

The Covenants, Grace, And Law (Part Seven)

Circimcision of the Heart

John W. Ritenbaugh

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I want to remind all of us, at the beginning of this sermon, how I began this series some six sermons ago. I said, "It is human for us to want to directly confront an issue like this, and seemingly solve a disturbing problem quickly. However, this issue is much broader in scope than to be solved by isolating a few specific doctrines and speaking on them out of proper context. Something that they have never done to any extent is to show the practical ramifications of the changes."

You will surely recall how Mr. Herbert Armstrong described God's plan as fitting together like a picture puzzle, with each part fitting together with the others to produce a beautiful mosaic. In addition, he also used a motion picture metaphor from time to time saying that if one goes into a motion picture towards its end (without knowing what proceeded at the point when they arrived on the scene), nothing makes much sense.

Well, the ramifications of the changes [being made by WCG] are so broad and so numerous that I could conceivably go through virtually every doctrine. Almost every one of them that pertains directly to salvation is in some way—directly or indirectly—involved in this series of changes that began quite a number of years ago. I will not go through each doctrine. But I do feel that it is very unfair to the brethren for the minister to dash off a couple of sermons by pointing out a number of laws that have been affected, and then merrily go on as if the subject has been covered.

Such an approach has not gotten to Satan's real purpose. His purpose is not just to get us to break a few laws. Satan's purpose is to blow God's whole purpose right out of the water by virtually destroying the entire **transformation process**. Hang on to that. By virtually destroying the entire transformation process! He wants to make it totally impossible for one to be in God's Kingdom. So please bear with me if it seems as though we are plodding through this, and you are anxious to get to the point. Brethren, we

are at (or, very near to) the point. That is, the crux around which this whole issue revolves. And it is not just the New Covenant and the Old Covenant. It is much more than that.

When we left off the last time, I had not really finished the subject. The subject of that last sermon was *the spiritual ramifications of circumcision*. Nobody knows with absolute certainty when, in the dim antiquities of time, the practice of circumcision began. Genesis 17 is certainly one of the earlier mentions of it. But other nations practiced circumcision as well, and so that kind of confuses the issue. My own personal feeling is that Genesis 17 *is* the earliest mention of it, and that the practice began with God instituting it with Abraham.

However, two things are certain to those who look into these things. One is that nobody used it as extensively or consistently as Israel did. And nobody circumcised their male children on the eighth day of life. It was used—*by God*—as a mark, or a sign, authenticating that the person had made the Old Covenant with Him. It was done on the eighth day to indicate that Israelites were *born* into the covenant relationship with God. There was nothing that they had to do except be born.

God, as usual, was looking far forward in time. And, in the writing of the Bible, He has made extensive use of circumcision as the symbol of what must happen to **a person's heart**. That is, those persons making the New Covenant. That is where it was aimed, brethren. Certainly it played a part, a role, in the Old Covenant; but He was already looking forward. God knows the end from the beginning. He was laying the groundwork so that we would understand *the spiritual ramifications of circumcision*. So [spiritual] circumcision must happen to each person who is making the New Covenant with God.

Now let us go back to a scripture that we used in the last sermon in Jeremiah 6. We will begin with a little bit more review.

Jeremiah 6:10 To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken. Behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach. [It

offended them. It caused them to stumble.] They have no delight in it.

It did not please them at all. They were not eager for it. They were not looking at it as a guide for life. And he said that, because of this, (at least in this context) they had "uncircumcised ears." That is unusual. Is it possible that **you** have an uncircumcised ear? No one ever took a nick of skin out of my ear, as far as I know. But God says that ears can be uncircumcised.

Exodus 6:12 And Moses spoke before the LORD, saying, "Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me. How then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?"

Not only are there uncircumcised ears, there are also "uncircumcised lips."

Exodus 6:30 And Moses said before the LORD, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me?"

Let us go all the way back into the New Testament. There is a scripture there that I skipped over the last time, but I want you to see that these principles are mentioned in the New Testament as well. In Acts 7, Stephen is giving his sermon, at the end of which he was stoned to death; and he says:

Acts 7:51-53 You stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels and have not kept it.

Let us put this all together with the "uncircumcised heart." An uncircumcised heart is one that is closed and impervious to God's attempts to have an effect on it. It resists them. That's why it says—in relation to uncircumcision—"Be no more stiff necked." What does *stiff necked* stand for? Unyielding! The

head is set. The jaw is set. The ears are closed. The mouth is clinched. "I won't do it!" Maybe it does not go that far; yet, that is the effect of the uncircumcised ear and the uncircumcised heart.

"Uncircumcised ears" are those which hear the Word of God imperfectly—usually because it only hears what it wants to hear, or it hears with such a strong prejudice that it rejects truth out of hand. "Oh, that couldn't possibly be true." It is very interesting that if God says something, it is very likely that men will reject it. If a man says exactly the same thing, there is a very high likelihood that the mind (the heart) is much more open to listening to what the person said. It just shows how physically oriented we are. If we know something is coming from God, human nature always gets its guard up. It is already beginning to say, "No."

"Uncircumcised lips" speak the Word of God imperfectly, incorrectly—either because the person is in ignorance, or he has been deceived. In regards then to an uncircumcised heart, if that which hinders yielding to God is cut away, then the circumcised heart becomes opened. It becomes pliable. It becomes amenable to the Word of God. And the effect then is that the person (that heart, that mind) will submit. But let us carry this one step further.

Deuteronomy 10:16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff necked.

That is a command. It is an exhortation. It is an admonition. It puts *the responsibility for yielding* on us. We are the one that has to give in. We are the one that has to submit. So circumcision, in that context, is something that *we* must do.

Deuteronomy 30:1-3 And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you shall call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD your God has driven you, and shall return unto the LORD your God, and shall obey His voice according to all that I command you this day, you and your children, with all your heart, and with all your soul; that then the LORD your God will turn your captivity, and have compassion upon you, and will return and

gather you from all the nations, whither the LORD your God has scattered you.

He has not done this to all of Israel; but He has done it to us. Wherever we are scattered, He has turned our captivity. That is, He has broken the shackles of Satan the Devil. And so He has been compassionate upon us.

Deuteronomy 30:4-6 If any of you be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven [Here's an exaggeration, you might say, or a hyperbole. He wants us to understand that God will reach out to anywhere in His creation.], from thence will the LORD your God gather you, and from thence will He fetch you. And the LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will do you good, and multiply you above your fathers. And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your seed, to love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, that you may live.

There is the other part of it. A *supernatural circumcision by God* has to take place. It is the circumcision made without hands. So we see here *a cooperative effort*. God does His part. We do our part. He makes the circumcision, for which we are responsible, possible by circumcising us supernaturally—so that we are enabled to yield, so that we can put aside human nature, so that we can subdue the resistance of human nature that is there and make the choice to do the right thing.

Romans 2:22-25 You that say a man should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You that abhor idols, do you commit sacrilege? You that make your boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonor you God? "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you," as it is written. For circumcision verily profits, if you keep the law; but if you be a breaker of the law, your circumcision is made uncircumcision.

In other words, even if you are circumcised, if you break the law, it becomes as if you are not circumcised.

Romans 2:26 Therefore if the uncircumcision [meaning, the Gentiles] keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?

Are you beginning to see the issue here? Is it clarifying what makes a person *circumcised* or *uncircumcised*?

Romans 2:27-29 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfill the law, judge you, who by the letter and circumcision do transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. 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.

I want you to notice which law he is writing about here. It is very obviously the Ten Commandments law that he is writing about. Here, within this context that we just read, is the Bible's definition of what God means by circumcision. **Circumcision** *is broadly defined as when one keeps the law. Uncircumcision is when one breaks the law.* We are not talking about an occasional breaking of the law. We are talking about the law consistently broken—as a practice, as a way of life.

It was the shocking disparity between what the Pharisees urged others to do and what they did themselves that brought about Jesus' strong rebukes against them. In this context right here, Paul accuses the typical Jew. It did not have to be a Pharisee. It did not have to be a scribe. It did not have to be a Sadducee. Paul accuses the typical Jew of bringing *blasphemy against God* by doing the same basic things the Pharisees did. They taught and they demanded one thing of people, and they did something else.

So the Jews, then, had acquired a bad name throughout the Roman Empire by teaching one thing and doing another in the business of life. Thus, Paul says spiritually they were uncircumcised. The average Jew was *externally* in conformity with the covenant; but *inwardly*, as shown by the way that he

lived his life—conducted his business, the way his family life was done—it was just as if he was uncircumcised like the Gentiles were. And, brethren, there is **a powerful lesson** in this for us!

Romans 6:1-6 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

In an earlier sermon, I went to some length to show us all that the very reason that Paul said we needed to keep the law is because we have been justified. That is what obligated us. Because we have received grace, because we have accepted the blood of Jesus Christ, we are under *obligation*. It is our duty. We are required. "Shall we continue in sin, so that grace may abound?" I can almost see the apostle Paul pulling out his hair.

Now, to Christianity, **baptism** has replaced circumcision as that rite and external form that has very meaningful spiritual ramifications for preparing us for participation in the New Covenant. But just as surely as the Jews *discredited the value of* circumcision by the way they live, we can do exactly the same thing to baptism. What good is baptism if we are not in obedience to God? Are we not then acting in the same way as the unbaptized? That was Paul's argument in Romans 2. I am just turning it around and using "baptism" instead of "circumcision." But the argument that I am using here is valid. The only thing that has changed then between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant—between circumcision and baptism—is the rite, the ritual, the form. That is all. The external rite!

I can remember years ago an article that appeared in the *Good News* magazine, "Is God the Author of Ceremony?" Is God the author of tradition?

Is God the author of customs? Absolutely, He is! And the New Covenant has its own rites. It has its own forms. It has its own ceremonies. If we are doing the same thing in dishonoring God by dishonoring our baptism, then we fall into the same condemnation as those people (in Matthew 3) that John the Baptist chastened. He told the Jews to think not that because they were sons of Abraham that they would be spared from the Lake of Fire. He said that God could raise up sons unto Abraham out of the stones of the ground. And just because you have been born into the covenant and you are circumcised makes no difference—unless you are **doing spiritually** what circumcision represents.

In John 8, Jesus ran into the same basic argument. He told them that they were of their father, Satan—who was a liar and a murderer—and that they could not depend upon their pedigree. The Jews could not depend upon circumcision; and, brethren, we cannot depend upon baptism. So John the Baptist said, "Repent!"

Now, if one makes the New Covenant with God and then, at some later time, he begins to consistently disobey God, God would have to call such a person "unbaptized." Even as He called those under the Old Covenant "uncircumcised." He did that because of the way they lived—even though they had made the Old Covenant with Him.

So, back to Paul's argument. The true Israelites are those who are so inwardly. That is, those whose obedience is coming from **a yielded, circumcised heart**. A relationship with God cannot be built and developed by mere externals. But never forget that the New Covenant has its own externals and that includes one of the things that is coming up here—Passover.

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.

Paul gives three descriptions of those who are truly circumcised. The first is that *they worship God in the spirit*. This is just going to be a short explanation. But they worship God having the Spirit of God, guided by it,

and possessing the qualities of that Spirit being given to them. Therefore—though Christianity has laws, ceremonies, and rites—its true worship is *of the heart*. The worship of God is from the inside out, because something has happened to the person's mind (his heart); and it is continuing to happen.

Circumcision is *not* a one-time occurrence. I am talking here about both God's responsibility and our responsibility. God continues to supernaturally circumcise our heart. And we have to continually work at circumcising our heart. Both are occurring at the same time. What we call what is *continually occurring* is—**conversion**.

It may be possible for a person to observe all the rites and the ceremonies, and yet still be far from God because the person's heart is filled with pride, hatred, jealousy, murder, envy, lust, and on and on. The outward observances, which are intended to reinforce the inward realities, have done that person no good at all.

So the one who worships in spirit is thus able to put his obedience to the forms, to the rites, to the ceremonies in the proper perspective because the basis of his worship truly is grounded in his *love* for God and *service* to his fellow man. That does not do away with the forms or the ceremonies at all! But this *circumcision of the heart* sure changes the person's perspective—his worldview.

Secondly, it also says that *they glory in Christ*. The true circumcision knows—and they know that they know—that salvation is through the living Savior, Jesus Christ. They live and obey God knowing that their access to God is by Christ's righteousness, and salvation from eternal death is because Jesus Christ lives; and He intercedes for them. Again, they are zealous of good works knowing full well that the works are not going to save them. They understand (they know, they know that they know) that the works are for a different purpose altogether.

And number three: it says that *they have no confidence in the flesh*. This is the flip side of glorying in Christ. We might say this is the negative side of glorying in Christ. Regardless of how perfectly we appear to keep God's law, once we sin our perfection is gone. Therefore, none of sinful humanity has

grounds to come before God unaided by the righteousness of Christ. And once the believer puts his faith in Christ, there is absolutely no room for pride or boasting.

All of our accomplishments (before or after conversion began, before or after our calling) might have gotten us a great deal of acclaim, notoriety, money, status in society, position in a company, or whatever. Those things may have gained us a great deal. But with God they are nothing but the blink of an eye, and so we put no confidence in the flesh.

That does not stop us from working. That does not stop us from being zealous. What Paul is saying here is that those who are of the true circumcision see things in their proper perspective. And *the proof* that they see things in their proper perspective (in their relationship with God in their own lives) is *the way they live their life*—and, I might add here, *their attitudes* as well.

II Corinthians 3:1-3 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men. Forasmuch as you are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.

As we have been seeing, *true circumcision* is not a mark that is made in one's skin. Rather it is *a quality of mind* that reveals itself in the way that one lives. It is very interesting that Paul says, "You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of **all** men." The first thing that Paul is saying is that no additional recommendation from him—that is, a letter of commendation about these people—is needed, because these people's lives were a comprehensive and a transparent (that means you can look right through it, look right at it) letter of recommendation.

What did he mean? He meant that their personal lives had changed so dramatically that anybody who knew them knew that something had changed! The person did not have to shout it from the rooftops. The person's life was declaring (or, as we would say today, broadcasting) all over the

place that something had happened to this person's mind. And because something had happened to their mind, what they talked about, the way they talked about, and maybe even who they talked about or who they talked to, begin to be noticed—and the way they lived.

Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." So, if what people talk about, and who they talk about, and the things they talk about **changes**, then something has happened to the abundance of the heart. Jesus also said, in Matthew 15, that all of those evil things come out of the heart. Well, if people stop doing these evil things, then people have to know that something has changed in the person's mind. Now, they may not be able to put their finger on exactly what it was; but the witness of the person's life was just broadcasting all over that something had happened to that person.

What had happened? Their mind had become circumcised—supernaturally! And they were **aiding** in the circumcision, in that they were **yielding** to the instruction that they were getting from God. So if anybody knows some truth, they are able to see whether a person is living by the Word of God. And even if one does not know much of the truth, the life is usually *attractive*—or, I might even say *irritating*—because of the truth. And, of course, God knows truth. And He is most concerned of all about whether or not we are really circumcised.

Now let me put in a cautionary statement here. What Paul says here in no way negates the value of what was written on stone. That is not his purpose. Paul's concern was for the relative value between the two. And as he goes on to show, it was not what was written in stone that was done away, but the administration that was done away. That is, **the administration** of what was written in stone was done away—not what was written in stone.

What if a person did *none* of the rites associated with the New Covenant? First of all, we are directly commanded in the New Testament to get baptized, are we not? "Repent you therefore and be baptized." In addition to that, Jesus was baptized (even though He had no sin to repent of) that it might be an example. So the Boss got baptized too. That is pretty strong—that a person who is being circumcised supernaturally ought to do that rite. He ought to be baptized.

Are we commanded to do the rites, the rituals, the ceremonies associated with Passover? Most certainly! We are to drink the wine. We are to eat the bread. We are to wash one another's feet. We are to commemorate the Lord's death. So just giving you those as an example, if we do not do those rites, we are *sinning*! Sin is beginning to stretch out here, away from the Ten Commandments; and brethren, it is beginning to envelop ceremonies, traditions, customs, forms, rituals, rites.

The external rites are *exercises* given to **reinforce** the spiritual truths that they exemplify or to **clarify** them. Their intention is not to save. They do not make a person a Christian. But like exercises in any program of learning, they hone a person's skills and increase understanding. You know very well that if you went to a piano teacher, and the piano teacher said, "Okay. Here's the book. I'm going to go through it with you." So this person told you where to put your fingers. But, if you never practice what was given you in instruction, would you ever understand the depths of artistry? Would you ever have a real feel for those kinds of things? No. (That is just enough of an illustration to make the point here.)

God has given us *exercises* that we are to go through. They are part of the New Covenant. And we are to do it, understanding that this is not what makes us what we are. Rather, they are intended to clarify and reinforce what is happening to our heart. In a previous sermon, I said that if we think that something is done away, then we pay little or no attention to it; and we lose the benefit. That is just the way that human nature is. But here is a question for you. You can do your own judging, or your own evaluating. (Oops, we are not supposed to judge are we? I kid you!) What percentage of Protestants do you think understand what we just went through regarding circumcision? (I am not talking only about this sermon, but the others in this series as well.)

Let me give you John and Evelyn Ritenbaugh's examples. I went to a Methodist church for twenty-five years before coming into the truth. I hardly ever missed a Sunday. The expanded family that I was in was fairly religious. And anytime I went to visit any of my cousins, or my grandmother, I got exposed to Pentecostalism. So I attended churches where

they spoke in tongues. And there were times when I would go to church on Sunday morning, and my mother and father (probably to get rid of me) sent me to a little Pentecostal church that was in our neighborhood.

So I had at least some exposure to a couple of branches of Protestantism. I hardly ever missed a Sunday. And I do not believe that I ever heard circumcision mentioned in a church service, or in Sunday school. All I knew about its spiritual associations was a vague knowledge that it was something that the Jews did.

I asked Evelyn, and she said that her experience was the same; but she attended a Presbyterian church. And I think that what we were exposed to (except for a few glitches here and there) was fairly typical of most Protestant churches. And my guess is that barely 1 in 100 knows something about *the spiritual associations* with circumcision. There might be some. Maybe the figure is a little bit higher. Maybe it is even double that—2%. I do not know.

I offer that to you to help you to understand that when you do not do the exercises and begin to think that it is done away, human nature's tendency is to ignore it! Human nature is human nature. And the same course, and the same result, will find its way into the Worldwide Church of God. The Jews quit pronouncing the YHVH—the Tetragrammaton. And now nobody knows for sure how to pronounce it. When you stop practicing something, immediately something begins to be lost. Such is the way with anything that is not used.

I know that there are things that we never forget. People never forget, let us say, how to play a piano. I do not think I will ever forget how to ride a bicycle. I do not think I will ever forget how to weld. But yet, on the other hand, proficiency—the ability to do it well, the ability to do it professionally, the ability to do it with ease and skill—is gone (even amongst those who have practiced something for a very long period of time).

Do you know what is going to happen? The parents, who have been in the church for quite a period of time, will tend to retain a fair amount of it. It is the next generation that is going to forget it entirely. So valuable truth is lost. And as each generation continues, the teaching will become more vague.

How long do you think that meaning of the Sabbath would last if one were not keeping them? I am including the festivals with this, because they rightly belong as part of the Fourth Commandment. They too are Sabbaths, and they are Sabbaths that outline the plan of God. Not kept, it will not be very long before God's plan for mankind is forgotten.

Like the Protestants, people will begin thinking that the goal of life is to go off into heaven. They will begin thinking that they are already immortal. They will forget about the second resurrection. The teaching about the Lake of Fire will begin to become twisted. The fear of God will be lost, or at a very low ebb. People will forget that the Sabbath identifies the God that we worship as the Creator. They will forget that it pictures the Millennium, and the Millennium will become nothing more than a theological point-of-view that people will argue over.

Look how far off the Protestants are on almost every major theological point. Once the starting point—once the truth—is lost, you cannot extrapolate properly because the perspective is skewed away from truth; and we become subject to human nature and its perfidious thinking.

You might recall from last week's sermon that Jesus said that the problem is in man's heart. He means, of course, *man's mind*. God did not create us this way, but we have become this way because we are under a constant **bombardment** of Satan's enmity against God. This has been going on from the time that we are born. I would say that once we are converted, Satan's attention on us becomes intensified, and the bombardment actually becomes *more personal* and *more intense*.

Instead of being something that is just generally sent out into the world, the beam begins to focus right in on us. He has a spirit. His demons have a spirit. And one spirit is affected by another spirit. You know that is true. You know very well how your spirit—how your attitude—is affected by somebody that you love, or respect, or want to have the right kind of relationship with. If they come into the room and they are in a bad attitude and you were in a good attitude—boy, your spirit responds to that almost immediately. The bottom drops out of your attitude.

There the spirit is focused. And you can believe me that, once Satan knows that you are converted, he begins to look at you as **an enemy** of the first order—who needs to be dealt with personally. And he can assign a demon to do those kinds of things, and to keep the pressure that way. So we have *a real battle* to do, in that regard. And that's why we have to guard our spirit at all times.

Let's go back to Deuteronomy 5. This is the chapter that contains the Deuteronomy version of the Ten Commandments. In verse 29, God says:

Deuteronomy 5:29 O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!

God knew what these people were like, and He knew that they didn't have "the heart." And you will notice that there's not much in the Old Covenant that addresses the problem. Now look at chapter 29. Remember earlier that I said that the very reason that the New Covenant was made was to address the problem.

Deuteronomy 29:1-4 These are the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which He made with them in Horeb. And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, "You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great temptations which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles. Yet the LORD has not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day."

Forty years later, He hadn't done what was necessary to *circumcise the heart*. He's helping us to see the underlying foundation of the Old Covenant, and why a New Covenant was necessary. So let's go back to the New Testament—this time in Romans 8.

Romans 8:3-4 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of

sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

God is looking for those who will worship Him *in spirit* and *in truth*. But, in order to worship Him in spirit and in truth, one has to have **the Spirit of God!** In another place, Jesus said that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. The flesh can get ideas. It can respond to something that is inspirational. It can say, "*Yes, I want to do that.*" But if the heart is not there, it lacks the resolve. It lacks the consistency. The circumcision hasn't taken place. This is why I said earlier that the New Covenant was designed by God in order to ***circumcise the heart!***

Hebrews 8:10 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days," says the Lord; "I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts. And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people."

Right there it is easy to see that the New Covenant has laws, and that these laws are to be **written in our heart**. They have to be written there in order for us to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Here is where the problem has always been. God has designed the New Covenant so that it is not just an instrument *for salvation* but also *for perfection!* Please get this.

Are we perfect when we are baptized? That's only the beginning. There's much, much more to come. Mr. Armstrong used to ask, "*Why doesn't God take us off to our reward as soon as we are baptized and receive His Holy Spirit?*" The answer is obvious. He's not done yet! That's only the beginning. We've only been conceived. We have to grow up. We have to go on to perfection.

Now, He did not design the New Covenant with a complete overhaul of its terms. They are basically the same. The New Covenant is designed to make up for *the lack in man*. He adds what we lack, and He does for us what we are unable to do for ourselves. We are NOT able to justify ourselves. We do NOT have His love without His Holy Spirit to help us overcome the weaknesses of the flesh and to go on to holiness. And so He has to justify us

through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ, and He gives us **grace** to justify us. We cannot do that, because we are sinners! We cannot have access to Him on the basis of our works, because they are imperfect. So He does it for us. We do NOT have **the love of God** that will enable us to keep His commandments and go on to perfection. So He gives us the love of God by His Spirit. That's another aspect of His grace.

The major distinction between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant consists in *what the New Covenant demands* of its professors—us. We are the ones who profess that we have made the new covenant with God. And what that is, is a far more intensive love. What is love? It is keeping the Commandments! *A far more intensive keeping of the Commandments!* Is that hard to understand? We have to love God truly—with all of our heart, with all of our soul, with all of our mind, with all of our being. We have to have a holiness of life that reaches to perfection. He tells us "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." And God provides His Spirit to accomplish this.

I'm going to give to you what I think is a surprising comment made in a Protestant commentary. It's the Keil & Delitzsch, which is German Lutheran. The comment is on Deuteronomy 6:5-6. In volume 1 of the Keil & Delitzsch Commentary, on page 324:

Even the gospel knows no higher commandment than this. The distinction [the difference] between the new covenant and the old consists simply in this, that the love of God which the gospel demands of its professors, is more intensive and cordial than that which the law of Moses demanded of the Israelites, according to the gradual unfolding of the love of God Himself, which was displayed in a much grander and more glorious form in the gift of His only begotten Son for our redemption, than in the redemption of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt.

But for the love of God to be of the right kind, the commandments of God must be laid to heart, and be the constant subject of thought and conversation [meaning, conduct].

That is *the only way* they can be written in our heart! We have to **do them!** And that's from a Protestant commentary. So let's go back there, to Deuteronomy 6, which they were commenting on.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 Hear, O Israel. The LORD our God, is one LORD. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart. And you shall teach them diligently unto your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.

He's covering every aspect of every day. They have to be thought on. They have to be used for life. They have to be practiced, practiced, practiced. We have to go through drill, drill, drill. We have to commit them to memory. We have to make ourselves, if need be, yield to them. That's **our part** in this circumcision, because human nature is going to put up a fight. It doesn't want to yield.

Deuteronomy 6:8 And you shall bind them for a sign...

That's something that can be seen. Remember that *a sign* authenticates what cannot necessarily be seen. [For example,] you see a sign on the road that says "Columbia, SC—77 miles." You believe the sign, that Columbia is 77 miles down the road. It is pointing to something that cannot be seen. A person cannot **see** that the law of God is written in your heart. But when you obey them, it points to where these things are. They are here [in the heart], where you can't see.

Deuteronomy 6:8-9 And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand [And so when you do your work, it is done like God would do it—as best we possibly can.], and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. [That's where we think. And so we are thinking all the time, about how we can apply the law of God.] And you shall write them upon the posts of your house, and on your gates.

There is the process, in a nutshell. The Commandments of God are to be our constant companion *in thoughts, in word, and in work*. And if they are done away, how can one become **holy** as God is holy? It is by living and using God's law in our daily experience—combined with the Spirit of God—that we become *transformed to the image of Christ* .

And so what has happened is that they have left out a very important step in God's purpose. They have reduced God's purpose to a two-step operation. The first one is "justified," and then one is "saved." But they have either left out or reduced to unimportance the VERY IMPORTANT in-between step! The in-between step is called, in the Bible, **sanctification**. And, God willing, that is what we are going to go into next week.