

Freedom In Faith

Long Beach Alliance Church • July 5th, 2009 • Pastor Chris Lankford

Circumcision is nothing, and
uncircumcision is nothing, but
what matters is the keeping of
the commandments of God.
~1st Corinthians 7:19 (NASB)

1) Earthly Circumstances vs. Spiritual Realities

- A) Have you ever thought that following Jesus Christ would be easier if some circumstance in your life would change? Getting married? Getting divorced? Getting out of debt? A new job? Having children?
- B) The followers of Christ in Corinth were concerned that changing their life circumstances (especially in relation to marriage) would enhance their followership of Jesus.
- C) While it seems sensical to change your circumstances in order to have a better walk with Jesus, Scripture provides counter-intuitive direction (1st Corinthians 7:17).
- D) Note that our station in life is not considered the key issue in following Christ. Rather, God has “called” each person to walk with Jesus, no matter their circumstances.

- E) In order to illustrate this point, Paul (the author), uses one of the most sacred aspects of the Old Testament Law for the Jews (7:18). Circumcision is commanded for all of God's people (cf. Genesis 17:9-11; Leviticus 12:1-3).
- F) For a Jewish male, circumcision was the "mark" of belonging to God, and the "mark" of God's choice. Circumcision was distinctive for the Jews, and a very important part of Jewish identity.
- G) "Keeping the commandments of God" (7:19) would be impossible without being circumcised. Thus, Paul's comment that "circumcision is nothing" would have been both perplexing and infuriating to his listeners.

2) The Heart Of The Matter

- A) Paul's point is that following God is not about what is happening on the outside of a person, but what is happening on the inside. The "mark" of a true follower of Christ is not in how you look, but in who you are.
- B) Paul illustrates this point further by juxtaposing a slave worker against the free man (1st Corinthians 7:20-24). The point is not in changing your exterior circumstances (which is optional), but in responding to God's calling.
- C) When our walk with Jesus becomes more about rules and regulations, it dries up our passion. When passion is lost, we tend to want to change our circumstances to somehow jump-start our walk with God.
- D) Scripture calls on us to not worry about exteriors, and reminds us that we can follow God no matter where we are, no matter our circumstances, no matter what...