

Now Paul comes to explain why we are complete in Jesus Christ. In this great passage before us the great Apostle uses sacramental terms to explain the tremendous things that have been done for the believers in Colosse.

Sacrament: a sacrament in the Bible was a symbol or a rite, performed in the physical world, which set before the senses a meaning in the spiritual world, or some promise of God that was yet to come. For instance, the sacrifice of a lamb on an altar pointed to the taking away of sins by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Not only was a sacrament a sign, but it was also a seal: a guarantee by the God of Heaven that the promises were true and that He would keep them. So we say that the sacraments are signs and seals of the promises of God: in some way they make the promise visible, and also guarantee to us that God is faithful and true to us in keeping the promise.

The first sacramental term that Paul uses in this passage is circumcision. In order to understand Paul's teaching it will be necessary for us to understand the idea of circumcision. To do that we must go back to the institution of circumcision in Genesis.

I. The institution of Circumcision. Two things are necessary: the idea of covenant; and the idea of circumcision, and they are very closely related.

A. Covenant: Gen. 15: read whole chapter. Key: verse 18: "made a covenant" is literally "cut a covenant." The word "cut" literally means just that; to cut with a knife or a sharp instrument. It is very widely used in the Old Testament from Genesis to Zachariah to cut a covenant;

Explain: practice of making covenants in Ancient Times. It carried a curse, that anyone that did not keep the covenant was to be cut off.

B. Circumcision: Genesis 17:1-14. Those who do not keep the covenant were to be "cut off" the curse of the covenant was to come upon them. Circumcision was a very rich and meaningful ceremony in terms of the promises and warnings that God is giving to the race.

1. Something is wrong with mankind. Because the rite was connected with male sexuality, it indicated that the very act of procreation resulted in polluted offspring. Mankind is defiled at the source, and both men and women are born in sin. The bible teaches that this is because of Adam's sin. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. We come into this world alienated from God and under His wrath a curse. We are not cursed because we are polluted; we are polluted because we are under a curse: the curse that Adam gained for himself and for all his seed after him. Circumcision was an emphatic reminder of this fact.

2. vs. 14. The absolute necessity of cutting off that which defiles was emphasized in a physical way. So this was carried out in the nation of Israel, the nation that sprung from Abraham. Over and over again throughout the law: God speaks of the necessity of cutting off that which defiles: those who eat unclean things; those who perform the ceremonies improperly; those defiled with the dead; those who eat blood, or become contaminated with abominations; over and over again: They shall be cut off from the congregation. Cut off, cut off, cut off is the them that runs over and over again in the congregation of the circumcised, emphasizing the absolute necessity of man being clean of all defilement before he can worship God properly.

Jeremiah 44:10,11 shows the ultimate result of being defiled before God: "They are not humbled even unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walking in my law,

nor in my statutes, that I set before you and before your fathers. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah."

3. But this points to the deeper meaning of circumcision: the cutting of the root of sin, which is not in the flesh, but in the heart of man. Circumcision was a sacrament: it was done in the flesh, but of itself could never reach the heart of man. Judah WAS NOT HUMBLED. They were circumcised in the flesh, but their hearts were unchanged; they were not changed spiritually, but remained alienated from God.

Circumcision pointed to the spiritual necessity of the root of sin in the heart being cut off.

Lev. 23:29 On the day of atonement: "Ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people" YOU HAD TO BE SORRY: REALLY SORRY.

Deut. 10:15-22 READ "Circumcise your heart!!"

Deut. 30:5,6 "And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy father possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply the above thy fathers. And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the hearts of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live...."

Not only must the outward things of sense that pollute be taken away, but anything in the heart that pollutes must be taken away also. Inward and outward purity in heart and body is what is required to stand before the Lord.

4. But this brings us to the next point: "I will circumcise..." God is promising that the time will come when all pollution will be taken away from His people, and that He will do it Himself. This is nothing else than the Gospel age, and the coming of Jesus Christ into the world.
 - a. Romans 4:10. It was given to Abraham as a sign of faith.
 - b. The true Jew was one who was circumcised inwardly.
 - c. I Cor. 7:18,19: keeping the commandments: Love the Lord...etc. Not in ceremonies but in reality.
 - d. Philippians 3:3: Circumcision was designed to show the vanity of hope in man [flesh] and his strength, but to point to confidence in Jesus Christ. Paul says in this passage that he counted that all dung, that he might win Christ.
 - e. Galatians 5:6: "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."
 - f. Gal. 6:15: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."
 5. So the point is this. God requires absolute purity and holiness. Everything unholy must be cut off, both of the flesh and of the spirit. The question is not whether or not God requires it, but how this cutting off is to be done.
- II. Colossians 2:11: "by the circumcision of Christ." Come back to Genesis 15. God cut a covenant with Abraham.
- A smoking furnace, and a burning lamp. God himself passed between the pieces and took the curse upon Himself.

Isaiah 53:8 He was cut off from the land of the living. He was made filth and uncleanness for us. He was the filth of the human race and was cut off in our place. He was made an unclean thing, so that we might be made partakers of His righteousness.

See II Corinthians 5:19-21 "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."