

Putting Off: Colossians – Week 6

HOOK

In some circles, becoming a member and enjoying the benefits of membership is easy. To become a **Sam's Club member**, you pay the base price of \$45 a year and for 365 days have a working Sam's card giving you access to wholesale prices, buying items in bulk, free lunch samples, and a massive slice of pizza, hot dog, and drink for just over \$3. The mark of membership is the Sam's card.

To be a member of the **Yoruba tribe** in several countries of West Africa, children are given decorative tribal markings carved or burned into the skin of the face. It's an excruciating process for the child, but the child will grow up wearing them with pride. These stripes are intimately tied to their culture and even considered a standard of beauty. The identifiable marks signify your tribe, your family, or your patrilineal line. They give a person full clan membership rights. Without these facial scars, an individual can't have roles of authority within the community or even participate in the standard greeting between equals.

They are so distinct between tribes that during the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, some men/ women who escaped and returned home after many years were successfully reintegrated into their tribes because of their facial stripes.

These are their marks of membership.

INTRO

- Because of Epaphras' faithfulness, the church overall is in a healthy place, but there are some who are pushing unbiblical ideas (heresies) in the church.
- Then Paul lays the foundation for dealing with the heresy. He defines who Jesus is. With this cornerstone in place, everything else will begin to realign.
- The heresy is promising great knowledge through the influence of demonic spirits, but Paul points out that in Jesus there are ALL the treasures of knowledge and wisdom. Every other philosophy is empty lies.

BOOK

1. We have a new covenant in Christ

Colossians 2:11 - *In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ...*

- Apparently, this heresy that's invading the Colossian church has blended itself with Judaism and is pushing circumcision as a way to be saved or become a member of Christianity. But Paul is attacking this idea. **Circumcision is no longer the sign of being God's people, nor did it ever give salvation.**

Circumcision:

For those of you that this is the first time you've heard the word circumcision, it was a practice performed on Jewish males beginning with Abraham. God instructed all the males, 8 days after birth, to have the excess skin cut from their... boy part. This marked them as being a member of the family of Israel (Jews/Hebrews) and in the direct genetic line of Abraham. But circumcision had even greater symbolic meaning. Understanding it begins with the question, **"Why of all things did God pick circumcision as the mark?"**

- **Gen.1:28** – God's blessing was on His creation. It was lost with sin and death.
- **Gen.3:15** – "offspring" = "seed." Her descendant will strike a fatal, crushing blow to the serpent, himself. The tempter, the root evil, will be destroyed.
 - We can trace the chosen "seed" through the family trees of scripture.
- **Gen.12:3** – Covenant with Abram: Through your family, your lineage, "all the families of the earth will be blessed."
 - (note the language: "in you...")
- **Gen.15:1-6** – God has chosen Isaac for carrying on the family promise. There, God established His covenant with Abram (**v.18**).
 - **What is a covenant?** A covenant is a vow or agreement between two parties which includes blessings for fidelity and curses for unfaithfulness.
- **Gen.17:9-13** – The sign of God's promise/covenant will be circumcision.
 - Abram asks about Ishmael, but God reconfirms the line He's establishing for the coming Victor over sin/devil. **17:19**.
- **Gen.21:1-4** – God was faithful to His covenant promises, and Abraham was obedient in circumcising Isaac.

Why circumcision? = It was a covenant symbol between God and Abraham's family. A symbol on their bodies representing three things.

1. Mankind is corrupted with sin, and every generation is inheriting both the sin nature and the curse of death towards that sin.
2. God promised right at the fall of man to defeat and restore what was lost from their sin. He would use a descendant of Eve and Adam to deal the critical and final blow to the enemy.
3. God established a covenant, not with the whole world, but specifically with Abraham's genetic family to be the conduit of the coming Savior. His work would be a blessing, not only to the descendants of Abraham, but to every family on earth.

Why circumcision? It represented the promise of God, and Abraham's family would carry its symbolism in the part of their bodies that carries the "seed" forward generationally. This generational covenant points to and will culminate in THE promised Redeemer.

- **What covenant is Paul talking about?** "...made without hands..." = internal, spiritual, done by God.

The New Covenant

Jeremiah 31:31-33 - Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt... [...] I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Deuteronomy 30:6 - And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring (seed), so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. (cf. **Jer.4:4**)

Ezekiel 36:26-27 - I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone (a circumcision of the heart) from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Romans 2:28-29 - For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.

- **Who will establish this covenant?** **Col. 2:11** - it's "of Christ." **Luke 22:20** – (last supper) "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

What happens in this circumcision?

"...**putting off the body of the flesh**" – instead of severing off and discarding a small piece of the body, the circumcision of Christ is a discarding of our sinful nature ("the body of the flesh" inherited from Adam/Eve).

In the New Covenant, **our old selves (flesh/heart of stone/sinful nature) have been thrown away, put to death, and buried.** And, just like circumcision was the sign of the old covenant, there's a visible sign for this New Covenant.

Colossians 2:12 - ...*having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.*

- **“In Him:”** God, Himself... - **What does “in Him” mean?** (cf. **v.10,11,15, etc.**)
Believers are united with Him in relationship making us joined with Him in His death, resurrection, and inheritance.
- There’s a difference between dying in sin (**Jn.8:24**) OR dying in Him.

Rom. 6:2-6 – *How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.*

What is the mark of the new covenant in Christ? Baptism.

But this symbolic mark doesn’t represent inherited sin nor a Redeemer yet to come through the seed of Abraham. **Baptism represents the finished, sufficient work which the Redeemer did for those whom He chose for Himself.**

- **What does it mean to be submerged under the water?** To die and be buried with Christ.
- **How much of a person is given over to the water symbolizing death?** All of them has been “put off”/put to death.
- **What does it mean to be brought back out gasping for air?** To be resurrected with Him, to have a new heart, to be brand new!
 - **Gal.2:20** - *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Disclaimer: Baptism is not salvific – It does not save. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone (**Eph. 2:8**). Baptism can’t save a person any more than the physical act of circumcision.

- However, baptism is an outward sign of an inward grace. It’s symbolic of the miracle God has done on the inside.

Application: What's that sin that you've been saved from that you like to dabble in when no one is looking? (Dog returning to vomit.) Or slip back to when your stressed? Or engage in when everyone else is doing it?

- **Our kids and their meal treats:** "Don't eat the treat until after you've eaten everything." They play with it, roll it on their face, give it a taste.
- **Gal.5:16-17** - *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other...*
- THAT'S NOT YOU ANYMORE! Your heart has been **metamorphosized** by Jesus.

Illustration: Caterpillar - Butterfly = metamorphosis/total transformation

- Zillion-legged worm – 6-legged beauty with wings
- Bound to the earth, creeping – weightless freedom, soaring
- Wrapped in a world of darkness (cocoon) – bathed in the sunlight
 - A transformation only God could mastermind
 - But the Caterpillar doesn't hold a candle to the metamorphosis of the human heart because **Jesus' transformation is not on a living bug but on a spiritual human corpse.**

2. The New Covenant gives us life and forgiveness

Colossians 2:13a - *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, (Echoing **Eph.2:1**)*

- The old you that was "put off" was **dead**.
- When God puts someone through the process of dying through Christ's death and resurrecting through Jesus' resurrection, He is doing a spectacular miracle.
 - **Imagine a foot that is gangrene.** It's past hope. It's full of dead and decaying flesh and must be removed to save the person.
- **God is removing a whole person ("putting off the body of flesh") Who they are is transformed from death to life.**

John 3:3-5 - *Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." [...] "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*

2 Cor. 5:17 - *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ~ "in Christ" !!!*

God gets all the credit: “*working*” (in the previous verse) = **energeia** = energy = God’s active power. God is the one at work. We cannot assist Him in saving ourselves in any way. We were dead.

- **Ex.** A dead man can’t grab a life preserver. We were dead and He gave us life.

Application: Relationship - God has offered us tremendous relationship with Himself. It’s sad when believers spend their whole lives only operating in head-knowledge about Him. They miss the daily walk with the presence of God.

- God gave them life to live in relationship with Him. **How did He do it?**

3. The New Covenant was established at the cross of Jesus

Colossians 2:13b-14 - ... *having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*

God not only gave us new life, He also removes what caused our death – sin.

- **“Trespasses”** - “rebellion” – violating trust, breaking a promise or covenant, treachery, falsehood.
 - **Example:** If someone breaks in your house and steals something, they’ve committed robbery = **iniquity** (the scales of justice are tipped against them). If it was your friend, it’s **transgression**. They’ve broken your trust.
 - God has forgiven our betrayal/rebellion against Him. **How?**

There’s a **“record of debt”** against us. This is referring to a “bond of indebtedness” which the debtor would sign to acknowledge their debt to a creditor.

Our sin getting us in trouble with each other is only a fraction of the danger. What’s terrifying is Who we’ve sinned against (**Ps.51:4** - “*against you and you only have I sinned – David*”).

Our rebellion is against a holy King who justly punishes treason. He will have none of it in His kingdom. And just like **treason** in the US is punished by death, everyone who rebels against God owes Him a sentence of punishment: **hell**. It’s an enormous debt.

- **“Canceling”** – is the imagery of a blackboard being wiped clean.
- **“Nailing it to the cross...”** – This “likely refers to an ancient practice of nailing the written evidence of a canceled debt in a public place as a notice to all that the creditor has no more claim on the debtor.” – Believer’s Bible Commentary

- Not only is our document of debt erased, but the document itself is destroyed. He's nailed it to the cross.

Why doesn't it say, "Jesus was nailed to the cross?" It does.

- **2 Cor.5:21** - *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
- **When we look at the cross, we can Jesus – who became our “record of debt” to the holy God nailed there and destroyed.**
- This gives new meaning to Jesus words: **John 8:36** – *“if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”* We're free! = **justification**

Application: Do you forgive? We can't just celebrate our incredible gift and selfishly tuck it away to be our own. Are we so hard hearted that we can share the greatest gift we could every receive? We shouldn't be. Our hearts have been transformed.

Christians don't have membership cards or facial scars to make the bold statement that we belong to the tribe of Christ, that we are under the new covenant He's established, or are free from the debt of sin. The outward mark of entering His kingdom is water baptism which lasts for a few minutes. It's beautiful and profound because it points to the inward mark of citizenship in His kingdom - a transformed heart.

RECAP

- Circumcision was once the mark of the covenant between God & His people.
- It showed that sin was generational, that God's promises were generational, and it looked forward to a coming Redeemer through the family of Abraham.
- God has established a new covenant with a new symbolic mark of inclusion.
- Baptism is the external sign of God's internal work. Our sin nature is put to death, buried with Christ, and we are resurrected to new life in Him.
- At salvation, our sins are forgiven, wiped away, and nailed to the cross.

Challenge 1: If you haven't been baptized, sign up: livingwordhouma.com/baptism.

Challenge 2: Run from sin! That's not you anymore.

Challenge 3: Forgive.

~ *Soli DEO Gloria*