

## Genesis 17

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How do you react to when God speaks to you?

How do you let the covenant of God affect and inform your life?

Explain the text

How long have you waited on God?

Why does he take so long to fulfil on this promise? (13 years)  
"But when chapter 17 opens, Abram is ninety-nine years old and has almost nothing to show for all the promises God had made—only a thirteen-year-old illegitimate son." Kurt Strassner, Opening up Genesis,

"One can well imagine that Abram was hurt by the suppressed smiles on the faces of his men when he told them to call him Abraham, meaning the father of a multitude of nations—when he was 99 years old (vv. 1, 24). Yet Abraham knew that God had not deceived him. His new name and his wife's new name were perpetual reminders of God's sure word. Every time someone addressed him he would recall God's promise, until finally Isaac, the child of promise, would call him "Abba" (father)." - Allen P. Ross

"After Abraham's battle with the four kings, God came to him as a warrior and told him He was his "shield." When Abraham wondered about his refusal of Sodom's wealth, God told him He was his "exceedingly great reward" (Gen. 15:1). Now when Abraham and Sarah were "as good as dead," God assured them that He was more than sufficient to bring about the miracle birth. God comes to us in the ways we need Him most." - Warren W. Wiersbe

Covenant- God wants those who are the beneficiary of this covenant to be sure it came from a miraculous source, Isaac is born by the power of God, not man!

"They would recognise and remember: (a) that native impurity must be laid aside, especially in marriage, and (b) that human nature is unable to generate the promised seed. They must be loyal to the family. Any Israelite who refused to be cut physically in this way would be cut off (separated) from his people (v. 14) because of his disobedience to God's command."-  
Allen P. Ross

"The Jews' ownership of the land depends solely on God's gracious covenant with Abraham: God gave them the land. But their possession and enjoyment of the land depends on their faithfulness to obey the Lord. This was the theme of Moses' messages in Deuteronomy. More than sixty times in that book, Moses told the people they would inherit or possess the land; and at least twenty-five times, Moses reminded them that the land was a gift from the Lord. God's name was there (Deut. 12:5, 11, 21), and He would watch over the land to bless it, if His people walked in His ways."- Warren W. Wiersbe

"The covenant people must bear the mark of the covenant."-  
Warren W. Wiersbe

Name change- Something new is being started, a new baseline for where things begin.

"Now, in most modern cultures, we do not change our names when we become believers in Jesus. But our status is no less changed than was Abraham's or Sarah's. We, too, have gone from barren to blessed. We have gone from being guilty to being innocent; from being God's enemies to being his friends; and, as we will see in the next section, from being disobedient sinners to being saints with the capacity and desire to obey God!"-Kurt Strassner

Circumcision-

"Faith and works are not synonymous. But good works are the inevitable result of true faith. And Abraham illustrates this. In 17:9–14 God declared that the sign of his covenant with Abraham would be that Abraham should circumcise all the males in his house.

Easy for us to say, since, in our modern, health-related practice of circumcision, we do the deed right at birth, leaving no memory of the pain. But Abraham, remember, was ninety-nine years old. His son was thirteen, and his servants were all grown men. To circumcise them all would not be an easy task. But this was what God asked. So Abraham faced a test. Would he really trust God, even when it was difficult? Would he prove his faith by obeying the God in whom he supposedly trusted? Yes, he would (17:23). Abraham did just “as God had said”! He demonstrated his faith by obedience. And so must we!”- Kurt Strassner

"Circumcision was not a new rite, for other nations practiced it in Abraham's time; but God now gave it new importance and special meaning. For the descendants of Abraham, circumcision was not an option; it was an obligation."- Warren W. Wiersbe

"Circumcision. The rite involves removing the flap of skin that covers the tip of the male's penis. This is done the eighth day of a Jewish boy's life. Circumcision was the physical mark of participation in the covenant which God made with Abraham and his descendants. One who did not consider covenant relationship with God important enough to identify himself or his children with the covenant people, and thus did not practice circumcision, “will be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant” (v. 14). Both testaments, however, testify that the physical sign is no more than a formality. It symbolises a readiness to respond to God that is spoken of as “circumcision of the heart” (Deut. 10:16; Phil. 3:3)”- Lawrence O. Richards

God predicts Kings of Nations, descend from Abraham and Sarah

"Since God's covenant involved Abraham's “seed,” it was fitting that the mark of the covenant be on the male organ of generation. Since all people are conceived in sin (Ps. 51:5), this special mark would remind them that they were accepted by God because of His gracious covenant. It was God who chose the Jews, not the Jews who chose God (Deut. 7:1–11); and He chose them to be a holy people.”- Warren W. Wiersbe

Abraham laughs- Abraham asks for the blessing to be on Ishmael.

God confirms the child and names him Isaac (meaning “Laughs”)

God confirms his relationship with Abraham and blesses Ishmael- and thus Kings will come from this line as well. (God cannot deny his character)

Abraham carries out the circumcision-

"What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness."-Romans 4:1–5

"There is a practical lesson here for all who seek to live by faith: When God is preparing a bright future for you, don't cling to the things of the past. Ishmael represented the past, Isaac the future."- Warren W. Wiersbe

Ill-Fridge- We are used to our parents providing food through the fridge in our house, as we grow we take this action for granted as a promise from them to us that they will take care of us, it becomes a symbol of their blessing to us.

Point- God provides for us and we accept this as pure and righteous, this is in the action of Jesus for and on our behalf.

Application- We will act accordingly as a result. Once this sinks in, we will adjust our life to conform to his will, knowing it represents the best for us and those around.

Application

How God promises to speak today

What the Covenant means today

What is the mark of our covenant? The Holy Spirit, Radical Obedience- Fruit of the Spirit.

"Unfortunately, the Jewish people eventually made this ritual a means of salvation. Circumcision was a guarantee that you were

accepted by God. (Some people today place the same false confidence in baptism, Communion, and other religious rites that can be very meaningful if rightly used.) They did not realise that circumcision stood for something much deeper: the person's relationship to God. God wants us to "circumcise our hearts" and be totally devoted to Him in love and obedience (Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; Rom. 2:28–29)."- Warren W. Wiersbe

Circumcised heart,

"Elsewhere Scripture refers to circumcision as a symbol of separation, purity, and loyalty to the covenant. Moses said that God would circumcise the hearts of His people so that they might be devoted to Him (Deut. 30:6). And Paul wrote that "circumcision of the heart" (i.e., being inwardly set apart "by the Spirit") evidences salvation and fellowship with God (Rom. 2:28–29; cf. Rom. 4:11). One must turn in confidence to God and His promises, laying aside natural strength. Unbelief is described as having an uncircumcised heart (Jer. 9:26; Ezek. 44:7–9)."-Allen P. Ross

How are we sealed to this Covenant?

"What does all of this mean to Christian believers today? The seal of our salvation is not an external rite but the presence of an internal witness in the person of the Holy Spirit of God (Eph. 1:13; 4:30; Rom. 8:9, 16). We have experienced a "spiritual circumcision" (Col. 2:9–12) that makes us part of the "true circumcision" (Phil. 3:1–3). When we trusted Christ to save us, the Spirit of God performed "spiritual surgery" that enables us to have victory over the desires of the old nature and the old life.

Circumcision removes only a part of the body, but the true "spiritual circumcision" puts off "the body of the sins of the flesh" (Col. 2:11) and deals radically with the sin nature.

This "spiritual circumcision" is accomplished at conversion when the sinner believes in Christ and is baptised by the Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). This baptism identifies the believer with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, and also in His circumcision (Col. 2:11–12; Luke 2:21). It is not "the circumcision of Moses" but "the circumcision of Christ" that is important to the Christian believer.

Donald Grey Barnhouse has said, "We have a nature of sin that must be dealt with by the knife ... The thing must be dealt with as

a whole, and not piecemeal.” In Christ, we can “walk in the Spirit and ... not fulfil the lusts of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).

Abraham immediately obeyed God and gave every male in his household the mark of the covenant. No doubt when he told them his new name, he also explained what this ritual meant.” - Warren W. Wiersbe

"Romans 4:9–12 makes it clear that the physical operation had nothing to do with Abraham’s eternal salvation. Abraham had believed God and received God’s righteousness before he ever was circumcised (Gen. 15:6). Circumcision was not the means of his salvation but the mark of his separation as a man in covenant relationship with God. The legalistic element in the early church tried to make circumcision and obedience to the Law a requirement for salvation for the Gentiles, but this heresy was refuted (Acts 15:1–35). In his Galatian Epistle, Paul argues convincingly for salvation by grace alone.” - Warren W. Wiersbe

We can bring this into existence for those around.

"The lesson? If we desire more faith, we ought to get ourselves more familiar with God’s Word! Faith is a response to God’s Word!" - Kurt Strassner