

# Demonstrating Our Commitment

Genesis 17:1-27

## I. Walk Blamelessly Before God \_\_\_\_\_ (1-2)

- We are tempted to trade our character for success when we forget that God is the provider of our success.
- When we are confident in **Who** God is and **What** God will do in fulfilling His promise, then we are free to **Walk with Integrity**

**Philippians 4:11-13** <sup>11</sup>Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. <sup>12</sup>I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. <sup>13</sup>I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

- **Contentment in Christ leads to Character & Confidence**

## II. Dedicate Your Name And Reputation To God's \_\_\_\_\_ (3-8)

**Revelation 2:17** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a **new name** written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

**Revelation 3:12** The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and **I will write on him the name of my God**, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and **my own new name**.

## III. Demonstrate Your Commitment To God \_\_\_\_\_ (9-27)

### A. Cut Out What Hinders Your Heart For God (9-14)

- Why Circumcision?
- Is baptism the new circumcision? No!
- Does this mean that Christians should circumcise their boys or become circumcised? NO! (Acts 15)
- The Old Testament sees circumcision as an analogy for "purity" (also Dt 30:6; Ezek 44:7-9)  
**Deuteronomy 10:16** Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your **heart**, and be no longer stubborn.  
**Jeremiah 4:4a** Circumcise yourselves to the Lord; remove the foreskin of your hearts,
- The New Testament continues to see circumcision as an analogy for "purity" (Col 3:8,15; Heb 12:1)  
**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,

### B. Look Out For Your Family's Commitment To God (15-27)

# Demonstrating Our Commitment

Genesis 17:1-27

## I. Walk Blamelessly Before God Inwardly (1-2)

- We are tempted to trade our character for success when we forget that God is the provider of our success.
- When we are confident in **Who** God is and **What** God will do in fulfilling His promise, then we are free to **Walk with Integrity**

**Philippians 4:11-13** <sup>11</sup> Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. <sup>12</sup> I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

- **Contentment in Christ leads to Character & Confidence**

## II. Dedicate Your Name And Reputation To God's Upwardly (3-8)

**Revelation 2:17** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a **new name** written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

**Revelation 3:12** The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and **I will write on him the name of my God**, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and **my own new name**.

## III. Demonstrate Your Commitment To God Outwardly (9-27)

### A. Cut Out What Hinders Your Heart For God (9-14)

- Why Circumcision?
- Is baptism the new circumcision? No!
- Does this mean that Christians should circumcise their boys or become circumcised? NO! (Acts 15)
- The Old Testament sees circumcision as an analogy for "purity" (Dt 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; Ezek 44:7-9)  
**Deuteronomy 10:16** Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your **heart**, and be no longer stubborn.  
**Jeremiah 4:4a** Circumcise yourselves to the Lord; remove the foreskin of your hearts,
- The New Testament continues to see circumcision as an analogy for "purity" (Col 2:11; 3:8,15; Heb 12:1)  
**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,

### B. Look Out For Your Family's Commitment To God (15-27)

# Demonstrating Our Commitment

Genesis 17:1-27

## Introduction:

1. How does one demonstrate commitment?
  - For a serious couple, it's an engagement ring
  - For a married couple, it's a wedding ring
  - For an athlete, it's a contract from his/her team
  - For a sports fan, it's season tickets or sports collection
  - With your company, it's a raise or a promotion
  - For a health conscious person, it's diet and exercise.
2. How was Abraham to demonstrate his commitment to God?
  - Circumcision

## I. **Walk Blamelessly Before God Inwardly (1-2)**

*1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, 2 that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly."*

- 99 years old – 24 years have elapsed since God made the promise of the covenant in Gen 12
- Abraham has to be reminded that Ishmael is not the bearer of the blessing
- Abraham also has to be reminded who's in charge: "I am God Almighty" (*El Shaddai*)
  - The strong and powerful God
- Walk blamelessly = integrity
- Ie/ At work, you see people who gets ahead who are talented and bright, but will cheat to get ahead.
- Have we ever been tempted to take an short cut, embellish our product or bend the law to receive the same acclaim as someone we know cheated to get ahead?
- Ie/ At school – you see student cheat all the time and you wonder if this will save you time to focus on your 3 other AP classes
- Henry Cloud: "Morals and ethics undergird our entire system of business, relationships, government, finance, education, and even our very lives. Talk to any wife or husband who has been cheated on, or any business partner who has been lied to, and you will see what a relationship without trust does to people." (*Integrity: The Courage to Meet the Demands of Reality*, pp. 7-8, HarperCollins. Kindle Edition. 2009)
- **We are tempted to trade our character for success when we forget that God is the provider of our success.**

- God is reminding Abraham, who is struggling with faith that:
  - God is Almighty (*El Shaddai*)
    - Used 48x in OT (31x in Job)
    - The God of Power
  - God will bless Abraham (**Genesis 17:6a** I will make you exceedingly **fruitful**)
    - Abraham became extremely wealthy (13:2; 24:34-35)
    - Abraham was blessed with land (13:14-15,17)
    - Abraham had several servants (15:7)
    - Abraham was spiritually blessed (13:18; 21:22)
- When we are confident in **Who** God is and **What** God will do in fulfilling His promise, then we are free to **Walk with Integrity**

**Philippians 4:11-13** <sup>11</sup>Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. <sup>12</sup>I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. <sup>13</sup>I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

- **Contentment in Christ leads to Character & Confidence**

## II. Dedicate Your Name And Reputation To God's Upwardly (3-8)

*3 Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, 4 "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. 8 And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."*

- V. 3 – Abram fell face down = worship posture
- V. 4 – Reminder of Covenant – father of many nations – not only Israel, but many of the Arab nations too
- V. 5 – Change of Name:
  - Abram = *ab* (father) + *ram* (to be high) = Exalted Father
  - New name: *Abraham* = *ab* (father) + *ham* (*hamon* = crowd) = Father of a Multitude
- V. 6a – Provision Of Material Blessings
  - Abraham became extremely wealthy (13:2; 24:34-35)
  - Abraham was blessed with land (13:14-15,17)
  - Abraham had several servants (15:7)
  - Abraham was spiritually blessed (13:18; 21:22)
- V. 6b – Royalty Shall Come From Him – eventually the Kingly line of David
- V. 7 – the Covenant will extend to Abraham's descendants

- All the way through the realization of the Messiah in Jesus Christ
- V. 8 – the land will be an everlasting possession

**Genesis 15:17-21**<sup>17</sup>And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. <sup>18</sup>On the same day the Lord made a **covenant** with Abram, saying: **“To your descendants I have given this land**, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates— <sup>19</sup>the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, <sup>20</sup>the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, <sup>21</sup>the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

- The border is greater than the current Israel
- What is the “River of Egypt”
  - Waltke thinks it’s the most easterly branch of the Nile
  - Walter Kaiser thinks it’s the modern Nahr el-Kebir (which means Great River)



- When we see all God wants to do for us, how can we not fall on our face and worship God
- Now, we’re not to expect the financial and geographical promises intended for Abraham – God has given us something greater: forgiveness of sin, resurrection power and the promise to be with Him
- This past week, we studied the Atonement of Christ. I literally had chills as I was describing what Christ did on the cross to set me free from sin and to satisfy God’s wrath intended for me. Words like: Substitution, Propitiation, Imputation, Redemption, Reconciliation
- **Changing a name demonstrates Lordship**
  - Allen Ross quotes Coats: “To give a name is to express suzerainty [lordship] (*Genesis*, p. 134).” (*Creation & Blessing*, p. 327)

**Revelation 2:17** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a **new name** written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

- A white stone probably represents innocence
  - In biblical times, courts would indicate a verdict using a black stone for guilty and a white stone for innocent
  - White stones also gained access to banquets – the picture being of gaining access to God's heavenly feast
  - White stones were also given to victorious athletes
- I don't know what that new name is, but the idea is that I have a new identity
- I'm no longer guilty and going to hell Steve Wong, I'm a Christian saved by the mercy of Christ
- My identity isn't what I do with my name
- My identity is now shaped by who Created and Saved me
- I'm a child of God

**Revelation 3:12** The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and **I will write on him the name of my God**, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and **my own new name**.

- ie/ new name given to Philadelphia – *Neacaesarea*
  - honoring gesture, but it didn't last
  - this name that Christ will give will last
- writing a name of someone in biblical times was to describe a person as similar to the name written on them
- it was also a way of demonstrating ownership
- God's name is written on us – we reflect His character and we belong to Him
- ie/ get married – wife take on name of husband
- we take on the name of Christ in our eternal marriage to Christ

### **III. Demonstrate Your Commitment To God Outwardly (9-27)**

#### **A. Cut Out What Hinders Your Heart For God (9-14; cf. Col 2:11; 3:8,15)**

*9 And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. 10 This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. 12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, 13 both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. 14 Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."*

- **Why Circumcision?**

- Circumcision is a sign of the Abrahamic covenant
- Circumcision is the removal of excess flesh on the male reproductive organ
  - Waltke: "It was performed on the organ of procreation because the covenant pertained to descendants set apart to God." (*Genesis*, p. 264)
  - V. 12 – 8 days old
    - Some ancient religions used circumcision as a rite of passage into puberty but God used it as an indication from birth that one belonged to God
  - V. 13 – everlasting covenant
  - V. 14 – uncircumcised males were, in a sense, circumcised from Israel – "cut off from his people"
- Not a condition, but a sign of participation
  - God did all the work in this unconditional covenant
  - But Abraham and his descendants would indicate their participation and solidarity in the covenant through the sign of circumcision
- With the Noahic Covenant, the sign was a rainbow
- With the Mosaic Covenant, observing the Sabbath was the sign for Israel of that Covenant
- **Is baptism the new circumcision? No!**
  - The Roman Catholics believe that babies who die without being christened or baptized go to "the Limbo of the Innocent" where a child will live without suffering, but also without God
  - Infant baptism originated when the Roman Catholic Church wanted to make everyone a Christian, even from birth, by baptizing them into the Catholic Church and putting them under the authority of the Roman Catholic Church
  - Reformed Churches and other Protestant Denominations (Presbyterians, Lutherans, Anglicans & Episcopalians) adopted this practice with the twist that the baptized baby becomes a member of the "covenant people" and is later confirmed during "Confirmation" by reciting the church's catechism.
  - Reformed Theology does not distinguish the Church and Israel, thus baptism is the new symbol of identification in the Church as circumcision was for Israel. Israel circumcised infant males at 8 days old according to the covenant made with Abraham. If this was intended for boys, what about for girls?
  - The Anabaptist (*ana* = again) was a movement that arose countering the false teaching of infant baptism and rebaptizing genuine believers and were greatly persecuted by both Catholic and Protestant churches
- **Does this mean that Christians should circumcise their boys or become circumcised? NO!**
  - The Pharisees in the NT tried to imposed circumcision as an additional requirement to faith for salvation
  - Acts 15 dealt with that as a heresy

**Acts 15:1-2** But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with

them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.

**Acts 15:7-11** 7 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, 9 and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. 10 Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11 But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

- Parents and men can make that choice for themselves – it has nothing to do with salvation

- **The Old Testament sees circumcision as an analogy for "purity"**

**Deuteronomy 10:16** Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your **heart**, and be no longer stubborn.

**Deuteronomy 30:6** And the Lord your God will **circumcise** your **heart** and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

**Jeremiah 4:4a** Circumcise yourselves to the Lord; remove the foreskin of your hearts,

**Cf. Ezek 44:7-9** – ungodly foreigners were called "uncircumcised of heart"

- **The New Testament continues to see circumcision as an analogy for "purity"**

**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,

**Colossians 3:8,15** <sup>8</sup> But now you must **put them all away**: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.... <sup>15</sup> Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

**Hebrews 12:1b** let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

## **B. Look Out For Your Family's Commitment To God (15-27)**

*15 And God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." 17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!" 19 God said, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. 20 As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a*

great nation. 21 But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year."

22 When he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham. 23 Then Abraham took Ishmael his son and all those born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had said to him. 24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised. 27 And all the men of his house, those born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

- V. 15 – Sarai's name changes to Sarah
  - Not clear on what the significance of the new name is
  - Both names have a royal link
  - *Sarai* may emphasize her princess role
  - *Sarah* may emphasize her role as queen
  - Waltke suggests that "*Sarai*, her birth-name, probably looks back on her noble descent, whereas *Sarah*, her covenantal name, looks ahead to her noble descendants." (*Genesis: A Commentary*, p. 262)
- V. 16 – "Kings of people shall come from her"
- V. 17 – Abraham laughed realizing he will be 100 years old and Sarah will be 90 years old if they are to have this promised son
- V. 18 – Abraham still thinks it could be Ishmael
- V. 19 – God says "No" and corrects Abraham's faithless reasoning: Sarah will be the mother, the promised son will be named Isaac
- V. 20 – God will bless Ishmael – he will father 12 princes (rulers)
- V. 21 – Isaac is the covenant
- V. 22 – God leaves Abraham
- V. 23-27 – Abraham circumcises Ishmael (when he was 13), his men, and himself

<b>Conclusion:</b>
--------------------

1. **Inward** – Live a life of integrity because you are confident in God's Power (*El Shaddai*) and Promise.
2. **Upward** – Glorify our *new* Lord and Savior (versus the *old* self) who has given us a new name and identity in Christ.
3. **Outward** – Cut out the things in our lives that hinder us from living in purity – bad influences, bad attitudes, sinful desires.