

Circumcision was appointed as the distinctive badge of the covenant, [made with Abraham] because it was peculiarly fitted for symbolically expressing the spiritual character and design of the covenant. It marked the condition of every one who received it, as having to do with higher powers and objects than those of corrupt nature, as the condition of one brought into blessed *fellowship* with God, and therefore called to walk before Him and be perfect. There would be no difficulty in perceiving this, nor any material difference of opinion upon the subject, if people would but look beneath the surface, and in the true spirit of the ancient religion, would contemplate the outward as an image of the inward. The general purport of the covenant was, that from Abraham there was to be generated a seed of blessing, in which all real blessing was to centre, and from which it was to flow to the ends of the earth. To shew that this end was to be reached, not as the result of nature's ordinary productiveness, but of nature *purged of uncleanness—nature raised above itself, in league with the grace of God, and bearing on it the distinctive impress of His character and working*, God affixed to the covenant this symbolical rite. It said to the circumcised man, that he had Jehovah for his bridegroom, to whom he had become espoused, as it were, by blood, and that he must no longer follow the unregulated will and impulse of nature, but live in accordance with the high relation he occupied, and the sacred calling he had received.

Most truly, therefore, does the apostle say, that Abraham received circumcision, as a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, —Rom. iv., 11., a divine token in his own case that he had attained through faith to such fellowship with God, and righteousness in him —and a token for every child that should afterwards receive it, not indeed that he actually possessed the same, but that he was called to possess it, and had a right to the privileges and hopes which might enable him to attain the possession. Most truly also does the apostle say in another place, Rom. ii., 28-29. He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, (i.e., not a Jew in the right sense, not such an one as God would recognize and own) &c. The very design of the covenant was to secure a seed with those inward and spiritual characteristics [declared in this passage] and the sign of the covenant, the outward impression in the flesh was worthless, excepting in so far as it was the expression of the corresponding reality. Isaac the child of promise, in his being and birth, was emphatically a child of God. And thus was the exact type of what the covenant properly aimed at, and what its expressive symbol betokened, viz., a *spiritual seed*, in which the divine and human, grace and nature, should meet together in producing true subjects and channels of blessing. But its actual representation—the one complete and perfect embodiment of all it symbolized and sought, was the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the divine and the human met from the first, not in co-operative merely, but organic union, and consequently the result produced was a Being free from all taint of corruption, holy, harmless, undefiled, the express image of the Father, the very righteousness of God. He alone fully realized the conditions of blessing exhibited in the covenant, and was