

Implications of Receiving the Sign of the Covenant

Genesis 17:9-14

Halifax: 2 August 2015

Introduction:

If you have been worshipping with us recently, you will know that I am presently preaching through Genesis, in our regular morning sermon series.

- And the part we are looking at in particular is the part that tells us about how God established His covenant with Abram whose name was changed to Abraham.
- This is a very important section because it is here that God promises to establish a kingdom of righteousness in this sinful world!
- From chapter 12, the LORD first promises to Abraham that He will make him into a great nation, a nation that will be blessed and that will be a blessing to all the families of the earth!
 - We have seen that when this kingdom is complete, it will be heaven!
 - It will be a kingdom that fills the whole earth with nothing but godly people in it.
 - The earth and heaven will be renewed into a new heaven and new earth, there will be no more sin, no more curse, no more death...
 - The wicked will be cast into Hell with Satan, and all who are in Jesus Christ will be perfected to sin no more...
 - We will serve God beautifully, we will love each other and serve each other with no selfishness, no curse, no death—only with perfect love.
- When God says that He is making Abraham into a great nation, He really means it!

Presently we are in Genesis 17 where God's revelation to Abraham of His promise to establish this kingdom comes to its fullest expression!

- Listen as I read to you from Genesis 17, beginning in verse 1:
 - This is the word of God, so please give me your reverent attention.

Genesis 17:1-14: When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. ² And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." ³ Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: ⁴ "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶ I

will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. ⁸ Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." ⁹ And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your

descendants after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ 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; ¹¹ and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. ¹² He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house

or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. ¹³ He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

May the LORD bless the reading of His holy Word.

Two weeks ago, we looked at verses 4-8 where the LORD tells what He will do for Abraham in His covenant...

- You can see how verse 4 begins with the words, “As for Me,” and then how the LORD tells what He will do...
 - He says that He will make Abraham a father of many nations—
 - that he will make him exceedingly fruitful and that kings will come from him—so God’s covenant will be with great masses of people!
 - But the essence of the covenant is in verse 7 where God says: “**I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.**”
- For God to say **I will be your God** is everything!
 - For you see, when Adam and Eve were first created, they made a decision that affected us all—the whole human race, everyone that comes from them...
 - They rejected God as their God!
 - God had forbidden the fruit of one tree to them.
 - By simply avoiding this one tree, they would show that they were under God’s authority, that He was their God.
 - By eating from it, they would show that they were renouncing Him as their God.
 - God also told them if they ate from it, they would surely die.
 - And they ate from it, and immediately they died spiritually to God—they became dead in their sins and were cut off from God.
 - As punishment, God cursed the earth that He had made for them and He sentenced them to suffering and eternal death.
 - And so it is that when God comes to this man Abraham and says, **I will be your God**, it is momentous—it is marvellously insanely wonderful!
 - It means that the LORD will somehow do all that is required to restore His relationship as God to Abraham!
 - And not just to him, but to the huge multitude of people that God promises to multiply Abraham into!

- It requires extreme intervention on the part of God Almighty!
 - To have this kingdom, it meant that:
 - He would have to change our hearts so that we are no longer in rebellion—and that He does...
 - And it meant that He would have to atone for our sins—somehow, we would have to pay for our sins—we are guilty and must be punished.
 - And somehow, Satan who led us astray and all those who are not brought into this kingdom would have to be destroyed.
 - So God, determining to have a kingdom of righteousness that would eventually fill the earth, undertook to do all that was required, and He is doing it all through His Son, Jesus Christ.
 - God has already had His Son leave the glory of heaven and come in our flesh, yet without any sin...so He could be the firstborn in this kingdom of righteousness—the founder.
 - And He gave Him the Holy Spirit, and made it so that He could give us the Holy Spirit to change our hearts so that we would turn to God...
 - And even more remarkably, He appointed His Son to go to the cross to pay the penalty of the sins of all the people in this kingdom so that they could be forgiven forever. Jesus suffered the pains of hell for us.
 - And in addition to that, Jesus has been appointed to be judge and to destroy Satan and all who are in league with him.
 - That is how this redemptive kingdom that God promised to Abraham is graciously brought about.

And so you see that this kingdom is a matter of huge importance!

- And that is why when God promises it to Abraham in Genesis, there is so much attention given to it.
- And that is why we need to pay attention to what God says to Abraham about it.
 - It behooves you to make sure that you enter this kingdom!
 - There is nothing more important than to enter this kingdom and to receive the blessing that comes by the grace of God to all who truly enter it.

So what is required of Abraham and of all who would enter this kingdom?

- Last week we began to look at this in verse 9.
 - You see that in verse 9, God says, “as for you.”
 - This corresponds with the words “as for me” in verse 4 where the LORD tells Abraham what He will do...
 - He tells him from verse 9 to verse 14.

This week, I want to continue looking at this portion.

- If you were here, you will remember that I did not have time to get to the implications of receiving God’s covenant sign—so we will do that this week...
 - But first we need to do a little review of what we did last week.

REVIEW: So let me begin by reviewing what we saw last week is required of us...

- A. First, in verse 9, God simply says, **“You shall keep my covenant!”**
1. There is nothing complicated about that!
 - God has just made a covenant to be Abraham’s God, so what would be involved for Abraham in keeping this covenant?
 - It is for him simply to belong to God!
 - That is it—He is to have God as his God.
 - In this covenant, we are simply to take God as our God!
 2. Having Him as your God means that you trust Him as your God, that you serve Him as your God, that you obey Him as your God—
 - Simply that you, who were cut off from God now come to Him to be His people.
- B. Secondly, we looked at how God appointed a sign to mark out those who are in His covenant.
- He calls the sign “a sign of the covenant between me and you.”
1. I showed you from the Bible that sign of the covenant before Jesus came was circumcision and that after He came it was changed to baptism.
 - a. We saw in Genesis 17 that circumcision involved the cutting off of the male foreskin.
 - Such a sign may seem odd to us, but it was really quite appropriate.
 - We covered this last week, but in short it showed that Abraham and his sons could not bring forth the righteous Son that God had promised who would establish His righteous kingdom!
 - All they could bring forth was sinful children like they were.
 - It showed that they needed to have sin cut away, represented by the cutting away of the flesh of the foreskin.
 - b. And when God finally brought forth the promised Son, he was not born by ordinary generation, but of a virgin!
 - He had no sin—and He remained completely without sin, with God as His God.
 - Yet, for the sake of the kingdom of people that needed to be saved, He was cut off from God and cast off—as is done with the foreskin.
 - He was cut off for the guilt of the whole kingdom, even though He Himself had no personal guilt.
 - c. And it was at this time that the sign of the covenant was changed.
 - Circumcision no longer applied inasmuch as it was fulfilled.
 - Circumcision was fulfilled in that the Son had come despite our inability to produce Him, and in that the Son had been cut off for us.
 - It was not fulfilled in that each member of the kingdom still needed to have a new heart and to be forgiven to enter the kingdom
 - So the sign was changed to baptism...

- Baptism pointed to the cleansing we still need, but to the reality that the cleansing is to be found in Christ who was cut off.
 - Circumcision looked at the Son that they needed to bring forth but could not; baptism looks to the Son that God sent and by whose saving work we are saved.
2. And then we looked at which persons are to receive the sign of the covenant—
- a. First, it was those who were already in the covenant when the sign was given—
 - like Abraham when circumcision was appointed,
 - or like Peter, James, and John who were already in covenant with God when baptism was appointed.
 - b. Second, it was given to the children and servants of those who belonged to God, showing that the children and servants also belonged to Him.
 - And thus, as circumcision was given to sons of those who belonged to God on the eighth day,
 - so when baptism was first given after Christ was raised, God declared that the promise of the covenant was to “you and to your children.”
 - Even though children cannot understand, God includes them and marks them out as His people with their parents who are His people.
 - c. Third, I showed you from Exodus 12 that proselytes who came from other nations and wanted be God’s people were circumcised,
 - and of course Jesus commanded that His church go forth and preach the gospel to all nations, and that those who believe are to be baptised.

So our gracious God has appointed signs to mark out the people who are in covenant with Him.

- And so today I want to focus on what it means for us to receive the sign of the covenant—
 - What are the implications for us in receiving this sign of those who come to God to enter into His covenant—to enter into the kingdom of Jesus Christ—the kingdom of righteousness that God is establishing in this sinful world?

I. First and foremost, as one baptised, it means that you belong to God!

A. We have seen that both circumcision and baptism were given as a sign of a particular covenant that God made with sinners...

1. And what was that covenant?
 - It was the covenant in which God promised to be the God of sinners!
 - It was the covenant in which He said, “I will be your God and you will be my people!”
 - That means that even though we are sinners, God accepts us as His very own people!

- He knew that we were sinners when He established this covenant, yet still He established it with us—
2. If you know anything about God and how holy He is—how much He hates sin—then you know how incredible it is for Him to be our God!
 - It is very hard to believe that He would be our God...
 - And so in His tender mercies, He has given baptism (and circumcision before) as a sign and seal of the covenant.
 - In Romans 4, circumcision is referred to as **a seal of the righteousness of faith** that Abraham had before he was circumcised.
 - A seal shows that something is official...
 - We use seals today, for example, to show that a legal document is official—that is backed by legitimate authority.
 - I had a last will and testament drawn up by my lawyer, and he affixed his seal to the document to show that it was authentic.
 - Baptism serves in the same way.
- B. When we and our children receive it, God is saying to us, “You really are mine. I really am your God. You really do belong to me!”
- He is affirming His covenant relationship with us and our children.
 - He is affirming His word with a visible sign and seal.
1. This is for you, dear child of God, in your weakness!
 - If you are trusting in Him, He has appointed this sign to mark you out as one who really does belong to Him!
 - Perhaps there are times when you wonder if God really does accept you.
 - Perhaps you are beaten down by an awareness of your sin or maybe doubts come because you are in the midst of many trials...
 - You are wondering where God is, and if He has forsaken you!
 2. Say to yourself—“I am baptised! I belong to God! He has sealed His promise to me and I need not doubt it.”
 - And then rejoice greatly and live as one who belongs to God—as one who is baptised—and that leads us to the other implications!

TRANS> Let’s look at three more implications that grow out of this first implication that you belong to God...

II. If baptism means that you belong to God (and it does), then you should renounce all other gods and masters.

- A. We have seen that we all renounced God as our God in the Garden.
1. When Adam ate the forbidden fruit, he spoke not only for himself, but for all of his posterity—that is every one of us!
 - a. By eating the forbidden fruit, he declared that God was no longer his God or the God of his descendants.

- He said, “I will not serve God!”
 - And in doing so, he followed Satan who led him into rebellion.
 - And in this way, Adam and all of us were cut off from and became slaves of Satan, slaves of sin, slaves of our own sinful passions and desires.
- Our bondage is very deep because we are not slaves who are longing to be freed, but those who are so corrupt that we willingly follow Satan!
 - As Colossians 3:6 says, we are all the sons of disobedience.
- b. When you receive the sign of the covenant, it is really the opposite of the sign of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
 - By eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve were saying that God would not be their God.
 - By baptism, we are saying that God is our God.
 - We are, as it were, coming back to Him to serve Him as His people.
 - We are renouncing service to the Devil to serve God.
 - We are renouncing the flesh to walk in the Spirit.
 - So you have no business serving Satan and sin now! God is your master!
- 2. You can see this aspect of baptism from the way it is spoken of in scripture.
 - a. For example, we read Colossians 3 today.
 - It follows Colossians 2 in which we are told that in baptism, we were buried with Christ and raised with Christ...
 - We died to the old master to live to our new master!
 - Therefore, Colossians 3 begins with the words:
 - **Col 3:1-5: If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. ⁵ Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.**
 - b. Something similar is expressed in Romans 6:
 - In Romans 6:5-6, we are told that being baptised into Christ’s death and resurrection, **we have been united together in the likeness of His death, and that certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.**
 - c. Now that you have been baptised, you have no business serving sin!
 - Sin and Satan are no longer your master!
 - God is your God, and He has declared that you belong to Him and He has sealed His covenant with baptism.
- B. Neither baptism nor circumcision are meant to be mere rituals!

- In receiving them, there is to be a true change of masters from the heart!
- 1. When Stephen saw how so many circumcised Israelites rejected Christ, he charged them with being **stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears!**
 - Their bodies may have been circumcised, but they did not have the change of heart that goes with truly belonging to Christ.
 - In Jeremiah 9:25-26, the Lord speaks of ungodly nations that were not circumcised, but then He shows that Israel was no better...
 - **Ezekiel 9:26: For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.**
 - Israel had the sign of belonging to God, but they did not belong to God in their hearts, so they were no better off!
- 2. Baptism is also associated with the washing of the heart.
 - John the Baptist emphasised that he baptised with water, but that Christ would baptise with the Holy Spirit...
 - The washing that matters is not the outward washing with water, but the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) that changes the heart.
 - Baptism is an outward ritual that points to the true renewal and washing of the whole person.
 - When we have the sign of belonging, we need to belong in heart and life through the new birth or the sign is worthless.
- 3. Let this be a warning that God's covenant sign can be nothing more than an empty ritual!
 - Paul says it plainly in Romans 2:25: **For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.**
 - And in 1 Cor 7:19: **Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.**
 - Exactly the same is true of baptism.
 - What matters is the baptism of the Spirit, not the baptism of our bodies.

TRANS> Now let's look at the third implication...

III. If baptism means that you belong to God (and it does), then you should look to God to be God to you—and to save you!

- A. And look at you—you are a sinner! You need to be saved! You cannot save yourself!
 - 1. You are guilty of renouncing God as your God...
 - That is no light thing—you have renounced your own Creator!
 - We all bear that guilt and God's justice demands that we all be punished forever—yet God says that He is our God...
 - And He sealed this promise with circumcision to Abraham, and with baptism to us now that Jesus has come...

2. And not only that, but you are also in rebellion against Him.
 - I just showed you how the Bible says that we are enslaved to sin and to Satan and that in baptism we renounce our old master and return to God as our God.
 - We are by nature such rebels, and we cannot change...
 - Yet, because God promises to be our God there is hope for us!
 - He seals His promise with His covenant signs.

TRANS> Look, it is a fine thing to say that receiving God's covenant sign *calls* us to renounce our old master—but how can we do that?

- How can He be our God when we are so guilty and how can we be His people when we are so rebellious?

B. Let me encourage you to take heart from the very fact that God says that He will be our God when He makes His covenant with us!

1. God is the one who takes the initiative in establishing His covenant with us!
 - He comes to us and says, "I will be your God," and He knows that we are guilty rebellious sinners!
 - He knows all about that.
 - He knows that He has sentenced us to Hell and He knows that we are in bondage to Satan and sin!
 - He knows all of this better than we do...

2. And *yet*—(this is the encouraging thing), He still promises to be our God!

- That means that He has plans to deal with our sin—both our guilt and our rebellion!
 - He would not say that He would be the God of sinners unless He is intending to do something about our sin!
 - He cannot be the God of sinners without putting an end to their sin!

C. I want you to see that the covenant signs themselves point us to the work that He does in saving us.

- What I mean is, they have in them symbolism that points to the how God will deal with our sin!
 - We are not simply called to turn from our sin to be God's people, but we are promised that God will save us from our sins so we can be His!

1. Take circumcision...what does it continually represent according to scripture?

- It represents the circumcision of the heart...
 - We saw that it is no good to be circumcised in your body if your heart is not circumcised so that you serve God.
 - But here is the good part—God promises that *He* will circumcise our heart—that He will cut away the corruption that is in us...so that we will serve Him...
 - Deuteronomy 30 verse 6 makes this beautifully clear...
 - It says: **“And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart 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.”**

- Do you see, circumcision taught the people not just that they needed to turn to God,
 - but that they were to look to God to change their hearts to love Him as they should!
 - This is a promise that gives us hope!
 - God is the One who works in us by His grace.
 - The sign of the covenant teaches us to look to His saving grace!
2. And look at baptism—what does it show us that God will do?
- The symbol itself is water—and water is used in scripture to represent cleansing from sin!
 - That means that like circumcision, baptism calls me to look to God to save me from my sins! He does the washing.
 - And we see just that...
 - John the Baptist points to Jesus as the one who baptises with the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is the one who changes our hearts to love God.
 - Titus 3:5 speaks of **the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.**
 - Regeneration! That means making me new in Christ!
 - Jesus spoke of washing with water when He spoke of the new birth to Nicodemus.
 - It means bringing me back to God to serve Him!
 - God does this!
 - This language of washing is a reference to baptism—
 - not that the water of baptism itself regenerates me, but that it points to God who regenerates me!
 - It reminds me that I do not change my own heart, but He does!
 - Over and over the Bible uses washing to point me to God for my cleansing.
 - One of the fullest descriptions of this cleansing is found in Ezekiel 36:25-27: **Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.**
 - So you don't just up and change your heart...
 - Look to the LORD to change you—for He is our God and we belong to Him!
 - If I am baptised, I have the seal of God upon my body that He cleanses me—and I am to look to Him in faith to do it!
 - A lot of people miss this about baptism and see it only as a testimony of what we have done in coming to Jesus.

3. But what about my guilt?
 - Even if my heart were to be completely changed, what could I do about my past sins?
 - I have incurred a debt of guilt that I can never pay.
 - Both circumcision and baptism call those who enter into God's covenant to look to Jesus for the forgiveness of sin.
 - a. When we get to Genesis chapter 21, we are going to see that Abraham is commanded to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice, but then God declares that that is not acceptable,
 - and promises that *He* will provide the sacrifice that is required to take away sin!
 - All of Israel's rituals at the temple point to the need for such a sacrifice, and all along God promised to send a Son who will save.
 - b. And of course in the New Testament, that Son is fully revealed!
 - He is Jesus Christ who is crucified for us so that we may be completely forgiven...
 - He is Jesus Christ who obeys for us so that we may be accepted.
 - God accepts Jesus and His work on the cross for all of His people, and then He can declare that we are righteous...
 - Even though we are sinners, we are joined to Christ by faith as God's people and are fully justified.
 - In Him—in Jesus—we have the forgiveness of sins!
 - All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, but God set forth His Son as a propitiation by His blood through faith that we might be justified who believe.
 - Now in justice, God justifies the ungodly.
 - c. In promising to be our God in circumcision, God promised to do what was required for our acceptance with Him...
 - And now that He has provided Christ, in promising to be our God in baptism, He promises to apply the work of Christ on the cross to us for our justification.
 - As it says in Galatians 3:27, **For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ...**
 - That is, we have betaken ourselves to Him for salvation—we have, as it were, put ourselves into Him for righteousness inwardly by faith that is outwardly shown by baptism.
 - We are baptised into His body, into His death and into His resurrection as well as into his cleansing work on the cross.
 - Hebrews 10:19-22 calls us to approach God with confidence because of the cleansing we have through Christ, sealed to us in baptism:

- It says: Hebrews 10:19-22: **Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹ and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”**

TRANS> And now, having seen so far that God’s covenant sign

- seals His promise to be our God,
- summons us to renounce our old master and serve Him,
- and teaches us to put ourselves in God’s hand to do what must be done to make us His people,
- I want you to see fourthly that...

IV. If baptism means that you belong to God (and it does), then it also means that you belong to His church, His people!

A. Our text in Genesis 17 tells us plainly in verse 14 that a child who is not circumcised—who does not receive the sign that he belongs to God—is cut off from God’s people.

- You can see that in verse 14: **“And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”**

1. This is very strong language...to be cut off...

a. But what does it mean?

- Does it mean that God will kill him?
- Does it mean that God will no longer recognise him as in his covenant?
- Does it mean that the church is to no longer recognise him?
- Does it mean that he is to be excluded from citizenship or even executed by the civil magistrate?

b. The phrase **cut off** can carry any of these ideas, though if execution by the civil magistrate were required, it would indicate that.

- Probably the main idea is that he ceases to be recognised and regarded as one of God’s people...and it suggests that God no longer recognises him.

2. The LORD says that by failure to receive the sign of the covenant, this person has broken His covenant—

- By refusing the covenant sign, this person has refused to belong to God!

B. We should recognise that this same application belongs to baptism.

1. This is not to say that baptism has some kind of magical power or essential necessity...

- This was not true of circumcision either.

- Abraham was saved before circumcision and so were a lot of other people, and a person who dies before baptism is certainly not cut off for that reason.

- The thief on the cross was not able to be baptised before he died, and Jesus promised to be with him in paradise that very day.

2. But what this does mean is that anyone who refuses the covenant sign that God appointed to mark us out as His people is excluded from His people.
 - Such a person has broken God's covenant.
 - Does God make allowance for ignorance—for example, for those who in conscience do not believe that their children should be baptised?
 - Perhaps He does—that is a judgement for Him to make.
 - But parents who believe that the covenant sign does not pertain to their children, if consistent, have little reason to suppose that a child born in sin has any hope anyway if God does not regard them as His people.
 - They have rejected the testimony of God that their children do belong to God.
 - One of the main reasons for supposing that our children are accepted by God if we are believers is because God appointed the sign of belongingness to be given to them as infants.
 - Note well that the language is not that the sign *makes* them His people, but rather that it marks them as such—it acknowledges that they are already His people.
 - The children of believers are already counted as His people and are cut off from that privilege if the sign is not applied to them.
 - They were counted holy, but now they are unclean.

C. With baptism, we are told in the Bible that we are baptised into one body.

1. For example, 1 Cor 12:13 says: **For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit...**
 - This has both an internal and an external aspect so that we are joined really and truly by the Spirit, and to the visible church by the water.
 - That is why in Acts 2:41, it says that those who gladly received Peter's preached word were baptised and added to them—to the church...
 - So a person who refuses to receive baptism cannot be counted as one of God's people.
 - God requires it of us to enter into His covenant.
 - But seeing that we are baptised into has its own implication!
2. We have responsibility to care for one another in the body.
 - We are to love, cherish, and care for one another,
 - and to rebuke and admonish one another when needed,
 - as well as comfort and encourage one another.
 - It is a great privilege to be numbered with God's people, and we should be very thankful for this—
 - We should give thanks for all of our brothers and sisters in the body.
 - Just think, they are marked out with us as God's people who are saved from sin and who will live with God forever in the new heavens and the new earth!

Conclusion: So you see, my brothers and sisters, that God's covenant sign reminds us that we belong to the LORD as His people...

- And that as belonging to Him, we ought to renounce the world, to trust in Him to do all that is necessary to make us His people, and to live in the fellowship of His people.

In conclusion, we may look at baptism as the way that God has appointed for us to respond to His covenant promises to be our God...

- By it, we joyfully put ourselves and our children in God's hands.
- We come to Him by faith, and we put ourselves and our children into His hands by baptism, looking to Him to do all that He promises to do for His people!