

CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART

CIRCUMCISION- Is to cut away the flesh. Spiritually it means a cutting away of the natural, sinful, Adamic nature that we are born with.

UNCIRCUMCISION- Represents uncleanness. It means the flesh that we are born with is not yet dealt with. The old nature with its wrong desires, ways, and uncleanness is still remaining.

NO INHERITANCE WITHOUT CIRCUMCISION

CIRCUMCISION refers to a spiritual work that is done in our hearts by the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Even in the Old Testament, Israel knew that physical circumcision had deeper spiritual meaning. Deut.10:16 and Jer.4:4 tell us that we must "*circumcise the foreskin of our heart unto the Lord.*" They understood that it represented a spiritual change of heart.

We can read in Genesis 17:7-14 that for Abraham and his descendants to receive their inheritance they had to be circumcised. Their inheritance was a physical land, Canaan. Our inheritance is spiritual: a call, a ministry, a position in the Kingdom, and a place close to the Lord. But without circumcision, there is no gaining of the inheritance. We must allow the keen edge of the Sword of the Spirit to cut away any areas of uncleanness in our lives.

In Exodus 4:19-26, God sent Moses down into Egypt to bring the Israelites into their inheritance in Canaan. We must remember that the Israelites had to be circumcised in order to come into the land, but Moses tried to bring them in when his own sons were not circumcised. So God was angry with Moses and sought to kill him! God was ready to judge him for not practicing what he was preaching. Circumcision is serious to God!

EVIDENCES OF A CIRCUMCISED HEART

1. NOT A SEEKER OF MAN'S PRAISE- Romans 2:29 says "*circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit... whose praise is not from men but from God.*" True circumcision of heart is shown in people who are more concerned about what God thinks of them than what people think of them. Shame, embarrassment, and the fear of rejection because of Christ is a serious form of uncircumcision. Sometimes people will not do the will of God because they are afraid of being misunderstood by relatives and friends. This bondage will hinder you from getting the inheritance God has for you unless the sword of circumcision cuts this away. We should seek God's approval.

2. NOT STUBBORN AND NOT RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT- Acts 7:51 says "*You stiffnecked people with uncircumcised hearts and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit.*" An uncircumcised ear means that someone cannot hear and understand a spiritual truth because the heart is uncircumcised. Stephen's message was not received by the Israelites because of their hardness of heart, stubbornness, and their being in bondage to tradition. We are born with resistance in our hearts- we are born uncircumcised! After the heart has experienced the sword of circumcision, the ear will be enabled to hear. We need a soft, pliable, and listening heart.

Peter, an apostle of great spiritual stature, had an uncircumcised ear in a major area of his doctrine that hindered multitudes from coming into the Church. The Lord had said "*preach the gospel to every creature under heaven*" in Mark 16:15. But the early apostles, including Peter, only preached to the Jews. It was

about ten years later that Peter and the apostles finally understood that God wanted everyone, both Jew and Gentile, to hear the gospel, Acts 10:28 & 11:18.

3. TRUE WORSHIP- Philippians 3:3 says "*We are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit...*" Another evidence of circumcision in heart is when a Christian is liberated to rejoice and worship God in the freedom of the Spirit. When believers ridicule the raising of the hands, dancing before the Lord, and other forms of spiritual worship, it is evidence of uncircumcision! It is natural to despise these forms of worship, but it is not spiritual. These manifestations of the Spirit are just exactly what God prescribes for man to be freed of his many spiritual bondages.

4. HAVING NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH- Phil.3:3 goes on to say that this is another sign of true circumcision. Many Christians are confident in themselves and in their talents. Sometimes preachers are so talented and gifted that as time goes on, they begin to feel that they do not need to seek God anymore- and then they fall! Blessed is the man who ever feels his need for divine assistance. Only helpless men pray! Jesus prayed all the time. Christ had no confidence in the flesh, Jn.5:19 & 30.

5. TO BE ABLE TO HUMBLE YOURSELF AND CONFESS YOU ARE WRONG, Lev.26:40-41. Those who are uncircumcised in heart find it difficult to say "I was wrong, I made a mistake, please forgive me." They would rather blame someone else. Those who are uncircumcised in heart also refuse to accept any punishment or restriction for their sin. Moses (in Deut.3:26-27) and David (in 2 Sam.12:9-12) both accepted punishment or restrictions for their sins. It is more serious when a Christian leader falls than a church member. God has far higher qualifications and standards for a minister. When a fallen leader refuses discipline, he is not truly repentant. This shows he is not deeply sorry that the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church have been shamed. He is mainly sorry that his sin was exposed and his job is endangered. The Lord can give punishment even after forgiveness, to build Christian character (Heb.12:9-10) and to warn others (Job 28:28).

6. THE ABILITY TO LOVE THE LORD AND KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS- Deuteronomy 30:6 & 8 says "*The Lord your God will circumcise your heart...to love the Lord with all your heart...and to obey the voice of the Lord and do all His commandments.*" Notice that the Lord said that He would do it. God must perform the work, but we must allow Him to circumcise our heart. Co-operation on our part is required! Also see I Corinthians 7:19, where Paul implies that the true meaning of circumcision is to keep the commandments of God.

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