

11.30.25

Genesis

Chapter 17 - God's Commitment to More Vested Interest (vs. 9-14)

Genesis 17:9-14: God said further to Abraham, “Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person

shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

Well, as we've gone through the Book of Genesis, what we have seen is that God certainly is gracious, isn't He? He created all things for us. Not one good thing did He withhold, right? God has great things for us. Nevertheless, in the garden, there was really not a relationship. Though Adam had times in which he walked with God, was there really a relationship with God? Further on down the road, God saves through the flood. He rescues man. How wonderful it is to have salvation. But God still wants more for us. And it is in this passage that we look at, in particular this chapter, that we realize that God has something far more for us than simply good things and salvation. God desires a relationship. And really, if we were to describe Chapter 17, it would be that God is describing this relationship.

In fact, if you look with me at the beginning of Chapter 17, He starts off by calling on Abram to walk with Him. Walk with Him; walk before His face. He wants a relationship.

But if you read in particular verse 2, it reads this way,
(Genesis 17:2) “I will establish My covenant between Me and you...”

You see that phrase? That phrase is going to be repeated over and over again.

As you go on, it says in verse 4,

(Genesis 17:4) “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you...”

“And I’m going to make you great.”

(Genesis 17:7) “I will establish My covenant between Me and you...”

This is a relationship covenant, isn't it? That's what this is.

If you look in verse 10,

(Genesis 17:10) “This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you...”

And how does He end verse 11? The same way. God is revealing that this is about a relationship and there really is no such thing as a one-sided relationship; so that you can give somebody something, not withhold things from

them, but then they only become the recipient of those things. It doesn't necessarily draw them closer to you.

He turns to Abraham in Chapter 12, and He says, "I'm going to bless you. I'm going to make you a blessing, and all the nations from you are going to be blessed." But it's not until this particular chapter that God begins to talk about him possessing a land together with God.

Possessing together. Doing something together.

Oftentimes I have people come up to me, and they say something like, "I'd sure like to be close to God. How do you get close to God?" And in some degree, this particular passage, as obscure as it is, and oftentimes perhaps a passage that often we would like to avoid, this particular text actually answers the question. Because within the passage, we're going to see certain properties that are necessary in order to have that relationship with God. You want to be close to God? You want to have a relationship? All right, here it goes. Fasten your seatbelts. It's not going to be easy. Why can't it be easy? You know, I've never known any relationship that really survived when everything was easy. But it is in the difficult times that we

draw close to one another, and it is in the commitment. The word “covenant” is used within the passage. And once again, God says, “This is my covenant. This is the way that you have a relationship, Abram. You want one, don't you?” He says, “Yeah, I trust You. I trust You.” He says, “Okay, that's the beginning of the relationship, you trusting Me. So, this is what you need to do.”

And it's that point that we pick up in verse 9,

(Genesis 17:9) “God said further to Abraham, “Now as for you...””

Now, it's very interesting at this juncture that He has actually named Abraham, “Abraham,” the father of many. Whereas before he was the exalted father, Abram, and probably in some ways wishful thinking, perhaps as a stargazer, perhaps seeing himself as exalted, or his father in naming him. Nevertheless, God says, “No, we're going to name you who you should be.” And He names him.

What makes this interesting is that the whole concept of circumcision, if you were to look, and if we have time, we'll look in the passages, but in Luke 1, as well as in Luke 2, where you have John the Baptist being on the 8th day

circumcised, and in Luke 2, Jesus Himself on the 8th day being circumcised. Both are named. The name is given to them. There is this sense of a new start, a new beginning, a new creation. And thus the number 8, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Seven days, Christ rested, it was finished, but the 8th day is the beginning of a new creation as it would be the first day of the week.

We come into this and we begin to see all sorts of marvelous nuances that begin to describe to us this relationship that God has in store for us. It starts off with a simple phrase, “Now, as for you”. You see the phrase? Up to this point, once again, I think it's been largely God. This is what's going to happen. In fact, at the very beginning of this covenant in Chapter 17, He starts off by saying, “I'm going to do this. I'm going to do this. I'm going to make sure that this happens. I will make you great. And I'm going to have you have so many children. It's going to be unimaginable. Look at the stars in the heavens. Can you count them?” But now He says, “As for you...” This is really where the relationship begins. And as we see the description of what He begins to ask him to

do, we realize that there are certain properties, and I would say certain ingredients necessary in order for there to be a relationship, because in order for there to be a relationship, there has to be a vested interest. We would call it “skin in the game.” You have to be in this. And more specifically, there has to be something that you fully understand, that you fully appreciate, you have to be in, you have to be involved, and you have to literally participate in what's going to be happening. Well, what's that going to look like? Well, He begins to describe.

“God said further to Abraham, “Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.”

The passage actually uses this interesting word, “keep,” which has probably an emphasis of guarding, protecting. “You need to keep, you need to guard this covenant.” What He's talking about is that this is something that you're going to treasure. “Thy word have I treasured in my heart that I might not sin against You.”

We read in Deuteronomy 6 that fathers are supposed to be in love with God's Word. Love the Lord your God with

all your heart, soul, and mind. And you need to demonstrate this to your kids so that when you walk by the way, you talk by the way, or you sit down, or you stand up, even the things that you wear needs to say, “I love God.” The phylacteries that were oftentimes given and worn by the Jews is that particular passage in Deuteronomy 6, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart.” Your kids should see this. In other words, part of your vested interest is that you demonstrate an intense love for the things of God. This is how we pass this on. This is how we continue. I was thinking about all the traditions that different cultures have. Certain cultures have an interesting tradition of liking strong drink. Did you notice that? In fact, all you have to do is mention a particular kind of liquor and you immediately think of a particular group and culture. I wonder where that began? I wonder how it began? There are certain groups of people that actually not only like strong drink, but perhaps some like pomp and circumstance. You can go just over the water and begin to see those that... Where did that come from? Why is that? Well, because their fathers embraced it. It was a part of their lifestyle. It was

part of what they felt was important. Your kids are going to see what's important to you. They're going to see what you're passionate about. And God says, "And you need to keep this covenant. Your kids need to see." Because He goes on and says in the text, "your descendants... throughout their generations." In other words, "You're actually responsible for them catching this desire to have a relationship with Me." I wonder what our kids see when they see us open up the Word of God, when they see us talk about the Word of God. When do they see an excitement? When do they see a desire to be with God, to have a relationship? God says the first thing that you need to do is have this desire. You shall keep, you shall guard in such a way with such intensity and a sincerity in your heart that this is actually contagious. And the fidelity that you have to God, that is to say the consistency in keeping this, is going to actually catch on too, because it'll go from generation to generation.

There's an interesting Psalm, Psalm 71, and in that particular passage, we won't turn to it, because I have so many passages that we need to go through. But in Psalm

71, it begins to talk about the fact that “When I'm old, my whole desire is to pass this on to my future generations.” This is an interesting point because what God is saying is that “One of the ways that you demonstrate that you want to have a relationship with Me is that you don't hide that relationship. That it becomes contagious with those around you, that they see the intensity of this and they catch on too.” Well, He starts off in verse 9 that way.

And in verse 10, He goes and gets into more description, (Genesis 17:10) “This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you...”

Now, I just want to stop there. “Male” actually comes from the word “to remember”. It's interesting. And the root of that seems to be based upon piercing. If in fact you pierce or somebody pierces you, it's hard to forget. It's something that you don't forget. It probably came from a woman coming from man, for God had opened him up. And of course, we see that wonderful picture of Christ and the birth of the church coming from His side, as His side is pierced, and the church is born. It is in this that

God is saying, "You will be remembered." And Isaiah 49 emphasizes that as well. The remembrance of God. What causes you to remember things? Well, what causes you to remember things, strangely enough, is pain. You remember pain. And God is then calling upon those that are male, specifically has given them this title, because if you look at Ephesians 5, the role of the male is to suffer for the wife, not the wife for the husband. It is his responsibility.

"... every male among you shall be circumcised."

It's a very small word in the Hebrew, "*mûl*," which makes reference to simply cutting off. Now, what He's talking about, obviously, in the text is a cutting off of the flesh, which, if you think about that, is not a comfortable thing. In fact, there's nothing about this whole thing of circumcision that is comfortable, that is easy. In fact, it seems to humble an individual. But that's the point. Because God is saying, "You need to put skin in the game. You need to be willing to suffer." Now, what's bizarre about the passage is, He starts off with, "You need to do this to your children," but then He'll turn to Abram, "and

you too.” So, why does He start off with the children? Well, the reason is because I believe that Abram was willing to give of his life freely, to save. Obviously, there was a time in which he threw his wife under the bus, but his desire was for his children to go on, and he would give his life for that. The hardest thing would be in some way to see his children suffer. I would say that would be true for most parents. In fact, I've oftentimes heard parents go, “I wish He would have taken me instead.” The passage is dealing with the desires of man. And in particular, we're dealing with the desires of Abraham, which the desires of Abraham have always been to preserve the genealogy, the lineage. He's done this in a way that went beyond what God had called him to do in protecting Lot. And by virtue of him wanting to save Lot, he began to compromise. And you began to see that he didn't want Lot to suffer, so he wanted to give him the best land. He didn't want Lot to go through hardship, so he breaks away from him so that things will be okay. The desire is, with most parents, “I just don't want to see my kids suffer.” Mark it well. If you want to have a relationship with God, you have to be willing to see your children suffer, that

they may be closer to God as well as you. Most people don't want to make that decision. "I don't want to see anybody get hurt." By the way, medically speaking, circumcision is a necessary thing in the sense that it reduced risk of sickness or infirmities or infections. It certainly reduces diseases, and there is a sense of actually improving hygiene in the person's life. The point is that it's a necessary ingredient. And strangely enough, medically speaking, when a child is circumcised on the 8th day, it is when they say the vitamin K (I didn't even know there was a vitamin K) is at its peak on that particular day, which means the blood will clot at that day. Now, what that tells us is that, I mean, God's not reacting off of science; God invented the science to declare the truth, that this is what you need to do. The point is that there are benefits of cleanliness within this, and it is oftentimes a picture of that cleanliness. The Bible is talking about the fact that God desires us to be clean, and sometimes that takes pain. It takes pain for those that we love. The question is, how close do you want to be to God and do you want to be free from your sin? Yes. Well, this is not going to be easy. You need to put skin in the game. You

have to decide this as much as God desires this. You're going to have to be willing to suffer. You're not only going to have to be willing to suffer, you're going to be willing to see your children suffer. Now, here again, strangely enough, a parent will take their child to the doctor, let the doctor do this, and let the child suffer for the sake of hygiene. But we oftentimes will withhold pain and oftentimes will give the kids what they want because we don't want to see them upset, we don't want to see them hurt, we don't want to see them going through a difficult time because they're holding on to that fleshly desire.

The passage reads,

“This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised.

(Genesis 17:11) And you shall be circumcised in the flesh...”

Unfortunately, at this juncture, he's about 100 years old. So, it doesn't get easier, from what I understand, and that old K thing is probably not working well. The point is that He's going to have to go through the greatest of suffering

at this time. He's going to have to be willing to forego comfort and pleasure for the sake of the relationship. Do you want to have a relationship with God? Fasten your seatbelts. Because in order for you to have a relationship, you have to be all in as He is all in. He's willing to suffer, are you?

“... you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.”

Once again, the emphasis is, “If you want to have this relationship...” He just keeps reminding him.

(Genesis 17:12) “And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants.”

In other words, anyone who attaches themselves to you, if you desire them to have a relationship with God and with your people, they have to be willing to suffer. They have to be willing to give of themselves. They have to be willing to submit themselves to this.

This particular thing is actually conveyed in Leviticus 12, if you look with me.

In Leviticus 12:1, it says this in the Law,

(Leviticus 12:1) “Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

(Leviticus 12:2) “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying: ‘When a woman gives birth and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean for seven days, as in the days of her menstruation she shall be unclean.

(Leviticus 12:3) ‘On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

(Leviticus 12:4) ‘Then she shall remain in the blood of her purification for thirty-three days; she shall not touch any consecrated thing...”

You know, Mary's son was consecrated. Jesus. It's a very interesting picture to me as He lives 33 years. It's a very interesting picture that a mother in this context will have to suffer in the sense of almost giving of herself and her blood for her own son in the sense that the hardest thing for her to be and to do would be to take her hands off her son and to let Him go to the cross. It would be the

greatest of sacrifices to the mother, and she would have to do that. She would have to watch Him go through the difficulties. She would have to watch Him go through the pain. She would have to watch Him go through the suffering. But the wonderful promise is in the shedding of the flesh, there is a resurrection. There is a new day. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. And in order for there to be productivity, in order for there to be fruit, in order for you to possess the land, and in order for you to possess the benefits of the land, i.e. the fruit of the land, you have to be willing to do this.

When the passage refers to descendants within the text, it actually uses the word “seed”. But what it's telling us is in order for your seed to be productive, there has to be purity. And in order for that seed to remain, there has to be the shedding of the flesh. It has to be cut off.

(Genesis 17:12) “And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants.”

(Genesis 17:13) A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.”

I oftentimes think of the passage, “Flesh and blood cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

(Genesis 17:14) “But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

You know, when I go through Scripture, I begin to realize that this whole thing of possessing what God has in store for us, in order for us to possess it, in order for it to become real to us, we have to jump in and be a part of it. Otherwise, we don't possess. God has given us wonderful things. But in order for us to appreciate them, in order for us to in some way understand what God has given us, we have to be involved and we have to participate in the whole action. There has to be a sense of sacrifice. You shall keep, you shall guard, you shall care more for God than for the feelings of your offspring. “I just don't want to upset them. I don't want them to feel bad.” You have

to love God. You want productivity throughout the generations? You want to preserve life throughout the generations? You have to care more for God and the relationship you have with Him than the feelings that your kids have, as well as your comfort, as well as your pleasures. You want to see productivity? All of that is necessary. And what's also interesting is if in fact you don't do this, you don't care about the longevity of your children. You're literally responsible not only for your family, but anyone that attaches themselves to you, you're responsible. I oftentimes think of Ezekiel where he says, "Look, you don't say anything, you don't warn, their blood's on your hands." God has placed certain people in our midst. I don't know how many people you're responsible for. "I don't want to hurt their feelings." You can't think that way. You and I have an obligation to care for these people, to protect them, to love them enough to want the best for them. You're going to be responsible for those in your keeping. You have to put God's will above your own, above anything that you desire. This fundamental principle is seen throughout Scripture.

One of the most fantastic places is found in Romans 8. If you look there with me, what a wonderful text as we begin to read that God has great things for us. Isn't that wonderful to know in Romans 8:1, there's no condemnation of those in Christ Jesus? We have a new beginning. How wonderful that is. He reminds us that the Law just couldn't fulfill the relationship. Why? Because it's in the flesh. The flesh is you trying to do what you do, and it has really nothing to do with a sense of love or devotion. We so easily go into the realm of Law, into the "have to," into fear of what might happen if we don't do something. And before long, where's the relationship? There's no relationship in the Law, is there? If you have to do something, there's no relationship.

(Romans 8:3) "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

(Romans 8:4) so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

(Romans 8:5) For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

(Romans 8:6) For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

(Romans 8:7) because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,

(Romans 8:8) and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

(Romans 8:9) However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."

You know, we become a new person in Christ. If any man be in Christ, he's a new person. That's what resurrection is all about, right? Jesus will turn to His disciples and say, "You need to take up your cross and follow Me. If you're going to do this thing, we're going to do this together. If you want to be a part of it, the flesh has to go. You have

to shed your personal desires. You have to shed what you think is right. You have to do what I tell you. You have to believe that what I tell you is better than what you could ever imagine. You have to trust Me. And you have to trust Me because you love Me. You can't trust Me because I've told you so. You need to trust Me because you love Me.”

As the passage goes, I want you to look with me in Romans 8:14,

“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

You can almost feel that new name coming.

(Romans 8:15) “For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again...”

In other words, you don't do what you do because you're threatened by the Law.

“... but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”

(Romans 8:16) The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.”

Ah, good. Saved. Children. It's an interesting picture of one born in the family. But you know as well as I do that a person may be a Christian but not have a close relationship to God, not mature.

If you read the next verse, it'll read this way,

(Romans 8:17) “And if children, heirs...”

In other words, God has destined us for more; not just that we would be born, but that we would have a relationship with Him. And in this particular verse, He'll actually use the phrase, “joint heirs with Christ,” together. Heirs with Christ.

“And if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...”

Biggest word in all of Scripture, “if”. “If” what?

Look at the text,

“... if indeed we suffer with Him...”

That seems to be a requisite. It seems to be a necessary ingredient. In order for us to have that relationship and to be called “sons,” and He'll use this word that actually refers to a mature son that has a relationship with his

father. There has to be a willingness to put some skin in the game. You have to be willing to suffer with Him, for Him. That means that by virtue of you not doing the things that you want to do, you begin to lay down those things willingly. Tearing those things, and sometimes it's painful to give up your flesh, sometimes it's painful to give up your own desires, sometimes it's painful to see your kids have to go without something that they really, really want. But you know that their soul is more important, and you're willing to let them suffer for the sake of the cleansing. Aren't you? Don't you want them to have a relationship with the Lord? Don't you want their life to go on from generation to generation?

All the way through Scripture, if you look at me in 1 Corinthians 6, let me just show you a couple of passages that make reference to this. 1 Corinthians 6, Paul begins to talk about, obviously to the Corinthians, that they need to grow up. Part of the things that they're doing, of course, are very shameful acts, and they're the acts of the flesh. In this particular chapter, they're taking brother to

court, which is once again very selfish and demonstrating great avarice.

He writes this in verse 8,

(1 Corinthians 6:8) “On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. You do this even to your brethren.

(1 Corinthians 6:9) Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? ...”

Do you see the word “inherit”? That's taking the possession of.

“...Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,

(1 Corinthians 6:10) nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.”

Joint heirs with Christ.

“...the kingdom of God.”

We're talking about inheritance. We're talking about possessing something.

Jesus says in John 15, “I came that you might have joy and your joy will be made full.” People go, “Why don't I have joy?” Because you don't have any skin in the game. You didn't do what He told you to do. “Hey, it hurts. It's hard.” How many times do you hear that? “It's so hard to do that.” Well, okay, we get it. But you can't have a relationship without giving of yourself. It's just one-sided. Where's the relationship?

Ephesians will say, if you look with me in Ephesians 5; of course, Ephesians 1, all the wonderful blessings that God has in store for you, there's no doubt about that, right? Why is it we don't reap those benefits?

He writes this,

(Ephesians 5:1) “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;

(Ephesians 5:2) and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you...”

Who what? Gave of His flesh that you might live? Greater love has no man than this than one lay down his life for

his brethren. This commandment I have for you, love one another. What is He asking us to do?

“And walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

(Ephesians 5:3) But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints;

(Ephesians 5:4) and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

(Ephesians 5:5) For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance...”

Oh, there that word is again, taking possession. This whole passage is about becoming joint heirs with God. You're a part of this covenant. You're going to have to come into the deal.

No place says it better than Galatians. If you turn with me to the Book of Galatians, which is right before your

Ephesians text. Yesterday my mother turned 99, so it was a great celebration. Thanksgiving Day I turned to her and I said, “Mom, tell us what your favorite verse is.” And what's been interesting is she'll oftentimes forget who I am, but every time I ask her to remember the verse, she remembers the verse, her favorite verse. And her favorite verse is Galatians 2, and I'll just read the verse to you, (Galatians 2:20) “I have been crucified with Christ...”

Oh, that's you coming into play, right? That's you being a part of this.

“... it is no longer I who live...”

Oh, you have a new name. If any man be in Christ, you become a new creature. What day did that happen on, the 8th day? Were you resurrected? Did you discard the flesh, cut yourself away from it and say, “No longer am I going to live for me, I'm going to live for God”? Is that what you did? It's bizarre. I think it's in Leviticus 19.

There's actually a text that talks about a tree being circumcised. It actually makes reference to an uncircumcised tree. And you cannot eat the fruit of that tree, specifically, when you first plant the tree. You can't

eat the fruit for three years. Because if you do, it'd be uncircumcised.

I don't think there's a mistake when you go into John 15 that Jesus says, "You know what My Father does? He's the vine dresser, and if there any branches that kind of get in the way of you bearing fruit, that fruit that would remain, He just cuts it off.

Galatians 2:20 reads,

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

Why do I discard the flesh? Because Christ died for me and loved me. And I would rather walk in the love of God than in the selfishness of me.

So, he piggybacks on this. If you look, and it's no wonder, because obviously, throughout this particular book, he keeps bringing up Abraham. It's not a strange thing.

If you look in Galatians 3:14, it reads,

(Galatians 3:14) “in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles...”

And of course, as he ends in Galatians 3:29,

(Galatians 3:29) “And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants...”

So, what are we talking about? Abraham's offspring.

But if you come into Galatians 5, Paul will write this in verse 2,

(Galatians 5:2) “Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.”

Now, what he's doing is he's taking us out of the realm of that physical mark that was to the Jews that they might identify, because once again, the Jews asked for a sign, so God gives them one. “You want a sign? Okay, here's a sign. You're going to have to be willing to sacrifice.” But he goes on, he says, “But this isn't the whole point of it.”

Of course, Leviticus will go on in Leviticus 26, and says, “You need to circumcise your heart. You need to circumcise your lips. You need to circumcise your ears. What you hear, you can't allow the desires of your flesh

to keep you from hearing. You can't allow your speech to be destructive to people by virtue of your desires of the flesh being proclaimed.”

He says in verse 3,

(Galatians 5:3) “And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.

(Galatians 5:4) You have been severed from Christ...”

That's very interesting because one of the curses of not being circumcised is that you would be severed from your people. You'd be cut off from your people. And what he's fundamentally saying is this is a picture, if in fact you don't discard your flesh, you won't be a part of the family of God. You can't participate. You can't know the fellowship that can be that God has for you. A person may say, “Well, I'm a believer.” And I would say to them, “Well, have you gotten rid of the desires of your flesh?” “No.” “Then what do you have in common with a believer? Where is the fellowship? What do you have in common with God?”

“You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law...”

In other words, you try to do this in your own power and not in a love for God. Remember, I've been crucified with Christ; no longer I live, but Christ lives in me. And the love that I have for Him is what moves me to do what I do. Because the realization is that through the Law, it couldn't make me do what I wanted to do.

“... you have fallen from grace.”

That is to say, you're falling away from that favor of God.

(Galatians 5:5) “For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.”

(Galatians 5:6) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.”

What is it that motivates you?

Now, here's the clincher in all this, and this is really where it gets practical to us. If you drop on down to Galatians 5:16, he begins to emphasize you need to walk by the Spirit, which is the spirit of love for God, which motivates

you to do the things that will cause you to be willing to discard the flesh.

He writes this in verse 16,

(Galatians 5:16) “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

(Galatians 5:17) For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

(Galatians 5:18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

(Galatians 5:19) Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,

(Galatians 5:20) idolatry...”

It almost seems like we have this list over and over again, don't we? Which is basically telling us these are the things that we're oftentimes drawn to in the flesh.

“... sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,

(Galatians 5:21) envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit...

Why does he keep using that word? Yeah, I want the blessings of God. I would trust that you want the blessings of God. The question is, what's keeping us from the blessings of God? And I would say, because you don't have a relationship with God. You'd say, "Well, what do you mean I don't have a relationship? God said He loved me. He died for me." I know, that's Him. But it takes two to have a relationship. Well, it only takes one to save you. But it takes two to have a relationship. And in order for you to enjoy the blessings that God has for you, in order for you to enjoy the fellowship with other brothers and sisters; if in fact you won't discard the things of the desires of the flesh, you're never really going to have a good relationship with the children of God. You never will. Because the children of God embrace God. They love Him. And if you were to ask them, "Are you willing to do anything?" They'd say, "I'm willing to suffer for Him. I'm

willing to go through shame for Him. I'm willing to be humbled for Him.” And it's what draws us together. And the fruit that comes out of that, well, that's in Galatians, too.

If you look with me,

(Galatians 5:22) “But the fruit of the Spirit is...”

Why don't you have the love of God? No skin in the game.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

(Galatians 5:23) gentleness, self-control...”

These things are being produced in you and are benefiting those around you.

I would say that if in fact you're walking in envying, in enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, I don't think a lot of people want to be next to you. And I don't think there's the fellowship of the Spirit.

Just by way of reminder, if you turn with me to 1 Peter, and we'll close with this particular passage, 1 Peter emphasizes that you and I are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation in 1 Peter 2:9,

“... of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

Because of this, God has called you to participate with Him. How do we know that? Well, he gives examples of being at work and the fact that you're willing to be submissive. You go, “Well, that's kind of humiliating to be submissive to a boss that’s unreasonable.” He goes, “Yeah, but it finds favor with God. You want to draw near to God? You want to have a relationship with God?”

I mean, verse 20 reads this way,

(1 Peter 2:20) “For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right...”

If you get rid of sin, as painful as it might be in your life, if you'll take the first step and you'll say, “I'm willing to stop. He did this for me.” You go, “How can I give up my sin?” The love of God constrains me. I mean, love is a powerful thing. I've oftentimes told people, “You need to do this,” and they go, “I don't want to do it. And then they find somebody that they really love, and that person says, “You need to do this,” and they go, “Yeah, no problem.”

There is a great power in love that motivates you to do beyond what you would normally do. What credit is there if you suffer for wrong? And the willingness of man to do wrong and to suffer for it; Romans 1 talks about this, and 2 Peter as well, that oftentimes people sin and they actually find the consequences of sin, but they keep going through the pain and the suffering and the consequences of sin willingly, willingly, over and over and over again. He goes, "You know, there's no real benefit to that. The only thing you're getting out of that is suffering."

But he writes this at the end of verse 20,

"... But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God."

Now, watch verse 21. If you don't have it underlined, you got to have it underlined. Especially for all people that go, "I follow Christ, I shouldn't have to suffer at all." What you don't understand is that you've actually been called for this purpose. That is to say, you've been called for the purpose of suffering for doing what is right, which distinguishes you from the world. They like to suffer for

doing wrong. We like to suffer for doing right. There's going to be suffering both ways.

(1 Peter 2:21) “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.”

Does that seem to infer that He wants you to do the same thing?

If you look in Chapter 4, it says fundamentally the same thing.

(1 Peter 4:1) “Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.”

In other words, when you discard that old flesh, when you're willing to suffer for doing what's right, it somehow sheds that desire to do wrong again. And how bizarre it is that even as Peter will go on to say in Chapter 4, when that happens, the glory of God rests upon you. “Man, I just want to be close to God.” Get rid of your selfish desires, suffer for doing what is right, and watch you feel

closer. It'll happen. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Resist the devil.

What is it telling you? You've got to be willing to give up, and you've got to be willing to care more what God thinks than what anybody else thinks that is around you. There are going to be times when those around you are going to say something like, "You know, that's not nice for you to say that to me." And you're going to say, "You know what? I love you enough to say it." Because you care more for God than for them. You're going to do what's right. It'll draw you near to God. And it'll draw you near to every believer that feels the same way.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your word and the opportunity to draw close to You. We often don't have that opportunity given to us and placed before us, even though every day we can die to this old flesh and live for righteousness. We can live like a new person, resurrected from the dead as Your Son did for us. We realize that the

calling to follow You is not simply a calling to be saved; it is a calling to be like You.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, what we're asking you to do is think through the commitment. And what we're asking you to do is desire the relationship. God is asking you to stop thinking about yourself, to not only care for the relationship with Him, but care for the relationship of others with Him more than anything else.