

## COLOSSIANS PART 8 – SPIRITUAL CIRCUMCISION

Colossians chapter 2, select passages (2:11-13)

Tuesday Night Bible Study, March 6, 2012

**For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you** and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, **2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love**, and attaining to **all riches of the full assurance of understanding**, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of **the Father and of Christ**, **3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**. **4 Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words**. **5 For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ**. **6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him**, **7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving**. **8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ**. **9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. 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. 13 And you being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh He has made alive together with Him having forgiven you all trespasses 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers He made a public spectacle of them triumphing over them in it. 16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. 18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. 20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations 21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," 22 which all concern things which perish with the using according to the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.**

### BACKGROUND ON PHYSICAL CIRCUMCISION

--circumcision in the Bible first instituted through Abraham as an external symbol of God's covenant with Israel. ([Genesis 17:9-14](#))

--quote from Nelson's Bible Dictionary: *Circumcision was widely practiced in the ancient world, including the Egyptian and Canaanite cultures. But among these people the rite was performed at the beginning of puberty, or about 12 years of age, as a sort of initiation ceremony into manhood. In contrast, the Hebrew people performed circumcision on infants. This rite had an important ethical meaning to them. It signified their responsibility to serve as the holy people whom God had called as His special servants in the midst of a pagan world.*

--regulations regarding circumcision were reiterated in the Mosaic law.  
(Exodus 12:47-51)

--as Israel lost touch with God's covenant with them and drifted from God, the need for them to "circumcise" their hearts was emphasized.  
(Deuteronomy 10:12-22 )

## SPIRITUAL CIRCUMCISION

--as the Israelites proved that humans are unable to circumcise their hearts, God spoke of a future time when He will circumcise their hearts.

--Deuteronomy 30:1-6... This passage gives us a major clue about the meaning of spiritual circumcision... the passage begins by saying that Israel must **first**, "**return to the LORD** your God and obey His voice... with all your heart and with all your soul..." **and then** after that "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."

--the deep love for God spoken of in this passage is only possible after God circumcises the heart.

--Ezekiel 36:24-28 parallels Deuteronomy 30:1-6

--the New Testament call of the gospel for everyone to "repent" of their sins – that is, turn away from their sins and turn to God – parallels the call in Deuteronomy 30:1-6 to Israel and is followed by the same supernatural work of God...

--through Christ, when anybody, Jew or non-Jew, turns to God with a repentant attitude deep in their heart, then God meets them there and circumcises their heart – He puts a supernatural love in their hearts...He draws them into a supernatural relationship with Himself.

--in the words of Colossians... "circumcised with the circumcision made without hands." (Colossians 2:11)

--an integral part of repentance that leads to this supernatural change is faith - "through faith in the working of God..." (Colossians 2:12) turning to God in faith.

--in the words of Hebrews 11:6: "for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

--living in this intimate relationship with God is what it means to truly live!

--Colossians 2:13: "And you being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh He has **made alive together with Him.**"

--as the Deuteronomy passage speaks of – "...to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, **that you may live.**"  
(Deuteronomy 30:6)

--Acts 3:19-20: "Now turn from your sins and turn to God, so you can be cleansed of your sins. Then wonderful times of **refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord.**"

--1 **John 4:19**: "We love Him because He loved us first."

--After Jesus rose from the dead, He talked with Peter and asked him three times whether or not Peter loved him. (**John 21:15-19**) Peter replied three times that he loved Jesus. The Greek word that Jesus used was "agape" while the Greek word Peter used in response was "phileo"... only through God's Spirit transforming our heart can we truly love God with agape love... before that we can only love God with friendship phileo love. (three Greek words for love: agape, phileo, and eros)

--**John 17:20-26** records Jesus praying to the Father that people may know the love that He and the Father share... The Greek word for love used in this passage is agape, the same word Jesus used in John 21:15-19.

--misc passages:

--spiritual circumcision is analagous to the concept of spiritual birth that Jesus talked about in **John 3:1-8**.

--during the time of the early church, many religious leaders ignored the internal reality while making a big deal out of the external reality that was merely supposed to be a symbol of the internal reality...

--**Romans 2:28-29**: "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 4:5-12**: "And he [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised [that is, circumcised physically under Jewish ceremony], in order that righteousness might be credited to them."

--**Galatians 6:15**: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation."