

# THE BLOOD COVENANT

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DR. J.L. WILLIAMS

# **THE BLOOD COVENANT**

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# PREFACE

**F**OR THE LAST several years, I have been studying the subject of the Blood Covenant, and it has been the most revolutionary study I have ever done in my Christian life. As I began to study God’s Word, I kept bumping into the word “covenant” over and over again. It was a word with which I was familiar, but I began to realize that the study of “covenant” represented the very essence, the very heart, and the very spiritual life-blood of the Christian faith.

It is my desire that you, in reading and studying the following, will become as excited as I have in preparing this material! It has revolutionized many of my former understandings of Scripture.

Repeatedly, this study will reveal a focal and unyielding truth: *Christianity is not something that you*

*do for God – Christianity is something that God has already done for you...and me!*

Take Paul’s letter to the church in Ephesus. The Apostle Paul was talking about the days before we were Christians, when he said we were dead in our trespasses and sin. He gave us those wonderful verses about grace: **“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God...”** (Eph. 2:8).

Remember, we are saved...**“...not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created *in Christ Jesus* to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men) – remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and *foreigners* (strangers, KJV) *to the covenants of the promise*, without hope and without God in the world. But now *in Christ Jesus* you who once were far away have been brought near *through the blood of Christ*”** (Eph. 2:9-13).

You can see that I have emphasized the words in italics that are crucial to covenant. **“For He Himself is**

our peace, who has *made the two one* and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in His flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. *For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit*" (Eph. 2:14-18).

What is the result? These are the benefits of covenant:

**“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit”** (Eph. 2:19-22).

Paul said there was a time when all of us who are Gentiles were strangers or foreigners to the covenants of promise but now we are a part of God's household. Unfortunately, many of us who have been brought near by the blood of Jesus Christ are *still* strangers to the covenants of promise. We don't really understand what it's all about.

**“The Holy Spirit also testifies (bears witness) to us about this. First He says: ‘This is the covenant I will make with them after that time,’ says the Lord. ‘I will put My laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.’ Then He adds: ‘Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.’ And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin” (Heb. 10:15-18).**

Thank you for embarking on this journey with me and for studying the scripture on your own as well. Don't just take my word for it! God's word is rich and powerful and you need to see that for yourself. May God open your heart and mind to the understanding of His Holy Word.

With Love for God's Covenant,

J.L.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J.L.' with a stylized flourish.

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# INTRODUCTION

**A**S WE BEGIN, let me enumerate the benefits that I think you will gain from this study.

## **Revelation**

You will understand the Bible at a deeper level than ever before and you will gain a deeper understanding of God's Word. Many of the scriptures you have never understood before are suddenly going to begin to "come to life"! Portions of Scripture that you formerly "read over" will leap from the page and excite your spirit.

In fact, you can't really understand the Bible at all until you have an understanding of covenants. "*Covenant*" is the basis of the entire Bible. The King

James Version of the Bible begins with the flyleaf which reads “The Bible: The Holy Bible” and subtitled, “The Old and the New Testament”. The NIV and NASV further clarify in parenthesis “The Old Covenant and the New Covenant”.

The whole Bible is a study of two great Covenants.

## **Redemption and Righteousness**

You will see the *security, depth, and richness* of your relationship with God because He redeemed you and gave you His righteousness. You are going to understand as never before that you have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. I pray you will grasp what Paul said:

**“...the depth and height, the length, the breadth of the love of God (KJV)...”** (Eph. 3:18).

May you also see that the Gospel is “Good News” precisely because of “*Covenants*”. Literally, the Christian life is a life lived in covenant! As I stated in the Preface, the Gospel is a story of *what God has done for us* – not what we have done or will do for Him.

## Relationships

A covenant relationship with God and other brothers and sisters is both the most *liberating* and *binding* relationship on earth. Through this study, you will get a deeper realization of your responsibility as a Christian. The Gospel has always been and will always be “Good News,” but the Christian life is a life lived in a covenant relationship. On the basis of what God has done for me, I have a glorious responsibility and the opportunity to fulfill it. It is human nature to love the privileges and the rights *without* the responsibilities. You will see the nature of your relationship *and* responsibility to Christ.

We are all familiar with Christ’s institution of the “New Covenant” in the Upper Room with His disciples the night He was betrayed by Judas (Matt. 26:26-28).

But there is another incident in the life of Christ that seems out of place. It was in His earlier Capernaum ministry – at least 2 years before the final Upper Room discourse (John 6:41-66). *This story can only be understood and make any sense at all when understood in terms of Christ’s early call to covenant.* But, many of His disciples clearly understood what He was calling for, and **“followed Him no longer.”**

Here is a familiar passage, from the Passover Meal at the Lord's Table (the Eucharist):

**“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is My *blood of the covenant*, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins”**” (Matt. 26:26-28).

The scripture that begins at John 6:53 has been a “fuzzy area” theologically for many Biblical commentators, as Jesus said something that seemed to be totally out of place! Why did Jesus say this now? The problem is that the statements were made at the end of Jesus' second year of public ministry. This was not the Passover or the Lord's Supper, yet it sounded so very similar that it seemed out of context at the time. At the synagogue in Capernaum, Jesus had been teaching about the manna that God had sent to the forefathers of the Jews with whom He was speaking.

**“Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.**

**Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink. *Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him.* Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.’ He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. On hearing it, *many* of His disciples said, ‘This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?’” (John 6:53-60).**

This sounds strange to us, doesn't it? Many theologians and commentators base their interpretations on a Western viewpoint. Theologians hypothesize that the disciples were *confused* at Jesus' words. But the disciples were hardly confused. They understood perfectly what Jesus was saying. He was calling them into a covenant relationship.

As we progress in this study, we will increasingly see that when you enter into a covenant relationship, you take upon yourself all that your covenant partner

is. And your covenant partner takes on himself all that you are.

Why was this difficult for Jesus' disciples? He was calling them to do something with which they were *totally familiar*. Jesus wasn't especially popular with the Jews, or with the religious authorities. To be linked with Jesus Christ was to be linked or coupled with someone who wasn't popular – *that* was the difficulty. The difficulty was in the cost or the price of being covenanted with Jesus.

**“Aware that His disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, ‘Does this offend you? (In the King James, ‘Does this cause you to stumble?’ Note He did not say, ‘Does this confuse you?’) What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where He was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing.’”**

Here's why Jesus was unpopular – the Pharisees, religious leaders and the Scribes were placing their confidence in the flesh's ability to fulfill the demands of the Law. Then Jesus came saying that the flesh counted for nothing! He was undermining the essence of their religion!

**“The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do**

**not believe.’ For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray Him. He went on to say, ‘This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless the Father has enabled him.’ *From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him*” (John 6:53-66).**

Many of His disciples withdrew because they were not willing to pay the price to cut the covenant. The price was absolutely too high. They were not willing to enter into a covenant relationship because of His unpopularity, and because of His great demands on anyone who entered into covenant with Him.

In the King James Version, the last part of verse 66 reads, “...and ***walked no more with Him...***”. Amos 3:3 used this critical covenant wording: “**Do two *walk* together unless they have agreed to do so?”**

You see, Jesus’ disciples wanted to walk with Him, and walk with the Romans, and walk with the Pharisees. But, His covenant requirement was to walk with Him alone.

# 1

## WHAT IS A COVENANT?

**T**HE WORD COVENANT is both an Old Testament (or Covenant) and a New Testament (or Covenant) word. The Old Testament Hebrew word for covenant is “bereeth” (not pronouncing the “h”). “Bereeth” means literally “cutting” or “the act of cutting.” It means to enter into a compact, an agreement, to a testament by passing between pieces of flesh.

The New Testament Greek word is “diatheke” and it means a disposition of property. It means one person making a deposit of valuable property to another person’s account.

What does this mean to us? God has made a divine disposition of property. He has said, “All that I have and all that I am is at your disposal.” Most of us live



such spiritually poverty-stricken lives that we act as though we serve a God who is just barely getting by. But not Paul, because he said: **“I can do everything through Him who gives me strength”** (Phil. 4:13).

The Bible shows three different types of covenants recorded in Scripture.

## **Two-Sided Covenant**

Just as it implies, a two-sided covenant is a covenant between two people who are roughly socio-economically equal to each other. Both are agreeable to the covenant.

In 1 Samuel 18:1-4, we see David’s covenant with Jonathan:

**“After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself...And Jonathan made a *covenant* with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt”** (1 Sam. 18:1-4).

Malachi 2:14 speaks of marriage as a covenant:

**“You ask, ‘Why?’ It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your *marriage covenant*” (Malachi 2:14).**

In Obadiah, God speaks about the cities of Esau and Edom, and how ultimately their covenant with each other could not withstand God’s judgment upon them for all of their attacks against the Jewish people. In Obad. 7, God said of Israel: **“All your allies will force you to the border; your friends will deceive and overpower you; *those who eat your bread* will set a trap for you...”**

## **One-Sided Covenant**

A one-sided covenant is a covenant that is imposed by a superior party upon an inferior party.

Ezekiel 17 told the story of Zedekiah. Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon. The children of Israel had been continuously disobedient, and God – in fulfillment of His prophecy – sent Nebuchadnezzar’s army in to overthrow the Jewish people. They carried off Jehoiachin, who was then the king, into Babylonian captivity.

Nebuchadnezzar appointed Zedekiah as his puppet king to rule in Jerusalem. He made Zedekiah enter into a covenant with him, that he would not create problems, that he would be obedient to Babylon, etc. But, Zedekiah, even after cutting the covenant, began looking for a way to break the covenant as soon as Nebuchadnezzar got back in Babylon. He looked to Egypt for help and broke the covenant. God said, “You have broken the covenant and I will judge you for it, even though the covenant was with a pagan king.” This clearly shows the seriousness of covenant.

Genesis 21 was the familiar story of Abimelech, the king of Gerar. Abraham went down into Gerar, and he knew that Abimelech had an eye for the ladies, and Sarai was a beautiful woman. Abraham talked Sarai into claiming to be his sister. He was basically a Bedouin, a nomad passing through Gerar. But Abimelech, with his great military power and possession, saw that every time he came up against Abraham, God was on Abraham’s side. So, he sought a covenant with Abraham, to protect himself:

**“At that time Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his forces said to Abraham, ‘God is with you in everything you do. Now swear to me here before God that you will not deal falsely with me or my children or**

**my descendants. Show to me and the country where you are living as an alien the same kindness I have shown to you”** (Gen. 21:22-23).

We also saw this in the story of the Ammonites and the men of Jabesh. **“Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh Gilead. And all the men of Jabesh said to him, ‘Make a *treaty* with us, and we will be subject to you.’ But Nahash the Ammonite replied, ‘I will make a treaty with you only on the condition that I gouge out the right eye of every one of you and so bring disgrace on all Israel.’ The elders of Jabesh said to him, ‘Give us seven days so we can send messengers throughout Israel: if no one comes to rescue us, we will surrender to you”** (I Sam. 11:1-3).

Another example where a superior person made a covenant with an inferior person is found regarding the king of Babylon and Israel. **“The king of Babylon went to Jerusalem and carried off her king and her nobles, bringing them back with him to Babylon. Then he took a member of the royal family and made a *treaty* with him, *putting him under oath*. He also carried away the leading men of the land, so that the kingdom would be brought low, unable to rise again, surviving only by keeping his *treaty*...he**

shall die in Babylon, in the land of the king who put him on the throne, whose *oath* he despised and whose *treaty* he broke...*He despised the oath by breaking the covenant.* Because he had given his hand in pledge and yet did all these things, he shall not escape...I will bring down on his head *My oath that he despised and My covenant that he broke* (Ezek. 17:11-19).

## **Self-Imposed Covenant**

A self-imposed covenant is one initiated by God. He does not have to enter into it because there is no one higher. He just chooses to do it, because of who He is. For example, God entered into a self-imposed covenant to adopt Israel.

- **“For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be His people, His treasured possession. The Lord did not set His affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath He swore to your forefathers that He brought you out**

**with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deut. 7:6-8).**

- **“...You said, ‘I have made a covenant with My chosen one, I have sworn to David My servant ‘I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations’” (Psalm 89:3).**
- **“This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt. 26:28).**

This last one, of course, is the covenant to save sinners, for the forgiveness of sins, of love and grace, with corresponding verses: Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20, Romans 11:27, 1 Corinthians 11:25, II Cor. 3:3, Heb. 8:8, 10; 9:15; 10:16; 12:24. He didn't do it because we sinners were desirable. After all, we were enemies of God.

As Paul said in Romans 5:8, **“While we were aliens God commended, He demonstrated, He gave expression to His love for us, in that while we were sinners (His enemies), He died for us.”** That is pure grace. That is unmerited favor, and that's what the

word “grace” means. It means 100% “I’m getting something I don’t deserve.”

God’s self-imposed covenant with you and me is remarkable because there is absolutely nothing in us that God needs. One of the reasons why “works” righteousness has such appeal to us is because we want to believe that there is something that we have that God needs. But, God...just...loves...us. He has set His everlasting affection upon us, even when we fail Him.

The word “covenant” is mentioned *three hundred times* in the Bible. In Romans 1:28-32, Paul talked about **covenant breakers**:

**“Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, and ruthless. Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such**

**things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.”**

Here are some of the things the Bible teaches about the terms for covenant. These should give more depth and meaning to your understanding.

## **Everlasting Covenant**

The study of covenants will convince you of the security of your life as a Christian. So many Christians live insecurely, because they look at the Christian life as though it were something they do or they have to maintain. If it is something you do or maintain, you will always be spiritually insecure. But, when you realize that the security of your Christian life is based not in you but in God, you will feel like Paul when he said:

**“...being confident that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:13).**

Mark that well, because this study will drive home the security of you as a believer. If I have “cut a covenant” with the One who is the Author of life, then that’s an everlasting covenant that has brought me



peace and life that can never be revoked – life that can never be lost.

## **Covenant of Peace**

Remember what Paul said in Ephesians 2:14-18? Jesus has broken down the dividing wall of hostility and He has become our peace through His blood. It is the blood that brings the peace, so it is called a Covenant of Peace, a Covenant of Life. Why? Because we have entered into an indissoluble relationship with Him who is Life.

## **Covenant of Brothers**

People who were formerly enemies, hostile to God, are brought near and enter into a covenant of brothers. No longer an enemy, or even a foreigner or alien – now a brother and member of God’s own household (Ephesians 2:19).

## **Marriage Covenant**

As we saw in Malachi 2:14, it is marriage that is spoken of as a covenant, and God said, “You know why I am no longer blessing your lives? You know why I am no longer accepting your sacrifices? Because you have broken the covenant with the wife of your youth.”

That's why I believe God's judgment is on America, because we are a nation of marital covenant-breakers. Just as He said to the nation of Israel, the moment you start breaking covenant with the wife of your youth, you are under His judgment. Marriage is an indissoluble covenant. It is a holy covenant; it is a covenant of promise.

Remember what Paul said in II Corinthians? God says "Yes" to every promise. Through Jesus and through Jesus only, all of the promises of God find their divine "Yes." And that simply means that if I am in covenant with the Lord Jesus, then all of His promises are mine.

**“For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not ‘Yes’ and ‘No,’ but in Him it has always been ‘Yes.’ For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ” (II Cor. 1:19-20).**

Jesus is the Author of what is called the New Covenant or the better covenant.

## 2

# SEVEN COVENANTS IN SCRIPTURE

### Edenic Covenant

**T**HIS IS THE covenant that God made in Eden with Adam and Eve. That is where He promised that redemption was going to come. The Edenic Covenant is a promise of redemption, that there would come that One out of woman who would bruise the serpent's head but His own heel would be bruised in the process.

**“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen. 3:15).**

## Noachian Covenant

This is the covenant that God made with Noah. God promised preservation of the human race, and of the natural kingdom. Never again would there be another flood or deluge that would destroy the world. Later we will look at covenant symbols, but the rainbow symbolized this covenant.

**“Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ‘I now establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you...every living creature on earth. I establish My covenant with you: Never again will the waters of a flood cut off all life; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.’ And God said, ‘This is the sign of the covenant I am making between Me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember My covenant between Me and you and all living creatures of every**

**kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.’ So God said to Noah, ‘This is the sign of the covenant I have established between Me and all life on the earth’” (Gen. 9:8-17).**

## **Abrahamic Covenant**

This was an everlasting covenant that God entered into with Abram who had come from Ur of the Chaldeans. God told Abram that through his seed, He would bring a blessing to the entire world.

In Gen. 15:18, God specified to Abram what is now roughly the land of the nation of Israel, and specifically the borders are defined.

**“On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates – the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.’”**

At this present time, not all of the borders are honored, but I can assure you if God is God (which He is) and if He is not a liar (which He is not), those borders will one day be fully occupied by the Jews. God promised it, and that settles it. He said to Abraham, “I will give you this land that you have sojourned in.”

## **Sinaitic Covenant**

God chose the nation of Israel, as we have seen (Exodus 19). God entered into a covenant with His people, who were the seed of Abraham, through the son of promise (Isaac) as opposed to the son of the flesh (Ishmael). On Mt. Sinai, He gave the rules for living out the covenant with Him.

## **Levitical Covenant**

Numbers 25:10-13 explained the covenant of atonement that God made with a Levite named Phinehas. By the way, the word atonement means, “to cover.” Although the sacrifices of the Old Covenant atoned for sin, they could not forgive the sin. They only covered sin. But, through the blood of the New Covenant, Jesus cleansed and continues to cleanse our sin. They are not just covered, they are cleansed.

## Davidic Covenant

God promised that through David there would come One who would be His Messiah. He would ultimately bring about the New Covenant, or the covenant of reconciliation, whereby those who were formerly enemies – those who were formerly dead in trespasses and sin, and those who were strangers to the covenants of promise – would be brought into reconciliation. God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.

## The New Covenant

Paul, in II Corinthians 3:1-6, replied to the Corinthians who questioned his apostleship:

**“Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. *Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God.* Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim**

**anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a *new covenant* – not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (II Cor. 3:1-6).**

So many Christians I know are not living lives of spiritual confidence, because there is guilt in their lives – real or imagined. If you have guilt, you can't have confidence before God. But, when we have been sprinkled clean by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can come boldly before the throne of God with confidence.

Please note particularly II Corinthians 3:5, which I quoted on the previous page, where Paul stated that our competence/confidence comes from God, and the *new covenant*, not of the letter of the law. “The letter kills”... rules kill... regulations kill... religion kills... religiosity kills... ritual kills... but the Spirit gives life! It is a covenant of life that we should be enjoying.

The Old Covenant of Law was written on tablets of stone; the New Covenant was written on the human heart. In Hebrews 10:16, God says, **“I will write My covenant on their hearts and on their minds.”** That's why I don't need a rule book...a list of do's and do not's...through His Holy Spirit He has inscribed on



my mind and on my heart what pleases Him. That's the New Covenant of grace. Paul calls the Old Covenant a ministry of death, and he calls the New Covenant a ministry of the Spirit. The Old Covenant was a ministry of condemnation (verse 9), of **“fading glory”**, and the New Covenant is a ministry of righteousness.

If you are having trouble understanding **“fading glory”**, do you remember Moses when he came down from the mountain? He was aglow, but after a while the glory began to fade. That, brothers and sisters, is the perfect picture of religion. The New Covenant is one of *increasing* glory. Note verse 18:

**“And we, who with unveiled faces (as opposed to Moses, who had a veiled face) all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with *ever-increasing glory*, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit”** (II Cor. 3:18).

The original Greek word used here for “transformed” is the word also for metamorphosis. We are going through spiritual metamorphosis into His likeness. Because we have entered into a covenant with the Author of life, whose Holy Spirit has inscribed on our hearts and on our minds those things

that please Him, we don't have to die to exhibit "ever-increasing glory".

## **PRAYER**

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You and we praise You that You have chosen to enter into a covenant with us, that You have "cut the covenant" – that You ARE the covenant! You have made peace for us with the Father through Your shed blood. We who were enemies, we who were dead, we who were hostile, we who were alone and strangers to the promises – we have joined the commonwealth of Israel and become a nation of priests and prophets unto You, and a holy people, all because You have cut a covenant with us. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that through your Holy Spirit You have made a diatheke, a disposition of Your property, of all that You are in us. Lord Jesus help us to live in You.

### 3

## CUTTING THE COVENANT

**T**O REVIEW VERY briefly, the Bible is a story of covenants. There are two words in the Bible that describe this experience called covenant. “Bereeth” is the Old Testament Hebrew word meaning “to cut”. It means entering into a compact by walking between two pieces of flesh. In the New Testament, the Greek word “diatheke” meant “a disposition of property, from one person to another.”

In John 6, two years into Jesus’ public ministry, several of Jesus’ followers or disciples chose *not* to continue walking with Him or following Him, because they counted the cost of covenant with Jesus too high. They didn’t walk away in confusion – they walked

away and followed Him no more because they knew full well what He was asking.

There are six steps involved in cutting a covenant. In the modern Western world, we are unfamiliar with entering a covenant, but in my travels I have found that almost all cultures are familiar with covenants. There are always several steps involved in formalizing the covenant. We will specifically look at the Hebrew blood covenants of Jesus' time. When Jesus said, **“unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood you cannot be one of My disciples,”** what did He mean?

## **Preparation for Cutting a Covenant**

### **Preparation Stage**

This involved *counting the cost*. A Hebrew man would in no way enter into a covenant lightly – because he knew what it meant. He knew the solemnity and seriousness of a covenant. Every Jewish person knew that a covenant was the most serious, the most sacred, and the most binding relationship that two people could ever enter into in life. He would ask himself, “Do I want to be inseparably bound to this person?” Much thought and much prayer went in to counting the cost of

this most serious and most binding of all relationships.

- “Nahash the Ammonite...besieged Jabesh Gilead. And all the men of Jabesh said to him, ‘Make a treaty with us, and we will be subject to you.’ But Nahash the Ammonite replied, ‘I will make a treaty with you only on the condition that I gouge out the right eye of every one of you and so bring disgrace on all Israel.’ The elders of Jabesh said to him, ‘Give us seven days so we can send messengers throughout Israel; if no one comes to rescue us, we will surrender to you’” (I Sam. 11:1-3).
- “Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them He said: ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be My disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and *estimate the cost* to see if he has enough money to complete

it?...Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, *any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be My disciple.*” (Luke 14:25-33).

## **Setting a Time and a Place Where This Covenant Relationship Will Be Sealed**

This again had to be chosen very carefully. Engaged couples choose the setting for the marriage ceremony very carefully – the church, an outdoor setting, etc. – as they know that from now on this place will be a special place for them.

The spot where Moses met God was holy ground. The Hebrews also chose the place carefully to enact a covenant, because they would want to leave a mark or a memorial which, from that time on, would be a reminder to them.

- “...Abram was living near the great trees of Mamre the Amorite, a brother of Eshcol and Aner, all of whom were allied with Abram” (Gen. 14:13).
- “They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull)” (Mark 15:22).
- (Planted a tree) “Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called upon the name of the Lord, the Eternal God” (Gen. 21:33).
- (Jacob’s Stone Pillar) “So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar” (Gen. 31:45).

## **Bringing the Appropriate People to be Witnesses**

Again, chosen very carefully. You wanted people who really saw the solemnity, the holiness, and the importance of this particular moment in your life. They chose family members, a close trusted friend, a priest or religious person, and often, God Himself would be the primary witness called upon in this covenant situation.

- “May the God of Abraham...judge between us’...” (Gen. 31:53).
- “I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you...” (Deut. 4:26).
- “...A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses” (Deut. 19:15).

## Covenant Ceremony

### Exchange Coats

That seems strange to us in the Western world, but it simply is an outward expression for “taking on an identity.” The outward coat covered the inner tunic, a loose coat over the garments. To the Hebrew, the coat represented who you really were; it represented your identity. The modern expression is “the clothes make the man,” but to Jesus’ contemporaries, “the clothes *were* the man.”

As a counselor, I can often judge a great deal about an approaching person by the clothes they are wearing. Colors and style tell you a lot about a person; modesty or lack of modesty tell you a great deal about a person. It can even tell you if a person



is insecure and is depending upon the outer accoutrements to make themselves secure.

- (Joseph) **“Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and *he made a richly ornamented robe for him*”** (Gen. 37:3). According to II Sam. 13:18, this was the kind of garment the virgin daughters of the king wore.
- **“Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David...”** (I Sam. 18:4). This may have even signified his recognition that David was to assume his place as successor to Saul.
- (Prodigal Son) **“Bring the best robe and put it on him”** (Luke 15:22). This was a sign of position and acceptance (Gen. 41:42; Zech. 3:4).

## **Exchange of Belts**

The belt in Biblical times (called “girdles” in some verses of the KJV) held a person’s armor. This exemplified that all of one person’s equipment of warfare was exchanged for the other person’s

weaponry, such as swords or daggers. In essence, this made the statement: “all of my strengths are your strengths. If you have to go to battle, you can count on me. If they mess with you, they are messing with me. Your battles are my battles.”

## **Cutting of the Covenant**

This was the most sacred, solemn part of the covenant ceremony. The participants would begin to *seal the covenant* in blood.

An animal was cut in half, right down the middle and through the backbone, including the head. Then, the two halves or pieces of flesh were laid with a walkway between each half.

The men stood facing each other, between the “walls of flesh,” symbolizing two important facts of covenant.

First, this animal had died as a symbol of “*dying to self.*”

Secondly, this symbolized a pledge of “*faithfulness to death.*”

The participants then took a knife and each made a cut on his wrist, and both lifted their hands to God in heaven with their palms open. As the blood ran down their arms, they said, “God, You see

this covenant that we have just cut. You are the witness of the oath that we are making together.”

In our culture, we do something called shaking hands. That’s the origin, literally, of the handshake. That represents, then and now, a grasp of friendship. We often refer to it as the “right hand of fellowship.”

As recently as a few years ago, million dollar deals were sealed between businessmen with nothing more formal than a handshake – no need for contract, lawyers or notary publics. A man’s word was his bond.

The Hebrews, after lifting their hands heavenward and verbalizing their covenant before God, would “shake hands” up on the forearm, so that their open-cut blood would intermingle at the wrist. This was the origin of “blood brother,” and was the Covenant of Brothers that we mentioned earlier. They were considered by all to be one soul in two separate bodies.

They would then take dirt, powder, or an herb and they rub it into their cut. This actually “set” a scar as a permanent scar – they never wanted that scar to fade, physically or mentally. In my travels and ministry, I have personally met African tribesmen who proudly bear scars from sealing covenants. Depending on the culture, the scar

might be on the forehead, finger, upper arm, belly, or thigh, but there was a cut somewhere on the body, and something was rubbed into the cut to seal the scar as a permanent reminder of the covenant privileges and responsibilities.

This was especially a constant reminder to *others* – especially enemies – that there was a “*covenant partner*” to deal with as well! There was “*more than meets the eye*” – an “*unseen partner*” to content with.

If the male children and all male descendants of the covenant-makers were to be included as part of the covenant, circumcision would be a part of the ceremony. All of the children would then be “born into the covenant.” As these children came of age, they were given a choice to ratify the covenant, or not to ratify the covenant.

(David and Mephibosheth) **“Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan’s sake?”** (II Sam. 9:1).

To the Hebrew, all heirs were “*in the loins*” of the father – the “seat of Paternity.” (Hebrews 7:5, KJV)

## Exchange of Names

The name of the covenant partner was added to the name. Just as most of us are given “middle” names at birth, the name of the covenant partner would become the “middle” name, and integrated into the other’s identity. From that point on, this would be how they were referred to by name, and this is how they would legally sign any document. This way, each covenant partner carried the other’s name.

**“No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham...As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah” (Gen. 17:5, 15).**

The sound of the letter “h” was inserted into their names. It is the same h sound in the name of the Lord, “Yahweh”.

The exciting thing is just how much Scripture is made clear from the understanding of this practice alone! Doesn’t this explain that when you identify yourself as a Christian, you are letting people know that you are a “little Christ” – one who carries and bears the name of Jesus?

Here’s a further explanation: when the Hebrew had taken the covenant partner’s name into his

own, everything he did would be either a blessing or a curse to the other's name – a credit or discredit – hence the expression, “do not take His name in vain.” Brothers and sisters, when we are cautioned against taking the Lord's Holy Name in vain, we are *not* necessarily cautioned only against profanity – we are cautioned about our whole way of living, if we call ourselves Christians!

- “O our God, did You not drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham *Your friend?*” (II Chron. 20:7).
- “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his *friends.*” (John 15:13).
- “I no longer call you servants...In-stead, I have called you *friends...*” (John 15:15).

## **Exchange of Pledges and Oaths**

Prior to making the covenant pact, each covenant partner prepared a list of all assets and liabilities.

They shared promises that would be fulfilled with the other person – and they read the lists to each other. If one owned a home or property, the other was told what it was and where it was, and invited him to move in anytime! Any clothes that were owned, any storehouses of food, any money – all were offered unconditionally to the covenant partner.

After sealing the covenant, each was given a copy of that list of assets and liabilities, and pledges were shared in writing. (Now we can see why covenants were *never* entered into lightly, without much thought and much prayer! You would definitely need to “count the cost.”)

After exchanging lists, with the hand that had been cut again raised heavenward (because God was the third witness), *and the other hand pointing to the bloody “wall of flesh”*, pledges were read aloud, and each affirmed by saying, “God, do so to me and more if I break this covenant.” In other words, “God, see this lifeless body, this bloody piece of flesh? Do so to me and more if I break this covenant.”

They then established a memorial sign, token, or plaque at the location as a permanent reminder of the covenant that had been made.

“Mizpah” is a Hebrew word. Let’s suppose that my covenant partner and I didn’t trust each other too much prior to making this covenant. There’s a perfect example of this in Genesis 31:44-55, in the story of Jacob and Laban. They had a history of fourteen years of trying to out-con each other, these two con artists. Finally, Laban entreated Jacob to enter into a covenant with him, and they sealed it with the “mizpah”. With one hand pointed heavenward, and the other pointed down, they would say, “God, You watch between us while we are apart.” (The unspoken end of the sentence would read, “because I know I can’t trust this guy.”)

## **Sharing a Covenant Meal**

It was called a memorial meal, something simple, a remembrance, consisting of bread and wine brought by both participants. Again we see this in Genesis 31:54.

In modern marriage ceremonies, immediately after the vows are exchanged, the wedding party goes to the fellowship hall, and the bride and groom put cake into each other’s mouth, and drink from each other’s glass.

Just so, the covenant partner took the bread that he had brought, break it, and put it into the



other's mouth. He would say, "Take this. Eat me – this bread is me. And you are now eating me – from this moment on, I have entered you. I am one with you." He opened the wine that he had brought, and say, "Drink this wine. This is my blood. You are drinking me – from this moment on, my blood and your blood are as one blood." The other partner did the same, partaking of the bread that represented the other's body, and drinking the wine that represented the other's blood. This would have consummated a Hebrew covenant.

Those words that Jesus spoke two years into His public ministry, a full year before the Passover and the instituting of the Lord's Table, would have been perfectly familiar to a Hebrew. So you see, the disciples who **"turned back and no longer followed Him"** were absolutely not confused about Jesus' meaning. Take a moment and read again John 6:53-66.

## **A STORY OF THE CUTTING OF A COVENANT – DECEMBER 1998**

My dear friend and brother in Ethiopia, Dr. Mulata Baffa, shared the following story with me:

A young man from a tribal village was killed in an auto accident – tragically hit by a car. The driver of the car asked Dr. Baffa and 6 other elders to go with him to meet with the family to resolve the death with some kind of financial settlement. He and the elders agreed and met with the parents and relatives.

The man offered 5,000 BR (the Ethiopian Birr)...8,000,...10,000...15,000...even 20,000 (which is roughly \$2,400 US). The family refused his offer, saying no amount of money would compensate for such a loss. Since blood was shed, there would have to be bloodshed in exchange – nothing else would satisfy. Without a blood sacrifice there would be ongoing revenge.

But, the family went on to say, instead of a member of the man’s family being killed – their tribe had another way. The driver had to provide a lamb to be killed as a substitute!

The appointed day came for the sacrifice. All of the extended families on both sides were present – plus the approved 7 elder witnesses, including Dr. Baffa.

The lamb was carefully killed and cut down the middle – only through the skin. Then the entrails were opened up and pulled out to the height of a man’s head (!) and separated to make a “bloody

door"! Then the heads of both households walked through the "door of blood" – followed by all of the family members and relatives on both sides.

Once this was done, the father of the slain boy declared that the death was atoned for – there would be no revenge from him or any of his family members. Money was not acceptable – only a blood substitute. When the offense was declared forgiven by the father on the basis of the sacrifice of the lamb – everyone clapped and cheered! Then both families sat down and had a feast together.

Dr. Baffa told me that this personal experience brought new understanding to his heart and mind of the substitutionary death and atonement of Jesus Christ – our Lamb of God! What a God-glorifying story!

God calls us into covenant. We as humans were made for covenant partners and relationships. The deepest craving in man's life is for an intimate relationship, a covenant relationship. Your heart cries out for it. But we need a covenant relationship with Someone greater than we – Someone strong where we are weak – wise where we are simple. We must have one Who has all that we desperately need – Someone Who has all the time in the world for us. That One is none other than the King of

Glory, strong and mighty, the Lord of Hosts – standing behind *me* and standing behind *you*.

Jesus told Simon Peter to put away his sword in Gethsemane: **“Do you think I cannot call on My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?”** (Matthew 26:53).

No man took His life – He gave it freely. If you have struggled with fear, with insecurity and inferiority, with depression, in poverty and defeat, remember *nothing* can separate you from the love of Jesus.

**“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord”** (Romans 8:37-39).

## **PRAYER**

Lord Jesus, our hearts are staggered by the immensity of our blessings in You. Forgive us for not wanting to enter into covenant. We are so much like those who counted the cost, but walked away, saying the cost was too high. They walked away into impotency, into defeat, into destruction, when You called them and now us into a permanent relationship with You. Thank You, Lord Jesus. Now, might we reign with You because of the covenant You have cut with us, to the glory of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

# 4

## COVENANT SYMBOLS

**T**HE SYMBOL USED in the covenant ceremony was used to give a permanent, perpetual memorial for the covenant makers and others. The following are some of the more prominent or widely known in the Bible, but the list is certainly not exhaustive. Some will overlap what we've studied in the previous chapter.

### **The Rainbow**

This was the first covenant symbol referred to in the Bible, and is certainly the most widely known. Genesis 9 gives a very precious account. Like other "first" references in the Bible, it can be used to explain all other references. For instance,

please note that *it was God who initiated the covenant*, after His judgment against the earth.

- “Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ‘I now establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you – the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you – every living creature on earth. I establish My covenant with you: Never again will the waters of a flood cut off all life; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.’ And God said, ‘This is the sign of the covenant I am making between Me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set My rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember My covenant between Me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see

it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.’ So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between Me and all life on the earth” (Genesis 9:9-17).

- “Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around Him” (Ezekiel 1:28).

## **Circumcision**

As we saw earlier, the covenant was not only to include the covenant partners but their children and descendants, and male circumcision was the covenant symbol. When God established His covenant with Abraham, He told Abraham that the covenant was also between God and Abraham’s Hebraic heirs who were in Abraham’s loins. God initiated the covenant whose symbol was circumcision. “At the seat of the fountain of your paternity, there will be a sign that will remind you and all those who come after you that they came out of the loins of a covenanted person.”

It is man’s basic propensity, or inclination, to “latch” onto the sign, the physical symbol, and forget the spiritual reality behind it – forming a



rule-bound, ritualized religion. By the time of Christ, the Jews were glorying in a physical circumcision. But, the physical circumcising of the foreskin was to be a memorial that the foreskin of their heart was to be circumcised. In Galatians, Paul chastised the Jewish Christians for their external rules and rituals without understanding the external is always a parable of spiritual things! God entered into the covenant with Abram BEFORE the circumcision, which was only the *symbol* or *sign externally* of the covenant with the faith in Abram's heart.

**“Then God said to Abraham, ‘As for you, you must keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is My covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner – those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your money,**

they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant” (Genesis 17:9-13).

## **Witness**

Often people were brought to witness the covenant ceremony: a family member, a trusted close friend, a religious person or a priest. In scripture, God was also called to witness the covenant ceremony. In Isaiah 1:2, **“Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the Lord has spoken”** – heaven and earth are called upon to witness. There are many beautiful examples also in Psalms, where God says, **“I call heaven and earth to witness against you that you have not kept the covenant that you made in heaven and earth’s presence...even the rocks and the mountains and the heavens and the earth and the stars will cry out against you that you did not keep your covenant.”**

Genesis 21 has the familiar story of the covenant that Abraham cut with Abimelech, the very powerful Philistine king of Gerar. As we saw before, he was much more powerful militarily and politically than Abraham, but he said, “Whatever you do you prosper, because God is with you, and therefore I want to enter into a covenant with you.”

When he entered into the covenant, Phicol, the commander of his forces, was called upon as a witness. It may help in your studies to realize that Abimelech was a dynasty name, similar to “Pharaoh” in Egypt. So, when you read of Isaac cutting a covenant with Abimelech, you will realize that this was not the same person.

In my studies, the following passage stood out as an important example of **“Witnesses to Covenant”**. Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel, and he summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials **“and they presented themselves before God.”** (Josh. 24:1). The purpose? To *renew the covenant* with the Lord. Joshua reminded them of all that the Lord had done for Israel, and he said:

**“Now fear the Lord and serve Him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.’**

“Then the people answered, ‘Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods! It was the Lord our God Himself who brought our fathers and us up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. And the Lord drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the Lord, because He is our God.’

“Joshua said to the people, ‘You are not able to serve the Lord. He is a holy God; He is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, He will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after He has been good to you.’ But the people said to Joshua, ‘No! We will serve the Lord.’ Then Joshua said, ‘*You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord.*’ ‘*Yes, we are witnesses,*’ they replied.

“‘Now then,’ said Joshua, ‘throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.’ And the people said to Joshua, ‘We will serve

the Lord our God and obey Him.’ On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he drew up for them decrees and laws. And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the Lord. ‘See!’ he said to all the people. *‘This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the Lord has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God.’*” (Josh. 24:14-27).

## **Animals**

Again, with the covenant of Abraham and Abimelech as an example, Abraham used a flock of sheep. “So Abraham brought sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a treaty. Abraham set apart seven ewe lambs from the flock, and Abimelech asked Abraham, ‘What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs you have set apart by themselves?’ He replied, ‘Accept these seven lambs from my hand *as a witness* that I dug this well’” (Genesis 21:27-30).

## **Stones or Heaps of Stones**

Genesis 31 detailed the familiar story of Jacob and Laban forming a covenant after fourteen years of trying to outdo each other by using a heap of stones as a witness.

**“Come now, let’s make a covenant, you and I, and let it serve as a witness between us.’ So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. He said to his relatives, ‘Gather some stones.’ So they took stones and piled them in a heap, and they ate there by the heap” (Genesis 31:44-46).**

There are many other examples in Scripture of stones and heaps of stones serving as a memorial to covenant ceremonies. Joshua, in fact, inscribed a stone with the words of the covenant into which he had entered (Joshua 8:32).

## **Covenant Meal**

As we previously saw, a covenant meal “sealed” a covenant ceremony. The Passover Meal was a perpetual memorial to the Jews that God had cut a covenant with them, in leading them out of bondage in Egypt. Luke 22 contains one of the many references to the institution of the Lord’s Table, a meal of celebration.

## Trees

Returning to the story of Abraham and Abimelech, we see many of the symbols in just this one story. They made a covenant at Beersheba, and Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, rose up and returned to the land of the Philistines.

**“After the treaty had been made at Beersheba, Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his forces returned to the land of the Philistines. Abraham planted a *tamarisk tree* in Beersheba, and there he called upon the name of the Lord, the **Eternal God**” (Genesis 21:32-33).**

It’s fascinating as you study the book of Genesis, you will find again and again mention of the *oaks of Mamre*, a covenant tree. Let’s not overlook the greatest example of a tree as a symbol of a covenant, formed into a Cross and placed on a hill.

## Oaths

After the cutting of the covenant, oaths were communicated between the covenant partners. Part of the oath was to hold the right hand heavenward,

and with the other pointing to the walls of flesh and say, “May God do to me and more if I dare to break this covenant.”

Isn't this exactly what marriage is about? Marriage is the closest thing to a covenant today – because marriage is a covenant. We stand before a witness...a minister and family and friends...and make an oath: “For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health.”

## Oil

In Genesis 28, Jacob had a dream and used a stone for his pillow. That night as he slept, he saw the angels ascending and descending. In the morning when he woke up, he anointed that stone with oil. That was a symbol of a covenant between him and God.

King David was anointed with oil to symbolize a covenant:

**“All Israel came together to David at Hebron and said, ‘We are your own flesh and blood. (Remember that flesh and blood are covenant symbols – “we are one”!) In the past, even while Saul was king, you were the one who led Israel on their military**



campaigns. And the Lord your God said to you, ‘You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will become their ruler.’ When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, he made a compact (a covenant) with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they *anointed* David king over Israel, as the Lord had promised through Samuel” (1 Chron. 11:1-3).

## **Name Change**

Abram’s name changed as a process of the covenant, as well as his wife Sarai. Jacob’s name changed to Israel. We will look at these in more detail later on.

## **Book of Covenant**

In Exodus 24, God had Moses make a written record of the covenant He had entered with the nation of Israel, and it became one of the most sacred things to the Jewish people, because it was a record of God’s Covenant.

In Malachi 3:16, there is reference to a Book of Remembrance. This confirms just how precious your thoughts, your prayers and your praise are to

God. Many in the nation of Israel had become covenant breakers, and they had forgotten their God.

“Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. *A scroll of remembrance* was written in His presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored His Name. ‘They will be Mine,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not’ (Malachi 3:16-18).

## **Ark of the Covenant**

The symbol that was most precious to the Jewish people was the Ark of the Covenant, and it contained the Book of the Covenant. When the Ark moved, the nation of Israel moved, and when it was still, they were still. It was a symbol of God’s presence.

## Salt of the Covenant

Leviticus 2:13 showed an example of the Salt of the Covenant. Every sacrifice had to have salt. There could never be leaven in a burnt offering. All through Scripture, leaven is a symbol of evil. Leaven could never be in any sacrifice. That's why Jesus said, **"Beware the leaven of the Pharisees."** Salt is a symbol of permanence, of incorruptibility. It's a symbol of that which stops corruption. And of course it's a symbol of the Christian life – Jesus said we are to be the **"salt of the earth"**. We are those living sacrifices. Paul said, **"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship"** (Rom. 12:1).

## Covenant Song

God loves music, and He wrote the song in Deuteronomy 31:19-22 that He gave it to Moses. He instructed Moses to teach it to the children of Israel, and have them sing it as a reminder of the covenant (which they constantly broke).

**"Now write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them sing it, so that it may be a witness for Me**

against them. When I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, the land I promised on oath to their forefathers, and when they eat their fill and thrive, they will turn to other gods and worship them, rejecting Me and breaking My covenant. And when many disasters and difficulties come upon them, this song will testify against them, because their descendants will not forget it. I know what they are disposed to do, even before I bring them into the land I promised them on oath.’ So Moses wrote down this song that day and taught it to the Israelites” (Deut. 31:19-22).

This is one of the origins of our current hymnbooks.

## **Covenant Clothes**

In Exodus 41, and 1 Samuel 18, clothes were exchanged, as they represented who you were. They might include finger rings, nose rings (still common in the Orient, Africa, and the Holy Land), bracelets, crowns, anklets, earrings, veils, headbands, amulets and signet rings (a symbol of authority, like Pharaoh gave to Joseph, and the father gave to his prodigal son).

Another symbol was the wearing of **Phylacteries**. Exodus 13:16 specifically referenced phylacteries: **“And it will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead that the Lord brought us out of Egypt with His mighty hand.”**

In Matthew 23:5, Jesus judged the scribes and Pharisees, **“you have made your phylacteries broad.”** They were accentuating the externals as though those were somehow efficacious and made them more spiritual and more religious.

The phylactery contained specific Scriptures, first the Shema. The Shema is the most recited prayer in the Jewish faith:

- **“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. *Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.* Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates” (Deut. 6:4-9).**

- “After the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites and gives it to you, as He promised on oath to you and your forefathers, you are to give over to the Lord the first offspring of every womb. All the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the Lord. Redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. Redeem every firstborn among your sons. In days to come, when your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ say to him, ‘With a mighty hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed every firstborn in Egypt, both man and animal. This is why I sacrifice to the Lord the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons.’ And it will be like a sign on your hand and *a symbol on your forehead* that the Lord brought us out of Egypt with His mighty hand” (Exod. 13:11-16).
- “So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today – to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your

heart and with all your soul – then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied. Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. Then the Lord’s anger will burn against you, and He will shut the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the Lord is giving you. Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; *tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads*. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the Lord swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth” (Deut. 11:13-21).

Those portions of Scripture were to remind the Jews about the Passover in Exodus, the sacrifice of the firstborn, the Shema – that God is One – and the rewards for obedience. **“Blessed is the man...(whose) delight is in the law of the Lord...”** (Ps. 1:2-3). Later Paul would write, **“He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant – not of the letter (written laws, NLT) but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”**

## **Covenant Weapons**

The covenant partners exchanged weapons of war. The covenant promise was to stand with each other in battle, even in a fight to the death.

## **Covenant Blood**

Blood was the essence of the covenant. In Leviticus it stated that **“the life of the flesh is in the blood,”** and no sacrifice was worthy unless blood was shed.

- **“But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering He did not look with favor. So Cain was very**



angry, and his face was downcast. Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?’ (Genesis 4:4-7).

- “The Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your offspring I will give this land.’ So he built an *altar* there to the Lord, who had appeared to him. From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an *altar* to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord” (Genesis 12:7-8).

The word “altar” is found 433 times in Scripture. Altar translates as “a place of slaughter” – a place where a lamb was slain. Of course, we must also remember the ultimate altar called Golgotha, where the Lamb of God was slain for you and me.

In the Old Testament, there were three types of sacrifices:

- Animal Sacrifices: If you study, you will note that a sacrificial animal was never cut like a covenant animal was cut. The

covenant animal was cut right in half from head to tail.

- Meal Sacrifices: Meals and grains were offered.
- Drink Sacrifices: Sometimes also referred to as “libations” which means, “to pour out.” Psalm 22:14 is known as the Messianic Psalm: “**...I am poured out like water...**” Paul at the end of his life said, “**For I am already being poured out like a drink offering...**” (II Timothy 4:6).
- Psalm 56:8 says, “**Record my lament; list my tears on your scroll – are they not in your record?**” God takes our shed tears and puts them before Him in a bottle, a fragrant incense that becomes libations that are poured out. The record of every one of those tears is in His Book of Remembrance. Those times you thought you were weeping alone, and no one knew and no one cared? Beloved, Jesus knew, and every tear that was and is worthily shed for Him is written in the Book of Remembrance. There is a vial before Him that holds precious incense, filled with your tears.

- Our prayers are also a libation before the Lord. Revelation 5:8 said “...the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the *prayers of the saints*.” We’re not talking about those Biblical giants of olden days, my friends. A saint is one who is sanctified – that means set aside for God’s good will and purpose – and that means me and it means you. Never doubt that He’s breathing in *your* prayers as a precious fragrant incense, and they are exceedingly pleasing to Him.

## Covenant Scars

This Scripture in Isaiah deserves your prayer and meditation: “**Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, *I have engraved you on the palms of My hands*; your walls are ever before Me**” (Isaiah 49:15-16).

Song of Songs 8:6 gives another beautiful and very precious covenant symbol: “Place me like a seal over your heart, like a *seal on your arm*; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame” (Song of Songs 8:6).

In John 20:24-28, after the Resurrection:

“Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord!’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe it.’ A week later His disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’ Then He said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; see My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Stop doubting and believe.’ Thomas said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (John 20:24-28).

To the Jews in Biblical times, the wrists were anatomically considered to be part of the hands. The nails that nailed Jesus to the Cross were actually hammered into His wrists. That was God cutting the covenant in the wrist. The One seated

at the right hand of God has eternal covenant marks in His Hands, and He eternally has inscribed us in His Hands. Every time the accuser – Satan – comes forward and says of us, “He’s helpless, he’s hopeless, he’s unworthy!” – the Lord Jesus just says, “Look at My arms. We have cut a covenant.” There is a myriad of scripture in Revelation about our being inscribed and He, the God of the Universe, carries an eternal scar. Even Paul said in Galatians 6:17 “...for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.” He was saying, “I have covenant scars with Jesus.”

In Isaiah 42:1-6, we are shown that all signs and symbols were pointing to the ultimate symbol – the Lord Jesus: “Here is My servant, whom I uphold, My chosen one in whom I delight; I will put My Spirit on Him and He will bring justice to the nations...I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness; I will take hold of Your hand. I will keep You and will make You *to be a covenant for the people* and a light for the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:1-6).

In Isaiah 49:8, “This is what the Lord says: ‘In the time of My favor I will answer You, and in the day of salvation I will help You; I will keep You and will make You *to be a covenant for the people*’” (Isaiah 49:8).

So, over and over again, beyond a shadow of a doubt, we are shown that Jesus Christ is the Great Covenant – the Great Symbol, the Great Sign! The symbols have become flesh. Who seals this? The Holy Spirit!

Ephesians 1:13-14 deserves your further study, prayer and meditation:

**“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised *Holy Spirit*, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession – to the praise of His glory”** (Ephesians 1:13-14).

In the King James Version, “deposit” – *arabon* – is given as “earnest” – **“...Which is the *earnest* of our inheritance...”**. Any business person is familiar with “earnest money” when an agreement has been made. This earnest money seals the deal, and guarantees that the full amount will be paid. The Holy Spirit is God’s seal upon us when we have entered into a covenant relationship with Him. The signet ring of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords is inscribed indelibly on us – and we are guaranteed safe passage and delivery to the

Father's presence to be forever with the Lord! See, beloved, once again, the security of the Christian life is wrapped around you!

- God has “...set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (II Cor. 1:22).
- “Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (II Cor. 5:5).
- “...because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but *you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children*” (Romans 8:14-16).

Many translations tell us that the Holy Spirit is God's engagement ring! God said, “When you have cut a covenant with My Son, the engagement ring that the marriage supper of the Lamb is going to take place is My Holy Spirit.”

## **Symbol of the Sabbath**

The Jews still celebrate the Sabbath because it is a commemoration to them of the Old Covenant. As Christians, we celebrate the Lord's Day – because it was then that the Lord Jesus was triumphantly resurrected from the dead and eventually ascended to the Father. He sent the Holy Spirit who is the guarantee or earnest of our ultimate eternal fellowship with God. I pray in the days and weeks ahead, as you open God's Word, and as the Holy Spirit opens your mind, that many of these symbols will become more and more precious to you.

## **PRAYER**

Lord, thank You for giving us physical reminders of our spiritual relationship – of the covenant that You have cut. Lord, make these symbols not just external rituals like phylacteries that we bind, but make them external reminders of a spiritually circumcised heart and of Your Word that has been indelibly inscribed on our hearts and on our minds. Thank You for the Holy Spirit who bears witness with our spirit that we are children of the covenant.



And we pray this to the Glory of the Name of Jesus.  
Amen.

**5**  
**GOD'S COVENANT**  
**WITH ABRAHAM**

**I**N THIS CHAPTER, we come to one of the most exciting stories in the Bible. In many ways, we could say that Genesis 15 is the foundation for the Good News. It is the foundational covenant that God established – the Abrahamic Covenant.

Thus far we have tried to establish something of a cultural base. We have looked at many of the things that an average Hebrew understood when he saw the word covenant. When we see the word *covenant* in English, we just see the word – some sort of contract, some sort of agreement, some sort of testament. But the Jew knew it was “bereeth” – it was a cutting, it was sealing a covenant by walking between two walls of flesh. We have already looked at some of the symbolism when two people cut a covenant.

Now, we are going to look at one of the most precious stories in the Bible – when God entered into a covenant with Abram, as he was known when we begin. God’s calling of Abram is found in Genesis 12:1-4.

## **The Sovereignty of the Covenant**

It is enlightening to realize that God called Abram from Ur of Chaldean – from a pagan

background. His father and all of his relatives *including Abram* were heathen idol worshippers. There was absolutely nothing meritorious in Abram. *It was a sovereign choice of God.*

- (Stephen's Sermon) **"The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran..."** (Acts 7:2).
- (God said through Joshua) **"Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshiped other gods. But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the River and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants..."** (Josh. 24:2-4).

God sovereignly chose Abram. In the same way, He reminds us:

**"You did not chose Me, but *I chose you* and appointed you..."** (John 15:16).

## **The Separation of the Covenant**

It is important to note that God's first call is always a call to separation, to a break from our old way of life.

- **“The Lord said to Abraham, ‘Leave your country, your people, and your father’s household, and go to the land I will show you’” (Gen. 12:1).**
- **“‘Leave your country and your people,’ God said, ‘and go to the land I will show you.’ So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran...” (Acts 7:2-4).**

In obeying this command and commission of the Lord, Abram was to separate himself from his...

- *Place*
- *People*
- *Possessions*

## **The Significance of the Covenant**

**“I will make you a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing” (Gen. 12:2).**

This was in contrast to man's rebellion in Genesis 10-11, and God's subsequent rejection of mankind who was seeking to build a great nation and a great name *without God*:

**“Come, let us build ourselves a city with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:4).**

This time, God began a new nation through Abram – a nation that will be a source of spiritual blessing to the whole world.

## **The Strength of the Covenant**

**“I will bless those who *bless you*, and whoever *curses you* will be cursed...” (Gen. 12:3a).**

Here we can see the familiar “*blessing*” and “*cursing*” aspect of every covenant. The covenant was *strengthened* through the promise of both “*blessings*” and “*curses*.”

Through this covenant, God was *eternally binding Himself to Abram*, and totally identifying Himself with His Covenant partner.

From *this moment on, to touch Abram was to touch God...*to bless Abram was to bless God! And to curse Abram was to curse God – and *be cursed* by God!

**“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him, and said, ‘I am God Almighty; walk before Me and be blameless. I will confirm My covenant between Me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.’ Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, ‘As for Me, this is My covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations’...God said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her’” (Gen. 17:1-5, 15-16).**

Earlier, we discussed covenant partners defending each other in battle. But now, as we study God’s covenant with Abraham, remember that God has promised retribution to those who go against him or his heirs. I believe that is still true, and the nations must never forget God will defend

Israel. Every nation that has ignored that and persecuted the Jews has done so at its peril.

## **The Scope of the Covenant**

**“...and all people and families on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:3b; 18:18).**

Here we see the *scope* of the blessings of God’s covenant with Abram was to be much larger than just his family...his people...his race...his nation!

This covenant would be *worldwide* in scope!

**“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations...” (Matt. 24:14).**

We can see its ultimate fulfillment in John’s Revelation of Heaven, and the song the saints sang:

**“...with *Your blood* You purchased men for God from every *tribe... language... people... nation*. You have made them to be a kingdom of priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:9-10).**

The *scope* of this Abrahamic Covenant is another reason that Christians must be “*World Christians*” and “*Great Commission Christians*.”

## The Spirituality of the Covenant

So, Abram and Lot left, as God instructed in Genesis 12. Now in Genesis 15: “**After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a *vision*...**” (Gen. 15:1).

It is important for us to see that all of the events that happen in Genesis 15 take place in a vision – *rather than in a physical sense*. (Remember, religion is *external*, Christianity is *internal*.)

This reminds us that most often God speaks to us through visions rather than in an audible way. As Paul says: “**The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit...**” (Rom. 8:16 KJV).

So, Abram perceived...experienced...saw all of these events in a vision – which is probably one of the reasons he quickly asked God for some external...visible...tangible proof!

## The Security of the Covenant



“Do not be *afraid*, Abram. I am your *shield*, your very great *reward*” (Gen. 15:1b).

First, God addressed Abram’s *fear*.

Fear has been man’s oldest enemy, his primary response ever since the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve broke their relationship with God, they said, “We were afraid and we hid.” Whether heathen Abram of Ur of Chaldean, or 20<sup>th</sup> century man – every man outside of a relationship with God is motivated by fear.

We try a thousand ways to compensate, to overcome, to run away, and to suppress that fear. There is only one secure, permanent way that fear can be alleviated. Not through tranquilizers, not through alcohol, not through psychotherapy, not through religiosity, but through a covenant relationship. That’s the only antidote to fear. Remember I John 4:18 says, “**...perfect love casts out fear.**”

In other words, the fears in my life will be alleviated, and I will become perfected...

...when I have really begun to grasp that He has set His everlasting affections upon me...

... and when I appropriate *my covenant privileges* into my life experiences.

Through God's covenantal words, He reminded Abram that He would be his *shield*. That means that God would be his *protector*, shielding him from all of those things he feared most.

Abram struggled with *believing* and *applying* this principle – just as we do! A study of his life shows that he often lapsed into fear – and therefore went *back into the flesh*. (Abraham and Abimelech in Gen. 20)

Not only would God be Abram's *shield*, He would also be his “...**very great reward.**” God didn't say, “I am going to *give* you a very great reward”, but that *He* would be his reward.

In obeying God's call, Abram gave up his *place...people...and possessions*. God assured him that his reward would be far greater than his loss! We always *gain* far more than we *give up* when we follow God.

Remember, in a covenant relationship they exchanged gifts. All that I am is now available to my covenant partner; all that he has is now available to me. What's Abram's immediate reaction? It had been ten years since he was instructed to leave his homeland, leave his family, and had been promised a great blessing.

Continuing with Genesis 15:2, **“But Abram said, ‘O Sovereign Lord...’**” The word here that Abram used is actually unpronounceable – it is the most prominent and important word for “God” in the Bible. It is used 6,823 times and is the word that we read about in Exodus when Moses said, “Well, God, who am I to say to Pharaoh sent me to tell you to let these people go?” God said, “You say, *I Am that I Am.*” It is the word Yahweh – the most common Hebrew word for “God”. It represented the holiness of God. But, it is considered so very holy they would not even say it, so the word “Lord” was inserted in its place.

## **The Son of the Covenant**

If God were going to reward Abram, it would be meaningless unless he had someone to *pass the reward on to*. Since Abram had no physical heir, he struggled with who his *successor* and *inheritor* would be.

**“But Abram said, ‘O Sovereign Lord, what can You give me...’**” We can relate, can’t we? If someone says, “I am going to be your very great reward,” we ask, “Well, what are you going to give me?” God had promised Abram blessings ten years before,

and nothing had happened. Do you ever get frustrated with God's timing?

**“...I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, ‘You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir’”** (Genesis 15:2-3).

The child of a servant in the home could be adopted, and so Abram's question was whether the child of his servant would gain the inheritance of God's promised blessings.

**“Then the word of the Lord came to him: ‘This man will not be your heir, but *a son coming from your own body will be your heir*’”** (Genesis 15:4).

Abram was getting on in years – 100 to be exact. And Sarai was 90! Abram had to be thinking, “Lord, time is passing on. We'd best get on with something pretty quick. Ten years have passed since You promised to make of me a great nation.”

But God had made it clear. He was wrapping up all of the blessings of His Covenant with Abram in the promise and person of a *SON!* It would not be an *outsider...servant...alien* who would be the

heir of Abram's estate – but rather a SON! This, of course, was a foreshadow of a *greater Son of Abraham* who would make all of the rest of us “sons of God!”

Remember too that Abram was what would be known as a Bedouin – he was a sojourner, he lived in tents made of goatskin and camel wool, he was a nomad in the desert. God awakened him, came to him in a vision and led him outside the tent.

**“He took him outside and said, ‘Look up at the heavens and count the stars – if indeed you can count them.’ Then He said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be’” (Genesis 15:5).**

Abram had to be wondering about God's sense of humor and had to be scratching his head, at the very least. But here is where Abram's salvation occurred. He wasn't “saved” in our modern terminology, he did not become a “regenerate person” ten years earlier...but the following verse speaks volumes.

## **The Salvation of the Covenant**

**“Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6).**

That's the first reference in the Bible to "belief". What does the word literally mean?

Remember the first reference to anything in the Bible is usually the key to interpreting subsequent references? It is the Hebrew word "aman" – meaning to confirm, to affirm, to ratify, and is the root of our English word "amen". It means to say, "yes"; it means to say, "so be it"; it means to agree with. When we say "amen" we are saying, "so be it in my life". "I affirm, I accept, I believe."

And it begins to have meaning when we personalize it in our lives! In Galatians 3:6-9 in the New Testament, it is repeated that *this is the moment of Abram's salvation*. In spite of how unbelievable it was, Abram said, "Aman."

There was nothing in Abram that God needed or that was worthy. Where as Noah was chosen by God as a righteous man, that wasn't the case here. Abram was a heathen, he was a pagan, but God sovereignly called him.

Before God called him, Abram had faith, his father had faith, his relatives had faith – but the object of their faith was wrong! What was credited to Abram as righteousness was *not* that he had faith, but that he took that faith and placed it in a worthy object. When he did that – when he said

“aman” to God’s promise – it was credited to him as righteousness.

It is a truth that the *object* of your faith determines the *validity* of your faith. There is nothing inherently meritorious in faith – everybody has faith – it is the object of your faith that makes a difference. That’s what caused Abram to be accounted as righteous before God.

John 8:39 is the story of Jesus talking with the Jews:

**“Abraham is our father,’ they answered. *‘If you were Abraham’s children,’ said Jesus, ‘then you would do the things Abraham did’*”**  
(John 8:39).

What were the deeds of Abraham that resulted in his salvation? “Aman” – Abram believed God. It was not the belief that pleased God – it was that Abram redirected his belief to the promises of God! That’s when salvation occurred. Everybody in the world has faith, but the majority of the world has an unworthy object for their faith. They may believe only in themselves, in materialism, in a political system and therefore, like Abram, their faith is misdirected.

**“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (II Cor. 5:20-21).**

Just as Abram’s belief was credited to him as righteousness, we must do the same thing! We must appropriate...affirm...ratify...place all our trust in what God has said. “Amen”! Then we are saved, and we “become” the righteousness of God through Jesus Christ, as Paul said.

## **The Substance of the Covenant**

**“He also said to him, ‘I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it’” (Genesis 15:7).**

God was telling Abram that this was one of the things with which he would be blessed. We saw earlier that in verse 18, God specified the boundaries of the land...**“To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates – the land of the Kenites,**



**Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.”**

Since Abram gave up his *people...place...possessions*, God now gave him a new land – the “*Promised Land*”. Since God had promised him a son...*offspring...heir*, he would need a place to live – *a land*.

However, that land was currently occupied by hostile people who would have to be disposed. The “**...land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girashites and Jebusite**” (Gen. 15:19-21) – or the peoples often collectively known as the Amorites, who were the strongest of the Canaanites, and represented all of the inhabitants of the Promised Land (See Josh. 24:15; Judg. 11:10).

The heirs of Abram would not fully receive their *Promised Land* until “**...the sin of the Amorites has reached its full measure**” (Gen. 15:16).

The Jews today have not totally established those boundaries, but if God’s Word is faithful and true, as we know it is, one day they will, because God said it. It has taken generations, but it will happen.

“But Abram said, ‘O Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?’”  
(Genesis 15:8)

Isn't that what we would have said? Here is Abram: a nomad, living out of a tent, doesn't even own the land the camels are parked on! But note here that *Abram asked this AFTER he had evidenced faith!* He didn't say, "Show me and I'll believe." He said, "I believe, now show me!" He believed the promises before there was one shred of evidence. God calls things into existence that do not exist! He speaks of things that are not as though they are! God gave verification for his faith AFTER the "Aman".

Abram was familiar with covenants. As we see in Genesis 14:12-13:

“They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom. One who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew. Now Abram was living near the *great trees of Mamre* the Amorite, a brother of Eshcol and Aner, all of whom were *allied* (confederates, or in "bereeth") with Abram” (Genesis 14:12-13).

## **The Sacrifice of the Covenant**

“...Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon.’ Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in half.” (Gen. 15:9-10).

This is where God was literally “cutting the covenant” with him. Abram laid each half opposite the other without cutting the birds.

It is obvious that Abram thoroughly understood this procedure from his upbringing in Ur – where *cutting a covenant* was commonly practiced.

Without a further word of instruction from God, Abram prepared the animals for the covenant ceremony.

## **The Suffering of the Covenant**

“And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses and Abram drove them away” (Gen. 15:11).

This was symbolic of the great suffering that would occur in the life of the party who would dare break the covenant!

This is a graphic symbol that everyone could clearly understand! As shepherding people of the land, they had all seen the *birds of prey* eat the bodies of dead animals!

Throughout the rest of Scripture, God used this picture of the fate of the covenant breaker – God would judge them with death, and the *birds of prey* would consume their dead bodies!

Abram was held responsible for driving away the birds of prey that had come to feast on the carcasses of the beasts, because this act was a symbol of protecting the covenant. (Reference Matthew 13 and read of the birds of the evil one that also came to feast in order to attack what God was doing). Matt. 13:18 and following was a warning for those who broke the covenant that the birds would come to pick their bones.

- **“Your carcasses will be food for all the birds of the air...and there will be no one to frighten them away” (Deut. 28:26).**
- **“Dogs will eat those belonging to Jeroboam who die in the city, and the**

birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country...Dogs will eat those belonging to Baasha who die in the city, and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country...Dogs will eat those belonging to Ahab who die in the city, and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country” (I Kings 14:11; 16:4; 21:24).

- “As for Jezebel, dogs will devour her on the plot of ground at Jezreel, and no one will bury her” (II Kings 9:10).
- “They have given the dead bodies of your servants as food to the birds of the air...” (Ps. 79:2-3).
- “...You have not obeyed Me in proclaiming release each man to his brother, and each man to his neighbor. Behold, I am proclaiming a release to you,’ declares the Lord, ‘to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you a terror to all the kingdoms of the earth. And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant who have not fulfilled the words of the *covenant which they made before Me when they*

*cut the calf in two and passed between its parts* – the officials of Judah, and the officials of Jerusalem, the court officers and the priests and all the people of the land, who passed between the parts of the calf – and I will give them into the hand of those who seek their life. And their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth” (Jer. 34:17-20).

- “...I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, ‘Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great’...and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh” (Rev. 19:11-21).

So, it is an exceedingly dangerous thing to break a covenant with God! God especially feels the same way about people who break the *“Marriage Covenant”*. Let’s read it again. “...It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith

with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant” (Mal. 2:14).

## **The Surety of the Covenant**

**“As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him” (Genesis 15:12).**

Isn't it interesting that whenever God had something to do, He had to literally put the person to sleep? Remember who else He put to sleep when He had something else important to do? He knew that if He didn't put Adam to sleep to create a helpmate for him, that Adam would have messed up the whole thing!

“You think you know what kind of mate that you need – but you just go to sleep and leave it to Me and *I'll* create the perfect helper for you.” Now God said the same thing to Abram, that although Abram knew the process of cutting a covenant, he was much better off asleep than awake – simply because God knew that Abram would ruin everything if he were awake.

**“When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On**

**that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram...” (Gen. 15:17-18).**

Now, how is it that Abram could enter into the covenant with God if he could not walk between the walls of the flesh being asleep? God knew that Abram had nothing to give Him. The Greek word *diatheke* means a disposition of property. It does not mean a disposition of property between two people who are equal. It means one person who possesses great wealth coming to another person who possesses nothing – and, purely on the basis of a desire within the wealthy person, he disposes his property on this undeserving other person.

God came to Abram and explained that the pagan covenant practices that he had been acting on before were between two *equals* giving each other things or “strengths” that would compliment the other. However, God was telling Abram that he had nothing God needed. Go to sleep. Finally Abram complied, hardly understanding that God Himself would be contributing *everything* and Abram nothing.

God tries to help us understand that He has all of the assets and we have all of the liabilities. We are sinners by nature. A sinner has no asset that a Holy God desires! Again, we get put to sleep. Our



hand in any covenant with God would contribute chaos to God's ultimate purposes.

**“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (II Corinthians 5:21)**

And so, God promised Abram: Anybody that messes with you will have to deal with ME. I will run them off in *seven* different directions. I am your reward. I am your shield: **“...Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions. And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete” (Gen. 15:13-16).**

Pay close attention to verse 17. This is *GOD*. **“And it came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces.”**

Deuteronomy 4:24, Hebrews 12:29, I Thessalonians 1:7 all speak about the fact that God is a consuming fire. Exodus 13:21 states that God led them as a pillar of *fire*. Now, He was the one passing through the walls of flesh as fire in Abram's place. This said that all God had now belonged to Abram.

When Jesus came and hung on the cross in our place this was the exact same thing as God Himself hacking right down to the backbone of the animal of the covenant.

**“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith...”**  
(Heb. 10:19, 20).

Recall if you will that when Jesus stated, “It is finished”, the veil of the temple was split right in two. For the first time, we could walk into the presence of a Holy God. Through the rent veil of the body of the perfect sacrifice, God now entered into a perfect covenant with us. We can boldly enter into the Holy Place.

To understand the significance of what took place in this Covenant, let's pause and define the word, *surety*.

According to *Webster*, it means: “A person who makes himself responsible for another; specifically, in law, one who makes himself liable for another’s debts, defaults of obligation, etc.”

The Hebrew word means: “To braid...to intermix...to give pledge (‘arab: to pledge, exchange, mortgage, engage, occupy, undertake for, give pledges, be or become surety, take on pledge, give in pledge).”

The Greek word means: “A pledge...a bondsman” (legal documents) (Egguos: a surety, a sponsor)

So, a *surety* is someone who “stands in for someone else...takes someone else’s place...guarantees...protects”.

There are a number of instructive examples in the Old Testament, particularly in the KJV:

- “I will be surety for him...” (Gen.43:9).
- “For thy servant became surety for the lad...” (Gen. 44:32).

- **“Be surety for thy servant for good...”** (Ps. 119:122).
- **“My son, if thou be surety for thy friend...”** (Prov. 6:1).
- **“He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it...”** (Prov. 11:15).

However, the most important example is also the only use of the word in the New Testament, the work of Christ in our behalf:

- **“...Jesus made a surety of a better testament”** (Heb. 7:22 KJV).
- **“...Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant”** (Heb. 7:22 NIV).

We have looked at a related term already but it bears repeating. Used three times in the New Testament, it is *“Arrabon”* (arrabon: an earnest – money which in purchases is given as a pledge or down payment that the full amount will subsequently be paid), i.e., a *“deposit”* or *“down payment”*.

- **“...God...put His Spirit in our hearts as a *deposit*, guaranteeing what is to come”** (II Cor. 1:21-22).

- “God...has given us the Spirit as a *deposit*, guaranteeing what is to come” (II Cor. 5:5).
- “...who is a *deposit* guaranteeing our inheritance...” (Eph. 1:14).

This is what Jesus meant when He said: “...Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing My day; he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56).

As was noted earlier, all of these events Abram was seeing in a vision were but a foreshadow of another covenant that God would cut! This time there would be no animals – but His beloved Son, whose body and blood were the basis of a “*New Covenant!*”

And so it was on another day that God cut a covenant. At that time: “...darkness came over all the land...Jesus cried out in a loud voice...‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’...And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, He gave up His Spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom...” (Matt. 27:45-53). (The Latin letters, INRI, stand for the inscription that Pilate ordered placed on Jesus’ cross: “Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum” – Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.)

This was the day that Abraham saw – and rejoiced! God had cut the Covenant that was bringing *new life...resurrection...righteousness...eternal security!*  
*Hallelujah!*

## **The Sign of Covenant**

One of the final things done was to change names: “**...And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, ‘As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you and kings shall come forth from you’**” (Genesis 17:1-6).

Imagine the gossip from the people wondering at the audacity of visiting a man named Abram (father of many) at his tent, ninety-nine years old and still thinking (believing) he was to actually *be* the ‘father of many’. Don’t think that when he told everyone that he was changing his name from “father of many” to “father of many nations” – people’s laughter and unbelief knew no bounds! Yet, Abraham continued to “Aman”.

As was mentioned in a precious chapter, God literally took the ‘h’ from His own name, Yahhweh, and gave it to Abram so that he became as Abrahham. Sarai became Sarahh. Never again were they called their old names. Interestingly enough, now that they were eternally placed within God, He attached His name to their descendents, saying of Himself, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob”. From here on out, Abraham was not a “servant” of God, but a friend of God forever.

## 6

# BLESSINGS OF COVENANT KEEPING

**T**HIS IS A covenant promise. We don't have to worry about life or death because we possess this promise. Christ is the one with whom we have covenant. Therefore, *all that He is* now is made totally available to *all that we are*.

Is *all that we are* totally dependent on *all that He is*? Jesus lived His life in total dependence upon the Father. All that Jesus said that He is – is now 100% available without any reservation. This means *everything in us is available to God* and *all of God is available to us*. As Paul said, **if we live our**



**lives in total dependence on Jesus – as Jesus lived His life in dependence on God – we can have more victory.** The great question is this: “Is all that I am in total dependence on all that He is?” If so, then all things belong to you and me. We belong to Christ and He belongs to God.

There were certain blessings bestowed on those who obeyed the covenant. As you know, when two people entered into a covenant, they pointed toward heaven with the mark of the covenant scar in their hand, with their blood trickling down...and pointing to the slain animal, said, “God, may You do this to us and more if we break this covenant.” In many places in the scriptures we find God enumerating the *blessings of covenant obedience*.

## **God’s Promises**

In Genesis 9, God promised Noah that there would never again be a flood.

In Genesis 15, God promised Abram that He would be his shield and his exceeding great reward.

In Genesis 17 God promised Abram and Sarai that they would be exceedingly fruitful even in their old age. Both Abram and Sarai’s “loins” were dead – yet God blessed them both with life.

He says the same thing about us. You are dead in your trespasses and sin. But He can call forth life from death because He is the Author of life. This is the principle we must have faith in.

Can you see a resurrection principle springing forth from these examples? Life comes out of death. God can call into being things that *are not*.

He also promised the nation of Israel that it would be His own possession – they were going to be His special treasure, a holy nation and a nation of priests.

Exodus 34 and Leviticus 26 are two other examples of God's miracles and promises of peace and security.

God also promised victory in war as long as His people lived in obedience. Why? Because God said that He was a shield that nothing could penetrate.

Deuteronomy 8:18 promised Israel great wealth.

In Psalms 25, God promised to lead Israel in paths of loving kindness and truth – and that He would make known the secrets of His heart to them.

## **Blessings of the Old Covenant**

## to Blessings of the New Covenant

The Old Covenant, as the writer of Hebrews said, was but a shadow of a greater reality, which was Jesus – the reality fulfillment of all that was represented in the Old Testament. Once the greater reality comes, you no longer want to focus on the shadow. Look at what the shadow represented.

The Old Covenant was a covenant primarily about the blood of animal sacrifices.

Leviticus 17 taught that the life of the flesh was in the blood – and that the blood was sacred. The Israelites were to neither eat nor drink the blood of any kind of animal as the heathen did. God said, however, that He had given the blood for *atonement*.

***Atonement:*** An Old Testament word meaning *to cover* or *conceal* by offering a blood substitute.

All of us are guilty before God. We somehow must assuage the guilt in our lives by either bearing through the shedding of our own blood or someone dying in our place. There must be a substitute, which God allowed in the Old Testament for an innocent animal's blood to be poured out in our stead. This was a reminder to us that this should have been our lives. We are the guilty ones and the animal was innocent.

There was going to be a time when all of the sins of the human race – past, present and future – were going to be uncovered and laid on Jesus Christ. But, once they were, the New Covenant, through the blood of Jesus, did not provide *atonement*. It provided *redemption*.

***Redemption:*** To pay the ransom price; to buy out. To buy a slave out of his slavery to the end of setting him free.

Jesus said that anyone who commits a sin is a slave of sin. All of us are born in a sinful condition. All of us have had imputed and reckoned to us the sin of our father, Adam. Therefore, we are in bondage and enslaved to sin. God temporarily provided a covering, or the atonement.

There would come a time when the redemption through the perfect blood from the perfect sacrifice would be shed, as we studied earlier. Our sins would be absolutely cleansed once and for all, not just covered. Therefore, we have been purchased or bought out of the slavery of sin and set free. We have not been purchased and cleansed so that we can do “our own thing.” We are freed to do “His thing.” We are redeemed to become His bond slave.

**“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit**

offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:14).

This tells us that if the blood sacrifices from animals temporarily atoned for our sin, how much more **the eternal blood of Christ will cleanse us** – and our consciences – from guilt. When the children of Israel saw that lamb that was slain, they knew that they were still guilty. Their consciences still condemned them – and they would have to regularly sacrifice animals. Now *our* consciences have been sprinkled clean by the blood of Jesus Christ.

- “But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin” (I John 1:7).
- “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9).
- “He made no distinction between us and them, for He purified their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9).

Peter said that God indeed was redeeming the Gentiles because He had cleansed the Gentiles' hearts just as He had cleansed the Jews' hearts by faith.

**“You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you” (John 15:3).**

So, the blood of Jesus Christ cleansed us and the word of Jesus Christ continues to cleanse us.

**“...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies, washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:22).**

This allows us to come **boldly** into His presence before the throne of grace. If we feel guilt in our lives, it is difficult to come boldly. Only when our consciences have been sprinkled clean can we come boldly. This is really how God wants us to live.

## **Spiritual Formula**

Let us go further in understanding that the means of **redemption** is the blood of Jesus Christ.

- “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace...” (Eph. 1:7).
- “...who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession – to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:14).
- “...in Whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14).
- “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree’” (Gal. 3:13).
- “...one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:5-6).
- “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (I Pet. 1:18-19).

- “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the mediator of a *new covenant*, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:12-15).

## Redemption Produces Remission



## or Forgiveness

The word “remission” literally means “to send away.” Remember in the Old Covenant how on the high Day of Atonement – knowing that many had wronged God or someone else – they had to bring sacrifices in which its life’s blood would be poured out?

The blood of one animal was the substitute – the innocent dying for the guilty.

Then laying hands on the other animal, the priests confessed the sin over that animal. This symbolized that out of our hearts was pouring all of the sin and bile, transferring our sin onto that innocent animal. Sometimes the animal was slain and sometimes the animal was sent away into the wilderness.

God literally separated us from our sins. He sent away our sins and all this came through the blood of Jesus.

On this basis, we now receive righteousness because we have been *redeemed* 100% and *forgiven* 100% – and it is reckoned to you and me for righteousness.

Once this has happened we are made “right” for the first time. We need this because we were born

“wrong” by nature. This is what it means to be a sinner!

If God says that we are “just”, then no person can say that we are “unjust”. Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in a covenant relationship with Christ.

- “It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption” (I Cor. 1:30).
- “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (II Cor. 5:21).

Remember God having all of the assets and Abram having all of the liabilities? You and I are the same. God is Holy, righteous and just. We are none of these. *Someone* has to pay the penalty.

God’s grace was placed upon His Son, Jesus, so that we could become the “righteousness of God.” We cannot work for it nor in any way achieve it.

God had to give it to us so that His righteousness could be imputed to us! That’s why there is now no condemnation.

When God looks at us, He sees us through the righteousness of His Son and can now say that we are His beloved, in whom He is well pleased. We are totally forgiven!

How do we get into Christ? By cutting the covenant.

The moment we are placed in Christ, that's where we live, move and have our being. This was what the apostle Paul used as his address. If anyone needed to get in touch with him, they could find him in Jesus Christ. No matter where I live, I am in Him and He is in me. He extends forgiveness to you and me, and opens up a relationship for us where fear is dispelled and we know God as "Abba, Father." God knows us better than we know even ourselves yet He still chose us.

Jesus told us "**...He who loves Me will be loved by My Father...**" (John 14:21).

If we are in "The Beloved" – "**This is my beloved Son...**" (Matt. 3:17) – then we are perfectly *accepted* in the Beloved. We do nothing to earn it and don't ever have to fear losing it. Our relationship is of *love*.

The best relationship with which to compare this is marriage. What does the bride receive of the bridegroom? The name.

Abram and Sarai inherited God's name in their "marriage" and became Abraham and Sarah. Jacob became Israel. God constantly inserts and covenants His name into relationships. These new names represent our new identities because God has written our new names on our own white stones.

**"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but him who receives it" (Rev. 2:17).**

Not only does God enter into a relationship of marriage and promises never to divorce us – but also it's a relationship of a precious friendship.

- **"But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham, My friend..." (Isa. 41:8).**
- **"Did You not...drive out the inhabitants of this land...and give it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever?" (II Chron. 20:7).**

- **“...And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,’ and he was called the friend of God” (James 2:23).**

From the time that the covenant was cut between Abram and God, (Abraham) was known as “The Friend of God.”

God even felt it necessary to discuss with Abraham the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah since this would obviously directly affect him. This is the type of honesty and partnership that God and Abraham had entered into with each other. Abraham actually had bargaining power with God. “What if I can find this many, God?” “How about this many?”

How many people do you know that are in such a relationship with God that they actually have a hotline to the bargaining table with the Creator of the universe?

**“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends...No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all**

**things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you” (John 15:13-15).**

Once two people have cut a covenant, they are ready to lay down their lives for each other. No longer are we slaves but *friends* of God.

This is why Jesus told His disciples in advance all of the things that were to be – so that they would not be caught off guard. He counted them among His friends and wanted them to know of certain events ahead of time.

The same thing goes for all of the secrets God has revealed to us in the New Testament – and the unsaved world doesn’t understand. These are secrets of how we are to live our everyday lives and secrets of the things that are to come.

We see now that through the covenant that God has cut with us that He doesn’t hold anything back from us, either. Again, we are counted among His friends and He wants us knowing these secrets so that we can move *with* God in the coming events instead of against Him.

- **“...what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our**

fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (I John 1:3).

- **“And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3).**

This is part of the intimacy that God wants to have with us. You cannot lose this relationship. You may indeed lose the *fellowship* but you will not lose the *relationship*. Sin can break the fellowship but the fellowship is restored in repentance. This all goes hand in hand with *reigning* with Jesus Christ.

**“For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:17)**

Can we see that God has raised us up to sit with Jesus at the right hand of the Father? We did not earn this position! It was freely given to us. Our sins were remitted – sent away – and we were wondrously forgiven. That forgiveness gives us the right to sit with Jesus and make the enemies of God our footstool. If we sit with Christ in the

heavenlies then we reign with Him! All we have to do is say, “Aman.”



## 7

# THE CURSES OF COVENANT BREAKING

**G**OD TOLD ABRAHAM: Anyone who blesses you I will bless; anyone who curses you I will curse. **“So keep the words of this covenant to do them, that you may prosper in all that you do”** (Deuteronomy 29:9).

Man is basically prosperity oriented. God promised prosperity to Abram if he kept the covenant with Him. **“I am...your exceeding great reward”** (Gen. 15:1). Wouldn't it be nice to think that the children of Israel lived prosperously and happily ever after? But, they did not keep the

covenant – they were disobedient and they came under judgment from God. Just as God kept the promises of His rewards for covenant keeping, He also kept His word on the *breaking* of the covenant.

**“See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the Lord your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it.**

**“But if your heart turns away and you will not obey but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You shall not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse.**

**“So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and**

the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them” (Deut. 30:15-20).

God created us as willful, volitional creatures. This is why He set before us a choice. Joshua made it clear that a choice was to be made between serving God and Baal. What we like to believe is that there is some sort of “middle ground” – some sort of median where we can have a little of both. God says, “No.”

## **The Law of Vows or the Law of Oaths**

God had established the *Law of Vows* or the *Law of Oaths*.

- “If a man makes a vow to the Lord, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth” (Num. 30:2).
- “When you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not delay to pay it, for it would be sin in you and the Lord your God will surely require it of you.

However, if you refrain from vowing, it would not be sin in you. You shall be careful to perform what goes out from your lips, just as you have voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God, what you have promised” (Deut. 23:21-23).

- “When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it, for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay” (Ecc. 5:4-5).
- “So watch yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything against which the Lord your God has commanded you” (Deut. 4:23).
- “Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High...” (Ps. 50:14).
- “But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; and anything beyond these is of evil” (Matt. 5:37).
- “And I say to you that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render

**account for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned” (Matt. 12:36, 37).**

What a sobering statement coming from the Lord Jesus! It is almost as if we are going to stand before Him while He plays back to us, on some sort of divine recorder, the vows that we made...“God, I’m going to start tithing!” “God, I’m going to be a man of my word!” “God, I’m going to be your woman!”

Make no mistake, one day He will play these back to us because they are vows that we made. As far as God is concerned, He said that it is better never to vow at all than to vow and break it. However, the children of Israel, of which we are a part, continually and habitually broke vows made to God.

- **“Why then has this people, Jerusalem, turned away in continual apostasy? They hold fast to deceit, they refuse to return” (Jer. 8:5).**
- **“Where will you be stricken again, as you continue in your rebellion? The whole**

head is sick, and the whole heart is faint” (Isa. 1:5).

- “But they deceived Him with their mouth, and lied to Him with their tongue. For their heart was not steadfast toward Him, nor were they faithful in their covenant” (Ps. 78: 36, 37).
- “They speak mere words, with worthless oaths they make covenants; and judgment sprouts like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field” (Hosea 10:4).
- “Now he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, and behold, he pledged his allegiance, yet did all these things; he shall not escape.’ Therefore, thus says the Lord God, ‘As I live, surely My oath which he despised and My covenant which he broke, I will inflict on his head” (Eze. 17:18, 19).

That is staggering, isn't it? God said to Zedekiah that since he had broken the covenant, He would now inflict it on his head!

“...not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the

hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord" (Jer. 31:32).

The following passage in the New Testament is often partially quoted – but is taken out of context. It is a covenant text. Here the writer of Hebrews contrasted the Old Covenant and the New Covenant – and anyone who broke the old, and whose guilt was established based on two or more witnesses, could be put to death.

**“Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ and again, ‘The Lord will judge His people’” (Heb. 10:28-31).**

These are serious words! This is like literally taking the blood of Jesus and hurling it back into the Face of God! I believe that this is grieving the

Holy Spirit perhaps to the extent of blasphemy – the sin unto death.

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the Living God. What is the clear implication here? God is saying “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay” and “If you break My covenant, I will bring it back on your head.” We will either fall into the hands of *Abba, Father*, or into the hands of God, a consuming fire.

The Old Testament constantly told of how the children of Israel were covenant breakers. The New Testament clearly rebuked the “untrustworthy”. Here is the only one place in the Bible where the original literally means, **“covenant breakers.”**

“And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrust-worthy, unloving, unmerciful; and, although they know the



ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them” (emphasis mine, Rom. 1:28-32).

## Signs of Covenant Breakers

### Unlawful Alliances

What are some of the signs of a people who have become covenant breakers? First of all, God says that **unlawful alliances** are formed.

Over and over again God said that since we had entered into covenant with Him, we are not to enter into unholy alliances with pagan nations – or it will lead to our destruction.

Unlawful marriages come into the picture. In Exodus 34 and Judges 3, God told us not to be unequally yoked. There are many other passages in the Bible where God commanded us not to be joined with unbelievers. He said that if you marry them, very soon your heart would begin to follow their gods.

This is exactly what happened to Solomon. He “held fast to” women were not Christians and ultimately lost his kingdom.

## Unlawful Desires

Unlawful desires are another indication of a people who have broken covenant. Remember that the children of Israel were not satisfied with the manna and other provisions that God had supplied. This is symbolic of craving the things of the world. Numbers 11:33-34 related that those who were disappointed and dissatisfied with what God had provided became objects of His wrath. God struck them down and they were buried by those who had obeyed Him. We as Christians still have the desire to flirt and covet the things of the world.

## Unlawful Practices

What were some of the **unlawful practices** that we find enumerated in the Old Testament?

- *Astrology*: reading horoscopes, depending on the stars for their fate.
- *Necromancy*: trying to communicate with the dead.
- *Child Sacrifices*: abortion and infanticide, sacrificing to the god Moloch; making their children pass through the fire.

- *Apostate Grandchildren*: abandoning the faith of their fathers.
- *Unrepentant Spirit*: refusing to ask forgiveness for sins.

## Consequences for Disobedience

There are many scriptures where various consequences for disobedience are listed.

- “For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them’” (Gal. 3:10).
- “But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be *cut off from his people*; he has broken My covenant” (Gen. 18:14).

Remember that Abraham had been given circumcision as his covenant. Anyone not being submissive to circumcision was cut off from the blessings and the benefits of the covenant – because he was revealing a *rebellious heart toward God* and God would not tolerate that.

“But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant, I, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a *sudden terror, consumption and fever* that shall waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away...I will set My face against you so that you shall be *struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when no one is pursuing you.* If after these things you do not obey Me, then *I will punish you seven times more for your sins.* And I will also *break down your pride of power; I will also make the sky above you like iron and the ground beneath you like bronze*” (Lev. 26:14-19).

God had already promised Noah that He would not destroy humanity again in the way that He had done before. But, when man became disobedient, God started disciplining them. Disobedience results in *discipline* but not *divorce*. Moving from the gentler punishments to the more severe, we begin with:

## Grace

God said that, “All of those I love, I discipline.”  
If we respond to His disciplines, then we will live.

- “For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines...It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of our spirits, and live?” (Heb. 12:6-9).
- “When He killed them, then they sought Him, and returned and searched diligently for God; and they remembered that God was their rock, and the Most High God their Redeemer” (Ps. 78:34-35).
- “So now let me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground. And I will lay it waste;

it will not be pruned or hoed, but briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it” (Isa. 5:5-6).

- “Their deeds will not allow them to return to their God, for a spirit of harlotry is within them, and they do not know the Lord...They have dealt treacherously against the Lord, for they have borne illegitimate children. Now the new moon will devour them with their land” (Hosea 5:4,7).

Unlawful marriages produce illegitimate children. This was what God called ‘awhoreing’ after other gods; in other words, spiritual adultery. Unfortunately, most of us have to learn things the hard way.

## **Law**

By the law of sowing and reaping.

- “So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be satiated with their own devices” (Prov. 1:31).

- “For Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen, because their speech and their actions are against the Lord, to rebel against His glorious presence. The expression of their faces bears witness against them. And they display their sin like Sodom; they do not even conceal it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves” (Isa. 3:8-9).
- “Your ways and your deeds have brought these things to you. This is your evil. How bitter! How it has touched your heart!” (Jer. 4:18).
- “Your own wickedness will correct you, and your apostasies will reprove you; Know therefore and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the Lord your God, and the dread of Me is not in you,’ declares the Lord God of Hosts” (Jer. 2:19).
- “But I shall punish you according to the results of your deeds, and I shall kindle a fire in its forest that it may devour all its environs...” (Jer. 21:14).

- **“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap” (Gal. 6:7).**

## **Death**

Thus far, we have seen how we've can be disciplined by love, by law and now we come to one that is exceedingly heavy. We can be disciplined by death. God had promised that obedience would result in long life. This is both statistically and medically verifiable.

- **“You shall walk in all the way which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess” (Deut. 5: 33).**
- **“...so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged” (Deut. 6:2).**
- **“Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him securely on**



high because he has known My name. He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him, and honor him. With a long life I will satisfy him, and let him behold My salvation” (Ps. 91:14-16).

- “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you” (Prov. 9:10-11).
- “The fear of the Lord prolongs life; but the years of the wicked will be shortened” (Prov. 10:27).

Now just think of all of the things – including irrational fears – that tend to bring our lives “to the end” that they should not come to. **Disobedience decreases both the quantity and the quality of life.**

- “For the waywardness of the naïve shall kill them, and the complacency of fools shall destroy them” (Prov. 1:32).
- (Wisdom) “For he who finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord. But he who sins against me injures himself; all

those who hate me love death” (Prov. 8:36).

- **“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct,’ declares the Lord God. ‘Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you. Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,’ declares the Lord God. “Therefore, repent and live” (Eze. 18:30-32).**
- **“If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this” (I John 5:16).**

This is a sobering thought and should shake the very foundation of every saint who accepts what this scripture is saying! The Bible says that there is a sin that leads to death and a sin that

does not lead to death. If I see my brother involved in that sin that does not lead to death, then I should pray for him. My immediate question is “What is that sin leading to death?” Isn’t it interesting that God does not tell us what it is? Why? Because we would go and commit every sin but that one. That is just a part of our human nature.

- **“My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-20).**
- **“Thus says the Lord to this people, ‘Even so they have loved to wander; they have not kept their feet in check. Therefore the Lord does remember their iniquity and call their sins to account.’ So the Lord said to me, ‘Do not pray for the welfare of this people. When they fast, I am not going to listen to their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I am not going to accept them. Rather I am going to make an end of them by the**

sword, famine and pestilence” (Jer. 14:10-12).

- **“Do not be excessively wicked and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time?” (Ecc. 7:17).**

These verses clearly reveal that there is such a thing as the premature death of a believer. We must be very sensitive in this conclusion. We cannot presuppose that when a brother or sister who has died what **we** would suppose to be an untimely death – that this is the premature death of a disobedient believer. Ultimately, only God knows these things. The word clearly tells us, however, that we can die before our time. The ultimate discipline that God brings on us when we do not respond to His wooings, chastenings and His discipline, is death. The Holy Spirit, in the counsel of the Godhead, finally is grieved to the degree that God says “Enough! I’m going to take him home.” and He takes the life of a believer. Let’s look at a biblical example.

- **“So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He, God, buried him in the valley in the land of Moab,**

opposite Bethpeor; but no man knows his burial place to this day. Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated” (Deut. 34:5-7).

- “Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep” (I Cor. 11:27-30).

So, a believer can suffer a premature death if he is disobedient to the chastenings of the Lord. Again, only God knows when that point occurs. God will also hold us to our covenant vows whether or not we want to be faithful to them. All of us want to believe that we can play “fast and loose” with God – and that we can enjoy all of the blessings and benefits and never have to worry about reaping the consequences for our disobedience. God, however, will not bless disobedience.

**“Good understanding produces favor, but the way of the treacherous is hard” (Proverbs 13:15).**

It is a basic principle from God’s word that sin results in forfeiture. When we sin and break our covenant, we lose a great deal of God’s will in our lives. How much time we waste and how many opportunities we lose over disobedience! Sin results in loss! The way of the transgressor is hard. God makes no exceptions for anybody. Young people think they can “beat the odds” – play now, and repent later. They cannot!

## **God’s Response to Our Unfaithfulness**

What is God’s response to our unfaithfulness?

### **God Remains Faithful**

- “What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar...” (Rom. 3:3, 4).

- **“If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself” (II Tim. 2:13)**

Even if we constantly deny who we are in Christ Jesus, Christ remains faithful. God’s love is an everlasting love.

- **“I also shall make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. My loving kindness I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall be confirmed to him. So I will establish his descendants forever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his sons forsake My law, and do not walk in My judgments, if they violate My statutes, and do not keep My commandments, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. But I will not break off My loving kindness from him, nor deal falsely in My faithfulness. My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips” (Ps. 89:27-34).**
- **“Israel has been saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation; you will not be**

put to shame or humiliated to all eternity” (Isa. 45:17).

- “Lift up your eyes to the sky, then look to the earth beneath for the sky will vanish like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a garment, and its inhabitants will die in like manner, but My salvation shall be forever, and My righteousness shall not wane” (Isa. 51:6).
- “For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting loving kindness I will have compassion on you,’ says the Lord your Redeemer” (Isa. 54:7, 8).
- “The Lord appeared to him from afar, saying ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with loving kindness” (Jer. 31:3).
- “...for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29).

This means that God neither calls back nor changes His mind. There are some things we cannot call



back once they have been spoken or done, but God said in Joel 2:25:

- “Then I will make up to you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the creeping locust, the stripping locust, and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you.”

God can restore anything He wishes in His own time.

## **RESTORATION**

*The sheep goes now toward the distant slope  
Where taller, tastier grass awaits.*

*Let the ninety and nine stay bleating and bumping  
one another,  
The horizon calls.*

*Here's one of Your flock, Good Shepherd, and  
He's headed for the ravine.*

*He doesn't understand drop-offs and wolves  
And he doesn't know how soon darkness will fall  
upon the land.*

*Call him back! Stop him!*

*The meadow shrinks in the gathering dusk*

*And the Shepherd's ram, full but unsatisfied  
Edges toward the rim  
Until in a cloud of clatter of gravel and dust He  
plummets into the gorge.  
Brambles clawing at his wool,  
He lies stunned upon his back.  
He cannot rise.  
He cannot reverse the steps that brought him to  
this dreadful place  
He can, in fact, do nothing at all.  
A cold moon stares down at him while sounds of  
night intensify.  
He is trapped – But more, he is alone.  
A flickering lamp – Footsteps in the underbrush  
The chill and the darkness are foiled this time  
As muscled arms encircle the fallen one  
And hoist him from the stones and mud  
To ride upon tall shoulders  
Back to the village fold  
“Had you nothing else to do this night,  
Good Shepherd?  
Should not this rebel sheep of yours  
Be ousted from care and food and drink for this?  
He chose his independent path!  
Will he yet be welcomed in Your fold?”  
He answers not.*

*He's too busy calling his friends and neighbors  
The young and the old about the town  
And even angels hear Him shout:  
"Rejoice with Me! I have found  
My sheep which was lost.  
He was Mine before, he is Mine tonight  
And he shall be Mine forever!  
Rejoice, rejoice!"*

*The villagers cheer and light years' distance  
The cherubim slap each other on the back.  
Both Earth and Heaven are awake tonight  
For the jubilee that crowns  
The restoration  
of one sheep.*

Author unknown

## 8

# DAVID AND JONATHAN

**WE** HAVE GIVEN many of the different steps of the covenant according to the Hebrew understanding. The story we will be looking at next gives us some of the most graphic illustrations of cutting a covenant that we have seen so far.

We looked at the Abrahamic covenant and how God established that covenant with Abram. We saw that the Hebrew word *“bereeth”* meant to “seal a compact by walking between pieces of flesh”. In the Greek, the word was *“diatheke”* and it meant “a disposition of property”. But, it is important to remember that it was not talking about a disposition of property between two people who

were roughly equal. It meant one person who had all of the assets, sharing those assets with someone else who had nothing but liabilities – and that’s a beautiful, beautiful picture of grace.

Now, in I Samuel 18, we come to the story of David and Jonathan. After looking at many of the aspects of cutting a covenant, I think this portion of Scripture will take on new life for you. When you come to the book of Samuel, you find three primary characters: Saul, David and Jonathan.

## **Saul**

The name Saul means “Ask of God.” While he was always asking of God, he never obeyed what he knew God required.

Saul was handsome. He stood head and shoulders above all the rest of the Israelites. We could say he was a person who had a great deal going for him. Saul’s problem was that he had an unbelievable propensity toward the flesh, and a natural aversion to doing God’s will. Saul was a picture of a person who predominantly lived under the bondage of the flesh.

Although Saul was the people’s choice for king, he was not God’s choice.

Look at Samuel 8:4-7:

**“So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, ‘You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.’ But when they said, ‘Give us a king to lead us,’ this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord told him: ‘Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected Me as their king” (I Samuel 8:4-7).**

At that time in their history, Israel was a theocracy. God (“Theos”) was ruling over them under the guidance of judges and prophets – people like Samuel. But, there came a time when the people of Israel no longer desired that kind of government, but wanted to be like other people. So they asked Samuel to appoint a king to rule over them.

God’s response to this request was that the people had rejected Him as their King. God was not only their God, but also their King, and they were to be His people. But they no longer wanted that kind of operation, but wanted to move from a theocracy to a monarchy. So, God gave them what

they wanted, and it proved to be the linchpin for the downfall of the whole nation. They decided that “*their way*” was better than “*God’s way*”. They wanted to be like the Philistines, the Moabites and all of the other people around them. God told Samuel to heed the voice of the people and give them what they wanted. They got their choice for a king, i.e., Saul – but he was not God’s choice.

This is a very clear example that will help us understand that God has a **perfect will**, a **permissive will**, and an **ultimate will**. There is no difference between His perfect will and His ultimate will except *time*.

During the particular time frame between His perfect will and His ultimate will, He permits many things to occur that are not His first choice. An example is His allowance to permit Saul to rule although that was not His perfect will. Saul was never His choice because he was a man of the flesh, not the spirit.

Saul boldly took over the priestly duties although God did not appoint him a priest. He also placed his soldiers under a foolish oath of fasting during warfare. It almost cost him the life of his son, Jonathan. Still another story was when God instructed Saul to slay the Amalekites and kill everyone. But, he kept King Agag in his decision to

keep the best of what God had said to destroy – a definite act of the flesh. *The flesh always wants to keep some of the things that God insists that we do away with.*

The flesh does not mind being religious and will even try to set up worship of itself – which is exactly what Saul did. Saul set up a monument to himself and ultimately sought to substitute sacrifices for obedience.

**“But Samuel replied: ‘Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has rejected you as king’” (I Sam. 15:22-23).**

God was not interested in Saul’s superficial sacrifices offered as an external cover-up. God wanted *heart* obedience. and Saul had tried to substitute sacrifice for obedience. Saul even killed 85 of the priests of God out of sheer passion because he did not get his way (I Sam. 22:6-18). These are but a few instances where Saul acted presumptuously toward God – and as a result God



wrenched the kingdom from him and gave it to someone with a different heart.

## **David**

The name David means “Beloved”. David was the opposite of Saul. Just as Saul had a natural aversion of asking but not obeying God’s will, David had a natural inclination to obey God’s will. David had a heart after God.

**“But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after His own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord’s command” (I Samuel 13:14).**

Paul reiterated this in his sermon at Pisidian, Antioch:

**“All this took about 450 years. After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. Then the people asked for a king, and He gave them Saul, son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. After removing Saul, He made David their king. He testified concerning him: ‘I have found David, son of Jesse, a man**

**after My own heart; he will do everything I want him to do” (Acts 13:20-22).**

God took the kingdom from Saul, and gave it to a man after His own heart. You will recall how Samuel was sent out to look for Saul’s replacement. Samuel kept looking at external features, and he viewed the various sons of Jesse, and several looked like prime candidates to him. But God was not interested in their outward appearance. He was looking at the heart – and He knew which one had a heart like His. God’s choice was David.

**“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (I Sam. 16:7).**

We have two characters thus far: Saul, who is a picture of the flesh living almost constantly *against* God – and David, who is a picture of the spiritual man, seeking to live *for* God.

Both of these men were sinners – both of them were in need of grace. But one man had a heart toward obedience who, despite all his fumbling, failing, stumbling, and falling back into sin,

ultimately was committed in his heart to do God's will. A pictorial contrast emerges as we recall that when Samuel told Saul to repent, Saul tried to cover up. But when David sinned and the prophet exposed him, David repented. He had a heart after God – and that was what God was looking for.

## Jonathan

Between Saul, the man of the flesh, and David, the man of the spirit, we have another man who seems totally out of character in this story: **Jonathan**. The name Jonathan means, “Jehovah has given.” He was King Saul's son, and yet he was totally different than his father. From all we can conclude in the Scripture, he was also totally different from his brothers and his sisters. Whereas they were very much like their father, Jonathan had a very different nature, character and outlook. Though fully of his father's house, fully of his father's humanity, he was a different person altogether. That is because *Jonathan is a prototype of the Lord Jesus Christ*. It is important to understand those characteristic typologies if we are to have proper understanding of this story.

Saul is a symbol of the **flesh**, David is a symbol of the **spiritual man**, and Jonathan is picture of the

**Lord Jesus Christ.** Jesus Christ – born fully man, the Word becoming flesh, fully partaking of our humanity, but without sin. And as you read the two books of Samuel, I Samuel particularly, you will simply be totally struck at how *out of place* Jonathan was. Just like Jesus.

Let us take a look at this very precious story that gives us some beautiful examples of covenant.

## **Partners of Covenant**

**“After David had finished talking with Saul, he met Jonathan, the king’s son. There was an immediate bond of love between them, and they became the best of friends” (I Sam. 18:1 NLT).**

Amos 3:3 is a covenant verse: **“Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so.”**

David and Jonathan walked together, their hearts were knit together in love, and their souls were as one soul because they had agreed to so walk. But, during the lifetime of Saul, David and Saul could never walk together – they could never agree. Saul was going in one direction and David was going in another. Saul was dominated and pulled by the flesh, and David was motivated by

the Spirit – so there was constant enmity and warfare between them.

We see that over and over again in Scripture. Paul said:

**“Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort” (Gal. 3:3).**

That is the very nature of the flesh. As Paul said:

**“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out” (Rom. 7:18).**

Jesus said:

**“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).**

## **Passion of Covenant**

**“...the soul of Jonathan was *knit* to the soul of David” (I Sam. 18:1).**

Circle that little word “knit”. Have you ever tried to take something apart that’s been knitted? In garments made from other types of fabrics, you can quickly find a seam, loosen it, and take it apart without destroying the garment. But a garment that has been knit together is virtually impossible to take apart without totally destroying the whole garment. It is a very beautiful picture of the oneness of the hearts of Jonathan and David – they were totally knit together.

This Hebrew word (Qashar: to tie, physically [gird, confine, compact] or mentally [in love, league]) is also used in Gen. 44:30: “**whose life is closely bound up**” or “*chained itself.*”

The picture of David receiving Jonathan’s love is, of course, a picture of **our receiving God’s love in Jesus Christ**. So, just as the soul of Jonathan was knit together with the soul of David in selfless love, so Jesus loves me as Himself in that same selfless love. *God loves me and loves you just as He loves His Beloved Son*. When that truth sets in, perfect love will set you free from fear – that’s one of the greatest liberating principles of the Bible.

The Living Bible’s paraphrase of I Samuel 18:1 is quite fascinating, and at this point, recites the passage more accurately than any translation I have seen. Listen to how it reads:

“And David met Jonathan, the king’s son, and there was an immediate bond of love between them. Jonathan swore to be his *blood brother*” (I Samuel 18:1 TLB).

Pay close attention to verse 2: “**From the day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father’s house**” (I Samuel 18:2).

No sooner did Jonathan – prototype of Christ – get involved, than Saul – prototype of the flesh – got involved. There is an important lesson here on the role of the flesh. As soon as the heart of Jonathan was knit to the heart of David, Saul stepped in and wanted to control the situation. That is the exact role the flesh always desires – control!

Jesus said: “**...apart from Me you can do nothing**” (John 15:5). Our flesh does not want to admit that. Rather, it always wants to have its own way. So, the picture forms that as soon as the spirit through Jonathan began to work in David, the arm of the flesh, King Saul, immediately wanted to get involved and control the situation.

## **Procedure of Covenant**

**“And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself” (I Samuel 18:3).**

You may never have fully understood just what happened in verse 3 because you did not fully understand the word **“covenant”**. Perhaps you previously thought they just came to some sort of agreement, maybe written, maybe verbal.

But as we have seen, the word covenant in the Hebrew is *bereeth*, which means to seal a compact always by walking between pieces of flesh. There was always an animal sacrificed, split right down the middle, down the backbone from head to tail, and then the two people stood between the walls of flesh and entered into the covenant and sealed that covenant with oaths.

We know beyond any shadow of a doubt, that this is what David and Jonathan did. They cut a covenant together – they swore to be blood brothers. Remember, they cut the animal and then cut themselves and bound themselves together in an unbreakable oath. Jonathan cut the covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Notice that phrase is mentioned twice.



- “... and he loved him as himself” (I Samuel 18:1b).
- “... because he loved him as himself” (I Samuel 18:3b).

The basis of the covenant was love. The initiator of the covenant was our prototype of Jesus Christ. *God is always the initiator.* God is always the one seeking us. He called us before we ever knew Him and it is the Lord Jesus, motivated by love, who is always reaching out to us.

In Deuteronomy 7:7 and several other places, God revealed His reason for choosing Israel. Let’s look at it again:

**“The Lord did not set His affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath He swore to your forefathers that He brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh, king of Egypt” (Deut. 7:7).**

In other words, God chose Israel because of His love for them. He set His love upon them. It was a

sovereign act of grace – and God has done the very same thing for us. Here is the one verse that everyone knows better than any other:

**“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).**

For God so loved the world that He cut a covenant with the world through His Son, Jesus Christ.

**“He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will – to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves” (Eph. 1:5-6).**

Jesus Christ is the “One He loves” in that verse. The Father said on several occasions in the presence of witnesses that He was well pleased with this One, His Son.

**“As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him.**

And a voice from heaven said, “This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:16-17).

God the Father and God the Son cut a covenant, a *diatheke*, in our behalf. Because of this covenant, we are accepted in the “One He loves”, or as the King James says “in the Beloved”, which is Jesus. And because of this covenant, God loves you and me as much as He loves Jesus! That totally escapes our comprehension. That’s too good to be true!

Most of us live all of our lives thinking that God could never really love us that way. But if I am in the Beloved – then God loves me just like He loves Jesus Christ.

“Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him” (John 14:21).

## **Provision of Covenant**

“Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his

**armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt” (I Sam. 18:4).**

We have seen that Jonathan initiated the covenant, because he loved David. And we have seen that David really was only a recipient at this particular time. Then, they continued with the exchanges we have already looked at in an earlier chapter.

**“...stripped himself...”** is significant. Jonathan stripped himself of his **robe**. The coat was not just something he wore – the coat represented his true identity.

Remember that was the problem with Joseph and his so-called coat of many colors. It was really a long coat with long sleeves, the kind of coat that only authority or royalty or rulers wore – that was the issue, not the colors. As soon as his brothers saw that robe, they immediately knew that this son was special, he was set apart by his father, and they envied him. Clothes may not make the man, but to the Hebrews, clothes *were* the man.

**“I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul will exalt in my God, for He has clothed me with garments of salvation” (Isa. 61:10).**

**“The angel said to those who were standing before him, ‘Take off his filthy clothes.’ Then he said to Joshua, ‘See I have taken away your sin and I will put rich garments on you’” (Zech. 3:4 NIV).**

That is a beautiful, beautiful illustration. God took Joshua’s filthy garments and said, “Now I will clothe you with festal robes (NASB), with robes of celebration and gladness.” This is such a wonderful, symbolic picture of God sealing the covenant.

One more illustration of the exchange of clothing. We all know the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. He had been ruining his life in the far country. For a while he was having a great time. But, it didn’t taken long until the Bible said he had spent everything he had – and he was up to his ears in corn shucks and, pardon my frankness, pig manure. There was nothing but the stench of the pigpen on him until he finally came to his senses.

How tragic that it takes us that long to come to our senses. As a counselor I know how true that is. Usually we do not come to our senses until we are just about to go under in the mire and the muck of our own disobedience.

The son said, “I will arise and go back to my father and I will say, ‘Father, I have sinned against

heaven and before you.” All sin is that way – first of all, against God; secondly before man.

The first thing the father did was to instruct his servants to bring the best robe. The son took off the filthy robes and the father put on the royal robes, re-establishing his son as a part of his family. Now that’s pure grace. The son did not deserve it – the son deserved to come back only as a lowly slave. But, the father reinstated him as a son – and as “joint heir” as Paul said in Romans 8:17.

As we studied earlier, God doesn’t leave our filthy garments on us – that is what atonement does. Atonement was a covering, but the blood of Jesus Christ does not *cover*...it doesn’t put clean clothes over filthy undergarments. God takes them away. He doesn’t atone, He doesn’t cover – He *cleanses*, and then imputes to us the perfect righteousness of His Son. Thus, the Lord has wrapped me in His robe of righteousness.

There is a very precious verse in Romans 13:14: **“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts”** (Rom. 13:14 NASB). Do you see that symbolism?

**“Do not lie to one another since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices and have put on the new self who is being**

renewed to the true knowledge according to the image of the one who created him” (Col. 3:9-10).

In both Romans 13 and Colossians 3 above, we have seen this beautiful symbolism of *taking off* – just as we take off an old dirty, filthy, soiled coat. We *lay it aside* – representing the flesh – and ***we put on the Lord Jesus Christ***. We are clothed in His righteousness. All of this is exquisite symbolism of God cutting a covenant with us.

In Philippians 2:6-8a, Paul said that Jesus Christ...

...even though He was fully God

...had all the rights and prerogatives of God

...thought it not robbery to be equal to God and

...did not cling to His rights and prerogatives of God –

...but laid them aside and became as one of us

...He became man and lived among us.

He stripped Himself, not of His deity, not of His Godness – **He stripped Himself of the *rights and prerogatives of being God*, and took upon Himself our nature, our image, our likeness ... the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.**

In John 13, He did that again with His disciples just before His Passion. He stripped Himself of His outer garment, and He girded Himself with a towel. This was covenant action taking place. Jesus was stripping Himself of His rights and His authorities and He was exchanging those things. And He said to His disciples, “No longer do I call you slaves, but I call you My friends.”

Now, back to our main covenant story. **“Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David...”** (I Sam. 18:4). I remind you this was not cheap, not Pollyanna. Jonathan was clothing the man that was going to take *his* rightful place on the throne. Jonathan was the heir-designate to his father’s throne. That’s why Saul hated David – that’s why Saul feared him. And so it was not a flippant, easy kind of thing for him to do. Jonathan was literally putting his robe of royalty on the man who was going to replace him. This was a very costly thing for Jonathan to give up.

Not only did they exchange robes, they exchanged **belts or girdles**. All of their armor was



attached to this large leather belt or girdle, and on that hung their saber, sword, or dagger. He gave to David his armor, including his sword, his bow and his belt.

## Three Symbolic Provisions of Covenant

### Robe and Tunic = Righteousness

There are many symbolisms in this. Jonathan – being a prototype of Jesus – gave David the robe. This action represents us receiving our salvation and our spiritual security.

We receive the robes of righteousness – and righteousness is imputed to us. (“**Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**” Rom. 8:1)

If receiving the robe meant **the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ**, this speaks of our **strength** and our **safety**.

- “...our *old self* was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin” (Rom. 6:6).
- “...the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But

the righteous man shall live by faith'...even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe" (Rom. 1:17; 3:22).

- "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption..." (I Cor. 1:30).
- "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Cor. 5:21).
- "...put on the *new self*, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph. 4:24).
- "By faith Noah...became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Heb. 11:7).

## **Armor = Resources**

Jonathan gave David his armor, which was obviously the best armor because the king's son and successor would have worn it.

We know that God wants to fight for us. Over and over again, He said to Abraham: “Abraham, anybody who blesses you, I’m going to bless; anybody who curses you, I’m going to curse. I’m going to be your shield and exceeding great reward. If anybody touches you, they’ve got to deal with Me. I am the one who protects you – because now we have cut a covenant together.”

David had come to know that principle. He had realized that he was in a covenant with God, and Jonathan had demonstrated this covenant to him.

There are many verses that reflect this covenant understanding, such as Exodus 15:2, where Moses said, “God is my strength.”

- **“The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise Him, my father’s God, and I will exalt Him” (Exod. 15:2).**
- **“It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect” (II Sam. 22:33).**
- **“The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold” (Psalms 18:2).**

- “The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to Him in song” (Psalms 28:7).
- “The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is His name” (Exod. 15:3).

I love this phrase in the Old Testament: The Lord of Hosts. He has more angels and archangels and seraphs and cherubim behind Him than we could ever need. Both David and Moses called Him the Lord of Hosts, and said that He was a great warrior.

These are all covenant theology and covenant phrases. And what did Paul say in Ephesians 6:11? **“Put on the full armor of God...”** (NIV) **“Put on the whole armour of God...”** (KJV). That’s really putting on the Lord Jesus Christ – and the only reason we have the privilege of putting on the Lord Jesus Christ is simply because *He has cut a covenant with us.*

- **“...in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left”** (II Cor. 6:7).

- **“...for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses” (II Cor. 10:4).**
- **“...let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light” (Rom. 13:12).**
- **“...having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation” (I Thess. 5:8).**

God continuously told the children of Israel, “Look, the battle is not yours, the battle is Mine. As long as you abide in Me, as long as you maintain your covenant with Me, I’ll fight your battles. You just have to be still.” About all they had to do was go out and sing a little bit before the enemy. God sent confusion and He routed the enemy.

Every time they acted presumptuously and thought they could take on their enemies, they went home defeated, with their tails between their legs. There was never a warrior lost in battle as long as they were living in covenant, and it was not until they broke the covenant, that they were defeated in battle.

You and I have a choice. We’ve entered into the covenant through salvation. Then God says,

“Alright, either you let Me fight your battles by the Spirit, or you go out in the energy of the flesh.” Every time you fight in the energy of the flesh, you do exactly what I do – you lose. And you come back with the scars of defeat. But God said, “I will fight your battles.”

Of course this means that I have to make sure that the battles I’m fighting are God’s battles. Young Christians go out and are very eager to pull out the saber, doing havoc a lot of times because they do not know the difference between God’s battles and the world’s battles. They do not know the difference between fighting in the flesh and fighting in the Spirit. God says, “I will fight for you.” When two people entered into covenant, whoever was the one’s enemy became his covenant partner’s enemy. Whoever was one’s friend automatically became his friend.

Jonathan was constantly loyal to David – and Saul hated this. Saul was increasingly jealous, because the people were singing, “Saul has killed his thousands, but David has killed his tens of thousands.” **“Saul became still more afraid of him, and he remained his enemy the rest of his days”** (I Sam. 18:29 NIV). Now that’s the picture of the flesh. The flesh is always, continually, eternally, perpetually an enemy of the spirit.

Saul aligned himself against David. Did David go out and take revenge or avenge himself? On several occasions he had the advantage and literally had Saul between a rock and a hard place. Saul entered a cave where David had hidden himself. He came so close to David that David was able to stealthily cut off a part of Saul's garment. He said, "I could have easily killed him, but he is God's anointed and I'm not going to do that."

Saul was so paranoid that he slept with all his soldiers sleeping around him. In the middle of the night, David snuck up to Saul, and took the king's spear and his jug of water that were at the head of his bed. Even though he could have killed Saul on this occasion too, he did not. David said, "I'm going to let God fight this battle for me." And ultimately, God raised up the Philistines, costing Saul his life. It applies to us as well. When we are in a covenant relationship, when we are resting in God, then my enemies are His enemies and He will fight the battle for us.

Though still a young man, David was learning more and more about how trust in God's resources, in God's provisions to fight his battles. I love the very familiar story of young David's victory over Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, in 1 Sam. 17:1-51.

When the 9'9" giant (about 3 meters) came out to challenge the people of Israel, David said, "Who is this uncircumcised man taunting and defying the Lord God, and the armies of the living God?" He said, "I'm not afraid to go out there, and I'm not afraid to fight him."

In verse 45, **"Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword, a spear and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord.'"** He said, "I do not need a sword, I do not need a spear, I do not need a javelin, I come to you in the name of the living God." He was in covenant with God and he knew it.

Apparently, David taught his son, Solomon, the same promise in his later years because Solomon wrote in Proverbs 18:10: **"The name of the Lord is a strong tower and the righteous run into it and are safe"** (Prov. 18:10).

We have the choice – going out in our own energies... going out in our own name... fighting in the energies of the flesh and becoming defeated. Or, we can rest in the name of the Lord, appropriating all He is, putting on the whole armor of God and allowing God to fight our battles for us. I'm learning more and more that the battle is not mine; the battle is the Lord's.



When Jonathan gave David his **robe**, it meant his **salvation and his spiritual security**. When he gave David his **weapons of war**, it meant his **strength and his ultimate safety**, because there is safety in the name of the Lord.

What does Isaiah 40:31 say about acting on the energies of the flesh? “...**those who *hope in* (*wait for* – *NASB*; *wait upon* – *KJV*) the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.**”

Have you ever seen an eagle? I was down at the beach not long ago, and a bunch of sea gulls and pelicans were flying. They flapped their wings as hard as they could, landed and rested a bit, then took off again, flapping their wings. It was exhausting just watching them! But an eagle doesn't fly like that, does he? An eagle is able to find the thermal updrafts and he is able to fly higher than any other bird. He is an example of *not* doing it in the energies of the flesh.

That is what many of us do as Christians every Sunday – we try to get a little more birdseed so we can flap a little harder the rest of the week. But you see, the eagle finds God's thermal updraft and just rides. And that's why Isaiah said, “**They will soar on wings like eagles...**” Why? Because we cut a

covenant with a God who has inexhaustible strength. He is everlastingly strong. That's the great exchange: my weakness for His strength... my inability for His all-ability.

**“But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (II Cor. 12:9-10).**

That’s covenant. Paul understood the Hebrew, and he said if we go out in the weakness of our flesh, it’s just going to be one defeat after defeat. But...

if we will allow that great exchange to take place...

- if we will recognize our weaknesses
- not try to cover it up
- not try to run away from it
- not try to excuse it

If we recognize our weaknesses, our recognition gives His strength a great opportunity to be manifest.

When we – housewives, mothers, businessmen, Christian leaders – are exhausted, utterly spent, have wrung every ounce of energy we have and we have nothing left – what are we going to do? Are we going to quit? Are we going to become depressed? Are we going to moan, “woe is me”?

Or, are we going to say, “Lord Jesus, I am at the end of my rope, my strength has absolutely been spent. I am exhausted. I can’t go any further, but thank You that You aren’t tired at all. My weakness gives You an opportunity now to magnify Yourself and Your inexhaustible strength through me. I appropriate my covenant privilege with You, and I exchange my weakness for Your great strength.”

There are many examples of this in the Bible:

- “I pray that out of His glorious riches He may *strengthen* you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have *power*, together with all the saints, to grasp how

wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:16-19).

- “I can do everything through Him who gives me *strength*” (Phil. 4:13).

Paul said, “I am more and more able to see that now I can do all things, not through the flesh, not through my Pharisaical background, not through my rabbinical training, not through my education – but I am able to do all things through my covenant partner who has made His strength totally appropriate and available to me.”

## **Prosperity of Covenant**

- “Whatever Saul sent him to do, David did it so successfully...” (I Sam. 18:5 NIV).
- “And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely...” (I Sam. 18:5 KJV).

- **“So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and prospered...”** (I Sam. 18:5 NASB).

David went out wherever Saul sent him and prospered, or acted wisely. When we act in wisdom, it always results in prosperity, doesn't it?

God is able to prosper us only when we are acting, not in the energies of the flesh, but when we are acting through His wisdom.

- **“...keep the words of this covenant and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do”** (Deut. 29:9).
- **“This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success”** (Josh. 1:8).
- **“His soul will abide in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land”** (Ps. 25:13).

- “Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers” (III John 2).

There is a spiritual richness that fills our spirits when we appropriate the Lord’s kindness and wisdom to our lives.

- “...the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7). *“exceeding”* (KJV)... *“incomparable”*(NIV)... *“incredible”*(NLT).
- “...poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things” (II Cor. 6:10).
- (The churches of Macedonia) “...in a great deal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in rich generosity” (II Cor. 8:2).
- “You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.” (II Cor. 9:11). I love this: *“You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion...”*(NIV).

- “...be rich in good works...” (I Tim. 6:18).
- “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich)...” (Rev. 2:9).

## The Priority of Covenant

As we have seen, when two people cut the covenant...exchanged the coats...exchanged the weapons of warfare, they also made vows – oaths to each other that nothing would ever separate one from the other.

Let us look at a couple of examples of this. In I Samuel 18 and 19, Saul hated David. He had commanded his secret police, his servants, everybody to find David so he could kill him.

**“Now Saul told Jonathan, his son, and all of his servants to put David to death”** (I Samuel 19:1).

But Saul had a problem – he knew there was one from his own family who had cut a covenant with David. Saul knew that Jonathan’s loyalty to David was greater than his loyalty to him, which only further ignited his anger and jealousy. So, he kept pursuing David.

Since Jonathan had vowed to lay down his life to save his covenant friend, he told David, “My father is seeking to put you to death. Please be on guard, and in the morning stay in a secret place and hide yourself. I will go out and I will stand beside my father in the field where you are and I will speak to my father about you. If I find out anything, I’ll tell you.”

Covenant people never had secrets from one another. So, he said, “I will not keep a thing from you that is in my father’s mind to do.” Time after time, Jonathan looked out for David and hid him from his father’s wrath.

In I Sam. 20:30, Saul became so angry with his son, that his anger burned and he said to Jonathan, **“You son of a perverse, rebellious woman!”** That’s a pretty harsh thing to call your son. But, because of his covenant with David, Jonathan was willing to lose his father’s respect. He was willing to lose his throne to protect his covenant partner, even though the throne was rightfully his according to the flesh.

- **“For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household. He**



who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matt. 10:35-37).

- “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26).
- Just a word of explanation: Jesus was not saying that we are to willfully hate them. *Hate* was a comparative word. He was explaining that all relationships must be secondary to your relationship with Him. If a test ever comes between your relationship with Him and your relationship with any other person, your highest priority is your relationship with Jesus.

And David had to flee from Saul...again.

“Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan and asked, ‘What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he is trying to take my life?’ ‘Never!’ Jonathan replied. ‘You are

not going to die! Look, my father doesn't do anything, great or small, without confiding in me. Why would he hide this from me? It's not so!" (I Sam. 20:1-2).

## **Privilege of Covenant**

Then, Jonathan renewed his covenant with David:

**"Jonathan said to David, 'Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you.' ...So David said, 'Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the Lord with you...'" (I Sam. 20:4, 8 NASB).**

Read this scripture to see a parallel for you and me.

**"Whatever you ask in My Name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14).**

Why was Jonathan and David's agreement called a covenant of the Lord? Because the Lord

was the witness between the two people who had cut the covenant.

David said, “...But if there is iniquity in me, put me to death yourself; for why then should you bring me to your father?” Jonathan said, ‘Far be it from you! For if I should indeed learn that evil has been decided by my father to come upon you, then would I not tell you about it?’ Then David said to Jonathan, ‘Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?’ Jonathan said to David, ‘Come, and let us go out into the field.’ (I Sam. 20:8-11). Then, they went out to once again ratify the covenant that they had made earlier.

Pay close attention to the oath they spoke. I’ve already stated that when two people stood between the walls of flesh, they pointed to heaven with one hand and pointed to the wall of flesh on the other, and said “May God do so to me and more if I break this covenant. I am willing to die for you and nothing, life or death, will cause me to break this covenant.” Here is what happened with David and Jonathan:

**“Then Jonathan said to David, “The Lord, the God of Israel, be witness! When I have sounded out my father about this time tomorrow, or the third day, behold, if there is**

good feeling toward David, shall I not then send to you and make it known to you? But if my father is inclined to harm you, may the Lord do so to Jonathan and more also, if I do not make it known to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. And may the Lord be with you as He has been with my father” (I Sam. 20:12-13).

Now, he clearly knew that David was going to succeed his father on the throne – so he said, “May the Lord be with you on the throne just like He has been with my father.” Jonathan knew that David was God’s choice and he vowed once again, “May God do so to me and more if I break my covenant.”

## **Permanence of Covenant**

“And if I am still alive, will you not show me the kindness of the Lord that I may not die.” (I Sam. 20:14).

It was as if Jonathan were saying, “David, because we have cut a covenant, you cannot do anything against me when you become king.”

“And you shall not cut off your loving kindness from my house forever. Not even

when the Lord cuts off everyone of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.’ So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David saying ‘May the Lord God require it at the hand of David’s enemies,’ and Jonathan made David vow again because of his love for him, because he loved him as he loved his own life...‘As for the agreement of which you and I have spoken, behold, the Lord is between you and me forever” (I Sam. 20:15-23).

In essence, he was saying, “David, the Lord will watch between us now that we have sealed this vow. It is for me and you and our houses forever. And the Lord will watch between us, and if either of us ever breaks this covenant, may God do so to us and more.”

And we know from the intervening verses that even as this discourse was going on, Saul was planning all the more to kill David.

**“And Jonathan was grieved over David because his father had dishonored him” (I Sam. 20:34).** So he told David that Saul was trying to kill him. In response to Jonathan’s honesty, **“...David got up...and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each**

other and wept together—but David wept the most. And Jonathan said to David, ‘Go in safety inasmuch as we have sworn to each other in the name of the Lord, saying the Lord watch between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever’” (I Sam. 20:41-42).

They had made an eternal vow of faithfulness to each other and their families through all generations. In the next chapter, we will see a thrilling example of how David maintained his fidelity to the house of Jonathan. It was long after God had used the Philistines to destroy Saul for his disobedience, for his covenant breaking. Sadly, Saul and his three sons died on the same day.

But, before this chapter ends, let’s look at Hebrews 2:16-18. It is the story of *our* Jonathan who came to cut a covenant with us, who came to exchange His robes of righteousness, and all of the weapons of His warfare. These beautiful words tell of that other One who was born like man in all outward forms of appearance... He was not God just playacting. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

**“For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendants of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made**

like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted” (Heb. 2:16-18).

For surely it is not angels He helps. Why? They don't need any. I do! So, He gives help to the descendants of Abraham. Who are they? **“And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise”** (Gal. 3:29). Paul clearly told us that we who believe are of the seed of Abraham, we are the seed of promise, we are the children of promise, and we are the children of Sarah the free woman. We are not the children of the bondwoman, Hagar. All of us are the descendants of Abraham. As such, we have a precious promise because Jesus – our Jonathan – has cut a covenant with us.

**“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weakness, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, draw near with confidence to the throne of grace that**

**we may receive mercy and find help in our time of need” (Heb. 4:15-16).**

He took upon Himself our infirmities, our likenesses, our full condition but without sin – tested and tempted at all points such as we, so He would feel our hurts, our pains, our struggles. He made available to us His robes of righteousness and all of His strength, so that we may come with confidence and may receive mercy and grace and help in our time of need. What a glorious reality! To this truth, I give a loud, “Amen! Aman!”



## 9

# THE SECURITY OF COVENANT: DAVID AND MEPHIBOSHETH

**P**AUL REMINDED US that the kindness of God was demonstrated toward us in Christ Jesus. *God set aside all of our vain attempts to make ourselves righteous* because they were the spending of counterfeit currency before the bar of a Holy and righteous God.

God imputed righteousness to us on the basis of what someone else – the Lord Jesus Christ – had done for us. As a result, we have been made heirs of Jesus Christ. If God has made us heirs, imagine the richness of our inheritance through Jesus Christ!

By comparison, the Rockefeller Estate is absolutely peanuts. They are paupers compared to what we have been made – “**joint heirs with Jesus Christ.**” God gave us, who were totally unworthy, who had nothing to offer Him, a “*diatheke*”, a disposition of property. We could neither merit it nor earn it...it’s a *diatheke*.

We have looked at I Samuel 18 and the very beautiful covenant that Jonathan cut with David. In this chapter, I want you to see primarily four things: the **PERMANENCE** of the covenant, the **POWER** of the covenant, the **PROMISE** of the covenant, and the **PROTECTION** of the covenant.

## **The PERMANENCE of the Covenant**

“You shall not cut off your loving kindness from my house forever, not even when the Lord cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth” (I Sam. 20:15).

This is very crucial. Notice that Jonathan said, “David, this covenant is not only between you and me, it is between your house and my house. You can never cut off your unfailing kindness to my family...ever.”

The permanence of the covenant...was it for just David and Jonathan's lifetime? No, he said, "David, this covenant is between your house and my house forever – not even when the Lord cuts off every one of your enemies from the face of the earth. May God do so to you, David, at the hand of your enemies if you fail to keep your promise." Jonathan made David vow again to seal his commitment so that generations to come would be permanently under the covenant.

**"As for the agreement of which you and I have spoken, behold, the Lord is between you and me forever" (I Sam. 20:23).**

The parallel of that covenant relationship and the one that God cut for us is obvious. **There is incredible security when we understand the permanency of the covenant God has cut with us.** Many people live in tremendous spiritual insecurity, as if the covenant is dependent on their efforts. Some may feel that the benefits are going to run out, or, if one partner fails, it nullifies the whole agreement. But, I want you to see the permanency, the eternity of God's covenant with you through Jesus Christ. It is irrevocable. It is as permanent as God and that fact is our incredibly

great security. After all, Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. So are His promises.

After David and Jonathan's agreement, tragedy struck while Israel and Saul were battling the Philistines. Saul and three of his sons died on the same day, leaving David to ascend the throne as Israel's new king. He subjugated his enemies, God gave him instructions about His temple, and peace ruled throughout the land. But, the covenant was still intact.

## **Mephibosheth**

On the day that Jonathan, his two of his brothers and his father died, a runner brought news from the battlefield to David that they had been killed. You can just imagine the panic and hysteria that erupted in Saul's palace at this incredible turn of events – God's anointed king had fallen in battle. They panicked because they feared what the victor would do to them. Besides, Saul had always kept everything stirred up against David, spreading lies and falsehoods. "If David ever gets his chance, he will usurp the throne. David is not a friend of the people; he is not God's chosen, I am. David is a usurper, you cannot trust him."

In I Samuel 22:7-8, in his paranoia, Saul had said to his servants who stood around him: **“Hear now O Benjamites, will the son of Jesse [David] also give to all of you fields and vineyards? Will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds? For all of you have conspired against me so that there is no one who discloses to me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you who is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me to lie in ambush as it is this day”**.

So, fear shot through the whole palace. All had to flee to keep from being slaughtered by the conquering army, including Jonathan’s 5 year old son, Mephibosheth. Of course, his nurse also feared that the new king would kill him, so she picked up young Mephibosheth in her arms and fled. As she hurried to leave, he fell and became crippled.

**“Now Jonathan, Saul’s son, had a son crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the report of Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled. And it happened that in her hurry to flee, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth”** (II Sam. 4:4).

For the first five years of this little lad's life, he had been born and reared in the palace. He knew nothing but all of the luxuries, accoutrements, attentions and pamperings of the palace. He was the grandson of Saul. He was the son of Jonathan, and one day perhaps he would be king. He was treated as royalty is always treated. All of his needs were met. Everything his little heart could desire he would receive. And no doubt, his grandfather Saul was a doting grandfather, and gave this little boy everything he wanted. Now he was suddenly swept up and as his nurse carried him, they fell and he was crippled in both legs.

We do not hear anything about young Mephibosheth for a number of years. David had come to the throne. **"...And the Lord helped David wherever he went. So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and righteousness for all his people"** (II Sam. 8:14-15). But, the little boy lived in obscurity in the desert.

## **The POWER of the Covenant**

### **The Persistence of David**

David now ruled the kingdom. All of the enemies of the people of God were defeated. He

administered justice and righteousness, and for the first time there was peace in Israel.

**“Then David said, ‘Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?’”** (II Sam. 9:1). David was a man of war, a man of bloodshed – that is why God would not allow him to build the Temple. But God had used him to amass an incredible fortune and brought a reign of peace to Israel that it had never known. Seated on his throne, he began to muse over his past life.

Years had transpired between the days he and Jonathan had entered into the covenant. Now that the wars were over, David had the luxury of thinking about the past. No doubt every time he washed his hands, he saw that scar on his wrist that reminded him of the covenant. And every time he put on his royal chains or his royal robe, he looked down and saw that scar, rubbing his fingers over it. One day, he asked aloud, “Is there anyone left in Saul’s family?”

There is great power in making a covenant, a force that cannot be overlooked or ignored, because its permanence propels the partner to follow through on the vow. What did David want to do? He wanted to show kindness for Jonathan’s sake, just as he had promised. God does the same for us.

He comes to us and says, “I am showing you kindness, not because of you, not because of anything you are or anything you have done, I am doing it because of your Jonathan. I am doing it for the sake of Jesus.”

So, the servants of Saul and Jonathan had fled – because they had bought into the rumor that if David ever got his chance, their lives wouldn’t be worth a shekel. All had run away...except for one.

**“So, the word went out that David was looking for anyone left of the household of Jonathan. Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David and the King said to him, ‘Are you Ziba?’ And he said, ‘I am your servant’ The king said, ‘Is there not yet anyone of the house of Saul to whom I may show the kindness of God?’ And Ziba said to the king, ‘There is still a son of Jonathan who is crippled in both feet.’”**

You can just imagine David sitting on his throne with great alertness while he rubbed the scar. And he said, “You mean there is still somebody left of the house of Saul?” And so David said to Ziba, “...‘where is he?’ And Ziba said to him, ‘Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel in Lo Debar’” (II Sam. 9:2-5).



## The Plight of Mephibosheth

*Crippled* in body

*Confused* in mind

*Confined* in Lo Debar

Now I want you to circle that word in your Bible. “He is in *Lo Debar*.” The word Lo Debar means *without pasture*. Lo Debar was a desert place. It was a godforsaken outpost on the backside of nowhere and that is exactly where Mephibosheth had fled. We do not know how he got there. We do not know if the servants originally took him – or he went there after he had gotten to be a little older. It was arid, a place fit only for scorpions and snakes, a wilderness. Down in Lo Debar, without pasture, greenery, or oases – just desperately hot and desolate.

However, the greatest Lo Debar that Mephibosheth was in was not geographic. The Lo Debar that he was in was a *spiritual* and *emotional* barren place. It was a place where all of the lies and all of the envy and all of the bitterness and all of the hatred that he was building up for David were seething and smoldering. Day after day he dwelt in that hot place, that arid lifeless place of spiritual and emotional bitterness.

Picture Mephibosheth as the word came back about David. “He is not the rightful king, I am. He is in the place I should be. And if I could ever get my chance, I would gladly take his life.” So, in the Lo Debar of bitterness, in the Lo Debar of anger, in the Lo Debar of resentment, in the Lo Debar of depression, Mephibosheth grew up.

I counsel with a lot of people who are living in Lo Debar, without pasture emotionally, without pasture spiritually. It could be that some of you reading this book are in Lo Debar. Keep reading and see how God kept the covenant through David.

**“Then King David sent and brought him from the House of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo Debar...” (II Sam. 9:5).**

I see in this a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Here you and I are in our Lo Debars. We have been reared on the lies of the world about God – that “God is not a good God, He doesn’t want to show you kindness, if you give your life to God, He’s going to take away all of the fun, all the enjoyment, all the adventure, all the excitement – do you want that kind of life?”

We banish ourselves into a self-imposed exile in our Lo Debar, and live in the fear and in the lies of

Satan. Jesus said that Satan is a liar – and the oldest lie in the universe was the one that Satan told the woman. It was designed to poison her mind about the kindness of God. **“Eve, has God said...?”** “Surely that is not the kind of God you want to serve. He has just taken away all the joy of your life.”

Man *cannot* give himself to a God that he does not know, and man *will not* will give himself to a God he fears. Satan is going to poison our minds with negative lies and untruthful statements about God – so we flee from God and banish ourselves to Lo Debar to die in resentment.

In our story, God sent the Holy Spirit, the great Hound of Heaven in the form of David. Imagine this with me as I see it in my mind (not from scripture!). Here Mephibosheth was, in Lo Debar, barely subsisting. A neighbor came to where he was staying and said, “I see a cloud of dust rising from the horizon...someone’s coming!” Fear struck his heart.

Suddenly, the chariots of the king arrived and encircled that godforsaken little barren house. Mephibosheth let his little crippled legs slide off his couch and onto the floor. He got his two crutches, his rough-hewn crutches that he had hacked out of some abandoned pieces of wood. He looked out, and

saw that he was completely surrounded and there was no escape.

“It’s finally happened,” he thought. “I knew it would come. I knew my life wasn’t worth anything as long as David was alive. He’s found me; somebody told him, and now he has come to kill me to secure his position.” Few words were probably spoken as Mephibosheth was escorted outside, put in a chariot and quickly transported back to the palace.

**“When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor. David said, ‘Mephibosheth!’ ‘Your servant,’ he replied”** (II Samuel 9:6). David really wanted to know, “Is that really you – are you really the son of Jonathan?” Mephibosheth had believed so many lies all his life – and he knew that at any moment the word was going to come from David for him to be killed. So, Mephibosheth just threw his crutches away and fell down prostrate before David – waiting for the word of execution to come.

## **The PROMISE of the Covenant**

### **Peace**

David – completely motivated by a different heart than Mephibosheth – leaned over to him and said, **“Do not fear.”**

Why does God always have to say that to us when He comes to us? Because man, outside of a covenant relationship with Him, is motivated by fear. In fact, *man’s oldest emotional enemy is fear*. We are all afraid. What is the fear that possesses your life?

David looked down on Mephibosheth and saw him, perhaps trembling, lying there prostrate on the floor. He said, “Mephibosheth, you do not need to be afraid.”

What did we say earlier was the only anecdote to fear? Perfect love casts out fear, when we begin to realize that the heart of the God who is seated on the throne is not that of anger. Jesus said, “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him” (John 3:17). God’s passion for us, and David’s for Jonathan, are the same – to extend loving kindness.

**“Do not fear, for I will surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan...”** (II Sam. 9:7a).

## Provision

“...and will *restore* to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you shall eat at my table regularly” (II Sam. 9:7b).

God is a God of Restoration – that is why the Gospel is Good News. You see, Satan says that God is going to take away everything. But, God says, “I am going to *restore*.”

Joel 2:25 is one of my favorite verses to share with people who have been ravaged, who have lived in self-banished poverty in Lo Debar. God said: “**I will restore unto you the years that were eaten by the locusts.**”

Now, let us understand that with sin there always comes forfeiture. There’s some that we can never call back. We cannot call back those years, and we cannot call back those lost opportunities. But God said, “**I will restore unto you the years eaten up by the locusts.**” David said to Mephibosheth, “All of this time you thought that I was a usurper, that I had taken your father and your grandfather’s estate and all of the money. Mephibosheth, I’ve been waiting for you, and I’ve had all the money in the bank and it’s been drawing interest. Not only am I going to give you the principal, but I am going to give you the

interest on it as well. All of it is now totally available to you; it's yours."

Mephibosheth's ears could not believe what he was hearing. (My imagination here!) He reached over and he got one of the crutches. He pulled himself up again out of that prostrate position before the king. You can just see him looking with absolute incredulity, and he said, "What are you talking about?" And David said, "Not only is the estate yours, but you're going to eat regularly at my table." And again, Mephibosheth just collapsed in unbelief.

Then, the Bible said, he prostrated himself, and he said, "**What is your servant, that you should regard a dead dog like me?**" (II Sam. 9:8). Now that is a Hebraism. The Hebrews thought, taught and wrote in picture concepts – not abstractions as we do. When he used the phrase "**dead dog**", that was a Hebraism that really said, "I am nothing but garbage."

What do you do with dead dogs? You certainly do not put a golden leash on them. You do not put a jewel-studded collar on them or bring them into the palace. You take a dead dog and its mangy worthless carcass and you heave it on the garbage heap. That is what that word literally meant to them. He said, "I am worthless, I am nothing.

David, you just do not understand – man, if you only knew what I have been saying about you, if you only knew the hatred I’ve had in my heart all these years about you. David, you just do not understand, I am unworthy, I am a dead dog. Why, David, are you doing this?”

There are two kinds of cripples in the world. There are those who are crippled by sin, by sins of their own choosing – and there are people who are crippled by circumstances. Mephibosheth was crippled by circumstances. Often things happen in our lives that are outside our control. He was a five-year-old little boy and he had no control over the war – but God, in His sovereignty, had allowed for those circumstances to happen in Mephibosheth’s life to show God’s glory. God is God even over our circumstances.

The people who have been crippled by circumstances often are the most bitter, aren’t they? At least the people who have been crippled by sin can look back, and even though they may rationalize, even though they may blame other people, in their heart of hearts they really know that they are reaping what they sowed. It’s their fault. They cannot really blame everybody else. But you see, the person who has been crippled by some capricious act of nature, by some circumstance



totally out of their control, that is the person that often really seethes with bitterness toward God – as Mephibosheth was filled with bitterness. His greatest infirmity was not the lameness of his legs, but his emotions, his attitude and his spirit were his greatest, debilitating, crippling problem.

Let me ask you. Where are you crippled? We all are, aren't we? All of us have crippled places. All of us have spiritual and emotional lameness. Where are you lame? Where do you walk with a dragging, infirmed part of your body, your emotions or your spirit? Mephibosheth saw himself as nothing but worthless, a dead dog. He could not believe what he was hearing, and that was why he said, "David, I am unworthy, I am worthless."

You can just see David as he was rubbing that scar on his wrist, leaning over and he looking at young Mephibosheth, dirty, unkempt, unshaven, just a wreck of a piece of humanity. And he said, "Mephibosheth, I am not doing this because of you, I am doing this because of your Daddy. I am doing this, because of a covenant promise that your father and I cut with each other and for our households. So, Mephibosheth, it's not for your sake, it's for Jonathan's sake. Because, before you were even born, your father cut a covenant with me, and it included you."

What does the Holy Spirit say to us? “Before you were even born, I cut a covenant with My Lamb, who was slain before the foundation of the world. And I am not showing this loving kindness because you deserve it. I am not doing it because you have earned it. I know the Lo Debar you’ve been living in. I know where I had to send my Holy Spirit to encircle you so there was no escape. I am doing it for My Son’s sake.”

## **Posterity**

Then the king called Saul’s servant, Ziba, and said to him:

**“All that belongs to Saul and all his house I have given to your master’s grandson. You and your sons and your servants shall cultivate the land for him, and you shall bring in the produce so that your master’s grandson may have food” (II Sam. 9:9).**

All that belonged to Saul now belonged to his grandson. All that belongs to Jesus now belongs to us.

- **“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become**

the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor. 5:21).

- “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” (II Cor. 8:9).
- “...For all things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God” (I Cor. 3:21-23).

All things are yours. Not because of who you are, but because of our Jonathan. You see how, literally, we have become joint heirs.

## **Perfecting of the Covenant**

“...You and your sons and your servants shall cultivate the land for him, and you shall bring in the produce so that your master’s grandson may have food; nevertheless Mephibosheth your master’s grandson shall eat at my table regularly.’...” (II Sam. 9:10).

Mephibosheth was lame, incapable of cultivating the land and bringing in the produce. So David assigned the job to Ziba and his sons.

The Holy Spirit knows we too are incapable of doing anything on our own. So, He comes and cultivates our lives, producing for us what we are incapable of producing for ourselves. Do you think I could produce any fruit of the Spirit? We may be able to counterfeit a few, but they will not last. *My* love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control cannot last, because they are something I have tried to produce through the flesh.

But, God puts His Holy Spirit, the great Helper, within us. That is why Jesus said to His disciples, **“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth...I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you”** (John 14:16-18).

He said, “I am going to leave you My Holy Spirit and He will cultivate within you all of My character. It’s going to be real. It will be *real* love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”

I love this – David said to Ziba: “Mephibosheth, your master’s grandson, will eat at my table regularly.” What does Revelation 3:20 say? **“Behold,**

I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Rev. 3:20). The word “dine” in Greek is the word for the last meal of the day. It’s that meal where people leisurely reclined and had all the time in the world just to sit and break bread and fellowship together.

“Then Ziba said to the king, ‘According to all that my lord the king commands his servant so your servant will do.’ So Mephibosheth ate at David table as one of the king’s sons” (II Sam. 9:11).

He didn’t eat there as a servant, he didn’t eat there as a slave, he didn’t eat there as a visitor, he ate there as one of the king’s sons. And that is precisely what Paul said in Romans 5:17: **“For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will *reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ*”** (Rom. 5:17).

And again in Romans 8:16, we have been made *joint heirs* with Jesus. **“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...”** (Rom. 8:16).

We are reigning with Him as one of the king’s sons. Isn’t that exciting?! And yet some of us still

have a servant's mentality. We are just like the prodigal who came back and said, "I am not worthy." And that is true, we are not worthy. But, wonder of wonders, He doesn't send us back out into the pasture to slop the pigs. He says, "Come here. I have a chair at the table that is been empty all these years. It's been waiting for you. I want you to eat regularly at My table."

I guarantee you that there were some in David's household for whom that was a hard pill to swallow. After all, what right did someone from the enemy have to eat at the king's table? Some may have even whispered, "Who do you think you are?"

If I had been Mephiboseth, I would have responded this way. "Go ask David about that scar on his wrist and you'll understand. You're right, I am not worthy and you do not know the half of it. I am not here because I am worthy. I am here by invitation of the king."

You and I are also here by God's divine invitation. But, we can count on the accuser of the brethren to whisper in our ear, too. To see a specific example of this, we're going to look at II Samuel 19:24.

## **The PROTECTION of the Covenant**

One of David's sons, Absalom, tried to take David's place on the throne. In fear, David stepped aside and went into hiding because he didn't want to have a direct conflict with his son, Absalom.

Mephibosheth had been at the table for some time when Ziba became a turncoat. No doubt, he resented what had taken place. In II Sam. 16, we see the duplicity of Ziba:

**“Now when David had passed a little beyond the summit, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him with a couple of saddled donkeys, and on them were two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred clusters of raisins, a hundred summer fruits, and a jug of wine. The king said to Ziba, ‘Why do you have these?’ and Ziba said, ‘The donkeys are for the king’s household to ride, and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine, for whoever is faint in the wilderness to drink.’ Then the king said, ‘And where is your master’s son?’ And Ziba said to the king, ‘Behold, he is staying in Jerusalem, for he said, ‘Today the house of Israel will restore the kingdom of my father to me.’ ’ So the king said to Ziba, ‘Behold, all that belongs to Mephibosheth is yours.’ And Ziba said, ‘I prostrate myself; let me find**

favor in your sight, O my lord, the king!” (II Sam. 16:1-4).

Ziba turned against Mephibosheth, and he said to David, “Because you were away, Mephibosheth is trying to take over the throne.” Ziba had become a slanderer, and he was telling lies about Mephibosheth. That is exactly what Satan does. The accuser of the brethren is always slandering us before God.

In II Samuel 19:24, David finally came back to Jerusalem:

“Then Mephibosheth, the son of Saul came down to meet the king; and he had neither cared for his feet, nor trimmed his moustache, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came home in peace.” (This is extreme mourning) “It was when he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said to him, ‘Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?’ So he answered, ‘O my lord, my servant deceived me; for your servant said, ‘I will saddle a donkey for myself that I may ride on it and go with the king,’ because your servant is lame.’”



**“Moreover, he has slandered your servant to my lord the king; but my lord the king is like the angel of God, therefore do what is good in your sight” (II Sam. 19:27).**

What an incredible change in philosophy. Earlier, he had tremendous *fear* of David. Now he had tremendous *faith* in David. He said, “David, you’re like an angel of God to me now, because I knew that when you were gone my life was absolutely worthless. But now that you have come back, you’re a sight for sore eyes. Do what is right; do whatever you want to do with me.” **“For all my father’s household was nothing but dead men before my lord the king; yet you set your servant among those who ate at your own table. What right do I have yet that I should complain anymore to the king?”** (II Sam. 19:28).

When Ziba lied David, David believed him and said, “You take what Mephibosheth had received through my goodness.” Once he saw Mephibosheth’s humility, he divided the land between the two of them.

Verse 30 shows a total change in Mephibosheth. **“Mephibosheth said to the king, ‘Let him even take it all, since my lord the king has come safely to his own house’”** (II Sam. 19:30).

Mephibosheth realized that his wealth, his source of security and his source of abundance was not in some land that he had received from his grandfather – his source of everything was the person David. And so Mephibosheth said, “I do not care, give Ziba all of the land. I used to long for it, I used to covet it, but now I do not really care. Let Ziba have it all. You are the source of everything.”

What a total change! He realized that all of his source of abundance, all of his source of security, all of his source for everything was not in land, it was in a person. *That is what God says to us, “All things are yours through Jesus Christ.”*

There is one more example to look at. In II Sam. 21, Saul had falsely persecuted the Gibeonites. Remember when Joshua was subjugating the land, the Gibeonites came and they deceived Joshua? They said, “**We have come from a far country...make a covenant with us’...(then) they heard that they were neighbors and that they were living within their land**” (Josh. 9:6, 16). In the meantime, the Israelites had already cut a covenant and said, “We will not do to you what we have done to the other people.” When they realized they had been deceived, some of the nation of Israel said, “Well, let us kill these people.” Joshua said, “We cannot, we’ve cut a covenant with them – and

that covenant is permanent, we cannot touch them now.” But, many, many years later Saul came to the throne and, in his zeal, he and his sons persecuted the Gibeonites, killing many of them.

God had not sent rain for three years, and David knew something was wrong. Somebody had done something to displease God because there was a famine in the land. And so he sought the Lord, and God said to him, **“It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he put the Gibeonites to death”** (II Sam. 21:1).

So, David called in the Gibeonites and said, “What can we do to right this?” The Gibeonites said, “Look, no amount of money can restore this. That is not what we are interested in. The only thing that will restore this is blood for blood. You give us anybody that is left out of the household of Saul that we may take their lives for breaking the covenant thus.” And so David said, “That we will do.”

**“But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul because of the oath of the Lord which was between them, which was between David and Saul’s son Jonathan”** (I Samuel 21:7). Jonathan’s son was totally protected because of covenant. David turned over the other sons of Saul

and they were destroyed, but he would not let Mephibosheth be touched.

God gives us the same protection from our enemy, the devil. There are those who say Christians can be demonically possessed, but I do not see that at all. I do not think that God will ever allow one of His covenant children to be possessed by the evil one.

**“We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him” (I John 5:18 NIV). Hallelujah!**

God said no one is going to touch My covenant child. Similarly, David said, “You can have the other sons of Saul who are probably guilty, but you are not going to touch Mephibosheth. Why? Because of the covenant that I made with his father.”

**“Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. And all who lived in the house of Ziba were servants to Mephibosheth. So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate at the king’s table regularly. Now he was lame in both feet” (II Sam. 9:12-13).**

And that is what God says of us. We are always going to be lame, we are always going to be unworthy, but “for the sake of My son Jonathan, you can eat at My table regularly.” He who fed the multitudes, and turned the water into wine, invites us to come and dine – the Master calls *you* – come and dine. And it’s all because of our Jonathan, and for His sake. Amen.

# 10

## THE TESTING OF THE COVENANT

### The Partner

**T**HE SELECTION OF a covenant partner was a serious endeavor. The major character issue desired was for the potential partner to be faithful under all circumstances. **Inevitably, when two people entered into a covenant relationship, a time of testing followed.** Usually some circumstance evolved whereby the covenant partnership was tested. For this reason, those who chose to enter a covenant relationship had to first count the long and short-term cost of that relationship. For

example, if the covenant entered into were merely between individuals, the affect on each partner would endure for their lifetime. However, if the covenant entered into was between the households of the partners, the long-term relationship and its cascading affects on future generations had to be considered very carefully. It was not a relationship one entered into flippantly or lightly.

You will recall that no other relationship was more important than a covenant relationship. It superseded all other relationships including family and friends. The old saying “blood is thicker than water” became a living reality in covenant relationships because the covenant partners literally became blood brothers.

## **The Terminology**

The word “friend” is a covenant term clearly understood by covenant partners. It is not used in the light, casual manner that is loosely employed in our western culture today. Covenant partners sealed their covenant in blood, meaning they were covenant friends to the death. As we have already seen, it was a serious thing to enter into covenant relationship with another because if necessity

demanded it, one partner would give his life for his covenant partner.

Jesus underscored this when He said:

- “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his *friends*” (John 15:13).
- “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you *friends*, for everything that I learned from My Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15).

The Jewish audience to whom Jesus was speaking knew full well the weight of the covenant term “friend”.

## **Example of Covenant in our Western Culture**

A very common example of a covenant that is made – and all too often broken – in our western culture is the covenant of **marriage**. Two partners stand before God and swear to be faithful to the death – but in at least 3 out of 4 marriages, the covenant is shattered in the ensuing days of



vicissitudes, mundane activities and routines. America is a nation of covenant breakers in the matter of the covenant of marriage. People who enter the covenant of marriage lightly are often found to be unfaithful when the inevitable testing comes.

## **Examples of Covenant Testing in the Scriptures**

God had a twofold reason for testing His people: (a) to reveal to them what is in their hearts, and, (b) to reveal to them what is in His heart.

Of course, God already knew what was in man's heart, but He also knew that man *did not know* what was in his own heart. God is not impressed with our outward appearance, but He looks inside us, upon our heart, our innermost being. He knows that we often live in self-deception and fantasize about ourselves. In His wisdom, He has to bring us out of our illusions into a realization of what we really are. When He has revealed to us our own midnight hearts, He drops the diamond-like brilliance of His own heart upon the darkness. In the stark contrast, He vividly shows us just how different His heart is from our own.

In Deuteronomy, at the second giving of the Law, God reminded the nation of Israel of the covenant He had provided for them:

**“Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that the Lord promised on oath to your forefathers (*Note: primarily Abraham*). Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands” (Deut. 8:1-2).**

Even though God provides constant reminders of the covenant He has made for us, we see ourselves over and over again in the children of Israel and their state of spiritual amnesia. We are no different. They forgot the covenant that God had entered into with them and they had entered into with Him. In the New Testament, we Christians are instructed to remember the new covenant in Jesus’ blood as often as we come to His table. Jesus said we are to do this to remember the covenant He cut for us on the cross.

In Exodus 2 we find the account of the children of Israel in bondage in Egypt. The seed of

Abraham, through his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob, about 70 strong, had gone down to Egypt because of a famine in the land of Canaan. They had been there for several hundred years, and had multiplied tremendously. They probably numbered between 2 and 3 million people.

They were God's people, no longer living in freedom in Egypt – but living as slaves to the Egyptians. They feared the Hebrews would side with Egypt's enemies and cause their defeat. Therefore, the Egyptian rulers made them slaves. They appointed lords over them and began to oppress the people of God. Is God going to be unconcerned about the plight of His people, or is He going to remember the ancient Abrahamic covenant, which He Himself had established hundreds of years before?

**“During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God” (Exodus 2:23).**

Watch what is going to be revealed about the heart of God: **“God heard their groaning and He remembered His covenant...” (Exodus 2:24).**

What does this reveal to us about the heart of God? God remembers. We forget, but God remembers. And when He heard their groanings, His great heart was stirred as He remembered the covenant that He had made with Abraham and reaffirmed with Isaac and Jacob. God saw the sufferings of Israel and God took notice of them. God does not change. Just as He heard their cries and took notice of their plight, so God hears our cries today and God is concerned. God remembers His covenant.

As God's heart is stirred in remembrance, notice that He immediately implemented His plan for the deliverance of His people as He spoke to Moses from the burning bush:

**“The Lord said, ‘I have indeed seen the misery of My people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering’” (Exodus 3:7).**

It is a great source of comfort to know that when we are in the midst of life's desert in circumstances or situations that seem unbearable, and heaven seems to have turned to brass – God sees, God gives heed, God is aware, and He takes action in our behalf.

**“So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey...”**  
(Exodus 3:8).

That is the heart of the God we serve. He sees, He hears, and comes to deliver us from the power of the enslaver. He brings us out of captivity and into a good and spacious place.

**“And now the cry of the Israelites has reached Me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring My people the Israelites out of Egypt”** (Exodus 3:9-10).

God is put to the test. His people are in bondage, in slavery. His people are being oppressed. The question is: Will He be faithful to the covenant He has made?

Indeed He will be! God sprang into action on behalf of His covenant people. He sent Moses down to Pharaoh with the message of God: “Let My people go!” When Pharaoh touched God’s people, it was as if he had touched God Himself. These people were the apple of God’s eye, His bride. In God’s

covenant heart, these people were not the slaves of Pharaoh – they were His covenant people. And when Pharaoh touched them, he touched God. When he oppressed them, he struck out at God Himself.

That’s the heart of God. He sets about to claim His possession. While Pharaoh thought of these people as chattel to be oppressed and used as slaves, in reality they belonged to God and He demanded their release that they might serve Him.

What we see in this Old Testament illustration is that the heart of God is absolutely faithful to His covenant. As shown in the Scriptures over and over, God is not only a covenant maker but He is also a covenant keeper. He alone is able. Our covenant with Him is a “*diatheke*,” meaning He is the greater; we are the lesser. He has the assets; we have the liabilities. He has everything we need – we have absolutely nothing that He needs. He alone is the covenant maker and also the covenant keeper.

## **God is Faithful**

- **“Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; He is the faithful God, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand**

generations of those who love Him and keep His commands” (Deut. 7:9).

- “This is what the Lord says – the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel – to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: ‘Kings will see you and rise up, princes will see and bow down, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you’” (Isaiah 49:7).
- “What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God’s faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: ‘So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge’” (Rom. 3:3-4).
- “The one who calls you is faithful and He will do it” (I Thess. 5:24).
- “God, who has called you into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful” (I Cor. 1:9).
- “If we are faithless, He will remain faithful, for He cannot disown Himself” (II Timothy 2:13).

What a precious promise! God is faithful. God keeps His covenant to a thousand generations. That's infinity! That's the faithfulness of the God with whom we are in covenant. God is faithful. God is faithful. God is faithful. God is faithful. What great security for the life of every believer!

As a result of the faithfulness of God, the children of Israel were able to depend upon His promises. He promised to bless them, and He did that. He promised to bless them physically. He promises that their wombs would not be barren, their cattle would be very productive and their crops would be incredibly fruitful.

He promised they would have none of the diseases of the surrounding nations. He promised them physical health and prosperity to the degree that they would never have to borrow, but they would always be the lender. And He promised they would have victory in battle. This was a secure promise only because of the identity of the One who promised. It was God who was their shield and exceeding great reward as He had promised Abram. His shield gave them victory in everything they did in warfare, and their exceeding great reward was shown forth in all areas. This was... this is... the heart of God.



## **Man is Unfaithful**

Whereas God's heart is totally faithful, the Bible says that the heart of man is fickle and faithless by its very nature. This is certainly reason to rejoice that the covenant is not based on us! Some specific passages for our examination here are:

- **“They (*mankind*) are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them” (Rom. 1:31-32).**
- **“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure, who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). [It literally means, the heart of man is incurably ill. It is filled with insanity.]**

- “This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all. *The hearts of men, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live, and afterward they join the dead*” (Ecc. 9:3).
- “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil” (Jer. 13:23).

Here is the folly of New Year’s resolutions. Our decision to “do better next year” is utterly futile. When we turn over those new leaves, what we discover is that the leaf is equally rotten on both sides. There is really no such thing as “self” help because “self is self is self is self”, regardless of which side of the leaf may be turned over at any given time. “Self” help does not work because the heart of “self” is desperately sick.

**“For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly.**

**All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean” (Mark 7:21-23).**

Jesus said the problem is in the heart of man. The heart of man is filled with sickness, because it is incurably ill. It is filled with insanities, and when it erupts, out of it flows all of the poisonous venom that permeates society – adultery, lying, killing, stealing, war, hatred and covetousness.

At the time of Christ, the religious people had begun emphasizing the externals of religious behavior. They felt that as long as they were externally good, being careful of what they ate and drank, they were okay. They had to be sure they did not eat unclean things.

But, Jesus declared that it was not what went into a man that defiled him, but it was what came out of the heart of man that proved that he was defiled. While the religious leaders emphasized the external, Jesus boldly scrutinized the internal – the very heart. And in so doing, He poignantly revealed the vast different in the heart of God and the heart of man.

**“Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?” (Amos 3:3).**

It is obvious that there cannot be agreement between two kinds of hearts so blatantly opposite at their very core. That's why you take two human beings and put them together in a covenant and problems will emerge. They are the kind of problems that we have in our world today – in local, national and global politics, as well as personally in marriage and every other relationship. Man's heart is desperately sick. Mankind is inherently incapable of being faithful to anyone or anything.

Paul elaborated his own condition: **“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out”** (Rom. 7:18).

Also from Paul, **“He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy”** (Titus 3:5).

After all, what does a sinful man have to offer a holy God? Covenant is absolutely humbling to the flesh – because we want to believe that we have something to offer.

We can see why God brings about a test. He wants to show us what is in our heart by comparison to what is in His heart – so that we will be driven to trust in His faithfulness as opposed to

our faithlessness and our fickleness. Even though we are faithless, He is faithful. Even though we deny Him, He cannot deny Himself.

What does God use to bring us to a personal awareness, to the point of self-revelation and self-understanding? He primarily uses two things.

## **Circumstances**

First, he uses the **circumstances of life**. God is going to use the various circumstances of life, trials and tribulations, things that will put pressure on our lives. We begin to see how desperately and incurably ill our heart really is. God allows various circumstances to come into our lives to teach us about our fickleness, our faithlessness and, therefore, to **drive us to His faithfulness**.

We can see many examples of this. Let's look at Abram for a minute. Why did God not allow Abraham to participate in cutting the covenant – not allow him to walk through the walls of flesh? Abram had already demonstrated the nature or the color of his commitment. And the color of his commitment was “yellow”. The nature of his commitment was absolutely fickle.

**Disobedience #1.** God had come to him in Genesis 12 and said, “Abram, I am going to make of you a great nation. I am going to bless those that

bless you and I am going to curse those that curse you. I want you to leave your father's house and go to the land that I will lead you to and I will make of you a great nation."

The Bible said Abram left *and took Lot!* God had not instructed him to take Lot. So, Abram was already off to a bad start by adding to what God had commanded, proving himself faithless and fickle.

**Disobedience #2.** God had said, "I am going to bless you. Abram, I am your source. If there's a problem, look to Me. Don't look at circumstances." But, when famine came to the land, what did Abram do? He caught the first train to pagan Egypt! He took the first caravan down to Egypt and looked to Egypt as his source.

**Disobedience #3.** Abram knew that he was married to a very beautiful lady by the name of Sarai. Abram also knew, by reputation, that Pharaoh had an eye for the ladies, and that his life would not be worth anything once Pharaoh saw his wife. Abram called her aside and said, "Now when we get to Egypt, tell them that you are my sister." Even though this was a half-truth because they had the same father but different mothers (Gen. 20:12), his intention was to deceive Pharaoh to save his own life, with little regard for Sarai's.

God had said, anybody who touches you touches Me. If they curse you, they curse Me. Therefore, I will be your shield and great reward. So, did he trust God to be his protector? No! He immediately failed again in fickleness and faithlessness.

That's why, when we get to Genesis 15 and 17, when God got ready to cut the covenant with Abram and began to walk through the walls of flesh, He said, "Abram, by now you ought to know that you have nothing to offer. You're as fickle as the weather. You haven't trusted Me a single time yet. I am going to put you to sleep. This whole covenant is not going to be based on you – it is going to be based on Me. It's not going to be based on anything you have to offer, it is going to be based on everything I am going to give you. It's a *diatheke* – I am the greater – you are the lesser. So Abram, go to sleep."

God had used circumstances – His command to leave, a famine and fear for his life – to reveal to Abram that he had a fickle, faithless heart, that he had not yet trusted his covenant Partner.

Look at the children of Israel. God had said to them, "I am going to lead you out, I am going to take you to the land that I have promised." They were the very same benefits that He had promised

to Abram, because they were in the loins of Abram – that He “would be their shield and great reward.”

Every time they got out there in the land, what happened? Even though God had said, “If you need water, strike the rock. If you need food, I bring manna. Your clothes are not going to wear out. I am going to give you natural air conditioning in the daytime and a natural heating system in the night with a cloud of fire.” Everything God promised, He fulfilled. Yet, they were constantly grumbling and looking at circumstances.

Were they trusting God? No. They were constantly murmuring. They were bellyaching. They were complaining. So again, He used the circumstances of the wilderness to – as He said in Deuteronomy 8:2 – “to humble you and to test you.”

What about us? We either have a humble heart or we have a prideful heart. A prideful heart says, “Well, God, I’ve got something to offer you.” God says, “No, you do not.” I say, “Come on God, You need me. Look at all of my talents. Look at my pedigree. Look at my education. Look at all the things that I can do. You really do need me.” God said, “No, I do not. Go to sleep.” “But God, I want to give something.” God says, “Go to sleep.” That’s how it works in our prideful hearts. What does the



Bible say? God withstands the proud but He exalts the humble. (Prov. 3:34)

And so God said to the children of Israel, “I am testing you to humble you – to show you what kind of heart you really have. If you choose to be humble, I will exalt you.” But did they do that? No. They were constantly pumping themselves up in pride. They were constantly rebelling against God and all that God was doing.

There are also many examples in the New Testament. Look at the disciples pre-Pentecost. They were just like so many of us as Christians. Remember in John 11:16, Jesus was getting ready to go over to Bethany. He had heard that Lazarus had died and Mary and Martha had sent for Him. The Jews were already hostile to Him.

The disciples told Him, “Lord, if You go there, You’re going to get Yourself killed. You’ve already shaken up the system. Frankly, the Scribes and the Pharisees hate You, and they’re out to get rid of You.” Jesus said, “I am going.” To which Thomas replied, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”

He was sincere, but you see, this was coming out of the fickleness of heart that was not yet filled with the Holy Spirit. You remember the situation of Peter when he said, “Lord, I am willing to lay down my life for You.” (Jn. 13:37) Peter was sincere.

Thomas was sincere. They weren't making idle boasts.

But you see, those were the kinds of vain promises that the flesh makes. "God, I promise You I am going to be better this time. God, I am going to be different this year. God, I am never going to do that again. God, I promise You that if You will just give me this one thing, I promise You I am going to be different."

We may be just as sincere as we can be and we often are, but we are just like those disciples before Pentecost. "Lord, we're ready to die for You" – and then when the test came, and they were gone. They all ran away. And, like them, we break the covenant that quickly.

God uses circumstances to show us what Paul said in Romans 7, "I may wish it, I may want it, I may desire it and in my heart of hearts I may be sincere, but the flesh cannot pull it off. It doesn't matter how sincere I am." So, God works through circumstances.

## **The Law**

Secondly, God brought in the **Law**. Now this is often a confusing thing – because the Law came 430 years after the covenant that God had made with Abram. Now what was the covenant? God said

to Abram, “There is one and only one basis for a relationship with Me. You cannot come to Me by anything other than faith. You’ve got absolutely nothing to offer Me. Abram, you go to sleep – and when you are prepared to just cast yourself on Me, when you are ready to prostrate yourself on Me and on My sufficiency and on My faithfulness” – then it was counted to Abram as righteousness. God said there is only one way you come to Him and that is through faith, through believing.

**“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists, and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him”**  
(Hebrews 11:6).

Paul said in Romans 14:23: **“But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin”** (Romans 14:23).

God said there is only one way. Then why, 430 years later, did He give a Law? Was the Lord now saying, “Those who are the real spiritual zealots come by faith – but for the rest of you, you can come by the Law”? “Here are the Ten Commandments. If you obey the Law and fulfill it by your own efforts then you can come to Me through the Law.”

Absolutely not. God never nullifies what He says. He did not change the covenant. What was the law designed to do? As Paul said in his epistle to the Galatians, it was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. The Law was designed to bring us to a new awareness of our desperate need for the covenant. And there is only one way and that is through belief – only through faith.

God didn't give us ten restrictions, but ten principles of freedom. He was trying to show us that it was not external morality...not some sort of obedience to works of the Law that He was after.

If you go through them all, you do all right until the last one. Maybe you can say, "I haven't committed adultery. I am not guilty of idolatry. I've not lied. So far, I've not done any of those things." But then, you get down to the last one, "Thou shalt not covet." Paul said in Romans 7, "I was fine until I got to that one." Why did he say that? Because covet means "to desire". God said, "Not only do I not want you to do these things, I do not want you to desire to do them."

Boom! We may not be guilty of killing someone but, let me tell you, we've been guilty of desiring it. That's why Jesus said it was not just the person who had committed adultery in the flesh. It also included looking on the person and desiring in your

heart – coveting. God put coveting last to give interpretation to all the rest. What God was really after was not some sort of conformity to an external religious code, it was to deal with the desires of our hearts.

The Law was to show us that our hearts are not pure. In fact, what we find ourselves doing is totally in rebellion against the Law. The Law says, “Thou shalt”, and you and I say, “We will not”. The Law says, “Thou shalt not”, and we say, “Watch me, I will.” It says, “Do not” and we do. It says, “Do”, and we do not. God used the law as a mirror to show us what the real contents of our hearts are. And what was the Law designed to do? It was to drive you and me back to the covenant.

This study was filmed years ago (but is not available now). Anyway, before we filmed this study one night, our cameraman looked at me, and said, “Did you shave today?” I said, “Yes, I did. I shaved right before I came over here.” I had been studying that afternoon, and when I looked in the mirror, I saw that I had the shadow of a beard – a no-no for filming in those days. The mirror showed me my great need for a razor and shaving cream.

It wasn't so much about the mirror as it was about what the mirror revealed about me. All the mirror did was to reveal my condition and what I

needed to do about it. It would have been foolish to try and shave the reflection of my beard in the mirror.

The Law was designed to reveal the condition of my heart, to take me back to the covenant heart of God, and to remind me that it was by faith in what He had done and not by my works. It was not in my outward obedience to the Law but in the inward desire to do so.

There is great folly when we realize that we cannot keep the law but try all the harder. Yet, as we continue to try and obey outwardly, we add *other* rules and regulations! By the time Christ came along, not only did they have the original ten principles of freedom, but they also had added 2,000 additions to it.

Now do you understand why Jesus said to the religious leaders, “You Pharisees, you are weighing the people down. You’ve missed the whole point of the Law. People cannot obey them.” (Matt. 23)

God did not come along 430 years after the covenant and say, “Now I am going to offer you a way through works.” He said, “It was a mirror to show you your great need of Me, so that you would go to the heart of God – and so that you would go to the One who would ultimately fulfill the Law for you.”

And yet, there are scores of Christian organizations that are just like the Scribes and Pharisees of Christ's day. They say if you're really going to be a Christian, you cannot do this, and you cannot do that, do not go here, do not go there, do not touch this. We have a long list of rules and regulations and we're modern day evangelical Pharisees. If the people of Christ's day couldn't obey their laws, do we think that somehow we are more spiritual? Do we think the Holy Spirit was sent to make us able to obey all these other laws and regulations and legalisms?

How different all of this is from the gospel of Jesus Christ! God ultimately said, "I am giving you the Law so that you might be prepared, so that you might see yourself for who you really are, so that you would quit trying to trust in your works and open yourself to what I am going to do for you."

What was that? God said that He was going to establish a new covenant – and that new covenant was not going to contradict the old covenant because it had the same basis: Faith. But the difference is, because of Jesus Christ, we are going to have a new heart. He said, "I am going to take out your stony heart that was constantly disobedient, and I am going to put within you a heart of flesh. I am going to take out that spirit of

constant rebellion or that spirit of pride and I am going to put within you a spirit that is responsive to My Spirit. I am going to put within you a spirit of humility.”

So God said in Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 11, Hebrews 9 and 10: “I am going to give you a new covenant, not like the one that I gave them. I am going to write My law on your mind and on your heart.”

Oh, I wish we Christians could learn that! I am so thankful that my parents tried to rear me in that philosophy. When I was a child, I needed to be under the tutelage of some law, all of us do. But as I began to grow, I did not need to be under the law. Once I was really introduced to Christ, I did not need the schoolmaster any more. I was now under the tutelage of the King, and I did not need the bondage of law. My parents constantly said to us, “Love God and do what you want to do.” Here is what they meant:

Jesus said over and over again...

- **“If you love Me, you will obey what I command”** (John 14:15).



- **“This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome” (I John 5:3).**

Because His commandments are not burdensome, therefore, I can say with David:

- **“I desire to do Your will, O my God; Your law is within my heart” (Ps. 40:8).**
- **“I will praise You with an upright heart as I learn Your righteous laws” (Ps. 119:7).**
- **“I delight in Your decrees; I will not neglect Your word” (Ps. 119:16).**
- **“Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors” (Ps. 119:24).**

They are principles of liberty, not principles of bondage. I can prove my love for Him by obeying His law *that is in the new heart He put within me.*

I went to a very legalistic college for my undergraduate degree. As soon as we signed in as freshmen, we were given a rulebook...page after page after page of regulations. We got demerits for every one of those regulations that we broke. It took 50 demerits to get expelled, and I usually kept

49 to 49½ because I tended to be little bit rebellious. I am not necessarily proud of that but the point is this: Rules and regulations do not make you a Christian.

God said, “I am going to write these things through My spirit on your heart and on your mind.” The problem with legalism, and rules and regulations, is that I invariably would find myself in a situation. I would get the rulebook and I couldn’t find a rule that would fit my situation. Now what do I do? I would panic because I did not have a rule.

God said, “I do not want you to live like that. It’s not the *letter* of the law. I am going to put My Spirit within you. My Holy Spirit will teach you and guide you in every circumstance...and show you exactly what you are supposed to do.”

Sure, we’re going to miss it sometimes – but ultimately that brings us to maturity, where we are not under an external code. It has now been written upon our hearts, it is now been written on our minds, and the Holy Spirit is now at work within us.

That’s what Paul said in Philippians 2:13: “...it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.” Isn’t that great? He is at work within you both *to will* and *to act*.

Paul also said, “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do...I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. for what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing...What a wretched man I am!” (Rom. 7:15-24).

But, when we receive the new heart and the new spirit, God comes and says, “Look! I am at work within you not only to *will* but to *do*.” As Paul said in I Thess. 5:24: **“The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.”**

For years I lived my Christian life under the delusion that God called me, and then I had to do everything else. Many of us have been there, haven't we? God called me and then in the energies of the flesh I had to go out and do it. How successful was I...about as successful as most of you. You just continue to fail and fail and fail.

But God said, “I am going to put a new spirit within you. I am going to be at work within you, not only to put within your heart the *will to do My will*, but to give you through My Holy Spirit the enablement or *power* to do the very thing that I ask.”

**“Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass”** (I Thess. 5:24 NASB). All we have

to do is be available! But as long as we are trying to do it in our own power, we are going to be just like the children of Israel.

God is bringing us this new covenant with a new heart. There is such a great contrast between the old and new covenant. As an old song said, “Do this and live’ the law demands, but gives me neither feet nor hands. A better way is what grace does bring – it bids me fly, and gives me wings.” That’s what He does for us.

We have looked at examples of God’s faithfulness and man’s fickleness. Now, let’s look at two examples in the Old and the New Testaments of people who practiced the principle of covenant – not trusting in their efforts, but trusting in the faithfulness of God.

## **Trusting in the Faithfulness of God**

### **Abraham and Isaac**

Abraham and Isaac are two of the greatest examples in the Old Testament. Abram was the only man in the Bible who was called the “friend” of God. Now when two people had cut a covenant they were willing to lay down their lives for each other. They were willing to go even one step further. They

were willing to give up that which was even more precious than their own life – and that was the life of their only or firstborn son.

- **“Then God said, ‘Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about’” (Gen. 22:2).**
- (New Testament interpretation) **“By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, ‘It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.’ Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death” (Heb. 11:17-19).**

There are two very important points to remember:

- Abram had waited 2½ decades for God to fulfill His promise and bring him a seed. God tested Abram when *Isaac was grown!* Many artistic renditions of this picture

Isaac as a little boy. That is not true at all.

- Isaac is a typology of Jesus Christ. “Take your only son whom you love.” This is the first mention of *love* in the Old Testament. Isn’t it appropriate that the very first mention of love in the Bible is the mention of a father’s love for his only begotten son!

Abram had waited, he had pleaded, and he had begged God for a seed. God gave him a son, and Abraham began to love Isaac more than he loved his God. Remember, once two people had entered into a covenant, no other relationship could take preeminence over it. That relationship was to eclipse all others. But somewhere along the line, the relationship Abram had with Isaac had become idolatrous...and God was now going to test him. Abraham was beginning to worship Isaac rather than worship God...and God was saying, “Abraham, that relationship has become idolatrous and you have got to put Isaac not first before Me, but second to Me.”

**“Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him**

two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, ‘Stay here with the donkey while the boy and I go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you’” (Gen. 22:3-5).

Notice already the faith of Abraham. He said *we* will go and worship and *we* will return.

“Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke and said to his father Abraham, ‘Father?’ ‘Yes, my son?’ Abraham replied. ‘The fire and wood are here,’ Isaac said, ‘but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?’” (Gen. 22:6-7)

And of course, all of this was a prelude to what the Father did to His Beloved Son. In Abraham’s hand, the symbol of death was the knife...and the symbol of judgment was the fire. There was perfect agreement between the father and the son. In God’s

hand, the symbol of death and judgment was the cross. There was perfect agreement between the Father and the Son. Notice the very precious love relationship in both instances.

“Behold the fire and the wood, where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” And Abraham said, **“God Himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son”** (Gen. 22:8). The two of them walked on together. **“Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?”** (Amos 3:3)

In the typology of Jesus Christ, there was perfect agreement between the Heavenly Father and the Heavenly Son before the foundations of the world that redemption was going to take place, not on Mt. Moriah as it was with Abraham and Isaac, but on Mt. Calvary.

**“When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood”** (Gen. 22:9).

Now beloved, I want you to understand this was not child sacrifice. I used to read this as a young boy, and interpret it as child sacrifice that was practiced in other pagan religions. No, God



totally forbid that. Isaac was a young man, probably a young man who would have been strong enough to overpower his father. He had total trust in his father. So, Isaac allowed his father to bind him. Remember what Jesus said in John 10:18:

**“No one takes it (My life) from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from My Father”**  
(John 10:18).

That’s exactly what Isaac did. Isaac so totally trusted his father that he allowed himself to be bound and to be put on the altar. Then, Abraham stretched out his hand and took his knife to kill his son. And we know what happened – God stopped Abraham:

**“Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, ‘Abraham! Abraham!’ ‘Here I am,’ he replied. ‘Do not lay a hand on the boy,’ He said. ‘Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from Me your son, your only son”** (Gen. 22:10-12).

**“Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead...”** (Heb. 11:19). Abraham believed that even if God allowed him to slay his son, God would bring him back. Why? Because God had made a promise when the covenant was cut that he would have a son and many descendants from him. Abraham knew that if God required him to take the life of his only son Isaac, that God would raise him up.

## **Jesus**

As we have just seen, Jesus is our greatest and most preeminent example of what the *life of faith* is all about – the life of absolute trust. He is our example of one who was sacrificed and was raised up from the dead. As we learned from our study of Saul, Jonathan, David and Abraham, we look to Jesus as the supreme covenant maker. He always (and perfectly) followed the will of the Father.

**“Therefore, when Christ came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You prepared for Me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings You were not pleased.’ Then I said, ‘Here I am – it is written about Me in the scroll – I have come to do Your will, O God’”** (Heb. 10:5-7).

Jesus said, “The only reason I have come into the world is to do My Father’s will.” The Father is not interested in burnt offerings – He’s not interested in sacrifice, because that can be a cover-up for a disobedient heart, as it was in the life of Saul.

- **“My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work”** (John 4:34).
- **“By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and My judgment is just, for I seek not to please Myself but Him who sent Me”** (John 5:30).
- **“For I have come down from heaven not to do My will but to do the will of Him who sent Me”** (John 6:38).

That’s why Jesus could say in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Father, it is My desire for this cup to pass, nevertheless not what My will is but Thy perfect will be done.” He lived a life of perfect obedience from the heart – and therefore He fulfilled the Law for us. He became the end of the Law for us – that through Him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus submitted His body – His desires and His will – to God the faithful Father. That’s why Jesus said, “You have prepared a body for Me.” What’s the purpose of the body, our bodies? That through our bodies God might be able to get 100% productivity. Our bodies are His temple – and so they are going to be a place for Him to manifest Himself. You and I are going to live in total dependence on Him. I pray that we would be those kinds of living sacrifices for the Lord Jesus Christ.

**“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1).**

# CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this study, we have looked at the meaning and significance of covenant. We have seen, in great detail, everything that was involved in a covenant relationship between God and mankind. Now it is up to you to accept the terms of God's covenant for yourself. It's time for you to put your faith and confidence in the Lord, if you have not done so already, and believe that He will do all that He has promised.

As we close this book, think about yourself and your relationship with God. Have you actually entered into this covenant relationship by exchanging all that you are, or ever hope to be, for all that He is?

Remember, God willfully and lovingly offers you an irrevocable agreement. He, as the superior Person with all the resources and wealth, has chosen to dispose of His property to you. It is a one-sided contract because He has everything to give. You have no righteousness of your own; it is only through Christ's death on the cross.

The enormity of such an offer almost stretches the mind beyond belief. But it's true!

**“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are!...”** (I Jn. 3:1)

So, boldly and confidently lay hold of this covenant from the Lord's hand, offered to you right now. He who promised you will be faithful to fulfill it (Hebrews 10:23). Today is your day and now is your time. It is not complicated. Here is one more promise for your prayerful consideration.

**“...O Lord God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven or on earth – You who keep Your covenant of love with Your servants who continue wholeheartedly in Your way.” (2 Chron. 6:14)**

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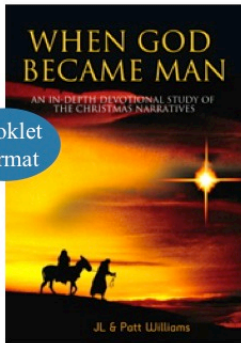
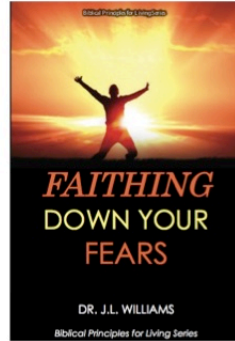
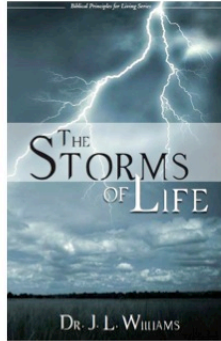
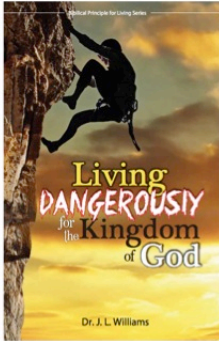


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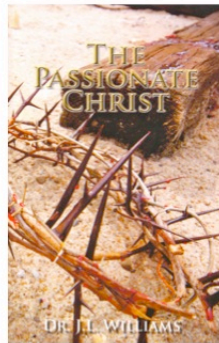
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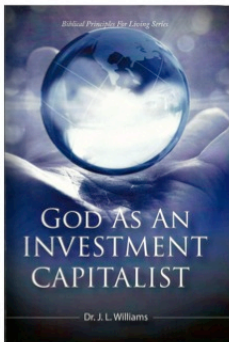
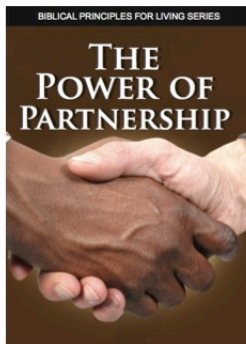
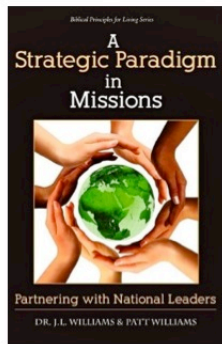
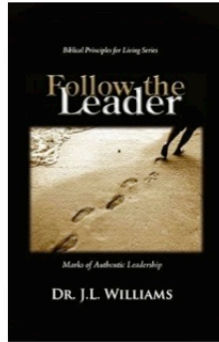
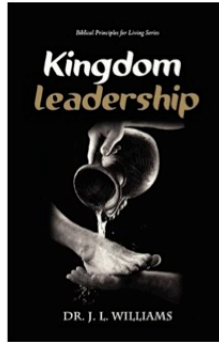
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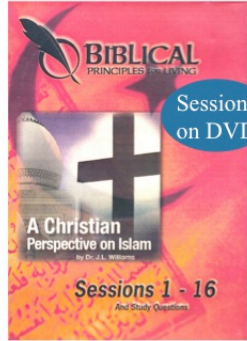
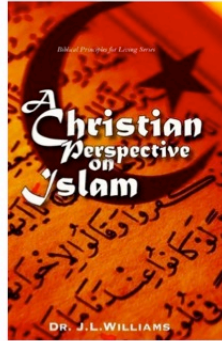
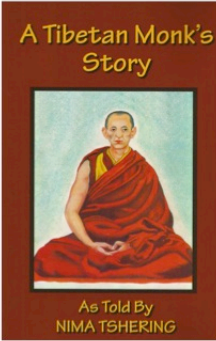
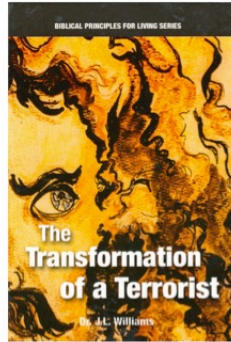
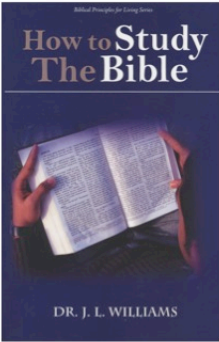


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