

1 Corinthians 7:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

Analysis

Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing—Paul states radically that Jewish covenant markers are spiritually neutral under the New Covenant. The repetition of *ouden* (οὐδέν, "nothing") emphasizes total irrelevance. This echoes Galatians 5:6, "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."

Instead, **but the keeping of the commandments of God** (τέρēsis entolōn theou, τήρησις ἐντολῶν θεοῦ) is what matters. Paul is not advocating Old Testament legal observance but obedience to Christ's commands, summarized in love for God and neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 13:8-10). True covenant membership is marked by heart transformation and obedience, not physical markers.

This verse relativizes all external religious markers—Jewish ritual, Gentile freedom, circumcision, uncircumcision. What God desires is *téreisis entolōn*, faithful obedience flowing from regenerate hearts. This prepares for Paul's later teaching that love fulfills the law (Romans 13:8-10) and that circumcision is a matter of the heart (Romans 2:28-29).

Historical Context

Paul's statement that circumcision is "nothing" was scandalous to Jewish ears, as circumcision marked Abraham's covenant (Genesis 17) and Jewish identity. However, the New Covenant's internal transformation (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel

36:26-27) surpasses external rituals. Paul declares the Abrahamic promise fulfilled in Christ, transcending ethnic markers.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's declaration that circumcision is "nothing" challenge cultural and religious identity markers?
2. What does "keeping the commandments of God" mean in the context of the New Covenant through Christ?
3. What external religious markers might Christians today wrongly elevate as essential for spiritual status?

Interlinear Text

ἡ	περιτομὴ	οὐδέν	ἐστιν	καὶ	ἡ	ἀκροβυνστία	οὐδέν
G3588	Circumcision	nothing	is	and	G3588	uncircumcision	nothing
G4061		G3762	G2076	G2532		G203	G3762
ἐστιν	ἀλλὰ	τήρησις		ἐντολῶν		θεοῦ	
is	but	the keeping	of the commandments	of God			
G2076	G235	G5084	G1785		G2316		

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 6:15 (Parallel theme): For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Galatians 5:6 (Parallel theme): For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Revelation 22:14 (Word): Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

Colossians 3:11 (Parallel theme): Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

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