

Cutting Away

02/08/26

How do you like your steak or pork chops? Do you like a little fat or a lot of fat on your steak? Do you cut off as much fat as possible before you fix them? I would add fat on if I could. I love fat on my steaks and pork chops. When I worked at Weis, I would have to cut meat at times on weekends if the meat department didn't have anyone working. We were to cut as much fat off as possible – I thought it was a waste. Today, we'll see that when we allow Jesus into our heart and mind, there is a procedure done that requires cutting. This cutting is needed for us to be able to follow Jesus in the correct way. We talked last week on how Paul's motive was guided by the Holy Spirit to help the Gentile Church to have a perfect relationship with Jesus. This perfect relationship means the fulfilling of the Great Command that Jesus gave in Mark 12: 30, "And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. (NLT)" When you strive for this type of perfection, everything else falls into place like being able to love people. You can't love people correctly until you live out the Great Command. Then, you'll discover that everything else in the Christian realm centers around this Great Command. Once you discover this, then you'll start to see how different you are becoming compared to the pagan world. Paul wanted the Church to understand that new life in Jesus Christ is radical – it is a new life through the blood of Jesus. For one to follow Jesus, they must come to this mental understanding that following Jesus is more than just calling oneself a Christian or just going good deeds or doing social justice which is big in today's world. There has to be some cutting involved. So, let's take a closer look into what Paul is telling the Colossian Church.

Let's turn to Colossian 2: 1 – 11, "2 I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other believers who have never met me personally. ² I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that

they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. ³ In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

⁴ I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments. ⁵ For though I am far away from you, my heart is with you. And I rejoice that you are living as you should and that your faith in Christ is strong. ⁶ And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. ⁷ Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. ⁸ Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers^[a] of this world, rather than from Christ. ⁹ For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.^[b] ¹⁰ So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority. ¹¹ When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature.^[c] (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

Now, we have to remember one of the reasons Paul writes these letters is to deal with some of the false teaching going on in churches and with the culture of the day. Not only does Paul want the Church to have perfect love for Jesus, but in verse two, he also wants them to be knit together in love and to have wisdom and understanding of God's plan for mankind. Paul is trying to get them refocused on following Jesus like when they first believed. In verse three, Paul tells the Church that in Jesus lies hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Paul didn't want the church to rely on human teaching and thought because that was seeping into the Church. Greek thought and Roman thought. Plus, there was Jewish teaching which we'll talk more about shortly. Paul wanted the Church to go back and refocus on Jesus because that is where all the wisdom and knowledge of the Holy is found. We are more guilty today than the Colossian Church on drifting away from Jesus because of human thought and teaching. We no longer rely on the Spirit of God to give us guidance and direction. We rely more on books and human teaching and then we wonder why it was so easy for us to drift away from our first love when we were first saved through Jesus. The Colossian Church didn't have the books we do today, but they had word of mouth and they had leaders and teachers that were teaching different versions of the teachings of Jesus. Paul knew he couldn't be there to correct or to help them to refocus on Jesus. Paul was in prison at Rome. Paul knew this church had strong faith in Jesus

because he states that in verse 5. However, false teaching was making them have a harder time following Jesus. One of the things that really bugs me is the film that develops on vehicle windows. During the Summer, you notice it when the sun shines off it or when the window fogs up, it's harder to see through when that inside film develops and it's so hard to clean off. Just plain Windex doesn't work very well. When the film is thick, you can still see in front of the vehicle, but not as well. This was the problem of the Colossian Church. They were following Jesus, but their view of Jesus started to become cloudy. When this happens, we start to focus more to the sides and they were starting to listen to persuasive arguments as Paul calls it in verse 4. If one is to love Jesus with everything one has, one can't start to focus on other things because it doesn't take long for the love for Jesus to cool which causes drifting. So, Paul reminds them that they still must continue to live in obedience to Him (Jesus). Paul didn't want other false teachers to tell them differently which was happening. Instead of listening to this false teaching, they are to let their spiritual roots grow down into Jesus so they could draw up nourishment so that their faith would grow strong and vigorous and boy, do we need that today – strong and vigorous. So, Paul warns them to not let someone or something to lead them astray with empty philosophy and high-sounding nonsense that comes from human thinking. I've been taking online classes at the Lutheran Seminary in Gettysburg for the past month for education credits that are required from the Nazarene denomination for pastors. The once Christian school has become a religious school in name only. As I was sitting there listening to some of the speakers, I kept thinking to myself how crazy this new teaching is. They have developed a crazy view of evangelicals and it's not a good view. I kept sitting there not believing what I was hearing that is supposed to be a Christian seminary. They have become so negative to evangelicals I will no longer have anything to do with the school. They have led many good people away from the true Gospel message of Jesus with their empty philosophy and high-sounding nonsense. How does one keep from getting all tangled up in this empty philosophy and high-sounding nonsense?

Well, Paul continues in verse 9 where he states, "For in Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body, and you are complete through your union with Christ. He is the Lord over every ruler and authority in the universe. When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised", but not by a physical procedure. It was a spiritual procedure – the cutting away of your sinful nature. (NLT)" Another false teaching that was being taught during Paul's day in the Church was from some Jews who thought the Gentiles needed to follow the old Jewish ways of the Old Testament

to be made right with God. Paul is telling the Church that they are not to follow human philosophy and high – sounding nonsense because its not from Christ and the Church should be complete through the union they have with Jesus. Paul is telling us a Christian follows Jesus and not this world and we have to be so careful not to. Some of these Jewish people were telling the Gentile Church that they had to be circumcised in the Old Testament way to be part of the Church. So, Paul tells them that by using the same Old Testament term that body circumcision is no longer needed, but has changed to a spiritual circumcision. Paul is smart by using the same old term that was well known during this time period. So, let's spend some time in looking into what is circumcision and why it was done in the Old Testament. Let's start in Genesis 17: 9 – 14 where we read this, ⁹ Then God said to Abraham, "Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility. ¹⁰ This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised. ¹¹ You must cut off the flesh of your foreskin as a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹² From generation to generation, every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased. ¹³ All must be circumcised. Your bodies will bear the mark of my everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ Any male who fails to be circumcised will be cut off from the covenant family for breaking the covenant." (NLT – www.biblegateway.com). When God made His covenant with Abraham, circumcision of males was part of the covenant. I like what this Christian Dictionary says about circumcision in the Old Testament:

"According to the terms of the covenant symbolized by circumcision, the Lord undertook to be the God of Abraham and his descendants, and they were to belong to Him, worshiping and obeying only Him. The rite effected admission to the fellowship of the covenant people and secured for the individual, as a member of the nation, his share in the promises God made to the nation as a whole. Circumcision reminded the Israelites of God's promises to them and of the duties they had assumed. The prophets often reminded them that the outward rite, to have any significance, must be accompanied by a "circumcision of the heart" (Lev. 26: 41; Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 44:7. (New International Bible Dictionary, 220)"

I looked up the Greek phrase that Paul used here and it means “a cutting around made without hands”. This is a spiritual non-physical act of removing the “sinful nature” through the union of Jesus Christ (AI Overview). So, Paul has turned the physical term circumcision into a spiritual term for cutting away. No longer was the cutting away of the foreskin needed. What Jesus had done at the cross replaced the old covenant of Abraham and created a new covenant that we now enjoy through Jesus. However, to Paul circumcision still remained, but in a new way. We are now “circumcised” through the cutting away of our sinful nature. Paul tells us in verse 12 of Colossians that we were raised to a new life through Jesus because of this cutting process. We must understand that there is “new life” when we allow Jesus into our hearts and we go through a new kind of circumcision – a spiritual circumcision – a cutting away of the sinful nature. We’ll go into great length next week on the bigger meaning here from Paul because this is not talked enough today. We have been circumcised through Jesus Christ and because of the union we have with Jesus, that circumcision process continues until we die. So, what we need to do this week is to ask ourselves have I allowed Jesus into my heart and have I become a new person? If you have, then you need to ask have I allowed my old sinful nature back in because Paul tells us it was cut out when Jesus came into our heart. Just like fat cut from a tender steak. Have you been circumcised through Jesus by the working of the Holy Spirit and is that still happening today? I believe if Paul was here today, he would write the same letter to us because we’re having the same problem as the Colossian Church. We have allowed false teaching to seep in and we have allowed it to help us to get distracted from totaling following Jesus and we have drifted away more than we realize. How close are you really to Jesus? Allow the Holy Spirit to search your heart and the Spirit will give you that answer if you really want an answer.

NEW International Bible Dictionary. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1987

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, 1996