

GENESIS 17:1-14

LAST TIME WE WERE IN GENESIS PASTOR BO REMINDED US OF THE COVENANT PROMISE THAT GOD MADE ABRAHAM IN GENESIS CHAPTER 15.

THAT PROMISE INCLUDED DECEMENTS THAT WERE AS NUMEROUS AS THE STARS IN THE SKY AS WELL AS A HUGE PIECE OF LAND.

WHICH WE SAW ABRAHAM AND HIS WIFE MAKE A FLESHLY ATTEMPT TO FULFILL THAT COVENANT INSTEAD OF WAITING ON GOD.

AND WE LOOK AT THEM AND SHAKE OUR HEAD BUT WE DO THE EXACT SAME THING.

WE TEND TO PUT TIMELINES ON GOD.

OUR EXPECTATIONS ARE GENERALLY FOCUSED ON THE SHORT TERM.

BUT WHEN WE FOCUS ON WHAT ISN'T HAPPENING, WE MISS OUT ON WHAT IS!

THERE IS ALWAYS A LESSON TO LEARNED.

DO WE JUST WAKE UP ONE DAY IN FULL POSSESSION OF THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT?

OF COURSE NOT!

EACH ONE OF THOSE FRUITS COME WITH TIME AND IF YOU'RE STRUGGLING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT GOD IS TRYING TO TEACH YOU THEN I WOULD BE SO BOLD AS TO SAY HE'S PROBABLY TRYING TO TEACH YOU PATIENCE.

THERE WAS A REASON GOD MADE ABRAHAM WAIT UNTIL HE WAS 100 YEARS OLD TO HAVE THE CHILD OF PROMISE.

IN FACT I THINK THERE WERE SEVERAL REASONS.
FIRST, I THINK HE WAS PROLONGING THE BIRTH OF ISAAC TO SHOW
THE WORLD THAT HE “GOD” WAS SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE
MIRACULOUS CONCEPTION.

I ALSO THINK THAT HE WAS PREPARING ABRAM FOR WHAT WAS TO
COME, TO ULTIMATE TEST OF FAITH.

WHICH WAS WHAT?

WHEN HE WAS CALLED TO SACRIFICE ISAAC.

REMEMBER GOD DOESN'T ALLOW OUR FAITH TO BE TESTED TO
PROVE TO HIM WE FAITH, HE ALLOWS IT SO THAT WE CAN SEE OUR
FAITH IN ACTION.

HE IS THE ONE THAT SO GRACIOUSLY GAVE US OUR FAITH SO OF
COURSE HE KNOWS WE HAVE IT.

I THINK HE ALSO MADE ABRAHAM AND SARAH WAIT FOR THE
BENEFIT OF EVERYONE THAT WOULD READ THEIR STORY.

THE BIBLE IS FULL OF HISTORY, IT IS FULL OF PEOPLE AND THEIR
FAILURES.

IT ALSO FULL OF PEOPLE THAT THROUGH THE POWER, AND THE
GRACE OF GOD THAT OVERCAME THOSE FAILURES.

IT IS FULL OF PEOPLE JUST LIKE YOU AND JUST LIKE ME, PEOPLE
THAT GOD LOVED, PEOPLE THAT HE SAVED.

SO, AS WE LOOK TO CHAPTER 17 AND WHAT TRANSPIRES LET'S
KEEP ALL OF THIS IN MIND.

GENESIS 17:1
WHEN ABRAM WAS NINETY-NINE YEARS OLD,
THE LORD APPEARED TO ABRAM AND SAID TO
HIM, “I AM ^[A]ALMIGHTY GOD; WALK BEFORE ME AND
BE BLAMELESS.

THE VERY THING THAT IS BROUGHT TO OUR ATTENTION IS ABRAM'S AGE.

HE IS NOW A SPRY 99-YEAR-OLD MAN.

DOES ANYONE REMEMBER HOW CHAPTER 16 ENDED?

GENESIS 16:16

16 ABRAM WAS EIGHTY-SIX YEARS OLD WHEN HAGAR BORE ISHMAEL TO ABRAM.

SO HERE WE HAVE A 13 YEAR GAP THAT HAS NO INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT TRANSPIRED DURING THIS TIME.

13 YEARS FOR HAGAR AND SARAI TO GROW IN CONTEMPT TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER.

13 YEARS FOR ABRAM TO BECOME CLOSE WITH HIS ONLY SON.

13 YEARS FOR HIM TO CONTINUE TO WONDER EXACTLY WHAT GODS PROMISE TO HIM MEANT.

WITH THE TENSION THAT THE BIRTH OF ISHMAEL BROUGHT I THINK ABRAM CAME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT HE HAD NO OTHER CHOICE BUT TO WAIT ON GOD.

GENESIS 17:1

WHEN ABRAM WAS NINETY-NINE YEARS OLD, THE LORD APPEARED TO ABRAM AND SAID TO HIM, "I AM ^{AL}ALMIGHTY GOD; WALK BEFORE ME AND BE BLAMELESS.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN THE PENTATEUCH THAT GOD REFERS TO HIMSELF AS EL-SHADDAI.

WHICH MEANS SOVEREIGN OR ALL-POWERFUL GOD. THE BEST ENGLISH TRANSLATION IS GOD ALMIGHTY OR ALMIGHTY GOD.

THIS IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE OF THE PROMISE HE HAS MADE ABRAM.

HE IS REMINDING HIM THAT HE IS CAPABLE OF ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING!
THIS VERSE ENDS WITH THE WORD BLAMELESS, WHICH KIND OF CATCHES YOU OFF GUARD.

THE DEFINITION OF BLAMELESS IS INNOCENT OF WRONGDOING...

NOW ARE WE AS HUMAN BEINGS, EVEN REDEEMED HUMAN BEINGS CAPABLE OF BEING BLAMELESS?

OF COURSE WE AREN'T.

BUT THAT WORD IN THE HEBREW MEANS SOMETHING DIFFERENT THAN WHAT OUR ENGLISH TRANSLATORS CHOSE.

IN THE HEBREW IT IS tā·mîm WHICH MEANS INTEGRITY OR TRUTH.

NOW THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE DOES IT NOT?

WE CAN BE HONEST AND HAVE INTEGRITY AND NOT BE BLAMELESS.

SO WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE INTEGRITY?

TO DO THE RIGHT THING EVEN WHEN NO ONE IS WATCHING....

AND THERE'S A LOT TO BE SAID FOR THIS.

TOO OFTEN AS HUMAN WE GET CAUGHT UP IN WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK ABOUT US, AND THAT BECOMES THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND EVERYTHING WE DO IS TO HONOR AND GLORIFY GOD.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK ABOUT YOU BECAUSE YOU KNOW WHAT?

OTHER PEOPLE'S OPINIONS DON'T MATTER.

THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE THAT HAVE AN OPINION ABOUT ME BASED OFF OF MY PAST AND WHO I USED TO BE, BUT WHO I USED TO BE DOESN'T MATTER.

I HAVE BEEN MADE NEW IN JESUS CHRIST AND THE ONLY THING THAT TRULY MATTERS IS WHAT GOD KNOWS ABOUT ME.

AND WE HAVE TO REMEMBER, GOD DOESN'T HAVE AN OPINION ABOUT YOU.

HE TRULY KNOWS WHO YOU ARE, HE KNOWS YOUR HEART, HE KNOWS WHAT MOTIVATES YOU AND HE KNOWS WHO YOU ARE WHEN NO ONE ELSE IS WATCHING.

SO GOD IS TELLING ABRAM TO WALK WITH INTEGRITY, HE'S TELLING HIM NOT TO WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING OTHER THAN THE TRUTH.

EVERYTHING WE DO SHOULD COME FROM OUR LOVE FOR THE ONE THAT SEES ALL AND KNOWS ALL AND A DESIRE TO BE OBEDIENT TO WHAT HE HAS CALLED US TO DO.

GOD GIVES US THE GIFT OF FAITH, THAT FAITH DRIVES US TO REPENTANCE AND FROM THOSE TWO COME OBEDIENCE.

SO JUST AS GOD COMMANDED ABRAM TO BE A MAN OF INTEGRITY AND HONESTY, WE HAVE THE SAME EXPECTATION PLACED ON US.

JUST AS JESUS SAID IN

MATTHEW 5:48

THEREFORE YOU ARE TO BE PERFECT, AS YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS PERFECT.

NOW WE KNOW WE CAN'T BE PERFECT THIS SIDE OF THE GRAVE, BUT WE DON'T HAVE TO BE.

JESUS WAS MAKING A POINT WHEN HE SAID THIS.

JESUS SETS AN IMPOSSIBLE STANDARD, SHOWING US WHAT THE LAW REQUIRED.

GOD COULD NOT LOWER HIS STANDARD WITHOUT COMPROMISING HIS OWN PERFECTION.

THE BEAUTY OF THIS STATEMENT IS THAT CHRIST MET THAT STANDARD FOR US.

AT THE END OF THE DAY THE SAME THING THAT WAS REQUIRED OF ABRAM IS REQUIRED OF US....

BELIEVE!

BELIEVE WHAT GOD HAS SAID!

GENESIS 17:1B,2

"I AM ¹ALMIGHTY GOD; WALK BEFORE ME AND BE BLAMELESS. ² AND I WILL MAKE MY COVENANT BETWEEN ME AND YOU, AND WILL MULTIPLY YOU EXCEEDINGLY."

I LOVE HOW PERSONAL GOD MAKES IT, WE SEE THIS OVER AND OVER AGAIN WITH ABRAM.

GOD TAKES HIM OUTSIDE AND HAS HIM LOOK AT THE STARS, NOW HE IS SAYING THIS COVENANT IS BETWEEN ME AND YOU.

THE BEAUTY OF THIS IS THAT GOD DESIRES THAT CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH ALL HIS CHILDREN.

AND IT IS TOTALLY ATTAINABLE.

AND I KNOW SOME OF YOU ARE SITTING HERE WONDERING WELL HOW?!

FIRST I WOULD SAY IT STARTS WITH BEING INTENTIONAL.

YOU CAN BE MARRIED TO SOMEONE FOR 10 YEARS AND NEVER EVEN GET TO KNOW THEM...

IN ORDER TO TRULY KNOW SOMEONE YOU HAVE TO SPEND TIME WITH THEM, YOU HAVE TO ASK THEM QUESTIONS, YOU HAVE TO GO THROUGH DIFFICULT THINGS TOGETHER...

THE SAME GOES FOR OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, WE MUST BE INTENTIONAL.

WELL, HOW DO I GET TO KNOW HIM?

IT STARTS BY READING HIS WORD.

LEARNING TO UNDERSTAND WHO IS AND HOW OPERATES.

ASK HIM QUESTIONS AS YOU STUDY, SPEND TIME WITH HIM IN PRAYER.

IT'S NO COINCIDENCE THAT GOD GAVE US MARRIAGE TO REPRESENT CHRIST'S LOVE FOR THE CHURCH.

BECAUSE WE CAN TAKE SO MANY PRINCIPLES THAT WE APPLY IN ORDER TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE, TO OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

GENESIS 17:2

² AND I WILL MAKE MY COVENANT BETWEEN ME AND YOU, AND WILL MULTIPLY YOU EXCEEDINGLY. ”

THE LORD ENDS THIS VERSE BY SAYING HE IS GOING TO MULTIPLY ABRAM EXCEEDINGLY.

THIS WILL BE THIRD TIME GOD HAS MADE THIS PROCLAMATION.

THIS FIRST TIME IN CHAPTER 12, NEXT IN CHAPTER 15 AND NOW IN CHAPTER 17.

THE FIRST TIME THIS PROMISE WAS MADE IN CHAPTER 12 ABRAM WAS 75 YEARS OLD.

SO FOR 24 YEARS THIS PROMISE HAS BEEN HANGING OVER ABRAM'S HEAD.

LIKE I SAID EARLIER DON'T EVER PUT A TIMELINE ON GOD.

HE OPERATES ON HIS TIME ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, FOR HIS GLORY AND OUR GOOD.

GENESIS 17:3,4

³ THEN ABRAM FELL ON HIS FACE, AND GOD TALKED WITH HIM, SAYING: ⁴ “AS FOR ME, BEHOLD, MY COVENANT IS WITH YOU, AND YOU SHALL BE A FATHER OF ^[B]MANY NATIONS.

THIS WON'T BE THE LAST TIME IN THIS CHAPTER THAT ABRAM FALLS ON HIS FACE BEFORE GOD.

THERE ARE MANY THINGS THAT CAN TRIGGER THIS RESPONSE TOWARDS OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

WE CAN FALL DOWN IN WORSHIP, FEAR, AWE, DESPERATION, PAIN.

I THINK IN THIS INSTANCE IT WAS IN RESPONSE TO HEARING THE NAME EL-SHADDAI.

SIMILAR TO WHEN THEY CAME TO ARREST JESUS IN THE GARDEN.

JOHN 18:4-6

⁴ JESUS THEREFORE, KNOWING ALL THINGS THAT WOULD COME UPON HIM, WENT FORWARD AND SAID TO THEM, “WHOM ARE YOU SEEKING?”

⁵ THEY ANSWERED HIM, “JESUS ^[A]OF NAZARETH.” JESUS SAID TO THEM, “I AM HE.” AND JUDAS, WHO BETRAYED HIM, ALSO STOOD WITH THEM. ⁶ NOW WHEN HE SAID TO THEM, “I AM HE,” THEY DREW BACK AND FELL TO THE GROUND.

THERE IS POWER IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.

WE WOULD DO WELL TO REMEMBER THAT.

THE LORD MAKES IT A POINT TO REITERATE THE FACT THAT THE COVENANT IS BETWEEN HE AND ABRAM, BUT AS WE WILL SEE IN A FEW SHORT VERSES, ABRAMS FAITHFULNESS TO THIS COVENANT WOULD NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO COVER ALL OF HIS OFFSPRING.

GENESIS 17:9

⁹ AND GOD SAID TO ABRAHAM: "AS FOR YOU, YOU SHALL KEEP MY COVENANT, YOU AND YOUR DESCENDANTS AFTER YOU THROUGHOUT THEIR GENERATIONS.

THE EXPECTATION WAS THAT ABRAMS OFFSPRING WOULD KEEP THIS COVENANT AS WELL.

THIS IS WHERE RELIGION SLOWLY STARTED CREEPING IN.

OVER THE YEARS THE JEWISH PEOPLE WOULD LET THINGS LIKE CIRCUMCISION BECOME THEIR FOCUS, ALL THE WHILE LOSING SIGHT OF THE ONE WITH WHOM THE COVENANT WAS MADE.

GENESIS 17:5

⁵ NO LONGER SHALL YOUR NAME BE CALLED ^[c]ABRAM, BUT YOUR NAME SHALL BE ^[b]ABRAHAM; FOR I HAVE MADE YOU A FATHER OF ^[e]MANY NATIONS.

WHO KNOWS WHAT THE NAME ABRAM MEANS?

EXALTED FATHER!

NOW I'VE READ SOME COMMENTARY THAT SAYS THIS WAS REFERRING TO GOD AS EXALTED FATHER AND NOT ABRAM.

THE ISSUE WITH THAT IS THAT ABRAMS FATHER TERAH WAS AN IDOL WORSHIPER SO I'M NOT SURE HOW I FEEL ABOUT THAT ASSESSMENT.

BUT HIS NEW NAME IS WHAT IS IMPORTANT, BECAUSE ABRAHAM MEANS FATHER OF A MULTITUDE.

AND THE LORD EVEN TELLS HIM, "***FOR I HAVE MADE YOU A FATHER OF ^[e]MANY NATIONS.***"

NOTICE THE WORDING THIS TIME. GOD SPEAKS TO ABRAHAM AS IF IT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED EVEN THOUGH HE HAS ONLY ONE CHILD AT THIS POINT.

BUT THAT'S HOW GOD OPERATES RIGHT?

HE DOESN'T OPERATE IN SPECULATION OR WHAT IF, HE OPERATES IN ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY.

THAT BROTHER AND SISTERS SHOULD BRING US GREAT COMFORT. TO KNOW THAT WE HAVE BEEN ADOPTED INTO THE FAMILY OF THE ALMIGHTY ALL-POWERFUL CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE AND EVERYTHING IN IT.

THE LORD SAYS HE HAS MADE ABRAHAM THE FATHER OF MANY NATIONS....

THAT WORD NATIONS IN THE HEBREW MAY NOT BE WHAT YOU WOULD EXPECT TO FIND...

THE HEBREW WORD USED IS GOWYIM... WHICH MEANS FOREIGN OR GENTILE NATIONS...

OF COURSE THE HEBREW NATION DIDN'T EXIST YET BECAUSE IT WOULD COME FROM ABRAHAM.

BUT LETS LISTEN TO WHAT THE APOSTLE PAUL SAYS IN

ROMANS 4:16

16 THEREFORE IT IS OF FAITH THAT IT MIGHT BE ACCORDING TO GRACE, SO THAT THE PROMISE MIGHT BE ^[b]SURE TO ALL THE SEED, NOT ONLY TO THOSE WHO ARE OF THE LAW, BUT ALSO TO THOSE WHO ARE OF THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM, WHO IS THE FATHER OF US ALL

DOES THIS MEAN THAT EVERYONE THAT IS IN THE DIRECT LINEAGE OF ABRAHAM WILL BE SAVED?

NO, IT DOESN'T, IN FACT THAT IS ONE OF THE IDEOLOGIES THAT JESUS CAME TO PREACH AGAINST.

DOES THIS MEAN THAT EVERY PERSON THAT HAS FAITH IS A DIRECT DESCENDANT OF ABRAHAM?

NO IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT EITHER.

IT MEANS THAT HE IS THE SPIRITUAL FATHER OR ELDER FOR BELIEVING GENTILES AND RACIALLY HE IS THE FATHER OF ALL JEWS.

LISTEN TO WHAT JOHN THE BAPTIST SAYS IN MATTHEW 3
MATTHEW 3:4-10

4 NOW JOHN HIMSELF WAS CLOTHED IN CAMEL'S HAIR, WITH A LEATHER BELT AROUND HIS WAIST; AND HIS FOOD WAS LOCUSTS AND WILD HONEY. 5 THEN JERUSALEM, ALL JUDEA, AND ALL THE REGION AROUND THE JORDAN WENT OUT TO HIM 6 AND WERE BAPTIZED BY HIM IN THE JORDAN, CONFESSING THEIR SINS. 7 BUT WHEN HE SAW MANY OF THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES COMING TO HIS BAPTISM, HE SAID TO THEM, "BROOD OF VIPERS! WHO WARNED YOU TO FLEE FROM THE WRATH TO COME? 8 THEREFORE BEAR FRUITS WORTHY OF REPENTANCE, 9 AND DO NOT THINK TO SAY TO YOURSELVES, 'WE HAVE ABRAHAM AS OUR FATHER.' FOR I SAY TO YOU THAT GOD IS ABLE TO RAISE UP CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM FROM THESE STONES. 10 AND EVEN NOW THE AX IS LAID TO THE ROOT OF THE TREES. THEREFORE EVERY TREE WHICH DOES NOT BEAR GOOD FRUIT IS CUT DOWN AND THROWN INTO THE FIRE.

JOHN THE BAPTIST MADE IT ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT ANCESTRY HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH SALVATION.

ABRAHAM WENT BEFORE US ALL IN FAITH AND IT IS BY THAT EXAMPLE WE ARE HIS OFFSPRING.

FOLLOWING THAT SAME FAITHFUL PATTERN.

PURSUING RIGHTEOUSNESS, REPENTING OF OUR SINS AND TRUSTING IN OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

GENESIS 17:6

6 I WILL MAKE YOU EXCEEDINGLY FRUITFUL; AND I WILL MAKE NATIONS OF YOU, AND KINGS SHALL COME FROM YOU.

ABRAHAM WOULD NOT SEE THE FULFILLMENT OF THIS PROMISE DURING HIS LIFETIME, BUT WE CAN LOOK BACK ON WHAT HAPPENED AND KNOW THAT IT WAS FULFILLED.

THE FIRST KING THAT WOULD COME FROM LINE OF ABRAHAM WAS KING DAVID 1,000 YEARS AFTER THIS PROMISE WAS MADE.

KING DAVID WHICH MANY WOULD CONSIDER TO BE THE GREATEST KING THAT EVER RULED THE NATION OF ISRAEL.
THEN 1,000 YEARS AFTER KING DAVID WOULD COME JESUS THE ON TRUE KING.

THE HIGH PRIESTLY KING.

MATTHEW STARTS HIS GOSPEL ACCOUNT WITH THIS SENTENCE....

MATTHEW 1:1

THE BOOK OF THE GENEALOGY^[A] OF JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF DAVID, THE SON OF ABRAHAM

MATTHEW IS POINTING BACK TO THIS VERY MOMENT IN TIME.

HE WANTS EVERYONE THAT READS IT TO UNDERSTAND EXACTLY WHO JESUS IS, THE SON OF DAVID, THE SON OF ABRAHAM JUST AS GOD HAD PROMISED.

GENESIS 17:7,8

7 AND I WILL ESTABLISH MY COVENANT BETWEEN ME AND YOU AND YOUR DESCENDANTS AFTER YOU IN THEIR GENERATIONS, FOR AN EVERLASTING COVENANT, TO BE GOD TO YOU AND YOUR DESCENDANTS AFTER YOU. 8 ALSO I GIVE TO YOU AND YOUR DESCENDANTS AFTER YOU THE LAND IN^[E] WHICH YOU ARE A STRANGER, ALL THE LAND OF CANAAN, AS AN EVERLASTING POSSESSION; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD."

GOD IS MAKING IT KNOWN THAT THIS COVENANT WOULD PASS FROM ABRAHAM TO HIS OFFSPRING.

SO IT WOULD PASS TO ISAAC, THEN TO JACOB AND THROUGH JACOB THE ENTIRE NATION OF ISRAEL.

AND KEEP IN MIND ABRAHAM DID NOTHING MAGNIFICENT TO EARN THIS, HE WAS CHOSEN BY GOD.

JUST LIKE PASTOR BO TAUGHT ON SUNDAY.

GOD CHOOSES WHOM HE WISHES BASED OF WHO HE IS NOT WHO WE ARE.

ABRAHAM'S ONLY RESPONSIBILITY IN ALL OF THIS WAS TO BELIEVE, AND HE DID, BECAUSE OF THE FAITH GOD HAD GIVEN HIM....

GENESIS 17:9-11

⁹ AND GOD SAID TO ABRAHAM: "AS FOR YOU, YOU SHALL KEEP MY COVENANT, YOU AND YOUR DESCENDANTS AFTER YOU THROUGHOUT THEIR GENERATIONS. 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; 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.

IN VERSE 9 WE SEE THE LORD MAKE IT VERY CLEAR THAT THIS COVENANT WAS EXPECTED TO BE KEPT THROUGH FUTURE GENERATIONS AND NOT JUST ABRAHAM.

AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE TOOK THIS VERY SERIOUSLY, EVEN AFTER JESUS CAME AND MADE A NEW COVENANT.

CIRCUMCISION WAS STILL AN ISSUE AMONG JEWISH BELIEVERS.

ACTS 15:1,2

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." ² THEREFORE, WHEN PAUL AND BARNABAS HAD NO SMALL DISSENSION AND DISPUTE WITH THEM, THEY DETERMINED THAT PAUL AND BARNABAS AND CERTAIN OTHERS OF THEM SHOULD GO UP TO JERUSALEM, TO THE APOSTLES AND ELDERS, ABOUT THIS QUESTION.

SO WERE THEY WRONG IN THIS?

GOD TOLD ABRAHAM THAT THIS WAS TO BE THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT FOR HIM AND THE GENERATIONS THAT FOLLOWED HIM?

FIRST WE NEED TO LOOK AT WHAT CIRCUMCISION IS....

AND WHY DID GOD CHOOSE THAT AS THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT.

WELL FIRST OF ALL REMEMBER GOD CREATED US SO IT IS APPARENT THAT FROM THE BEGINNING THIS WAS PLAN ALL ALONG.

ALSO IS CIRCUMCISION REVERSABLE?

NO! IT IS PERMANENT.

ALSO, WE KNOW THAT OFTEN THE BIBLE DESCRIBES OUR SINFUL NATURE AS THE FLESH, SO THIS IS THE TEARING AWAY OF THE FLESH.

CAN THERE BE FORGIVENESS WITHOUT THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD?

NO!

GOD ALSO USED THIS AS A WAY TO SET HIS PEOPLE APART AS AN IRREVERSIBLE MARK THAT COULD NEVER BE CHANGED.

THIS IS ALSO A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS DISPENSATIONS.

OH BOY WHAT IS THAT HUH?

A DISPENSATION IS: A DISTINCT PERIOD OR ARRANGEMENT IN HISTORY WHERE GOD ADMINISTERS HIS RULE, REVEALING HIS WILL AND TESTING HUMANITY IN SPECIFIC WAYS.

NOW THIS IS SOMETHING THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE STRUGGLE WITH, BUT THERE'S NO REASON TO MAKE IT DIFFICULT.

SO TONIGHT, WE ARE SPECIFICALLY TALKING ABOUT THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

WHICH THE SIGN FOR THAT COVENANT WAS CIRCUMCISION.

CIRCUMCISION WAS FOR GODS PEOPLE PRIOR TO THE COMING OF JESUS.

IT POINTS TO JESUS!

THE TEARING AWAY OF FLESH AND SHEDDING OF BLOOD.

AFTER JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS THERE WAS NO LONGER A REQUIREMENT FOR GODS PEOPLE TO BE CIRCUMCISED.

BECAUSE JESUS'S PERFECT BLOOD PAID THE NECESSARY PENALTY FOR THE SINS OF GODS PEOPLE.

AND SOME OF YOU MAY BE WONDERING WELL HOW DO WE KNOW THAT IT S NO LONGER REQUIRED?

I'M GLAD YOU ASKED!

IF WE LOOK AT THE APOSTLES AND ELDERS REACTION TO THE PEOPLE IN ACTS 15, WE CLEARLY SEE THEIR RESPONSE TO THE FAITH PLUS CIRCUMCISION STATEMENT.

ACTS 15:22-29

22 THEN IT PLEASED THE APOSTLES AND ELDERS, WITH THE WHOLE CHURCH, TO SEND CHOSEN MEN OF THEIR OWN COMPANY TO ANTIOCH WITH PAUL AND BARNABAS, NAMELY, JUDAS WHO WAS ALSO NAMED BARSABAS, [G] AND SILAS, LEADING MEN AMONG THE BRETHREN.

23 THEY WROTE THIS LETTER BY THEM:

***THE APOSTLES, THE ELDERS, AND THE BRETHREN,
TO THE BRETHREN WHO ARE OF THE GENTILES IN ANTIOCH,
SYRIA, AND CILICIA:***

GREETINGS.

24 SINCE WE HAVE HEARD THAT SOME WHO WENT OUT FROM US HAVE TROUBLED YOU WITH WORDS, UNSETTLING YOUR SOULS, [H] SAYING, "YOU MUST BE CIRCUMCISED AND KEEP THE LAW"—TO WHOM WE GAVE NO SUCH COMMANDMENT— 25 IT SEEMED GOOD TO US, BEING ASSEMBLED WITH ONE [I] ACCORD, TO SEND CHOSEN MEN TO YOU WITH OUR BELOVED BARNABAS AND PAUL, 26 MEN WHO HAVE RISKED THEIR LIVES FOR THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. 27 WE HAVE THEREFORE SENT JUDAS AND SILAS, WHO WILL ALSO REPORT THE SAME THINGS BY WORD OF MOUTH. 28 FOR IT SEEMED GOOD TO THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND TO

US, TO LAY UPON YOU NO GREATER BURDEN THAN THESE NECESSARY THINGS: ²⁹ THAT YOU ABSTAIN FROM THINGS OFFERED TO IDOLS, FROM BLOOD, FROM THINGS STRANGLED, AND FROM SEXUAL^[U] IMMORALITY. IF YOU KEEP YOURSELVES FROM THESE, YOU WILL DO WELL. FAREWELL.

BUT WHAT ABOUT GOD SAID TO ABRAHAM? HE SAID THIS WAS THE SIGN FOR HIM AND HIS DESCENDANTS!

WELL, PAUL TELLS US IN ROMANS THAT CIRCUMCISION IS STILL REQUIRED EXCEPT NOW IT IS A CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART AND IN THE SPIRIT.

ROMANS 2:25-29

²⁵ FOR CIRCUMCISION IS INDEED PROFITABLE IF YOU KEEP THE LAW; BUT IF YOU ARE A BREAKER OF THE LAW, YOUR CIRCUMCISION HAS BECOME UNCIRCUMCISION. ²⁶ THEREFORE, IF AN UNCIRCUMCISED MAN KEEPS THE RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW, WILL NOT HIS UNCIRCUMCISION BE COUNTED AS CIRCUMCISION? ²⁷ AND WILL NOT THE PHYSICALLY UNCIRCUMCISED, IF HE FULFILLS THE LAW, JUDGE YOU WHO, EVEN WITH YOUR ^[E]WRITTEN CODE AND CIRCUMCISION, ARE A TRANSGRESSOR OF THE LAW? ²⁸ FOR HE IS NOT A JEW WHO IS ONE OUTWARDLY, NOR IS CIRCUMCISION THAT WHICH IS OUTWARD IN THE FLESH; 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 ^[G]PRAISE IS NOT FROM MEN BUT FROM GOD.

IT ALWAYS GOES BACK TO THE STATE OF THE HEART.

PAUL IS SAYING WHAT GOOD IS IT TO BE CIRCUMCISED IF YOUR HEART ISN'T IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

AND EVEN IF YOU WERE A DESCENDANT OF ABRAHAM PRIOR TO THE COMING OF JESUS AND YOU WERE AN EVIL UNBELIEVING MAN YOUR CIRCUMCISION MEANT NOTHING.

GENESIS 17:12-14

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. 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. ”

SO WHAT’S GOING ON HERE?

THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT WAS TO BE ON EVERY MALE IN THE HOUSEHOLD.

WHAT ABOUT THE WOMEN?

HOW DID THIS EFFECT THEM?

WELL FOR THE MOTHERS IN THE ROOM I’M SURE YOU CAN IMAGINE HOW IT WOULD HURT YOUR HEART TO SEE THAT BEING DONE TO YOUR EIGHT-DAY OLD LITTLE BOY.

ALSO WHO WAS GOING TO BE THE ONE THAT CARED FOR THE CHILD AFTER THIS WAS DONE?

THE MOTHER!

THIS ALSO ESTABLISHED THE FATHER AS THE SPIRITUAL LEADER OR PRIEST OF HIS HOME.

BUT CIRCUMCISION DIDN'T GUARANTEE SALVATION OR ACCEPTANCE FROM GOD, IT JUST POINTED TO COVENANT PROMISE MADE BETWEEN GOD AND ABRAHAM.

DOES THE EIGHT DAY OLD LITTLE BOY KNOW OR UNDERSTAND WHAT IS GOING ON AND WHY?

OF COURSE HE DOESN'T!

SO WHO'S FAITH WOULD MOTIVATE THIS ACT?

THE PARENTS!

IT'S LIKE WHEN WE DEDICATE OUR BABES TO THE LORD.

IT DOESN'T MEAN THEY ARE SAVED, IT US AS PARENTS PROCLAIMING THAT WE WILL FAITHFULLY SERVE THE LORD BY RAISING OUR CHILDREN ACCORDING TO HIS WORD.

OUTSIDE OF SALVATION AND MARRIAGE OUR GREATEST RESPONSIBILITY IS TO OUR CHILDREN.

NOT TO ENABLE THEM OR GIVE THEM EVERYTHING THEY WANT BUT TO LIVE A GODLY LIFE FOR THEM TO SEE.

TO DISCIPLINE THEM WHEN THEY ARE WRONG.

ENCOURAGE THEM WHEN THINGS ARE TOUGH.

TO TEACH THEM HOW TO RESPOND TO THEIR FAILURES IN A GODLY WAY.

PROVERBS 22:6

TRAIN UP A CHILD ACCORDING TO HIS WAY, EVEN WHEN HE IS OLD HE WILL NOT DEPART FROM IT.

THIS MEANS IN EVERY AREA.

TEACH THEM HOW TO BE GRACIOUS AND UNDERSTANDING.

TEACH THEM HOW TO STAND FOR THE TRUTH WHILE BEING HUMBLE ABOUT IT.

TEACH THEM HOW TO ASK FOR FORGIVENESS WHEN THEY'VE DONE SOMETHING WRONG.

TEACH HOW TO LOVE THE LORD WITH ALL THEIR HEART, MIND, SOUL AND STRENGTH.

THERES NO WAY WE WILL BE ABLE TO FINISH THIS CHAPTER TODAY BUT I DO WANT TO JUMP TO THE LAST VERSE BECAUSE IN MY MIND THAT'S WHAT THIS ENTIRE CHAPTER IS ABOUT.

GENESIS 17:26,27

²⁶ THAT VERY SAME DAY ABRAHAM WAS CIRCUMCISED, AND HIS SON ISHMAEL; ²⁷ AND ALL THE MEN OF HIS HOUSE, BORN IN THE HOUSE OR BOUGHT WITH MONEY FROM A FOREIGNER, WERE CIRCUMCISED WITH HIM.

THAT VERY SAME DAY!

ABRAHAMS RESPONSE TO THE LORDS COMMAND WAS IMMEDIATE!

AND THAT'S WHAT WE NEED TO SEE IN ALL OF THIS.

YES THE COVENANT AND THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT IS IMPORTANT BUT ABRAHAMS RESPONSE IS PARAMOUNT.

HE WASTES NO TIME AT ALL!

AND WHY IS THAT?

THERE'S NO WAY A 99 YEAR OLD MAN COULD'VE BEEN EXCITED ABOUT BEING CIRCUMCISED.

REMEMBER HOW GOD IDENTIFIED HIMSELF TO ABRAHAM IN THE BEGINNING OF THIS CHAPTER?

EL-SHADDAI.

ALL MIGHTY GOD.

AND ABRAHAM KNEW THAT, HE BELIEVED IN THE ALL MIGHTY POWER OF GOD AND THAT IS WHY HE RESPONDED THE WAY HE DID.

AS CHRISTIANS THE SAME GOES FOR US.

THE WAY WE LIVE IS DETERMINED BY WHAT WE THINK OF GOD.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN OUR LIFE IS WHAT WE TRULY BELIEVE ABOUT GOD

AND IF HE IS ANYTHING LESS THAN EL-SHADDAI THE ALL-POWERFUL GOD ABRAHAM BELIEVED IN THEN IT WILL NEUTRALIZE YOUR FAITH.

YOU BE FEARFUL BECAUSE YOU DON'T BELIEVE THAT GOD WILL PROVIDE FOR YOU.

YOU WILL BE DEPRESSED BECAUSE YOU DON'T BELIEVE THE PROMISES HE HAS MADE ABOUT THE FUTURE.

YOU WILL LIVE IN GUILT AND SELF-PITY BECAUSE YOU DON'T BELIEVE HE CAN AND WILL FORGIVE YOU.

SO MY ENCOURAGEMENT TO EVERYONE IS SIMPLE...

BELIEVE!

BELIEVE GOD IS ALL POWERFUL!

BELIEVE THAT WHEN HE ACCEPTED YOU INTO HIS FAMILY THAT HE SEPARATED YOUR SINS FROM YOU AS FAR AS THE EAST IS FROM THE WEST.

BELIEVE THAT HE LOVES YOU AND HIS PLAN FOR YOU IS PERFECT.

BELIEVE THAT JESUS GAVE HIS LIFE SO THAT YOU COULD BE FORGIVEN OF YOUR SINS.

THIS WILL FREE YOU FROM THE BONDAGE OF SIN, THIS WILL SET YOU FREE FROM ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION.

START THE NEW YEAR WITH THE CONFIDANT HOPE THAT COMES FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT HAS POURED OUT OVER US!

HEBREWS 10:11-17

¹¹ AND EVERY PRIEST STANDS MINISTERING DAILY AND OFFERING REPEATEDLY THE SAME SACRIFICES, WHICH CAN NEVER TAKE AWAY SINS. ¹² BUT THIS MAN, AFTER HE HAD OFFERED ONE SACRIFICE FOR SINS FOREVER, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, ¹³ FROM THAT TIME WAITING TILL HIS ENEMIES ARE MADE HIS FOOTSTOOL. ¹⁴ FOR BY ONE OFFERING HE HAS PERFECTED FOREVER THOSE WHO ARE BEING [b](#)SANCTIFIED.

¹⁵ BUT THE HOLY SPIRIT ALSO WITNESSES TO US; FOR AFTER HE HAD SAID BEFORE,

¹⁶ "THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR HEARTS, AND IN THEIR MINDS I WILL WRITE THEM,"¹⁷ THEN HE ADDS, "THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE."