

All Christians Must Be Circumcised

Immediately after crossing the Jordan, we would have thought that the Israelites would have got ready to attack their first city – Jericho. After all, they had the report from the 2 spies that the people were all afraid of them because they had heard about what God had done through them. As we enter into chapter 5, we find this affirmation as well. All the kings of the various cities were afraid of them. So, why don't they just attack and possess the land?

Instead, we find them doing two things. First, they ensured that they would leave behind a rich spiritual legacy for the future generations. We have seen that last week. Secondly, they got every male born in the wilderness circumcised. Our first reaction to this would be to ask why. Wasn't possessing the Promised Land their objectives? Then why take time to do all these things? Last week we dealt with why we must leave behind a rich spiritual legacy.

Today, let us look at circumcision – right now, you may be thinking – oh, circumcision is not for us, Christians – the topic is not relevant to us. Nothing can be further from the truth. In fact let me say this -- All Christians must be circumcised. Yes, all Christians must be circumcised. But I am not talking about physical circumcision. I am talking about spiritual circumcision. All Christians, whether male or female, must be spiritually circumcised. Today, we will see why it is important for us to do so. What are the reasons for us to do so. We will also see what the results are when we do so – when we obey the Word of God and do so.

1. Why Circumcised?

All the males born in Egypt and left Egypt with Moses were circumcised for it is the custom to circumcise males when they are infants – in fact before they are eight days old. Those born in the wilderness were however not circumcised. We wonder why not. It could not be because they were in the wilderness. They had just crossed the Jordan and the condition was not any better. They were still in the wilderness but now God is asking that they be circumcised. What does this mean? To answer that we must understand what circumcision is.

Circumcision was initiated by God. After He promised Abraham that he will be the father of many nations and that the whole of the land in Canaan will belong to his descendents. To seal this covenant, all males from then on would be required to be circumcised. Not to be circumcised would mean being cut off from the covenant. No circumcision no Promised Land. This is why the Israelites that were going up against the occupants of the land must show that they are abiding by the covenant – they must be circumcised before they can inherit the Promised Land. If we are to inherit our Promised Land we too must be circumcised. All Christians, both male and female must be circumcised. I do not mean physical circumcision. In the NT as mentioned by the apostle Paul, circumcision now is a circumcision of the heart. Not a circumcision of the flesh. Circumcision is a cutting away. We are to cut off things of the past – things done when we were not God's people – things done when we were under the bondage of sin. We are to cut off whatever is not pure. Whatever is not right in the sight of God. Whatever wrong desires there are in our hearts. Our hearts must be dedicated to God. We must be consecrated before God. In the New Testament circumcision is consecration. Formerly we were people of the world. Now, we are people of God. A people set apart for the living God.

2. The Mark of the Circumcised

We know what the mark of Zorro is. A z marked with a sword. Circumcised Christians also have a mark. Just as physical circumcision has its mark, spiritual circumcision has also a mark. Doctors examining a person would know whether he is circumcised through this mark of circumcision that is on him. Consecrated Christians live with a mark that can be identified. When people see their lives, they would know that this is a man circumcised – this is a man set apart for God – this is a holy man – a consecrated Christian. What then is the mark of the circumcised?

The mark of circumcision – the mark of consecration – is obedience to the Word of God. Because the Israelites disobeyed God, they were not allowed to enter the Promised Land. Because they were wandering around in the wilderness because of their disobedience they were not circumcised. Now however as they were in the Promised Land they were to be circumcised. However they were to be 100% committed to God by being completely obedient to Him. As God told Joshua to enter the Promised Land He told Joshua to be careful to obey all the law Moses had given them -- they were not to turn from it to the right or to the left, so that they may be successful wherever they go. They are not to let the Book of the Law depart from their mouth; they are to meditate on it day and night, so that they may be careful to do everything written in it.

If we are to take the Promised Land, we must be consecrated Christians – circumcised Christians -- who are 100% committed to God by obeying every single one of His Word. There can be no exception. This brings to my mind straight away a question. Just one question. If we are to obey every single one of God's Word, do we know His Word? Do we read His Word? Do we know His Word? If we don't know how can we obey something that we don't know about?

Just like I said last week. It is time that we return to basics. No point for us to pursue anything else in our Christian walk if the basics is not sorted out. No point for us to want to know more – to want to read great books – if we have not even mastered our alphabets – our ABCs. The ABCs of our Christian life is just three things -- the Word, Prayer and Fellowship. So, we must read the Word daily and know God's Word. We must pray in all circumstances. We must fellowship with Christian brothers and sisters. I have shown how we can do this last week. What the premise is for us to get into a life of prayer and seeking God – to understand who our primary person is – we are spirit and soul first before we are a physical being. If we don't know that then we will always be distracted doing what counts for our bodies and not our souls and spirits. If we take time to look after our physical being how much more must we spend time to look after our spirit and soul? So, the first thing that we should consider is whether we love God and are concerned with ourselves enough to want to do something about it? Is there a deep enough spiritual passion? If there is then learn how to read the Bible and to pray – fellowship – that is rather simple and yet not entirely that simple – that is why we are discussing about spiritual friendship in CGs. Last week, I used Luke 11 to show how we can pray and read the Bible. We should read one Biblical idea per day – it could be a few verses – it could be a chapter – normally not – then think about that idea the whole day long – let it transform you. In prayers, know that God is a loving father who desires to answer us when we ask, who desires to give us when we seek and who desires to open the doors when we knock.. he is not like some friend who is asleep and reluctant to open the door for us...God never sleeps – He is always ready to answer our prayers if

we pray according to His will. Today, I want to use the Lord's Prayer and show how we can.

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen.'

Is the Lord's Prayer one to be prayed verbatim? Is it to be prayed through in one go every day? No, you can pray the different segments at any time throughout the day. Normally, I would like to open the day with a few things and throughout the day I either pray in tongues or in our normal language. Once I was in an ExCo meeting and we were debating on something. In my usual way of asking God to be in all my situations I prayed quietly in my heart. However this time it came out audibly. And it was in tongues. Ps Lau looked at me – strange as it was – we laughed – but he joined in the prayers. But that's the way we should cultivate our praying habit.

The Lord's Prayer starts with exalting the Lord – proclaiming His greatness – His goodness – anytime is a good time to praise the Lord. Let me ask you a question – when you praise the Lord, is it for His good or ours? Our God is not a megalomaniac – as though He needs to be praised by you – He knows who He is – but we have to be reminded of God all the time or else we will get into the trap of building up our bodies and not our souls and spirits – so praising God helps us be reminded of who God is – do it all the time throughout the day – whenever you can – when I am driving -- at times when I am alone -- I just praise the Lord or I just burst out in tongues.

The second segment – pray for God's Kingdom to come into every aspect of our lives and our world. Read the newspapers – watch the news. When we do so, be reminded that the world needs God – they need God to be in their situation – pray then for the reign of God to be in their situation. When we meet a difficult situation at work ask for God to reign over the problem and give you the solution. Pray continually throughout the day under different circumstances for God to reign – for His Kingdom to come into those different situations. Pray for God's will to be done in those situations as well. When we see wrong doing, injustices, sin around us – ask for God's will to be done and that He will reign in those situations. When a friend comes to mind, ask for God's will to be done in his or her life and for Him to reign in your friend's life.

Let me ask you one thing right now. Are you into extended prayers where you feel that you don't really have the time? You don't really have to all the time – once in a while is good – it is good to fast and pray at least once a week. But far more important is praying continuously through the day. As you are engaged in activities – pray -- the spiritual act of prayer throughout the day, helps you to integrate your soul and spirit with your body – integrating the spiritual with the physical – bringing God into all your situations.

The third segment – give us this day our daily bread. This is not asking for food to feed our physical body. But to ask God for a Word either through the Bible –

good time to pray this is when you pick up your Bible or for God to show you the significance of every event in your life – what godly principles you may learn from every event every single day. Our days are filled with lessons to be learnt. Spend time to reflect – as you are on the bus or the MRT just reflect upon the events of the last hours – ask God to give you your daily bread – something that may refresh your spirit and soul. When you learn to do this, you will begin to realize that God is with you all the time. You will begin to see that there is a vital spiritual lesson in every single thing. You will begin to hear God in all your situations.

The next segment of the Lord's prayer is for strength to withstand all temptations – one that we should be concerned with it not to think more about our physical self than our spiritual self – of doing more things and being more concerned about our physical rather than our spiritual selves.

Conclude the day with the last segment – praising God for all things in the day – knowing that everything in our lives is to bring Him honour and praise.

The Lord's Prayer is therefore in segments that can be prayed through at any time – need not be a contained whole.

When we read a Biblical thought per day – when we pray in all situations in all circumstances right through the day, we will become Christ conscious – the chances would be that we will be more obedient to His Word – we will be consecrated unto Christ – we will indeed be a circumcised Christian.

To obey requires trust – we know the song “trust and obey.” The more we know God the more we will trust Him. It is built up through a life of consistent prayer and knowing the Word. The more we trust Him the more we would obey Him. Let us today return to basics and build up our trust in the Lord. Let us obey Him. Let us consecrate our lives before Him. Let us live as circumcised Christians.

Living as a circumcised Christian has its blessings.

3. The Blessings of Being Circumcised

Immediately after the circumcision, God told Joshua “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” The place was called Gilgal which means to roll away. Reproach brings shame, a stigma, a bad reputation. All the bad memories of the past are washed away at Gilgal.

As we consecrate our lives to God we become a new creation in Him. The old has passed away and the new has come. We are set free from our guilt, our shame, our conscience. We are set free by Jesus and whom the Son has set free is free indeed. This is why when we come to Christ we experience a deep sense of peace. This is a blessings of our past.

People are however peculiar. After the Israelites were set free from Egypt they wanted to go back to it. Today, people are essentially the same. After Jesus has set us free we return to our remorse – to our conscience – to our bad memories – we return to where we were before. We are like dogs returning to their vomit. However, as we consecrate ourselves and press on towards our high calling in Jesus we leave the past behind. This is why we have to move on from conversion to consecration and to Christ-likeness. There is no such thing as standing still in our spirituality. We either move on in Jesus or we backslide. The main thing is whether we have got our basics of Christianity right. Are we reading our Bible? Are we praying in all circumstances? Are we conscious of God's presence all the time? Master the basics first.

We also note that after the circumcision that the Israelites began to enjoy the product of the Promised Land – the land that was flowing with milk and honey – no longer would they have to eat the manna – the same diet which they had done for the last 40 years. When we are consecrated, we will begin to enjoy the product of our Promised Land as well. This is a blessing of the present. All our needs are met in Jesus Christ. We will find peace, joy, hope and love. We don't have to seek for them in this world. We don't have to go to self-help seminars, read self-help books, seek for self-help gurus – try this or that. All we need is to relate closely with God – seeking Him – reading His Word – praying consistently throughout the day. Therefore, as circumcised Christians we can begin to enjoy the blessings of the Promised Land.

Immediately after, the commander of the Lord's army stood in front of Joshua and told him that he was on holy ground. The commander of the Lord's army is Jesus. Joshua knew then that he was in God's presence. As circumcised Christians, we will realize that we are in God's presence all the time. That Jesus as the commander of the Lord's army is with us. There should therefore be no fear as we face the obstacles of life that lay ahead of us. Fear is a factor that immobilize lots of people. They need something to help them conquer their fears. The possibility of winning S\$50,000 is a motivating factor and therefore people go in to face the challenge of the Fear Factor. Fear is also a factor that stops us from trusting God completely and consecrating ourselves. This is why from the outset God told Joshua not to fear. We must therefore believe God and trust Him – do away with our fears. Then the more we consecrate our lives to God the more courageous we will be. . This is a blessing of the future. Being a consecrated Christian therefore has its blessings

All Christians male or female must be circumcised. We must turn our lives wholly over to God and trust every single one of His Word. We will be blessed as we do so.