

The New Covenant

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Walking In the Spirit - Series 1 (A Ministry of Eternity Christian Fellowship)

We live in a secular culture that radically devalues (or trivializes) the inner life and the spiritual life and emphasizes the life of 'sight', of materialism and of that which can be confirmed by the five senses. This series of Eternity-DBS will be a sort of step-by-step guide to renewing our minds and our spiritual senses and opening up to walking and dwelling in the Holy Spirit.

The first thing we need to know is that we are in a New Covenant, we have moved from a lifestyle of 'law-keeping' under the Old Covenant of the laws of Moses, to a lifestyle of "Spirit-following" (while still being holy as He is holy) in the New Covenant established by Jesus Christ. Indeed it is those who are led by the Spirit that are the sons of God! This statement is found in two very similar passages that contrast the flesh life, the Spirit life and the life of serving the law in fear.

Romans 8:12-15 MKJV *Therefore, brothers, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. (13) For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die. But if you through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live. (14) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (15) For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption by which we cry, Abba, Father!*

Galatians 5:16-18 MKJV *I say, then, Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. (17) For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary to one another; lest whatever you may will, these things you do. (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.*

The contrast between law and Spirit is forcefully made in Romans, Galatians and Hebrews and is perhaps clearest in this verse:

Romans 7:6 MKJV *But now we having been set free from the Law, having died to that in which we were held, so that we serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of the letter.*

We are to be a Spirit-following people. But how do we do this? In our modern lives we have become spiritually dull. We are unsure whether it is God, the Devil or our own desires that are leading us. We are lost and confused and have great difficulty following the Holy Spirit so we often revert to Law, or to our own strength and reason or even to despair. But God CAN be trusted and He can and does lead His people. So let's keep on going and look a bit more at this New Covenant.

The New Covenant is **promised** in Jeremiah 31:31

Jeremiah 31:31-34 MKJV *Behold, the days come, says Jehovah, that I will cut a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, (32) not according to the covenant that I*

cut with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which covenant of Mine they broke, although I was a husband to them, says Jehovah; (33) but this shall be the covenant that I will cut with the house of Israel: After those days, says Jehovah, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (34) And they shall no more teach each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says Jehovah. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more.

We can see that is a covenant where the law is written on the hearts of believers and people come to a true internal knowledge of God through persona and individual revelation that needs no external teacher (see also 1 John 2:20,27)

The New Covenant is **instituted** at the Lord's Supper and by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who becomes its Mediator:

Matthew 26:26-28 MKJV *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is My body. (27) And He took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink all of it. (28) For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

Hebrews 9:15 MKJV *And for this cause He is the Mediator of the new covenant, so that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, those who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*

The New Covenant **completely replaced** the Old Covenant just as a new will replaces an older will, or a new labor contract replaces an old labor contract:

Hebrews 8:6-13 MKJV *But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by so much He is also the Mediator of a better covenant, which was built upon better promises. (7) For if that first covenant had been without fault, then no place would have been sought for the second. (8) For finding fault with them, He said to them, "Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, and I will make an end on the house of Israel and on the house of Judah; a new covenant shall be, (9) not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day I took hold of their hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt," because they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not regard them, says the Lord. (10) "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My Laws into their mind and write them in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (11) And they shall not each man teach his neighbor, and each man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. (12) For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more." (13) In that He says, A new covenant, He has made the first one old. Now that which decays and becomes old is ready to vanish away.*

The New Covenant calls us to be Spirit-Followers rather than Law-Keepers or Flesh-Indulgers. We saw that the New Covenant was promised by God via Jeremiah the prophet, established by Jesus at the Last Supper and that through His death and resurrection he has become the Mediator of the New Covenant which completely replaces the Old Covenant. We also saw that the New Covenant was actively ministered by the apostles such as Paul.

Now we need to go into a bit more depth about precisely what the New Covenant means for our daily Christian life.

We find the Scriptures telling us that the New Covenant is for the 'forgiveness of sins' (Matthew 26:28, Romans 11:27, Hebrews 9:13,14) , that it is a better covenant than the Laws of Moses which it replaces (Hebrews 7:22, 8:6) because it is eternal (Hebrews 13:20) and gives not just material blessings but eternal life itself (Hebrews 9:11-15) a new and living way to God (Hebrews 10:20).

The New Covenant is a covenant which brings glory, freedom and life to those who believe (2 Corinthians 3:6-18) and as a result of which we have (in Christ) all the spiritual blessings of the heavenly realms (Ephesians 1:3) including being seated in the heavenly realms with Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-7) and being made children of Abraham (Galatians 3:13-29) which include the Promise of Abraham that we might receive the Spirit through faith (Galatians 3:14) and it is this Holy Spirit who becomes the dynamic power of the Christian life (Romans 8:4-6, 14:17, 15:13; Galatians 5:16-18).

The New Covenant means we have access to God as sons of God and members of His household (Ephesians 2:17-19, Romans 5:1-5, 8:14-16) since our sin is forgiven and the way to God has been made through Christ's sacrifice on the cross (Hebrews 10:20). And this means we can individually go to the throne of grace for grace and help in time of need - and that we do not need any earthly priest to represent us there since Christ is our Mediator (Hebrews 4:14-16). Indeed we can call God our "Abba Father" (Romans 8:14-16).

Now Abba father means that we have been granted a close personal transformative relationship with God in which He is changing us from glory to glory as we behold the face of God in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). The Old Covenant was about performance (do this and you shall live) while the new is about grace and the free gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23) and God's ability to renew us with resurrection power (Romans 8:11).

Thus the New Covenant is all about God's absolutely unconditional love for you. You do not have to perform or to do anything in order to be saved. You simply have to trust God. And you do not have to change yourself. God does the changing - working in you to make you an entirely new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15) and creating a 'new man' made in the image of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10).

Thus the knowledge of the New Covenant should put an end to spiritual striving. God loves you and has called you and has given His Son for you so that you can be saved.

Romans 8:31-34 HCSB *What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? (32) He did not even spare His own Son, but offered Him up for us all; how will He not also with Him grant us everything? (33) Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the One who justifies. (34) Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the One who died, but even more, has been raised; He also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us.*

Indeed we are told that the New Covenant is a covenant sealed by the very blood of Jesus Christ Himself! (Matthew 26:28, 1 Corinthians 11:25, Hebrews 12:24, 13:20) This is so great a gift that we cannot possibly add to it, replicate it to replace it with anything else. Everything has been done for us, by Him, as the result of a sacrifice that was 'once for all'. (Romans 6:10, Hebrews 7:27, 9:12 10:10; 1 Peter 3:18).

Our task is simply to rejoice in what God has done for us:

Philippians 4:4 MKJV *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, Rejoice!*

Hebrews 13:15-16 MKJV *By Him, then, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, confessing His name. (16) But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

God provided the New Covenant because the old simply did not work as a method of salvation. God understands our weakness and sinfulness and knows that law-keeping just brings condemnation and death, not because the laws are bad, but because we are incapable of keeping them and so end up under divine judgment. God wants you to stop struggling. He wants you to entirely trust Him for your salvation.

When you sin you need to remember that you are in a covenant for the forgiveness of sins and come back to God for grace and help and cleansing by His blood (1 John 1:7-10).

When you are in need of blessing you need to remember that the New Covenant has given you all the blessings of Abraham and indeed all the blessings in the heavenly realms! (Galatians 3:13-19, Ephesians 1:3)

When you are in need of grace and help you need to remember that the New Covenant has given you glorious access to your Abba Father, an understanding High Priest and Mediator, and the privilege of being able to come before the Throne of Grace (Hebrews 4:14-16)

The New Covenant is God's supply agreement with you. In it all the promises of God are 'yea and amen' and it is these precious promises of the covenant that give us all we require for life and godliness. (2 Corinthians 1:20, 7:1; 2 Peter 1:4)

The Precious Promise

2 Peter 1:2-4 MKJV *Grace and peace be multiplied to you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, (3) according as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who has called us to glory and virtue, (4) through which He has given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, so that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

2 Corinthians 1:20 ISV *For all God's promises are "Yes" in him. And so through him we can say "Amen," to the glory of God.*

Every covenant agreement, even in the human realm, has certain good promises attached. Now the glorious New Covenant has all the promises of God attached - and they are 'yea and amen' in Christ Jesus! These promises are free gifts. They are not earned. They are like the gifts you get as an inheritance from your uncle. You did not earn them – they were freely given because he chose to give them to you!

You do not have to 'do something' (other than believe in Jesus) for these promises to be activated. They are the promises of faith, and not of works. And they are simply inherited through faith and patience like that of Abraham (Hebrews 6:11-15).

The purpose of the promises is 'so that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature'. That is that we might become a truly holy and godly and kind and compassionate people made in the image of the God who is Love.

The promises are not given for the flesh but for the spirit. For the flesh profits nothing:

John 6:63 MKJV *It is the Spirit that makes alive, the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit and are life.*

The promises of God are faith-activated spiritual principles that help us to be Spirit-led Jesus-followers who 'escape the corruption that is in the world through lust'. So the promises of God are world-renouncing and lust-denying. They are the glorious promises of the saints that give hope in the midst of trials and bring the grace and peace of God to bear in the midst of life.

Let's look at 2 Peter 1:2-4 above. God's divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. These gifts are received through the knowledge of Jesus Christ so that we can obtain glory and virtue. Whatever you require to live a positive, godly Christian life will be supplied through Christ and through the promises of His covenant.

Experience seems to contradict this. In the current recession many ministries are hurting and some are closing. The mail is full of urgent appeals for funds. Many Christians seem to be saying that they do not have all that they need for life and godliness.

On the other hand I have lived by faith for over 25 years and I have had many 'lean times' but there has always been enough for life and godliness. God has seasons of abundance and of pruning, of directing funds, then of redirecting them. Occasionally the expensive programs have had their time and need to go. And from time to time God brings us back to holy simplicity.

It is in faith's holy simplicity that we find the activation of the precious promises of God. It is as we follow Abraham and Joshua that we find the victory.

The New Covenant is full of gifts for those who follow Christ. Gifts such as eternal life, godliness, and the promised Holy Spirit. We press into the experience of those gifts through faith. For instance we can believe God for more and more joy in the Holy Ghost or we can be unbelieving and self-pitying. We can go to the Bible looking for things to rejoice in or we can look at our circumstances and find things to be miserable about. We can rejoice in hope or we can say "I will believe it when I see it".

One of the most fundamental promises that we inherit is that of the love of God being poured out in our lives (Romans 5:5). Because of what Jesus has done on the cross we are 'justified' – that is made good, OK and blameless, in the sight of God. Many Christians do not yet believe that God truly loves them in this way. They are still struggling to 'be good' so that God can love them. In fact it the other way around. God loves us first – and later on as we understand this, we find it easy to do good works.

Meditate on bible verses about the love of God such as the following:

1 John 4:16 MKJV *And we have known and believed the love that God has in us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.*

Romans 8:37-39 MKJV *But in all these things we more than conquer through Him who loved us. (38) For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, (39) nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Galatians 2:20 MKJV *I have been crucified with Christ, and I live; yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me. And that life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith toward the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself on my behalf.*

1 John 4:9-10 MKJV *In this the love of God was revealed in us, because God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. (10) In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation concerning our sins.*

Pray that God will awaken your spirit to the love of God, opening your 'faith senses', that is your spiritual eyes and spiritual ears, to the goodness and wonder and kindness of the Savior. Press in to inherit these things. Stir up your faith to lay hold of the promises that are yours as part of the eternal covenant.

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