

## Circumcision of Heart

- In Moses' review of the Law and the history of the departure from Egypt and the wilderness period, two statements about circumcision of heart were included:
  - Deuteronomy 10:16, Therefore, circumcise the foreskin of your heart and be stiff-necked no longer.
  - Deuteronomy 30:6, The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul that you may live.
  - Observations:
    - In one place, Moses ordered them to circumcise their hearts. In the other, Moses promised that God would do the circumcising of both them and their descendants.
    - These passages were directed toward Israelites only, specifically including subsequent generations.
    - In the same book, Moses assured the people that this Law was not too difficult or mysterious for them, nor was it far off (Deuteronomy 30:11).
    - This is similar to the places where Pharaoh hardened his own heart versus when God is said to have hardened his heart. Rather than claiming that the passages are in conflict, or discarding one in favor of the other, an explanation that makes both true is needed. In the case of circumcision of the heart, the Israelites were to seek this circumcision while, at the same time, God promised to supply the opportunity. This is the same as most of the promises of God, where God told the Israelites to use odd methods of warfare, government, and agriculture without specifying exactly how He would make it work. This is the same under the New Covenant. The faithful are instructed to act on clearly impossible promises without knowing how God will make it work.
    - God does not ask people to do anything at which they are guaranteed to fail. To do so would be deception, not in keeping with the nature of God. So, the Israelites before the time of Jesus had a promise that circumcision of the heart was available to them. Certainly, only a small percentage took God up on His promise.
- Jeremiah reminded the Jews of his day that circumcision of heart was the way out of their difficulties.
  - Jeremiah 4:4 Circumcise yourselves to the Lord and take away the foreskins of your hearts...lest My fury come forth like fire...
  - This was addressed specifically to the "men of Judah and Jerusalem" during Jeremiah's earthly career as a way of avoiding a calamity in the form of an invasion by Babylon.
  - If the people were not capable of doing this, then God was deceiving them by asking them to do it.
- The description, uncircumcised in heart, may be found in Jeremiah 9:26 and Ezekiel 44:7.
- Paul used the same figure of speech three times:
  - Romans 2:29, ...circumcision is that of the heart, in Spirit, not in letter...
  - Philippians 3:3, ...for we are the circumcision who worship in the Spirit of God, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh...

- Colossians 2:11 – 12, In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism...
- Observations:
  - As in Deuteronomy, the passage in one place implies that the reader is to set out to be circumcised in heart, whereas others imply that this circumcision is done for them. So that the passages harmonize, we must assume that the faithful must set out to achieve this level of closeness to God, but that God will have an unspecified hand in making it happen.
  - This circumcision of heart is nowhere described as being performed by the indwelling Spirit. Rather, it is assigned to those who are “in Spirit.” (those who make decisions based on the things of the Spirit) versus those “in letter” (those who make decisions based on the things of the Law).