

Title:

Text: Genesis 17: 1-8

Place: SGBC, New Jersey

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God himself will receive the glory for sanctifying his children unto himself. God purges the consciences of his children from dead works, to serve him, writing the word of his everlasting promise on our hearts. God keep us by his Spirit, continually making his promise new in our hearts.

Proposal: What God does for Abraham in our text, shows us the Lord's work of grace in the hearts of his people whereby God sanctifies his children from ourselves to Christ by whom we are saved.

Sanctification is the work of God's grace whereby God sets apart and makes his children consecrated unto him.

- Set apart by divine election in Christ
- By the circumcision of Christ made without hands wherein he put away the body of the sins of his people by sacrifice of himself.

- By the Holy Spirit circumcising the heart—this work of the Spirit is the work we are considering now.

I. SANCTIFICATION IS ALL OF GOD'S GRACE

Genesis 17: 1: And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram,

A. This was not when the Lord began his work of sanctifying grace in Abraham's heart. God began his work in Abraham when Abraham was 75 in a land of idolatry (Genesis 12: 1-5)

- Abraham did nothing to merit God's coming to him, God came to Abraham first
- God sanctified Abraham by his word of promise
- The result was Abraham believed God and went out.

Hebrews 11: 8: By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

This work of sanctifying Abraham from idolatry to God was by God's grace, worked in Abraham's heart by the word of promise through faith.

2. Over and over, the Lord spoke to Abraham, each time renewing his promise to Abraham, the result was: Abraham worshipped God.

3. Now look to Genesis 15: 1-6—all the promises given to Abraham concerned a Seed which the LORD God promised Abraham would come from him.

- This seed has reference to the multitude of God's elect, whom he purposed to save before the world began (Heb. 2:16). The heir, the immediate son, would be Isaac.
- But here God promised Abraham that from his lineage, God would send the seed of the woman, Christ his Son, who would crush the serpent's head and redeem God's elect (Gen. 3:15)

Galatians 3:16: Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Note: The everlasting covenant to Abraham was by promise—by covenant. This covenant was ordered and sure because this covenant work was entrusted to the Son of God by God the Father

- It is the covenant work to which Christ referred when he said, “*I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*” (John 17:4 AV). When from the cross Christ said, “*It is finished.*”

B. We see this work of sanctification is by grace, when we consider the error Abraham made prior to our text:

- Abraham waited but no son came.
- So he and Sara came up with a plan.
- Sara gave Abraham Hagar, her handmaid, to wife. Abraham produced a son, named Ishmael.

C. Paul told us in Galatians that these two women represent THE TWO COVENANTS.

1. Hagar represents the old covenant—the same which Adam broke in the garden

- The covenant of works which God would give on Mt. Sinai
- Like as Hagar came second, the covenant of works came second in time.

2. Sara represents the everlasting covenant of grace, the new covenant, written on the heart by God, the covenant God made with Abraham.

- Like Sara was first, the everlasting covenant was first—before the world began.
- Abraham made to Abraham his everlasting covenant of grace, then afterwards, 430 years later the law on Mt. Sinai was given.

3. When Abraham looked to Hagar he:

- Mixed his fleshly wisdom with God's wisdom
- His works with God's work
- Law with grace.
- It was an act of unbelief, not of faith
- It was touching the unclean
- The result was Abraham produced a child of the bondwoman, the product of his will and works.

4. Thirteen years passed. **Genesis 17: 1: And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram,...**

- Though Abraham had done this thing, he is a child of God's grace.
- God made his promise to save Abraham
- God will not let Abraham return to his former idolatry, but will keep Abraham separated unto himself

Sanctification is all of the grace of God, by the power of God.

II. SANCTIFICATION IS BY GOD CONTINUALLY REVEALING CHRIST TO US.

Genesis 17: 1: And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I *am* the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

A. I am the Almighty God—El Shaddai

1. All powerful to bring to pass that which he has promised
2. All powerful to nourish his children in all times of trial
3. All powerful to accomplish the salvation of his people without any help from our impotent hands

When God makes us to behold his glory in the face of Christ Jesus, he manifest El Shaddi—the Almighty God—in our hearts

B. This is his word spoken into our hearts--*Walk before me, and be thou perfect*

1. This is a statement of fact—in Christ his Surety, through faith in Christ, Abraham was perfect.
 - The only reason God did not destroy Abraham for looking to Hagar (his will and work) is because Abraham was perfect in his Substitute and Surety the Lord Jesus Christ.

Malachi 3:6 For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

2. This is a promise—because God put Abraham in Christ, because Christ has made the believer the righteousness of God—

- None shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.
- We shall not be left to turn aside and perish.
- By this very act of God not leaving Abraham to himself but speaking to him in power we see it is so.

Romans 6:14: For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

3. This is the command by which the Spirit of God upholds and strengthens our faith

- Abraham had just turned from faith in the LORD God to the law when he turned to Hagar.
- God appeared to Abraham and spoke into his heart, “Turn not from the God of promise—
- From the promise of God—
- From salvation in Christ—
- From him in whom we have fulfilled the law of God to our vain wisdom and way

Galatians 5: 1: Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. 2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. 3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. 4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. 6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

III. SANCTIFICATION IS BY GOD MAKING HIS COVENANT IN OUR HEARTS AND CONTINUING TO RENEW HIS EVERLASTING COVENANT IN OUR HEARTS.

Genesis 17: 2: And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. In other words, “Abraham, I will do all the work, I have promised!”

A. I WILL MAKE MY COVENANT—FULFILL MY COVENANT BETWEEN ME AND THEE

1. God in Christ has fulfilled the covenant of redemption. He shall fulfill his promise to keep us unto the day of salvation.

B. I will multiply thee exceedingly

1. Even as God brought forth Christ, so he brought forth Isaac

2. Even as God brought forth Christ, so he brought forth all Abraham's spiritual seed

3. Even as God brought forth Christ, so he sheds his grace into our hearts and multiplies us personally, exceedingly!

C. Notice the "will's and shalls and everlasting"(vv 4-8)

2 Corinthians 1:20: For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

True rest from all our vain works, true sanctification to God, comes from God circumcising our hearts from the filth of our flesh, by speaking to us personally in the heart, by declaring his name to us--God our Savior—El Shaddi--and from hearing of the fulfillment of his covenant promises to us.

What most speak of as sanctification is little more than a cutting of the flesh like circumcision. But truly this work is:

1. Wrought by Christ

Colossians 2: *11*: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: *{12}* Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. *{13}* And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; *{14}* Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; *{15}* *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

Wrought in the heart by the Spirit

Romans 2:29: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

CIRCUMCISION IN THE FLESH MEANT EXACTLY THE SAME THING TO ABRAHAM AND HIS DESCENDANTS THAT THE NEW BIRTH MEANS TO US.

1. It was a mark by which God's covenant was sealed to his people (Eph. 1:14; 4:30).
2. It was a mark distinguishing God's people from the rest of the world.
3. It was a painful mark. – The experience of grace is painful to the flesh.
4. It was a purifying mark.
5. It was a permanent mark.

This is always the result—

1. "Abraham fell on his face, and God talked with him." **Abraham believed God** with amazement. (v17)
2. **Abraham prayed for his son, Ishmael** (v. 18).
3. **Abraham bowed to the will of God** (vv. 20-22).
4. **Abraham obeyed the Lord** (vv. 23-27).

Having these promises we turn from our former way to God our Father and declare with Paul:

Philippians 3:3: For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Amen!

