

The Book of Genesis

Chapter Seventeen

Abraham's Laughter!

Lesson Verse: Genesis 17:17

I. Lesson Introduction

- A. As chapter 16 ends, Abram is at his lowest spiritual point. He has sinned and is out of fellowship with both his God and his family. But the Lord seems to do nothing to his erring child. Is Abram going to get away with all this? To answer we need only note that he was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born (16:16), but is 99 when God again speaks with him. Abram thus apparently suffered a thirteen-year period of God's grieved silence. Here the words of the Psalmist concerning Israel's history comes to mind: "And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" (Ps. 106:15).
1. It has been almost 13 years since God talked with Abram, depending on how one counts the years. It would be 14 years from *Gen. 15* to the birth of Isaac. Abram is 99 years old and once again the Lord visits him and brings him news that in just about nine months he is going to be a father.
 2. We may think that this is a mighty long time to wait for the Lord to move. Surely Abraham grew weary from waiting day in and day out with no word other than promises made years before. What we have to remember and apply in these situations is God has a timetable and He does not speed time up to make us happy. What we need to be thinking about is not that time is passing us by, but that God is using us.
- B. In spite of this, a gracious God now forgives and restores him (Ps. 51) back into fellowship. The title "Almighty God" in the Hebrew is **El Shaddai**. The word Shadd refers to the bosom of the nursing mother, as if to convey place of protection. The word El means "the strong one."
1. God comforts Jacob with His name (Gen. 35:10, 11).
 2. He reassures Moses with this name (Ex. 6:3).
 3. Jacob blesses Joseph with this name (Gen. 49:25). This title is found more often in the book of Job (thirty-one times) than in any other Old Testament book. And that suffering patriarch needed it. Perhaps the most sublime passage in which it is used is Psalm 9 1:1, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty "

II. Study Lesson

- A. The _____ (17:1)
1. To obey God instead of and above everyone else
 2. To Walk all Our Walks With God.
 - a. Almighty God wants His children to grow in their walk of faith. In order to so do, each must engage in four different walks. Each one is somewhat different than the other, but one is no less important than the others. These walks are types of spiritual growths.
 - b. Here is where the majesty of the King James Bible makes a grand display of beauty. These four walks of faith are positional and are so identified with pre-positional phrases in the KJB. Of these four prepositional phrases, only one is found in the NIV and that is the phrase walk before me. Ironically this is the babe in Christ walk.
 - c. _____, *Gen. 17:1*.
 - 1) Abram walked before the Lord. The preposition before suggest that Abraham would walk before the Lord in perfect peace. The phrase reminds one of a child playing before their father, with the father's ever watchful eye on the child. The child plays and runs without any fear, for there is security, knowing that father is near, and no harm can befall.
 - 2) God is saying to Abraham to walk before me. Do not be afraid of the promises I made. It is not up to you to carry them out and make them happen. That is my part. Your part is to believe I can and will do it; so walk before Me upright and perfect.
 - 3) This walk is typical of a new born babe in Christ. The minute we get saved we have an abundance of energy. We are active just like children. Perhaps that is why the Author refers to us at that stage as babes in Christ.
 - d. _____, *Deu 13:4*.

- 1) The prepositional phrase ‘to walk after the Lord’ is to walk in submission to His will. This is the command God made to Israel. They were His children. He was their Father.
 - 2) This is the next level of the walk of faith in the life of a Christian. Once the newness of being born again settles, we begin to realize there are some do’s and don’ts in the word. Those that walk after the Lord place his statues and laws before them and vow to keep all the things written. This walk is a submissive walk and denotes Master and servant.
- e. _____, **Gen 5:24.**
- 1) The prepositional phrase ‘walk with the Lord’ is a walk of fellowship and friendship. Enoch found that this was not a difficult walk. He was greatly rewarded for walking with the Lord.
 - 2) As Christians, we can not walk with the Lord until we have learned to walk after the Him. This level of Christian walk is not easily obtained. The reason why it is not easily obtained is because if we are going to be friends with God, we are going to be enemies with the world.
 - 3) How many times do we compromise this walk with the Lord because we want to drag Him down into the world with us. God will not stoop to our level. He did that once at Calvary, and He will not do so again. If we intend to grow in our faith, we must learn to walk with the Lord. If we do we will find peace. If we continue to walk in the world their will be everything but peace.
- f. _____, **Gal 5:16.**
- 1) The prepositional phrase of ‘walking in the Lord’ is a walk of oneness. Again it is only obtained after we master the other three. The reason why it is so important for us to continue in our walks until we are at one with Him is because that is the only time we can be identified with His body. He is the head of the body, **Eph 5:23.**
 - 2) The physical body ought to be in harmony with the head. How many times does the body tell the head what to do, where to go, what to say, how to act, and when to do these things? Always when the flesh is in control
 - 3) Now let us make a spiritual application to this physical attribute. Jesus is the head of the spiritual local body of believers called a New Testament Church. The local body does not tell the Head what to do. If we, as a local body, made up of individuals are not in harmony, we are not at one with Him. Our walk of faith is not growing.
 - 4) The reason why so many born again children never mature into that full man of God is because a walk in the Lord requires sacrifice. It requires bearing some marks in your physical body, for did He not bear some marks in His? Paul had the marks of Christ on him. *Gal 6:17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.* Some do not want to have their bodies marked.
- g. In summary, we walk before God as children, we walk after Him as servants, we walk with him as friend, and we walk in Him as members of His body.

3. To be perfect – to be what God designed you to be (Mt 5:18; 19:21)

B. God’s Covenant Expanded (17:2-14)

1. The Lord personally appears to Abram
2. Establishes an _____ Covenant
 - a. For the _____ time now God reaffirms the land and seed covenant to his old servant. (See Gen. 12:2, 3, 7,- 13:14-17; 15.5.)
 - b. On this occasion (17:9-14), God commanded Abraham to _____ himself, all the males of his household, and each future male baby on the eighth day of birth.
 - c. Following is a brief summary of circumcision as found in the Bible.
 - 1) Abraham was the first man to be circumcised. This in itself was a real act of faith, for it rendered completely helpless all the males in the camp.
 - 2) Circumcision was to be the seal (or sign) of God's promise, but not the source.
 - 3) Faith in God's Word was the source.
 - 4) Circumcision of the flesh without circumcision of the heart is absolutely worthless. (Deut. 10: 12, 16).
 - 5) Circumcision was set aside in Acts 15:29.
3. Bases the entire covenant with Abram on Himself, and His abilities and perfection – THANK GOD

- a) God explained to Abraham how to perform the task and on whom:
 _____ born into his house and any male child purchased with money and added to his house shall be circumcised.
- b) God also told Abraham WHEN: on the _____ after the son is born. The eighth day was probably chosen to give time for the baby to gain strength and also so that he would have passed one Sabbath Day. Also, the eighth day was a sign of something new, a new beginning, as of a new week.
- c. Spiritual Circumcision
- 1) _____.
- a) Physical circumcision performed by hand differs from the spiritual act that is made by the Holy Ghost. The difference is more than in the physical act of cutting the foreskin.
- b) Spiritual circumcision made by the Holy Ghost circumcised (cuts) our soul and spirit from our flesh. It was as if God took a laser, *Heb.4:12*, and separated our body from our soul and spirit. Once we understand this it helps us in understanding that when the body dies, the soul and spirit return to God that created them. The body returns to the dust.
- 2) _____ by God *Col. 2:11*. The day we accepted Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we received the new birth. We immediately were recreated in the image of God. We regained that image Adam lost in transgression. Regardless, there is still a curse of death on the flesh, *Gen 3:19...till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return*. The day Adam sinned, he died spiritually. The day we accept Jesus we live spiritually.
- 3) _____.
- a) Spiritual circumcision was not performed in the Old Testament because no one received the new birth. Old Testament saints were not moved or indwelt by the Holy Ghost in the same manner that New Testament saints are.
- b) Under the law of Moses when the Jew touched something with the flesh that was listed as unclean, the soul of the one that did the touching was also unclean, *Lev 5:2 Or if a soul touch any unclean thing, whether it be a carcase of an unclean beast, or a carcase of unclean cattle, or the carcase of unclean creeping things, and if it be hidden from him; he also shall be unclean, and guilty*. How could an intangible soul touch some tangible unclean thing? The soul touched it by way of the flesh. *Lev 22:6 The soul which hath touched any such shall be unclean until even, and shall not eat of the holy things, unless he wash his flesh with water*. Their soul was cleaned by washing the flesh with water. From this and other passage relating to the Law of Moses we come to understand that the folks living under the law were united in soul and body.
- c) Understanding what spiritual circumcision through the new birth did for us ought to make us appreciate the grace of God. Now when we read the book of *Leviticus* we can have a better understanding of the ceremonial rituals these folks lived under in their futile efforts to remain clean. If they kept the letter of the law, they were limited as to what they could do without contaminating themselves.
- d) Once a person accepts Jesus as Saviour, they are spiritually circumcised. What this means is that even though the flesh has occasion to sin, the soul and spirit is kept by God. If we would follow what Paul taught and liken the flesh as being dead and cut off, we would not grieve the spirit and soul with the burdens of the flesh.
- d. Christian Circumcision:
- 1) Christians are said to be circumcised in Christ <Col. 2:11>. This circumcision is asserted to be "circumcision made without hands," that is, a spiritual reality and not a physical rite, the antitype and not the type. Physical circumcision was a putting off of a part of the flesh as a symbol of covenant relationship of God's people with a holy God. Christian circumcision is "removal of" not a part, but the entire "body of the flesh." "The body of the flesh" is the physical body controlled by the old fallen nature that all possess, saved as well as unsaved. The "removal of" is positional truth, that is, truth that arises as a result of the believer's being placed in Christ by the Spirit's baptizing work. Because the sin nature was judged by Christ in His death, so the believer by virtue of his organic union and identification with his Lord shares that "removal" that Christ accomplished, just as he shares Christ's fullness and is

declared to be "complete" in Him. <2:10>. The believer's circumcision is not only a spiritual reality consisting in the putting off of the body of the flesh; it is more precisely Christ's circumcision, effected by Him and imputed to the believer: "In Him you were also circumcised . . . by the circumcision of Christ" <2:11>. Our Lord's circumcision mentioned in this passage has no reference to His physical circumcision when He was eight days old, but is a meaningful term the apostle applies to Christ's death to the sin nature. It is the truth enunciated in <Rom. 6:10>, "For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all," and <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." It is thus apparent that the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit <Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 2:12> effects spiritual circumcision. (from New Unger's Bible Dictionary)

C. God's Promise (17:15-22)

1. The seed of promise.
 - a. Abraham wants a seed. God wants to give Abraham the seed. However, if we remember anything at all about the seed of man we know there is something wrong with the blood line of man, for since Adam transgressed, every child was born in the likeness of Adam, **Gen. 5:1-3**. Recall from our earlier studies that Adam was created in the likeness of God. This was not the case with the sons of Adam. We received his fallen nature. Somewhere along the way the human race got some poison in our blood. We can never be in the image of God until we have a type of a blood transfusion. Remember that command about not eating blood.
 - b. In His own time and manner, God is preparing a remedy for that disease (sin) that contaminates the blood line of man and eventually kills us. However, God does not do things according to our ways and means. His ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not our thoughts. That is why we must adjust our thinking to meet the demands of the word. God will redeem mankind through the Promised Seed, **1 Pet. 1:23**. His precious blood was shed for us, **Heb 9:22** *And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and **without shedding of blood is no remission.***
2. The Disbelief – can you blame Abraham for not believing?
 - a. Had already trusted the Lord, but nothing was coming about LIKE what Abraham expected
 - b. Hard to KEEP trusting the Lord – especially when we have our own ideas of how God should fulfil His promises
 - c. Laughter is a good medicine unless it is a mocking, unbelieving kind of laughter
 - d. God overcomes unbelief by going ahead with His plans anyway

D. Abraham's Circumcision (17:23-27).

1. Immediate obedience, **Gen. 17:23-27**.
2. Abraham took Ishmael, all the males born in his house, all those bought, and circumcised them in the selfsame day. This set them apart from other families. He did not ask why or when, or how, he just followed God's instructions immediately, **Ps. 119:60**.
3. Abraham did not excuse himself, but rather set himself as an example to the others as leader of the household. All fathers should set a high standard and be an example of what God has commanded us to be.

III. Conclusion

IV. Study Questions