot of factors that feed into that. But nevertheless, all who have been circumcised, you're not who you once were. You are not the person that you were. Your whole spiritual life can be divided into two volumes, and Volume One is entitled BC, before Christ. That's what your life was before Christ. And when you were spiritually circumcised, that closed Volume One. It's closed, it's over, ancient history in your life.

And now Volume Two is your walk with the Lord and your new life in Christ and this new heart. In fact, in a spiritual circumcision of the heart, in reality God takes out your old heart of stone that was hardened towards God and resistant towards God. God just took it out. It's a heart transplant. And in its place God has put a heart of flesh in you. It's a new heart that is alive unto God, and it has new desires and new passions and new ambitions for God and for the gospel and for the kingdom and for eternity with God. That's now your new heart, and your obedience to the Lord is flowing out of this new heart. And so obedience is not a bad word to you, it's a good word, because that's what your heart is pounding to do is to follow the Word of God.

First John 5, verse 3 says, "His commandments are not burdensome for those who are born of God." We gladly take the yoke of our Master, because He alone knows the path that we are to pull and to follow Him like an ox. But we submit to His lordship because of His grace, His love, His mercy. He's taken off that old yoke that we could just never meet the standard, and now He has met that standard for us in Christ.

Well, I need to wrap this up, and I'm not even close to being finished. Air-conditioner just came on to signal me. I just need to find a place here to stop and we'll pick it up next week.

Verse 12, "And every male among you who is" - yeah, come back to Genesis, not the gospel of John, by the way, but to Genesis, Genesis chapter 17, verse 12. And I hope you were able to track with me on that walk

through the Bible on circumcision, and that you see the significance of the sign. If you see a sign but you can't read it, the sign doesn't do you any good, does it? You have to be able to read the sign to know which way it's pointing and where you're to go.

So, verse 12, and we'll just wrap this up, "And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations," and again, this underscores the eternal nature of this. "I want you to keep practicing circumcision because it's almost like a sermon being preached to you, a continual, ongoing testimony. And even that it's the male organ that's cut because the sin nature is passed through the male, and so it is constant reminder of the total depravity of the human heart that is past from the male to the woman at the moment of conception. And so that cut is a reminder that you're sinful and you're perpetuating sin to the next generation, and it's come through you, Abraham."

And it goes through every boy, and it goes through boys who become men when they impregnate their wives. That offspring will bear the sin nature. And every time you look down and you see your private part, you will be reminded that you are a perpetuator of Adam's sin to the next generation. It is not passed through the woman, it's passed through the man. That is why Mary was born of a virgin, sired by the Holy Spirit, Luke 1:35, so that the offspring would be the holy offspring. Joseph could not have been the father of Jesus or the sin nature would have passed from Joseph to Mary. There would have been a corruption in the impregnating of Mary.

No, that's why Joseph is completely out of the picture. God took a virgin, a woman who had never known a man, and the Holy Spirit of God descended upon her, and the Holy Spirit of God conceived within her the Holy Seed, and Jesus was born, not just truly God, but truly man, but without a sin nature. He had to be born like He was in order to be what He was in order to do what He did. He had to be a sinless Son of God.

So, this also is a reminder that there was something desperately wrong with your first birth. No matter if your father was a pastor, an evangelist, and

your mother was a missionary, when you were conceived in your parents' womb, there was the transmission of the sin nature into you. And David the psalmist says, "In sin did my mother conceive me." Because your first birth was so drastically wrong, that is why you must be born again. You must have a new birth. You must have a birth from above. You've already had a birth from below, you need a birth from above. You need the Holy Spirit of God to impregnate you. You need the Holy Spirit of God to plant a new heart inside of you and to give you repentance and to give you saving faith. You need a divine encounter with the living God; and God must initiate that, and there is no other way to get into the kingdom of heaven except you have this heart circumcision, except you be the true circumcision.

So, I just need to stop right here; I see the time, and I'm going to stop right here. I preach next week and I think even the following week, and we'll just figure it out how to make time.

Now let me end by just saying this. You cannot have one foot in the world and one foot in the kingdom of God. You can't play all ends into the middle. You can't be someone on Sunday and someone else on Monday. And a false circumcision would be you just blend in wherever you are. A false circumcision would be during the week you're part of the world, you run with the world, you dance with the world. Nothing wrong with dancing, by the way. I want to leave that impression. But you're just part of the world. You love the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the boastful pride of life. And then you come to church on Sunday and you just know how to blend in. You know where to sit, you know how to sing, all that. And so you just fit wherever you are. That's a false circumcision, and that would make you an evildoer and a dog.

In order to be a son, a son of God, you must be born again. "Except you be born again, you will not even see the kingdom of God. You will not enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Do not marvel that I say to you, 'You must be born again.'" Jesus said that to Nicodemus who was the teacher of Israel. He was at the head of the list of religiosity. But until his heart would be circumcised, he would have no part in the kingdom.



And so, my question for you is, "Have you been born again? Have you been circumcised?" It's got to be more than just you were baptized; you just got wet, that's all that was. And it indicated something; but if the reality wasn't there in the heart, it was just a false baptism with a dead testimony. Prayerfully, if you've been baptized, it's because you have had the true circumcision in your heart.

So, there's only one way to be born again, and that is for God to initiate heart surgery upon you. It's by His initiative. "The wind blows wherever it wishes. You hear the sound of it, but do not know where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit," John 3:8.

So, if you've never been born again - I'm going to close in a word of prayer - you should pray and ask God, "God, birth me into your kingdom. God, operate on my heart. God, pierce my soul." God will answer a prayer like that. He's not going to play hide and seek from someone who's seeking Him genuinely. He will receive you; but you need to pray that God would do this in your life.

So, I'm going to close in a word of prayer. We'll pick this up next week. We've barely put our toe in the water. This is what happens when I come back from seminary for two weeks, I get pretty fired up. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Father in heaven, thank You for Your grace, for Your mercy, for Your forgiveness. Thank You for a new heart. Thank You for cleansing. Thank You for pardon. Thank You for all that You've done in us. And let us not be content with merely the external rituals and routines of religion. We want a religion of the heart. We want our hearts to belong to You. So, "Let not a wise man boast in his wisdom or a mighty man boast in his strength or a rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he knows Me, the one true, living God." Father, we ask this for the sake of Christ. Amen.