

# What the Bible Really Says About Routine Infant Circumcision

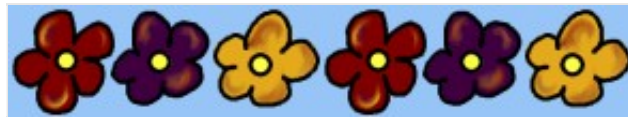
*by Laura Jezek*

Congratulations! You're expecting a baby! Nothing could be more joyful and exciting.

Did you know that one of the most important things you can do for your baby, if it turns out to be a boy, besides teaching Him about Jesus, is to leave his perfectly created little body **intact**? That's right, saying no to routine infant circumcision is just about the greatest display of love, compassion, and respect you may ever have the opportunity to show your child.

Choosing to protect your son from this horribly painful and totally unnecessary procedure is a decision that honors God, honors your spouse (even a circumcised father), honors yourself, honors your community, and of course honors your child.

Countless books have been written about the subject, and the American Academy of Pediatrics has declared circumcision unjustifiable (any possible benefits are clearly outweighed by the moral and medical problems inherent in it), but let us look at a broad overview of the subject. We will look at the strange and disturbing practice of routine infant circumcision from a Christ-centered, biblically-based perspective.



There is no room for debate or speculation. Christians are forbidden from practicing routine infant circumcision by the New Testament. There are only two sets of Christians who still circumcise their sons: those who do not know the Bible well enough to know what it teaches about the subject, and those who know but simply do not care (the Bible isn't their measure of living, their own mindset is.)

Contrast this set of circumstances with the circumstances that our parents' generation faced, when mothers in the delivery room were lied to and deceived, similar to the way Eve herself was. In an age when “tradition” ruled and myths abounded, one can hardly

blame our mothers for ignorantly handing over their babies. Twenty years ago, doctors actually believed that babies **felt no pain!!** Now, of course, no one can comprehend how people could have been in the dark about such an obvious fact. This was a time when fathers were excluded from the births of their own children, and mothers were told that breastfeeding would reduce them to behaving like cows. Full term healthy babies were kept in the nursery, away from the mothers they so desperately craved; and children in general were to be seen and not heard.

Today, everything has changed. Science and medicine have opened our eyes to the truth about babies in the womb and those newly born. A strong emphasis on family togetherness has brought Daddy into the delivery room, and made rooming-in with baby the norm. And mothers are encouraged to speak up and tell their doctors what they think is right and wrong. We, the parents, are responsible for defending and protecting our babies.

Now that the myths have been lifted and the medical ignorance replaced with accurate information, we at last know the facts surrounding routine infant circumcision. Here's what we know. Babies not only feel pain, they feel it more exquisitely than any other age group, simply because their nerve endings are fresh and uncalloused. Baby boys are still often subjected to surgery **without anesthesia**, something we wouldn't normally do to even our cats and dogs!

Trusting newborns have their wrists and ankles strapped down to a table as their tightly closed foreskins are ripped open and stretched to near the tearing point. Then a scalpel is used to amputate square inches of healthy, sensitive skin. (Imagine yourself in this situation.) The cutting is slow and painful and babies usually respond in one of two ways. Either with screaming (which can last from several minutes to several hours) or with a sudden lapse into a state that resembles unconsciousness.

This deep sleep has been studied by scientists who remark that it is deeper than any other form of sleep known to mankind. This desperate withdrawal is the body's coping mechanism for dealing with a pain too intense for the brain to process. After it is all over, if there are no surgical complications, the parents are given back their formerly perfect, now-wounded child with his red, raw, bleeding genitals tightly bandaged, and

given instructions for how to care for the wound with petroleum jelly and other protective lubricants. Some babies don't recover emotionally, as lactation consultants say "nursing strikes" are not uncommon. One woman we spoke with said that her baby boy had nursed fine the day prior to his circumcision, but after the painful procedure was over, he wouldn't go near her breasts. Try as she might to coax him, he wanted nothing to do with her, and she was forced to bottlefeed him permanently. Similar stories abound.

So why are 25% of all newborns (50% of baby boys) still made to suffer this inarguably excruciating, outdated procedure?

1. **Conformity** ("I'm willing to let my baby experience this just so he'll look like his daddy") Conformity, for conformity's sake, is a sin -- according to the Bible. No longer can parents say "I want junior to look like the other boys his age" since over half will be intact by the time he is using public bathrooms and locker rooms. Thankfully, if parents have the courage to break the cycle, this will be the last generation that has to worry about conforming to daddy's needless amputation as well. This is not a reason to put your son through painful, unnecessary surgery, especially in light of the fact that God's Word forbids it. You wouldn't remove his tonsils just because Daddy had his removed as a child, would you? If Daddy had lost a thumb in a hunting accident, would you want your son's hand to look just like Daddy's? We must use the common sense God gave us.
2. **Cleanliness** ("I heard a couple people say that its easier to keep it clean if there's no foreskin left") Another myth left over from the dark ages! If this was true, than evolution would be true as well. Either that, or God made one huge mistake when he designed and created the male anatomy, including the foreskin, and pronounced it "very good." Evolutionists love to say that we have all these "extra parts"-- biological accidents, they call them. Modern circumcision and evolution go hand in hand; you can't have one without the other. Fortunately, even the Darwinian enthusiasts have had to give up their line of reasoning as of late, since in the last 10-12 years science has fully discovered the important uses of the foreskin (just as they have the tonsils and the appendix!). And guess what? One of the functions that God

so brilliantly designed the foreskin for its cleanliness!

When a baby boy comes into the world, the foreskin is sealed shut and protects the extremely vulnerable "glans" from the urine and feces that will fill his diaper. True to God's amazing wisdom, the foreskin begins to loosen and retract naturally right about the time the child is toilet trained!! If that doesn't prove that God designed the human body, what does? Ape descendants, we are not. Once the foreskin loosens and retracts (something no parent or doctor should ever cause to happen prematurely), the male anatomy becomes as easy to wash and keep clean as any other part of the body. In fact, the intact male genitalia is much easier to keep clean than the female genitalia with all its flaps and folds. And, tragically, female circumcision persists in many third world countries. (Americans, being the hypocrites that we are, protest this very loudly!) But Europe and other modern nations do not routinely circumcise males or females, and the fact is, less than 1/10 of 1% of these males undergo circumcision later in life. (A simple outpatient procedure. Something much less painful or dangerous than with infants! Not to mention more ethical, as it's done with the male's consent!)

Why would any nation subject all their babies to something so traumatic when less than 1% would ever need it? America is the only Western nation to do so. C. Everett Koop, M.D. the famous Christian former Surgeon General has stated, "**All of the Western world raises its children uncircumcised** and it seems logical that, with the extent of health knowledge in those countries, such a practice must be safe." Intact boys benefit greatly from the protective function of the foreskin as it keeps the delicate skin of the glans moist, dark, and free from irritants and exposure to the elements. This is the same kind of skin found in the mouth, nose, and the inner genitalia of females. Notice these places are all kept dark and well lubricated. This is God's design. Go against that and you run into problems. Most of the problems circumcised males have with their genitals, intact males will never experience. This list includes irritated skin, rashes, chafing, redness, bumps and blisters, as well as sexual problems such as chronic erection failure and chronic premature ejaculation. God designed the foreskin for important sexual purposes, including to prevent such embarrassing predicaments as those mentioned. A basic

understanding of human anatomy would go a long way in changing male opinion about circumcision, since one of the foreskin's functions is to control the correct level of sexual stimulation in the beginning, and to greatly intensify the amount of pleasure in the end. Circumcised men miss out on so much! (Testimonies from men who underwent circumcision in the midst of their sexual relationships prove this point.) But that is precisely what should be expected when we go against God's design.

3. **Confusion** ("I thought that God must like circumcision since it's in the Old Testament") ("I heard there's a conspiracy against Jews to single them out for persecution by eliminating circumcision of Gentiles") ("I figure if all the men in the Old Testament were circumcised, it must have benefits") ("I thought the New Testament says it's just a matter of preference, circumcision and uncircumcision are both valid choices") Myths one and all! All of these statements are false and reflect one of the biggest handicaps that cripples the church today: partial biblical knowledge intermingled with partial biblical ignorance. A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing when you only know select verses here and there, without an understanding of the complete context and the overview of complete teaching. Since most Christians don't know their Bibles very well, or at least have given up the age-old practice of reading them chronologically or cover-to-cover, let's get right down to the facts.

- All the men who followed God in the Old Testament were certainly NOT circumcised. Adam, Able, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah (here's a plug for good health-the man who lived the longest in history was intact!), Noah, Shem (the father of the Semites), Terah, and countless other men, many of whom are listed in Scripture, were not circumcised. In fact, conservative Bible scholars estimate that Adam lived in 6,000-8,000 B.C., and Abraham didn't come onto the scene until 2,000 B.C., so that means the majority of men in the Old Testament (for 4,000-6,000 years!!), including those in the genealogy of Christ, were not circumcised. What's more, Abraham walked with God for most of his life without being circumcised (which didn't take place until he was 99 years old!). When God found favor with Abraham ("Blessed be Abram of

God Most High...who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And he gave him a tenth of all"), he was uncircumcised and continued to remain so for many, many years to come. Circumcision was also suspended by God for the 40 years in the wilderness.

- When God instituted circumcision, it was as a symbol of the Old Covenant (sacrifice of one's son, shedding of innocent blood, etc.), and as a prelude to the coming of the Sacrificial Lamb of God, Jesus Christ Himself. Relatively speaking, God waited til shortly before the advent of the Messiah to begin this practice that foreshadowed the meaning of Christ's sacrificial atonement. God wanted to make sure people understood very well the purpose of the Old Covenant before the New Covenant took its place. While the Old Covenant was symbolically pictured through animal sacrifice and infant circumcision, both were forever made obsolete (and abhorrent) by the dawn of the New Covenant. That is why the Scripture says that to shed the blood of a baby boy or an animal *now*, after Christ shed His own innocent blood once for all, would be blasphemous and mock our Lord's sacrifice. (The New Testament is very stringent in its warning about this!)
- Circumcision did not begin with the Jews at all, but was practiced by pagan nations (including most of Israel's enemies) long before Abraham's day. This barbaric, unholy, worldly connotation was precisely why God chose it, as a reminder of the commonality and baseness of sin (the focal point of the Old Covenant).
- **The circumcision that Abraham and his descendants practiced was something entirely different from modern circumcision. It merely involved cutting the tip of the foreskin, not removing it!** This is both a historical and an archaeological fact that can be found in any reference book of ancient culture. The ancient peoples, whether Jew or Gentile, wouldn't have dreamed of doing away with such a useful and pleasure-enhancing part of the body. Nor would God want such a thing! The tip of the foreskin was more than sufficient for fulfilling the bottom line purpose, which was to shed a few drops

of blood as a "sign" to all. This is one of the 3 reasons it was instituted during infancy. The tip of a newborn's foreskin hangs loosely past the end of the shaft. There was no "plastic bell" back then to try to pull all of the foreskin away from the shaft in order to cut it off. Ancient peoples couldn't have removed the tightly adhered foreskin even if they had wanted to, without doing considerable harm to the shaft as well. Had they tried, they would have cut off the entire genitalia more often than not (something that happens occasionally in modern times). This is why the two Hebrew words in the Old Testament that were used for Old Covenant circumcision were **namal** (this is the word God used with Abraham when He first instituted the ritual) and **muwl**. Namal simply means "clipped," just like the tips of the fingernails are clipped and the ends of the hair are clipped. The Hebrew language has words for "cut off", or "removed" which are entirely different than this word. Muwl is defined as meaning "to curtail, to blunt, to cut shorter." Again, the idea is to take a little off the end, not to cut off. To blunt something is to dull the edge. This is how the relatively short season of Old Covenant circumcision can be reconciled with the fact of creation and God's pronouncement that everything He made was good. Simply put, **God never ordained that the foreskin or any other part of the human body should be amputated (i.e. his creation destroyed)**, unless it became diseased. Our modern invention of foreskin amputation (modern circumcision) took place in Victorian times when several doctors and psychiatrists came up with the idea in hopes of discouraging self-stimulation. It didn't work, but the practice soon became ingrained as "tradition." And there are few things so safely guarded as tradition.

- God's purpose for animal sacrifice and infant circumcision were based on our love of sin. These two rituals were disgusting, bloody, repugnant, and mortifying to both humans and to God as well. But that is precisely why they, and the Old Covenant in general, were necessary-to deal with our disgusting, repugnant sins! These two customs were designed to be unpleasant, that is why they involved blood (something most humans inherently find distasteful), and why they were performed on the innocent (babies and animals). It was

meant to grieve the people as they performed these rituals. God didn't want their compassion and mercy to subside, for all throughout the Old and New Testament He says that these are the qualities He values most. Rather, He wanted the people's compassion and mercy to intensify the regret and humility they experienced as they were forced to come face to face with the magnitude of their sins. But God knew this season of the Old Covenant (2,000 years) would be but a moment in time to Him and to human history, and He knew that Christ's perfect atonement would bring great relief and an end of sacrifice once and for all. Can you imagine how it would make God feel to see people still practicing these rituals that were meant to be an "imprisonment" of sorts, after the price He paid to free them? Only Satan-worshippers still practice animal sacrifice in the Western world. But look who's still practicing the shedding of innocent infant blood? And not only that, but amputating God's creation as well (something that was never done in Bible times)! God is hardly surprised at this though, as He knew all our sins from the beginning of eternity. That is why He filled the New Testament, from beginning to end, with warning after warning about any believer ever participating in circumcision again. In fact, it is possibly the social issue that Paul writes the most passionately about, if his intense choice of words is any indication.

- **Cutting a baby without anesthesia is a separate sin all its own.** It is hoped by many that in the near future it will be illegal to do so in this country. Even if someone had never had access to the Bible's teachings and knew nothing about the ramifications of unnecessary surgery, any human being who could permit a doctor to make a surgical incision in their child without a total anesthetic block of the pain, is guilty of the worse child abuse imaginable. Considering the threat of Jesus toward anyone who would harm a child, one shudders to think of the judgement for such a sin. (Do they still make millstones?) When God instituted Old Covenant circumcision, the small incision at the tip of the foreskin was never intended to cause pain or suffering, but rather the several drops of shed blood served merely as a sign or symbol of the covenant. Thus, great measures were taken to insure that the child felt no pain whatsoever. First, the body was numbed internally by giving

the child a fair quantity of wine (God must have guided them on the amount that was safe.) Second, the body was numbed topically by rubbing the secretions from an ancient plant, known for its anesthetic properties, directly onto the tip of the genitals. The gel from this Mediterranean plant served as a numbing agent and kept the site painless for several minutes, according to archaeologists. Since the incision was very small, the pain after the procedure was miniscule and easily blocked by a few more doses of wine. The child was spared from any physiological evidence of the procedure (i.e. pain); and, by his young age, was also spared from any mental evidence of the procedure (i.e. knowledge of what was happening). The child was kept in a state of peace and remained unagitated, just as a loving Heavenly Father would will it. In spite of these careful measures, however, it was still meant to be a painful procedure for the parents, and a heinous ritual overall. Had it not been, then Christ's substitutionary sacrifice would hardly have been such a welcome relief.

- It would be very interesting to know who made up the rumor about the decline of routine infant circumcision being linked to a conspiracy against the Jews. This imaginative person obviously was not familiar with the Bible at all. Neither were they acquainted with world history. And yet, undoubtedly people hear something like this and without thinking too clearly about it, repeat it to someone else. Like all silly gossip, it has good "shock value" and people love to dig up controversy wherever they can find it. Even a statement like this, which is biblically and historically impossible, will be believed if enough ignorant people repeat it. So at the risk of wasting the precious time of the intelligent, let's briefly expose this "new" wives tale for what it is: pure foolishness. First, most of the people who still perform circumcision as a religious rite belong to the Eastern Religions (Moslems totalling 85%). Second of all, a large number of Jews do not practice circumcision at all. The largest majority of Jews (56%) are non-practicing and most of them reject the Old Covenant rituals. The next largest group of Jews, the Conservative Jews are divided. Some circumcise and some do not. The 3rd category, the Reformed Jews, emphasize social justice and compassion, they reject the harshness of the "old ways." Only the 4th

groups, the Orthodox Jews, found mostly in Israel, are fully committed to continuing circumcision. Recent newspaper headlines have explained that for many conservative Jews who would like to keep some of the old traditions, a new alternative is growing more and more popular. Many Rabbis have come to the conviction that tradition shouldn't be at the expense of compassion, and babies should not be made to suffer, so a new ritual has been formulated whereby the "naming" ceremony (the brith) can take place on the 8th day, without any cutting of the baby's flesh. Instead, an anointing with oil and a prayer of dedication are used as alternative rituals. So while Jewish circumcision and Gentile circumcision continue to decline, Muslims and other Eastern religionists will hold to this merciless ritual relentlessly. Those Gentiles who reject God and His commandment against circumcision will also be less likely to spare their offspring. And what about those Jews who continue to cling to the Old Covenant and the shedding of their sons' blood? Are these the heroes...the people of God? Are these the ones who should be sympathized with and honored? Not by any means. Only the Messianic Jews who recognize the Savior as the Way and the Truth and the Life are God's people. Those who continue to sacrifice the flesh of their baby boys as part of the Old Covenant do so in rejection of Christ and His atoning sacrifice. These lost souls are still waiting for their messiah and thus they continue in the Old way, the bloody way, the way that Christ came to end forever. These people who have been given the prophecies of Christ, reject Him and His work on the Cross. They are enemies of God (as are all unbelievers of every race). But the Good News is that there are Christian Jews everywhere. More and more Jewish people come to know Jesus everyday and they are raising little Christians under the New Covenant who are spared the burden of Old Covenant circumcision. These are the Jews that God honors; and their children's God-created anatomy is intact! As more and more people of all races come to Christ, there will be less and less infant circumcision, for the things that are abhorrent to God (namely the shedding of innocent blood, Prov. 6:17, Is. 59:7, Deut. 19:10, etc.) will become obsolete. In the end, only the enemies of God, and those who disobey God, will practice this modern foreskin amputation. This group will undoubtedly have

some Jews and some Gentiles in it, as well as a whole lot of Muslims, Hindus, African animists, and other pagan tribes and cultures. Our allegiance is to God and not his enemies. Let us find glory in letting our bodies bear testimony of our obedience to God and the commandments of the New Covenant in Christ.

The bottom line is that God forbids routine infant circumcision under the New Covenant. One cannot call himself a follower of Christ and knowingly participate in this ritual. One must treat circumcision identically to animal sacrifice-the same attitude should be practiced. We must not let our culture desensitize us to God's will. In conclusion, let us give a complete listing of the New Testament scriptures on circumcision. We will be thorough so as to avoid any further misunderstanding or misinformation on the subject.

We begin with the Gospels. In *Luke 2:21*, Jesus' circumcision is mentioned. The New Covenant began on the day of His resurrection and thus all Jews were bound to obey the Old Covenant until then. This is the first reason for Christ's circumcision. He was born under the Old Covenant and His parents were obedient. But the second reason, which transcends the cultural, is even more significant. The Bible teaches that Christ's circumcision was the starting point of His shedding of blood for humanity, and that not only did He do so to identify with all those who had suffered under this grievous burden, but He did it also as a substitution for all the babies that would be born after the New Covenant. The New Testament teaches that we as New Covenant believers are supposed to accept His circumcision, His baptism, His death, and His resurrection as our propitiation (Col. 2:8-14). The writings of the Early Church Fathers are filled with references to this. They speak over and over of "giving thanks to our Savior for taking our circumcision for us, and shedding His innocent blood once for all, so that we'll never have to."

Next, we come to the book of Acts where the issue in question is how Old Covenant Jews who are now wanting to be New Covenant Jewish Christians can live harmoniously with Gentile believers who are just coming to Christ for the first time under the New Covenant. Paul and Peter are desperately trying to unite the two groups in order to achieve this harmony. Circumcision keeps coming up, as it is a bone of contention.

Imagine how you would feel if you, having been born before the time of Christ, had been made to undergo several unpleasant rituals, and now the followers of God who come into the picture after Christ's heralding of the New Way are spared such unpleasanties. Try to imagine the possible bitterness, the unfairness of it all-in human terms.

*~Acts 15: 1-2, 7, 10 "And some men came and were teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' But Paul and Barnabas together had great dissention and disputing with these men. . . Then Peter stood up and said to them '...Why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke **which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?**'"*

One can hear in Peter's voice how painful the whole burden of circumcision had been on God's people, especially the parents. (And remember, this was just a tiny incision back then.) It was so hard for the Jews to accept that Christ had set their brothers free so that they'd never have to be mutilated again! But the apostles wanted to use this to teach about selfless love, that the Jews should rejoice for their brothers (and future children) and feel compassion rather than resentment.

In Romans, the same challenge exists: trying to get the Jewish believers who were circumcised before the New Covenant to accept the permanent changes of the New Covenant. It must have been very difficult for them to all of a sudden, in one day, be expected to give up animal sacrifices, circumcision, purification rituals, etc. (The only parts of the Law they were required to *give up* were those parts that Christ Himself had fulfilled-Matt. 5:17 ) As much as they hated these unpleasant rituals within their souls, these "traditions" were deeply ingrained in the fabric of their day to day lives. Like the American slaves suddenly set free asked: what do we do now?

*~Rom. 2: 17-19 "But if you bear the name Jews and rely upon the Law...You who boast in the Law through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?...For indeed your circumcision [i.e. the mark that is already on your genitals] is of value if you faithfully keep the Law, but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has been made obsolete. If therefore the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his*

*uncircumcision be counted the same as your circumcision? And will not he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not condemn you who, through the letter of the Law and through circumcision, are a transgressor of the Law. For he is not a Jew who is one externally. **Neither is circumcision that which is external in the flesh.** But he is a Jew who is one inwardly. And **circumcision is that which is of the heart by the Spirit.** . . .and his praise is not from men, but from God."*

Here was God's answer to one and all. Just as the sign of the Old Covenant was an external mark on the flesh (Old Testament circumcision), the sign of the New Covenant was an inward mark on the heart (New Testament circumcision). Thus, physical circumcision had been replaced once and for all.

*~Rom. 3:1 "Then what is the advantage of the Jew? Or what is the benefit of his circumcision [i.e the mark that is already on his genitals]? Great in all respects. First of all that they were entrusted with the oracles of God."*

God is seeking to reassure the Jews that their former sacrifice will not go unmerited. In a sense they were martyrs and deserve a special respect. They wear their scars as a badge of courage for persevering in faith through the painful and often grotesque requirements of the Old Covenant. Their circumcised condition served as a prophetic statement about the Messiah's advent; thus, they carried on them the oracles of God.

*~Rom. 3:29-30 "Is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles, also? Yes, of Gentiles also. Since the God who will justify those of the circumcision out of faith, and those of the uncircumcision through faith, is One."*

Here we have one of the most important concepts of all. God begins to use the term "the circumcision" in place of "the Old Covenant," and the term "the uncircumcision" in place of "the New Covenant." The entire Biblical doctrine can be summed up in these two phrases. The concept of circumcising under the New Covenant was therefore an anomaly, utter nonsense, absurdity.

*~Rom. 4:10 "How then was this faith reckoned to Abraham? Not while*

*circumcised, but while uncircumcised. He received the symbol of circumcision. . . that he might be the father of all **who believe without circumcision**. . . who follow in the steps of our father Abraham which were in his uncircumcision."*

God defines a Christian in this verse as one who believes without circumcision.

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians he addresses a new issue, that of foreskin restoration. Now, the foreskin restoration which we hear about in the news today is building a new skin structure where there is none. This is a difficult task. But in Bible times, the restoration simply involved stretching the foreskin a little bit so it covered the tip of the shaft. Not nearly as difficult. The Biblical word for this restoration process was **epispaomai** which means "to draw over" (i.e. to draw, or pull, over the edge, "to efface the mark of circumcision by pulling the foreskin over the tip"-lexiconal note). The word for "uncircumcised" was **akrobestia**. It is a combination of "akron", which means "tip," and "posthe," which refers to the male genital. To be uncircumcised was to still have that "tip" of the foreskin in place, and many Jews around Corinth and in other regions, thought that if they had that "tip" in place they would be more in keeping with the New Covenant. So the restoration process began. Paul was exasperated as he tried to get it through their heads that the uncircumcised genitalia was not the new symbol of the present covenant. It wasn't about body parts any more! It was about the spirit. The reason for the intact foreskin was not to have a new symbol, but to return to God's perfect will at the time of Creation: a perfect foreskin that is not mutilated in any way!

*~1 Cor. 7:17 "As God has called each man, in this manner let him walk. And thus I **command** in all the churches. Was any man called in the circumcision [i.e. Old Covenant]? Let him not try to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in the uncircumcision [i.e. New Covenant]? **Let him not be circumcised!** Circumcision is nothing. And uncircumcision is nothing but the keeping of the commandments of God. **Let each man remain in that condition in which he was called.**"*

It doesn't get much clearer than this. Those who were chosen by God to be born under the Old Covenant are called to bear the sign of that covenant. Its nothing to be ashamed

of. Today, there is no longer anyone alive who was born under the Old Covenant (i.e. prior to Christ), but back in the first century A.D. this was a very relevant issue. On the other hand, those who were chosen by God to be born under the New Covenant are called to keep that covenant and no other. Those who are born under the New Covenant (i.e. since the resurrection of Christ) are forbidden from routine circumcision. It is a terrible offence to God to dabble with the rituals of the Christless era.

This brings us to the one and only exception to the above law that God ever allowed. Acts 16:3 says that Timothy was the only Christian, under the New Covenant, to be allowed to participate in the act of circumcision, as an adult. Let's look at the four reasons why this wasn't a sin in this one unique situation.

1. Timothy was a Jew, **born under the Old Covenant**, who should have been circumcised but was not, due to the tension between his Jewish mother and Greek father. While his Jewish lineage on his mother's side made him a true Jew in every way, his Gentile father forbid a circumcision to take place, thus preventing his mother from obeying God's law. (So this has nothing to do with "New Covenant" circumcision).
2. God still would not have asked Timothy to go back and correct this oversight...God has no pleasure in seeing anyone's genitals cut, especially after Christ had shed his blood. But it was Timothy who desired to bear the mark of the Covenant he was born under. Timothy made his choice **as an adult**, not an infant. (So this has nothing to do with Infant circumcision).
3. God would not have allowed Timothy to make this mark for his own personal reasons, but Timothy's motive was not personal, it was sacrificial. He wanted to enter the ministry of evangelism to the Jews and they would not go near him because he was an uncircumcised Jew. He chose to do what should have been done anyway **to selflessly reach these lost people**. (So this has nothing to do with Routine circumcision)
4. This was a **small incision**, not an amputation. (So this has nothing to do with Modern circumcision).

There no longer exists any Jews who were born under the Old Covenant, therefore ANYONE who mutilates the genitals in ANY WAY now would be directly disobeying Scripture.

Galatians is the book where Paul hits the issue the hardest. By this time, there were many false doctrines spreading though the church and Satan seemed to be meddling with the peace of the Body of Christ. Almost every chapter of the book is devoted to Paul speaking passionately against circumcision and giving very severe warnings (some of his most severe ever!)

*~Gal. 2:3 "But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. But it was because of the **false** brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our freedom which we have, in order to bring us back into bondage. But we did **not yield in subjection to them** for even an hour, **so that the truth of the Gospel might remain in you.**"*

Paul has just related a story about visiting Jerusalem where many circumcised males tried to urge the uncircumcised believers with him (including Titus) to be circumcised. But Paul was repulsed by their efforts. He was probably in shock that anyone would want to bring the Old Covenant back, when the New Covenant was so much better! The "truth of the Gospel" and the practice of circumcision cannot co-exist!

*~Gal. 3:13 "Christ redeemed us from the **curse of the Law**, having become a **curse for us.**"*

Paul teaches here that circumcision was meant to be a curse (no one is supposed to *want* to do this to their babies!), but that Christ has been the substitution for our children, that our sons should never have to shed their blood again.

*~Gal. 5:2 "**Behold, I Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing!**"*

Enough said.

*~Gal. 5:3 "And I testify again to **every male** who receives circumcision, that he*

is in debt to keep the whole Law. **You who do so have been severed from Christ. . . you have fallen from grace."**

~Gal. 5:6 "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision gives spiritual power, but faith working through love."

Here Paul reasons again that the genitals are no longer a status symbol. Therefore the only acceptable thing to do with them is to leave them alone the way God created them.

~Gal. 5:7 "*You were running well, who hindered you from obeying the truth? **This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you.***"

No matter who or what is persuading you to circumcise your baby boy, know for sure, this persuasion is NOT coming from God. There has never been any form of mutilation that has been acceptable in God's eyes, with the one exception of the Old Covenant ritual to foreshadow Christ's sacrifice. To circumcise a baby for any reason other than that, is abhorrent to God.

~Gal. 5:10 "*I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt **no other view.** But the one who is pushing you to do so shall bear his own condemnation, whoever he may be.*"

Paul did not believe in freedom to choose; he believed in freedom to obey God.

~Gal. 5:11 "*But if I still proclaim circumcision. . . then the stumbling block of **the cross has been abolished.***"

First there was circumcision and animal sacrifice; then there was the cross. If you hold on to the former, you render the latter worthless.

~Gal. 5:12 "***I wish that those who are pushing you to do so would mutilate themselves!***"

Have you ever heard Paul so intense about anything? Mutilation is *his* word. And it will come up again.

*~Gal. 6: 12-16 "Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. . . They desire to have you circumcised so they may boast in your flesh. . . for neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision..."*

Again Paul tries to convince people to stop thinking about the male anatomy... its not relevant anymore! The purpose for messing with the genitalia is over forever; its time to move on. Paul is very negative about the motive of anyone who would want to keep circumcising babies. Ironically, while a few have speculated about the poor Jews being singled out for anti-Semitism because of our refusal to circumcise as Christians, Paul paints a picture that is quite the opposite. Some of the Jews were actually trying to trick Christians into conforming to the Old Way simply so that they could blend in and escape any judgment for demanding the crucifixion of our Lord. Far from being a plot against them, it was their plot against the Church. Thankfully, a large percentage of the Jews became godly followers of Jesus and were above such malice.

Paul only mentions the issue in passing in the book of Ephesians, but one cannot miss the sarcasm in his voice as he uses the term "so-called." This was truly a sore-spot for him.

*~Eph. 2:11 "You, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called the 'uncircumcision' by the so-called 'circumcision' performed in the flesh by human hands..."*

Paul was reminding the people yet again that Old Covenant circumcision had been "fleshly" and "human," whereas the New Covenant circumcision of the heart was spiritual and Christ-centered.

Philippians has one thing to say and one thing only, on the subject at hand...but it is one of the strongest statements in the Bible.

*~Phil. 3:2 "**Beware of the dogs! Beware of the evil workers! Beware of the mutilation!** For WE are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put NO confidence in the flesh!"*

Paul has three things to say about those who would still practice routine circumcision

after the ushering in of the New Covenant and the final sacrifice made by Christ. First, he calls them dogs, the lowest of insulting terms in those days. (Dogs were not yet domesticated as household pets and they ran around wild in packs eating garbage and annoying the livestock.) Second, he calls them evil workers. Scripture is clear: maiming an individual, outside of a direct order from God, is evil and morally unacceptable. Third, Paul minces no words; he calls unordained circumcision what it really is - mutilation. This is the second time Paul uses this term. Ironically, those who speak up for children today are often labeled "extremists" for using this same word.

Colossians is the proof-text for the doctrine of Christ's circumcision being a part of his substitutionary sacrifice. Jesus was mutilated in order to identify with those who suffered under the Old Covenant, as well as to shed His innocent blood once and for all, so no baby would ever have to be subjected to circumcision again.

*~Col. 2:8-14 "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men...rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form and in Him you have been **made whole.. and in Him you were also circumcised, with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism, and raised up with Him through faith. And...in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him. . . having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us which were hostile to us. And He has taken them out of the way, having nailed them to the cross."***

Finally, Peter-who spent his time ministering to Jewish believers-summed up the absurdity of the controversy. He knew that any involvement with things like circumcision or animal sacrifice, in light of Christ's work on the Cross, was blasphemous and sacrilegious. He knew that the people must be made to see that this was a matter of obedience to God's commands and His will. Eloquently, he put it like this.

*~1 Peter 2:20-22 "For if after they have **escaped the defilements** of the world **by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are***

*again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For **it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandments delivered to them.** It has thus happened to them according to the true Proverb: 'A dog returns to its own vomit' and 'A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mud.'*

Paul called those who would continue circumcision "dogs," and truly anyone who would desire the continuation of something so morbid and unpleasant (something God says in Gal. 3:13 was meant to be a "curse"), would truly be the equivalent of a dog returning to its vomit. We should praise God everyday that He set us free from chopping up animals on an altar and slicing our babies with knives. The relief He intended us to feel should flood our soul whenever we think of it. How perverse that some would still be blood-thirsty enough to crave what God Himself sees as detestable.

Our children are gifts of the Lord. They were created by His hand; knit together in the womb. God brilliantly fashioned every part of their bodies and has pronounced His creation "very good." His handiwork is to be admired, not despised. He has more reasons for creating a foreskin on your son than you or I could ever begin to imagine or comprehend. God makes no mistakes. We have no spare parts. Never in all of time has God ever allowed the amputation (the destruction of His creation) of any part of the body, except in dire sickness. *1 Cor. 5:3 says "If you destroy the temple, God will destroy you."* For only 2,000 years God allowed a ritual that mutilated the flesh (to a very small extent). He did so in preparation for the blood sacrifice of Jesus. For the other 6,000-8,000 years (from Creation to the present), God's normal rule has been: no mutilation of any kind is permissible. With the exception of the God-ordained Old Covenant from Abraham to Jesus, God's commandment is unchangeable.

*~Lev.19:28 "You shall not make **any** cuts in your flesh."*

This is followed by the phrase "for the living," since incisions "for the dying" were sometimes necessary, and incisions "for the dead" could be permitted also (allowing for an autopsy or such). In other words, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Unless God Himself sets forth an exception in the form of a command, this rule governs all living people.

**One rule has never changed, cutting off any part of the genitals has always been forbidden.** The cut at the tip of the foreskin was one thing, but had any man cut off his foreskin, or any of the other parts of his genitals, he would have been excommunicated from God's presence and His people's fellowship.

*~Deut. 23: 1 "No one who...has his male genitalia cut off shall enter the assembly of the Lord."*

The foreskin represents 1/3 of the total skin which comprises the male genitalia. This was truly a significant portion of the genitals. But God never wanted his people to "cut off" anything!

Let us conclude with the words of our precious Lord Jesus Himself. As parents, we cherish His words and seek His pleasure in all our parenting decisions. "What pleases you, my Lord?"

*"I desire mercy and not sacrifice."-Jesus (Matt. 9:13)*

Christian parents, let's take God serious. Let us mind His word and love our children the way Jesus Himself loves them. Let us protect them, cherish them, and tenderly care for them. Let us treat them the way we ourselves would want to be treated. Let us give each new baby a peaceful beginning, a compassionate introduction to the world. And let us surrender all of our actions to the Lord. He will mold us into the parents He wants us to be. Parents who will be like Him.

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