

#SpeakLIFE: A Covenant Heart

Text: Genesis 17:9-14; Ezk. 36:26-27

Introduction:

Just like what I have said before, by 2030, according to futurist Thomas Frey, that 20% of building construction will be 3D-printed. But did you know that on April 15, 2019, a group of scientists in Tel Aviv was able to have a 3D-printed heart. This 3D-printed heart is about the size of a rabbit's heart. They used stemcell or human cells as their base. Perfecting this technology will revolutionize not just the medical world but the entire world.

Human hearts are the core of our life. It is the essential part of the body as they say (you can read more about this on our bulletin program.) For today, we will learn the two realities of having a covenant (or renewed) heart, specifically, the new covenant heart. *(remind them about covenant series)*

Main Idea:

In our passage, the picture of circumcision is a mere covenant sign. Example: God made a covenant sign of rainbow with Noah and the whole creation. But the rainbow itself does not bear the promise. It only expresses the promise of life preservation. In the same way, the circumcision itself is not the promise but rather it only represents something beneath and more important.

Hence, my first point of having a “renewed” heart, **The Internal Reality.**

Circumcision of the flesh is just a surface level. What really matters is the one that goes beyond our eyes—the heart. Obeying, keeping God’s covenant signifies humility, submission, and devotion to God. Hence, we do not merely focus on the external rite, but the inner reality of the sign.

So, when Abraham and his descendants enacted the circumcision proper. It is not only because it is traditional but because it is their expression of devotion, full obedience, and submission to God’s authority. By keeping the sign, they are yielding to God’s order. Acknowledging His power. Depending on God’s word.

The Problem: But the problem is that God’s people failed on keeping the covenant of God. Not just with Abraham, but also with Moses and David. In Jeremiah 11:10, *“They have returned to the sins of their ancestors, who refused to listen to my words. They have followed other gods to serve them. Both Israel and Judah have broken the covenant I made with their ancestors.”*

This reality is like a **sinkhole**. A sinkhole can collapse an entire building in just a snap of fingers—like Thanos’s. Even though we are not yet sure on what caused the collapse of a part of a condo building in Miami, but one of the suspicions that it can be a sinkhole or other else.

Yes, these are different images of sinkholes. How is the sinkhole done? It is natural. When the water goes into the deeper level of the soil then it creates spaces like what we know cavities in our teeth. Then it fills up space on the second level soil which is composed of sand, clay, and soft materials.

What our bare eyes can see is the surface level of the ground—the first level soil. Looking at a normal view, it looks strong outside but actually inside it is weak and shallow, moreover, there is a hole

within. For the younger generation, for us, when we are planning to buy a new laptop or desktop, we do not buy a pc because of its outside design but we check the specs if it has a high core processing unit, large RAM, video card built-in, and even at least a terabyte for storage. In short, what's important is the one inside, the design/ color is just secondary.

Putting that in context, our hearts are also the same. What really matters is our inner life. It does not mean that when you are good or competent in your field of ministry then you are also spiritually mature or healthy. Your talents, or natural giftedness, are not the measurement for one's spirituality. We have witnessed famous/ prominent pastors, giants of the faith, who failed and fell so low because their inner lives are just hollow.

We smile during Sunday services—spiritual cosmetics—but underneath our masks are sad, burdened, struggling, and not-okay life. Do not fake it. Faith it!

Our hearts are vulnerable and in need of protection, filling, and purification. That is why we should pray the same prayer of the psalmist in Psalm 51:10, *“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”* The core of our heart is indeed sin (check our bulletin today), but a renewed heart is where the saving grace of God enacts and overcomes the entirety of one's life.

Going back, another reality of having a renewed heart is the **External Reality**. A renewed, or covenant heart, is a heart that is transformed—and continuously being transformed by God by the Holy Spirit.

Linking with the point we have a while ago, what matters is the inner part, so in Romans 2:29, Paul contended for the **circumcision of the heart**; *“No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God.”*

- In Paul's statement, he is echoing the both Old and New covenant, Deut. 30:6, *“The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.”*
- Ezk 11:19, *“I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.”*
- Jeremiah 31:33b, *“I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”*

After all these passages that still speak about inward transformation, why did I make it under my second point today? Look carefully at those verses. The following verses after these speak about the Spirit's outworking in the lives of those who have experienced an inner renewal of the heart.

Meaning, those who have experienced a renewed covenant heart are the ones who are also—supposed to—act righteously, not perfectly but conforming to the likeness of Christ. In short, Christian living, living according to Christ's standard.

Pastor, Christ standard? Is that even possible? In Ezekiel 36:26-27, in verse 27, *“And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”* The same with

Jeremiah 31:33, God has written the law on our hearts so that we may follow it. God did not just write it there to remind us of but He has given the Spirit to help us keep it and obey it.

Indeed, by the Spirit, we can do it. Let the Spirit work in our lives and drives us to live righteously and even to **speak Life**. What do I mean by SpeakLIFE? As our application, as Christians, we know that words are powerful. So, we share these powerful words with other people to encourage them, bring hope.

1. **Speak Love** – We know that the ultimate love, the very source of love, is Christ. A person cannot fully and genuinely love apart from God (1 John 4:7-9).
2. **Speak the Inspired Word of God** – Share God’s Word. Meditate upon the Bible. While reading, it is inseparable to also pause and pray God’s Word. Pick up a word, or a thought from your devotion and start praying using that word or idea. This helps us break our repetitive prayer.
3. **Speak Your Faith** – stand firm and be proud. Just as what Paul said in Romans 1:16, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.”*
4. **Speak about the Eternal Joy in Heaven** – let us be excited about this matter. This is our ultimate hope—the Christian telos, eschatological hope. Seeing the church worship God, follow God, and fellowship with one another is already a glimpse of heaven. But we ought to share this eternal joy and ultimate to all people. Let us evangelize, make disciples, and plant churches.

Conclusion:

Finally, Christians truly have experienced these two realities: inner renewal and external transformation. So how do we summarize this sermon? Let us read **Colossians 2:6-23**.

That is why we only baptize believers because they are the ones who have experienced the renewal of the heart—foreshadowed in the time of Abraham as circumcision of the flesh but crystalized in the new covenant of having a renewed heart.

To this thought, if ever you are feeling empty right now, or maybe guilty and being convicted by the Spirit because of the shallowness of your hearts to God. Let us take this opportunity to sing this song as our way of praying how we needed our Lord Jesus Christ to enact upon our struggles.

When David was rebuked by Prophet Nathan because of his sin, he had prayed to God in Psalm 51:10, ***“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”***

Let us sing, “Lord I Need You.”

Ptr. John Paul Arceno

UCBC New Jersey

June 27, 2021