

99-01-17b

As we continue our worship this morning, turn with me to Romans chapter 4 for our scripture reading. Romans chapter 4. This, of course, is a direct New Testament reference to the study we are engaged in in the book of Genesis. And Paul makes for us the application, the primary application of the life of Abraham recorded in these intermediate chapters of the book.

Romans chapter 4. Paul, having made the point that righteousness does not come by what we do, but by what we trust. It is what we trust in that motivates us. It's what we trust in, what we treat as reality that determines our priorities and the way we make our decisions.

If we choose to trust God, His word, His promise, and His plan in and for the human race, we are declared righteous. Not having lifted a finger on the analogy of the sin that takes place in the mind. Jesus said, if you look at a woman to lust after her, you have already committed that sin in your heart.

And the positive side of that observation is that righteousness is also committed, if you will, in the heart. And we can't fool God. We can fool some of the people some of the time or most of the people most of the time, but God sees the heart and He knows whether we really care about His opinion and His judgment of us or not.

Whether our heart's desire is to live in a way that pleases Him or if we're just skating by in that area and we really have a different agenda. Paul makes the point in Romans 3, verse 21, that the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed. It has been witnessed to by the law and the prophets.

This isn't something brand new. Righteousness by faith is not, by the way, a mystery doctrine or part of the mystery that had been hidden away until the time of the church. It is witnessed by the law and the prophets, but it comes into fullness and takes center stage as the prime mover and measure of the life of believers in this age.

So, Paul, by way of illustration now in Romans 4, says, What shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Now, to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace, but as debt.

But to him who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. Notice the object of faith. To him who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.

Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes

righteousness apart from works. Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.

This, of course, is from Psalm 32. Does this blessedness come upon the circumcised only or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.

And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, so that the righteousness might be imputed to them also. And the father of circumcision to those who are not only of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised. For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, that is, through works, but through the righteousness of faith.

For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, because the law brings about wrath. Where there is no law, there is no transgression, therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only of those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. As it is written, I have made you a father of many nations, in the presence of him whom he believed, God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did, who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations according to what was spoken, so shall your descendants be.

And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body already dead, since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what he had promised he was also able to perform, and therefore it was accounted to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but for us also.

It shall be imputed to us who believe in him, who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses and was raised because of our justification. That's a long and rich chapter. We have exegeted it and gone through it in detail in our study of the Book of Romans.

But in overview, what is the principle? When God credited righteousness to Abraham, we've already seen that this was prior to his circumcision, prior to his renaming. He was Abram. But it was well after the point of his salvation, his belief in God and his path of obedience in leaving Ur, in going to the promised land, in offering sacrifice to God, in trusting God for victory and so forth.

God made him a promise and he believed it. So this is the living faith of a believer that's in view with Abraham. Interestingly, the covenant that is in view, the faith that is in view, and the sign of that covenant and that faith that we are in the midst of studying, which is circumcision, all of these things have to do with living faith, the operational faith of a believer.

It is not tied to salvation. Turn with me now back to Genesis 17 where we resume our study. We will refer again to Romans 4 later on.

But here in Genesis 17, we have yet again after Genesis 12 and after Genesis 15, another expansion, reiteration of God's covenant promise to Abraham. He is 99 years old. The Lord appears to him and gives the condition upon which these promises can be fulfilled.

Walk in front of my face and be complete. As we've seen, literally what verse 1 says, walk in front of my face and be complete. Be whole.

Be without blemish, without flaw. And I will make my covenant between me and you. And this, of course, is establish, confirm, perpetuate, cum, which we have also looked at in detail.

Abraham fell on his face. God talked with him and said, As for me, behold, my covenant is with you. Then in verse 9, he's going to say, As for you, you shall keep my covenant.

So the first section there in verses 4 through 8 is God's part. God says, As for me, this is what I will do. Verse 9, As for you, you shall keep my covenant.

You and your descendants after you throughout their generations. Later on, he will say in verse 15, As for Sarai, your wife, this is her portion. This is her part in the promise.

And then finally, in verse 20, As for Ishmael, here is his part. Here is his heritage under the promises. Then in verse 22, God finishes talking with him and God went up from Abram.

This, by the way, is common. I won't point you to all the passages, but when you look at theophanies or appearances of God, whether in person or in visions in the Old Testament, you will find at the beginning of the section God appeared to so-and-so and at the end God went up from so-and-so. And that pattern, of course, is in evidence here.

We have seen in the past the use of structure and of literary device to emphasize points in Scripture and it's very helpful to us to make those observations. We're in sort of a heavy section of Genesis. We've seen creation, we've seen the flood, we've seen lots of interesting things in Genesis so far.

We've seen interesting and captivating episodes in the life of Abraham when he goes up

and fights the kings and so forth. But here, this entire chapter, this reminds me a little bit of the epistles in the New Testament where there's not a story to carry you along. These are statements.

They have theological freight associated with them. For me, at least, it's a little bit more difficult to concentrate and keep up my enthusiasm and the stimulation of really learning something that's interesting and that kind of carries my mind along. In Hebrew, it wasn't quite so difficult because the structures were in existence.

We've seen many times in the past the use of chiasm, of parallelism, and other literary devices to point out what's important. Well, our old friend the chiasm is here again in Genesis 17. And there is a main point in this chapter.

I am not captivated and really grabbed and held onto by which part of this applies to Sarah and which part of it applies to Ishmael. I'm living thousands of years in the future. It's interesting to look at the Arabs and the Israelites and see what sorts of relationships they have.

But most of us, I think, are concerned with how should we live. What difference does the Word of God that I have learned this morning as I go into Monday and Tuesday, what difference does it really make? And sorting out the difference between what happens to Ishmael and what happens to Isaac is only useful if it makes a difference in my thinking, in your thinking, in how we prioritize, how we are motivated, what we decide, what we think and what we do. So where is the thing that makes the difference? I've told you this story before.

It was one of the most helpful things in my early learning and studying the Word of God when I was working one summer. The first summer I was in seminary at a really difficult time having left the service finding any employment that would pay anything at all. And in my first summer of seminary, I was very graciously taken on as temporary help by a piano company up in Tulsa.

And I was moving pianos and doing grunt work. And one of the fellows there that helped to get me that employment was also the music director at our church and quite a character in his own right. He later became associated with the Glenhaven Youth Ranch.

Some of you have met him, Brian Elmore. One of the things that Brian told me, he was a salesman at that time at Keynote Music. And we would talk, of course, being in church, and he knew I was in seminary and so forth.

We would talk about the effectiveness of different lessons that we might have heard or speakers that we had heard and so forth. And Brian said, when I'm selling a piano and someone comes in, I can dazzle them with my knowledge of these Yamaha pianos that we carry. I can tell them all about what kind of finish Yamaha uses and what kind of

wood they use and the craftsmanship and so forth.

But he said, I have found that it is most effective in selling a piano when I can demonstrate the benefit to the purchaser to answer the question, so what? So what that they use three layers of clear coat shellac? So what that they have balanced keys with lead weights in the end opposite where you press? So what? You can dazzle me with all these facts, but what does that mean to me? And so he said, if I can talk to them about the superior feel and responsiveness and touch of this piano because it has the lead weights in the other end of the keys and because of the quality of felt that they use and so forth, now that's a motivating factor to the buyer to answer the question, so what? Takes us from academic knowledge into practical operation. So we always want to ask ourselves that question and sometimes when we get caught up in the details of theology especially, it can easily lapse into mere knowledge rather than motivating wisdom that takes on a practical bent. Well, we have chiasm here and it's a wonderful thing because it points out to us what is the main point here in Genesis 17.

Okay, you've got the covenant, you've got circumcision, that's for Israel and that's all fine and good, so what? Well, let me point out a little bit about the structure here that I think you'll find interesting. If you've read this over and I know we've looked through it a few times already formally together, it doesn't immediately leap out at you that there's a structure here. But you'll notice first of all that sometimes even the small details serve as markers.

The first detail we're given in this chapter is that Abraham's age is 99. Interestingly, that same fact is mentioned again at the end of the chapter, verse 24. And right away when we start seeing the repetition of something that we already know, it makes us think, I wonder if this is a marker, I wonder if this is pointing out to me that there may be a set of brackets here that would mark a chiasm and when we find this structure of A and A prime and inside that B and B prime and inside that C and C prime, this is going to not only give me the basis of comparison of each of those parallel and opposite statements, but also they lead inexorably toward a central concept which is the point.

So out of all these things, is circumcision the point? Is the covenant the point? Is the condition the point? What's really the substance of this? Because that's what we want to take away and say this is what I got from studying this portion of the Word of God. I think one of the biggest tests of effective communication by a teacher or a pastor is if somebody asks you Tuesday, oh, were you at Grace and Truth on Sunday? Oh, yeah. Well, what was the lesson about? Well, sometimes I can't even answer that question and that's a terrible thing.

Hopefully there's something we carry away that sticks with us and we say, oh, well, it was about this. We learned what this is all about. There ought to be something that sticks with us.

There's been a tendency in our particular corner of Christian faith and practice to concentrate on the intake of the Word of God. And sometimes we've had phases in our life where we sort of measured how well we're doing spiritually by, well, did I take in the Word of God? Did I attend Bible class? Did I hear a tape? Did I spend time in meditation? Did I get my devotions in or whatever? And if we say, well, yes, I took 15 minutes before I went to work and read over some scripture or I went over my notes from Sunday or I heard a tape or I went to Bible class and we say, well, that's taken care of. And then we just go on.

We say, well, I punched that part of my ticket. But the real measure is do we absorb and retain something that we can bring up for meditation later? The measure is not did I hear. It's do I remember.

It isn't do I have something here someplace that I can listen to or look at, but do I have something in my soul that I can bring up and meditate on? Am I carrying it around with me? Not can I go get it? And a lot of people that have not, a lot of us that have not really wrapped our minds around that, when we get into a crisis, we say, boy, I'm in a quandary. I don't know what to do. Where's my Bible? Where are my notes? Let me see if I can find something I can look up to help me in this situation.

It's too late. What we need and what God is testing us over is not, this is not an open book test, so to speak. It's what we've already learned.

And we're really quick to go rush and try to get a concordance or a topical Bible or something when an occasion comes up or when a test comes up. But like any good teaching, the real test is over what we already know, what we have or should have in our hearts. So what do we want to bring away from this study of Genesis in general and the study of this chapter in particular? Well, this is one of the things that helps us, these structures.

Sometimes people will point out structure just for its own sake and it's sort of a filler. And you come away saying, well, I learned on Tuesday, somebody says, well, what did you cover in church on Sunday? Oh, well, there's a chiasm in Genesis 17. That's not the point.

What does that do for us? What did it point out for us? Where is the emphasis in the chapter? That's what we're looking for. So first of all, we're finding that thing and then we'll find what it points to. So we see an outer bracket here in the mention or repetition of the age of Abraham.

So this is in verse 1a, you have Abraham who's 99 years old. And again, over in verse 24, Abraham is 99. So you can mark that as your a and your a prime.

The next thing that happens is in the second half of verse 1, the Lord appeared to

Abraham. The Lord appeared to him. Well, interestingly, in verse 22, God went up from Abraham.

So you have another corresponding set of statements. God appears. God goes up.

And as I mentioned earlier, you'll find this frequently in the theophanic passages in the Old Testament. What's the third thing that takes place in verse 1? God speaks to Abraham. You have the same idea in verse 22.

It says, He finished talking with him. Sometimes we think, well, these are just kind of filler statements, but this serves to reinforce our pattern, our structure here in the chapter. The fourth thing that we have in verses 1 and 2 is the first speech that we've already covered.

I am El Shaddai. Walk in front of my face and be Tamim. Be blameless, complete, whole, unblemished, not disqualified.

Walk in front of my face with integrity might be the best translation. So this is God's first speech. We know that there are markers where God says, as for me, as for you, as for Sarai, as for Ishmael.

Well, the first speech, this is sort of the preamble or the introduction. And that is in verses 1 and 2. And this corresponds with the fifth speech because there are a total of five, the preamble and then God, Abram, Sarai and Ishmael clauses. So you have the first speech in verses 1 and 2. You have the fifth speech in verses 19 through 21, which is the Ishmael section.

What's going to happen with Ishmael? Abram says, in verse 3, what does Abram do? He falls on his face. Abram falls on his face in verse 3. You might think, well, now he's on his face for the whole rest of the episode. But look at verse 17.

Abram fell on his face again. So this is our, if you've been keeping track of this, Abraham's age would be A and A prime, the Lord appearing. And then going up would be B prime, God speaking in verse 1 and ceasing to speak in verse 22.

That would be your C and C prime or your third concentric brackets there. The first speech would be D in verse 1 and 2. Actually, you know, the third part of verse 1 there and verse 2. And the fifth speech in verses 19 through 21. So that's your D and D prime.

Abraham's falling on his face in verse 3 and in verse 17. That would be your E and your E prime. So you can see this moving inexorably toward the center of the chapter.

What would correspond to the sixth element or element F is the second speech in verses 4 through 8 when God says, as for me, this is what I am going to do. We might expect that this is going to correspond to a speech and it does, which is the fourth speech in

verses 15 and 16. You'll notice that even the elements of these speeches correspond.

For example, when God speaks in the second section in verses 4 through 8, what does He do? He changes Abraham's name to Abraham. He talks about many nations. He talks about kings coming from Abraham.

You're going to be the father of kings. The very same elements show up in the fourth speech that corresponds to it in verses 15 and 16. He says, Sarai's name is going to be changed to Sarah.

She is going to be a mother of nations and kings and peoples. So even the content of these speeches coincide. So that's sort of our F and F prime, if you will.

So now what do we find at the center of this wonderful structure? It's the content of verses 9 through 14, which is the third speech. What is the content of the third speech? As for you, Abraham, 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 child among you shall be circumcised and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins. It shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. Remember now, Genesis 17 is not the cutting of the covenant.

It's not the giving, Nathan. To cut a covenant, karat, is to initiate a covenant, like when God cut the covenant into stone at Sinai. To give a covenant is to initiate a covenant.

This is neither Nathan to give, this of course is where the name Nathan, if you know anybody named Nathan, their name is from the Hebrew and it means, it's from the verb to give, Nathan. Nor is it from karat, which is to cut. This is the kum, Q-U-M, verb, which means to perpetuate, to maintain, to confirm something that's already in existence.

And this covenant is going to be maintained by God and it is to be maintained and kept up and kept in the mind by Abraham and his descendants. And the sign, the oath of this covenant is circumcision. Eight day old male children are to be circumcised.

Every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised. Of course, the whole anti-slavery idea, I don't think anybody wants to come out and say, I'm a big fan of slavery, let's bring it back, let's practice it, and so forth.

But you run into big problems looking for biblical support for the abolishing or eradicating of slavery because God says, Abraham, when you buy somebody with your money, what is that? That's slavery. God doesn't say, Abraham, don't you dare ever buy anybody with your money. He says, when you buy them, circumcise them.

So, that's an aside. That's not our subject this morning. God uses slavery in His plan, doesn't He? The Israelites become slaves and so forth.

I'm not advocating slavery. I'm not saying it shouldn't have been abolished. I'm just pointing out what's in the scriptures that we need to have a balanced view of these things.

And if there was a very positive side to slavery, look at this particular situation. If you were someone in a conquered nation, and if you were going to be a slave, whose slave would you like to be? Would you like to be the slave of the Hittite kings or the slave of the Egyptian pharaoh? Or would you like to be a slave of Abraham and be brought into his household and made party to his covenant with Almighty God? This is a way that God could arrange for the transport of people who would have faith in Him out of their pagan country and their pagan religion and their destitute circumstances into a household where they would be cared for, where they would be respected, where they would be provided not only with the material things of life, but also with the knowledge of God. Because they have been purchased out of the slave market, purchased out of destitution and terrible circumstances and brought to a place of blessing.

So it is not the institution itself that bears the evil. It is the abuse of that institution like any other. Anything can be abused.

Of course, you get all your arguments about gun control and everything else in this light. It isn't the existence of something so much as what people make of it and what people do with it. So here at the center, here in the place of emphasis in this chapter is circumcision.

Well, what are we to make of this? We began our analysis of circumcision a little bit last week. We saw that the removal of this piece of flesh has significance. It has spiritual significance even in the Old Testament.

And it is used metaphorically as often if not more often than it is literally even in the Old Testament to speak of circumcision of the heart. In Jeremiah, there is even a reference to circumcision of the ears. Figure that out.

If you look at it in context, it is fairly straightforward. But this is the point of emphasis. So this is what we need to spend our time on.

Now, what is our answer to the question so what about circumcision? We understand that the nation of Israel, the Jews historically, have always practiced this custom and it has become an identifying mark of their culture. And yet, it was also not exclusive to them even in this time. Circumcision had already been practiced before the time of Abraham.

We have bronze statues that have been unearthed. You know that Abraham, his time is

somewhere 2,800 B.C., somewhere in that range. And yet, we have statues from nearly a thousand years earlier that give us graphic evidence that circumcision was practiced in other cultures.

There are notes made even in the Word of God that there were other nations that practiced this. So it is not the act itself. It is the meaning that God assigns to it.

So what is the meaning that God assigns to circumcision? Well, He says here, it is a sign. And the word sign is our friend, ot, or O-T-H. It is kind of hard to render in English because it has a guttural at the beginning and a silent H at the end.

But this is a word that we encountered earlier in Genesis. We have encountered it a couple of times. Do you remember the other things that we have already seen in Genesis that were labeled as a sign? A little pop quiz here.

The rainbow. The rainbow was a sign of the promise. What did God say about the rainbow over in Genesis chapter 9? Actually, at the end of chapter 8, God speaks to Noah and delivers him out of the ark and then Noah builds an altar.

The Lord smells the aroma and He says that while earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, day and night shall not cease. He blesses Noah and his progeny. Gives him regulations about eating meat and not eating the blood.

And then in verse 9, we see some familiar language. What does Genesis 9.9 say? As for me... Covenant language right at the beginning. As for me, behold, I establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you.

We could read this verse forward into Genesis 17 or read a couple of verses of 17 back in here. The language is identical. And with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth, thus I establish my covenant with you.

Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood. Never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth. Notice anything that catches your eye in that verse? God says, I am not ever again going to cut off flesh.

Why does He say that? What is the right of circumcision? It is the cutting off of flesh. God says never again. What does that mean? It means He has done it, hasn't He? What did the flood do? The flood was a giant circumcision of the earth.

The flood removed the corruption of flesh from the earth. And God says, I'm never again going to cut off the flesh from the earth. That's my promise.

That's my covenant. I will never again cut off all flesh from the earth with a flood, with the waters of the flood to destroy the earth. I set my rainbow, in verse 13, in the cloud,

and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

There's an interesting foreshadowing and an interesting implication here in everything that is said in chapter 9. And we noted this as we went through a few months ago, that God says, now it's your job to cut off sin. It's your job to remove the evil that crops up in the human race. That's why in this context, why do we have God smelling this soothing aroma at the end of chapter 8, and then giving the regulations about capital punishment and the eating of blood, and then returning to the idea of not destroying the earth by a flood? Because God has delegated the responsibility for cutting off the flesh to man.

The administration of justice, the cutting off of the flesh that offends, the cutting off of the flesh that is unfruitful, that is useless, is delegated to man in the covenant. And there's a sign, there's a reminder that this has taken place, that God is no longer going to do that. This reminds me of, as most things do, of raising children.

It's amazing how much insight you can gain into God's teaching and God's statements to us as our Heavenly Father when we engage in those same things ourselves. There are many things we do for our children when they are small, that we don't do for them when they're older. You clean up after your children when they're very small.

You pick up their toys. You physically clean up after them when they engage in the natural processes of elimination. This is why pampers are such a big industry.

Children don't change their own pampers, do they? They do not take care of their need for and the process of elimination. We do that for them until a certain point. And when they grow to a certain point, we delegate that responsibility to them.

We say, now you are potty trained and you will go in and do these things for yourself. I'm not going to come in and employ the shaman on the roll there on your behalf. You're going to do that yourself.

I am not going to come in and clean up your room for you. You are going to do that yourself. I'm not going to cut your food and I'm not going to spoon it out of the jar and stick it in your mouth.

You're going to do that for yourself. God with the human race, as it matures, He gives the example. He gives the principle and executes that function at the flood of eliminating those whose hearts are only evil all the day and whose every imagination and plan and thought is anti-God, counter-God, minus-God.

He eliminates that. And then He says, I'm going to make a covenant with you. I'm not going to do that anymore.

You're going to do it. If a man takes another man's life, then by man his blood shall be shed. That's a divine ordinance.

And it is one that we have, as a society and culture and so forth, sought to get out from under. And we say, well, we don't want to do that anymore. We have ideas that it's immoral or taking too much upon ourselves.

One thing and another. Well, we have no choice. God assigned us that responsibility.

Anytime you look at the rainbow, remember, the rainbow is a reminder that capital punishment is our responsibility. People like to look at the rainbow and say, oh, God will never again destroy the earth by flood. The rainbow is a sign of the covenant.

And the covenant, God says, is I'm not going to accomplish that function anymore. You are. The rainbow is the reminder of our responsibility in that area and in a couple of others, as we saw when we went through Genesis chapter 9. But the rainbow isn't oat.

It is a sign. It's a reminder. And God says, it's going to remind me.

Why does God need a reminder not to destroy the earth with a flood? Not to cut off all flesh again with a flood? Because he's going to be tempted. Because he's going to look down at generations such as we live in and want to obliterate the whole thing. Go read the dialogue again in Exodus between God and Moses after the golden calf episode.

God says, Moses, if you'll just move to your right about 20 paces, I'm going to show you what kind of power I've got in obliterating this entire nation and I'll start over with you. And Moses says, Lord, wait. You've made promises.

What's your reputation going to be if you go back on your word? Moses reminds God. Of course, we know some things about God that caution us in pressing that too far. But Moses gets the opportunity to tell God what he knows and what he understands, much as we do in prayer.

We're not reminding God of anything that he forgot. But God will allow situations to persist, will bring situations to our attention to see what we know. What will we bring before him in our prayer? Just like he does with Moses.

Did God ever really intend to obliterate the Israelites? It's a moot point. God put that situation in front of Moses. Moses produced a response that was pleasing in God's sight and God did not obliterate the Israelites.

But God told Moses he was going to and I'm not going to stand there and say, oh, God didn't really mean it. I think he did. And I think he was counting on Moses to pray the prayer that he prayed to remind him of his promise so that he wouldn't.

We do this sometimes with our children. If you're not ready when it's time to leave, we're going to leave you behind. If you don't have your coat on and have your shoes tied and have all your stuff, we're just going to leave you.

Now, do we really intend or want to go off and leave our child? Well, there are parents who have done because their child didn't think they meant it. You have to assume that the parent means what they're saying. That's the point.

The parent wants you to believe that you mean what you say in order to not ever have to do it. It's this kind of thing that God does with us. He's our Father.

So, this was a sign. We also had even earlier on back in Genesis chapter 1, if you'll recall, the creation of the luminaries, the greater light by day and the lesser light by night. They are an oath.

They are a sign, a marker for signs, for seasons, for days, and for years. So, we are to regulate our conduct by these things. God will regulate His conduct when He sees the rainbow.

This oath of circumcision is to regulate the conduct. It is to be a reminder of truth that ought to make a difference. What difference does that make to us? We're going to pause and take our break.

When we come back, now that we've identified the center of this chiasm and the point of this passage and we've seen the oath or sign of circumcision, we'll try to answer for ourselves the question, so what? Let's pause here and take a break.