

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Glory of the New Covenant, Part 1

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 3:6-18

Code: 47-15

We are about to embark in our study of 2 Corinthians, chapter 3, on a very, very important study. Starting in verse 6 of this chapter and going to the end of the chapter, we're going to be studying the glory of the new covenant. The glory of the new covenant.

Now, I wanna say some things to you this morning that I want you to understand as a preliminary to this message and to this series that we're going to be involved in this chapter. This is one of the most difficult, if not the most difficult section in 2 Corinthians – difficult to interpret, difficult to grasp – unless you give yourself with some devotion to it.

At the same time, as is very often the case, the difficulty, when removed, will yield the greatest profundity of this epistle. This particular section is profound. It is brilliantly argued by Paul. It is sweeping and far-reaching in its impact, and furthermore it does not stand alone.

This particular portion of Scripture has wide ramifications throughout the whole of the Bible. It is one of those watershed passages that throws influence in every direction. To understand the heart of what the Apostle Paul is saying here is to understand the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is to understand the law of Moses and the gospel. It is a profound and strategic section of Scripture.

Now, also, it is immensely pertinent and highly applicable to the scene in which we find ourselves in the Evangelical Church in America today. I would venture to say that, that first reading, were any of you to just read through this, you would be, perhaps, somewhat confused by every verse because it takes a bit of looking and discerning and studying to unravel it.

And even when you have maybe gone through that, you might be scratching your head and saying, "Well, that's all well and good, but what does it have to do with where I am at today and the church in this particular part of the world in this particular time?" And I just wanna tell you it relates, as you will see this morning and all through this series, in very, very specific ways.

I'm going to belabor this text a little bit, as I have been known to do occasionally through the years. I'm not going to be in a hurry because I want you to understand it. It is foundational, and one message will necessarily build on the other, and I'm not gonna be able to go back and reestablish the foundation every week.

Now, if you're gonna really understand this, and you're going to come to grips with the tremendous implications and impact of this, the first thing you need to do is to come on Sunday because it'll be very hard if you're not here for you to understand it and to pick it back up the following week. So I want you to be faithful, I want you to be thoughtful, and I want you to follow carefully these truths – not just for the sake of understanding but for what that understanding is gonna mean to you and to our church and to the cause of Christ.

I'm going to go slowly and as thoughtfully as I can in unfolding the dynamics within this text. This is a passage of Scripture for which I have waited all these many years to finally preach, and I'm not gonna be in a hurry to get through it. I'm going to sound more like a teacher than a preacher, more like a professor than a pastor, and this may feel more like a classroom than church service. And you may, at first, feel more educated than motivated, and you may feel that it's more theological than practical. Be patient. This is a very, very important part of Scripture.

Now, that was the introduction to the introduction. Here comes the introduction. The proper understanding of the Christian church and the Christian minister has been severely clouded by the sacramental ecclesiasticism and ceremonialism of the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, and ritualistic Protestant groups. The pure, true, clear, new covenant gospel, the authentic Christian faith has been severely threatened by Roman Catholicism, Greek Orthodoxism, and Protestant ceremonialism – High Church ritualism.

In fact, it was that very battle that led to the Reformation – when true evangelicalism separated itself from ceremonialism, ritualism, sacerdotalism – or sacramentalism as it is called, mechanical Christianity, where the church becomes a surrogate Christ to which you are attached by means of external ceremony, ritual, sacrament, priestly function. The church becomes a surrogate Christ displacing the true Christ, and people have a connection to the church through mechanical means rather than a connection to the living God through Christ, and many of you understand this.

I would venture to say that probably 50 percent of the people who are a part of a Grace Community Church were saved out of a Roman Catholic or some other sacramental background. Most of them from Roman Catholic background. Church services are ritualistic. They are ceremonial. They are mechanical, and they are external. Ministers see themselves as functionaries, priests, clerics, who are doing certain physical things and making certain physical motions and carrying out certain physical rituals.

This is quite foreign to the reality of authentic Christianity, where the church service is true, spiritual, worship from the heart, and where ministers are priests and clerics, but they are prophets and heralds and servants and pastors and teachers. And the distinction between the two is as great as the distinction between the old covenant and the new covenant in Scripture.

Sacramental religion has always been viewed in historic Orthodox Christianity as a deadly heresy, and it is a heresy that has relentlessly plagued the church since the Dark Ages – external ceremony in the place of internal worship, a surrogate Christ in place of the real Christ, impersonal ritual in the place of personal salvation, ceremonies and sacraments as means of grace rather than symbols of grace. All of that brought about the Protestant Reformation.

Ministers are not viewed in authentic Christian faith as men of exalted, ecclesiastical rank who administer ceremonies but rather ministers in true Christian faith, are looked at as men who see the face of God and hear His voice and come out of His presence to speak to His people. And beloved, I'm telling you the church needs to stand against the sacramental corruption of true Christianity today as it always has stood against it, and that is exactly where you're going to see Paul doing in this chapter.

He is not standing against a sacramentalism in the form that we see it today in the Roman Catholic or Greek Orthodox or, say, the High Church Episcopalian Protestantism. He is not standing against that kind of ceremonialism, but rather he is standing against the original ceremonialism that plagued the church, and that was Judaism, but it is really one in the same kind of problem. The passage before us is a marvelous and rich provision to help us to think clearly about this issue of divorcing the true Christian faith from ceremonialism, from the illusion, the deceptive and damning illusion and heresy, that somehow you can have a right relationship to God through some external means.

Paul, at the time that he writes this, was facing the devastating plague of ceremonialism, and it was encroaching on the Christian faith in the form of Judaizers who were advocating the Mosaic ceremonies as necessary components in salvation, including physical circumcision. They were called the "party of the circumcision." They were holding on to ceremony, Sabbaths, new moon, feasts, rituals. They were advocating those ceremonies as means of grace, means of blessing.

And, in fact, that is precisely what we're facing today, and it is very threatening to the purity of the church. Illustration and point that perhaps you have heard about – perhaps not – this last week, across my desk came a document, 25 pages in length, authored by a coalition of Roman Catholic scholars and well-known evangelical leaders, a Catholic-evangelical coalition statement.

Now, they had met together to put together a statement of cooperation and harmony and alliance between authentic evangelicalism and Roman Catholicism. The document is a very disturbing document, extremely disturbing. It says things like this: "We must acknowledge, as evangelicals, that Roman Catholics are our brothers and sisters in Christ." I wish that were true. There are Christians in the Roman Catholic Church, but they are the exception.

It went beyond that to say this: "We need to confess our sin of attempting to convert them, acknowledging that that is sin." It even said this: "We do have some disagreements, but we can't let those disagreements separate us because we are one in Christ."

What disagreements? Disagreements like this: Catholics see baptism as a means of grace. We see baptism as a symbol of grace. There is a huge difference. The document says we can't let that difference separate our unity in Christ. If you see baptism as a means of grace, you're not in Christ because that's a salvation by works.

The document goes on like that for 25 pages, celebrating the fact that we are one in Christ as Roman Catholic and Christians, the mechanistic, surrogate Christ, the ceremonial, ritual church as being one in the same with the true church. It's a frightening thing. Really frightening. It's an un-Reformation, and it is exactly what Paul was dealing with here.

In fact, you will find some of the leading Roman Catholics who are "pleading" for this unification because they want to absorb everybody in their system, and they are pleading for this unification on the basis that Catholicism is the only true Christianity for it embraces, in its spiritual sense, the new covenant and, in its formal sense, the old covenant, and it is true – old covenant and new covenant. And when they say that, they are betraying a failure to comprehend that the old covenant is gone, and there is no place for the ceremonies, and there is no place for the rituals that have ceased. Now, that is precisely the kind of thing that is in the background of this text as Paul writes.

Now, let me give you a little bit of a foundation so that we can understand this. 2 Corinthians is Paul's most personal letter. We would say, in this letter, he is most transparent. In chapter 6, he basically says that, verse 11, "Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide." Absolute honesty. "I have not been hypocritical. I've held nothing back. I've said everything, and I've opened my heart, and I am absolutely transparent. You're seeing deep down into my soul."

This is his most revealing letter. You feel the depth of his heart more in this letter than in any other letter he ever wrote of all the 13 in the New Testament. Not only is Paul at his most candid and transparent, and not only is he at his most revealing, but secondly, this letter was written to the congregation which most elicited his affection. I don't know why, but he had a love for this congregation that was unique – very unique. He calls them, in 1 Corinthians 4:14, "beloved children" whom he has begotten.

In 2 Corinthians, chapter 12, he says, "You are children," verse 14, then in verse 15, "I will most gladly spend," that is, give away everything I have, "and be expended, give my life for your souls. If I love you the more, am I to be loved the less?" And he's telling them, "I love you more. Is it fair for you to love me less?"

Because this congregation elicited more affection out of the heart of Paul than any other, they had the potential to hurt him the most deeply, and they did. His heart was wide open to them. He was totally exposed, totally transparent, and he loved them with an affection beyond on any others, and they cut him to the heart.

Because of his strong love for them, he was genuinely grieved, and he was heartsick over their sin, and there were rebellion. There was so many issues to make him despondent – threats and plots against his life going on daily. Most likely, he was suffering from a nearly fatal illness. The phrase "nearly dead," in one way or another, is repeated throughout this letter.

In chapter 4, in verse 8, he says, "We are afflicted, perplexed"; verse 9, "persecuted, struck down"; verse 10, "always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus"; verse 11"; constantly being delivered over to death"; verse 12, "death works in us"; chapter 6, verse 4, "afflictions, hardships, distresses, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, sleeplessness, hunger"; chapter 7, verse 5, "conflicts without, fears within"; chapter 11, verse 23, "imprisonments, beating times without number, in danger of death, 5 times receiving 39 lashes, 3 times beaten with rods, stoned 3 times, shipwrecked a night and a day in the deep, and all the dangers that his life endured – labor, hardships, sleepless nights, hunger, thirst, no food, cold, exposure."

And all beyond that, the worst of it, is the *merimna*, verse 28, the *merimna*, the anxiety, of dealing with unfaithful Christians. This church had broken his heart 100 times a day. They were so richly endowed with spirit gifts, 1 Corinthians 1:5 says that – 5 through 7 – that they had received all knowledge, all wisdom, and they came behind in no gift.

They were so eminently gifted, so strategically located, so singularly blessed to have had Paul as their pastor for nearly two years, and they had so much, and yet they were a mess. They were filled with conflict and chaos and division, factions, jealousies, evidences of pride, sexual immorality, incest, lawsuits between Christians, harlotry, abuses of marriage, lack of love to weaker Christians.

They were involved with idol worship. They abused the Lord's Table. They came to the love feast drunk. They perverted their spiritual gifts. They even cursed Christ, chaos in the worship services, errors regarding the resurrection. They refused to give to the poor saints, and all of that stuff he dealt with in 1 Corinthians.

Now, there's another issue, and this issue is the issue of the destructive heresy of the sacramentalists – the circumcision party, the Judaizers, who had come into the church and said, "You have to keep the old economy. You gotta do the Sabbaths and the laws and the ceremonies and the washings and the cleansings, and all the rituals," and here he was heartbroken all over again. This devastating confusion of ceremonial externalism with a true heart for God grieved him.

It wasn't enough that he was ill with a nearly fatal illness. It wasn't enough that he was sad and grieved over all the sins he dealt with in the first letter. It wasn't enough that he was alone and lonely and waiting for Titus to come and join him. It wasn't enough that he had faced a riot over his ministry in Ephesus and had to get out of there with his life. It wasn't enough that he came to Troas and was so downcast and disheartened and beaten down that even though there was a wide-open door of ministry, he turned his back on it and left the place he was in such deep despair. He had enough pain and life in his ministry without this, the worst of all pain, the defection of his beloved church into sacramentalism, ceremonialism, ritualism.

A.T. Robertson wrote, "If Paul is able to look on the bright side of the preacher's life, he also knows what the dark side is. There's plenty of cloud in his life to set off the light. Indeed, when Paul was driven to boast of his work in comparison with that of the Judaizers at Corinth it is the catalogue of his trials which he counts. He has 'prisons,' his 'stripes,' his 'shipwreck,' his 'perils' of various kinds, 'watchings often,' his 'hunger and thirst.' If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things that concern my weakness," he says.

But just now, Paul cannot glory even in his weakness. He cannot worry in anything. A.T. Robertson says he is a broken man, broken in spirit and in body. This is how you find him when he writes.

Now, you gotta remember something. The pastor or the preacher can understand this because this is where we all live. Two things grip and grieve the pastor's heart. One is the sins of his people. Two is their doctrinal defections, and this is precisely what Paul is dealing with in Corinth. Letter number one addressed the issue of sin, and letter number two addresses the issue of doctrine.

At the risk of putting myself in a category that I don't belong in, I think I understand what Paul is feeling here because I have become equally burdened and equally overstressed in my soul and equally concerned and equally aggressive in combatting those two same issues. What is it that destroys the church? Sin and doctrinal defection.

People ask me, "Why do you write the books you write?" Because I'm as compelled as the Apostle Paul or any other man who is faithful to His calling to keep the church from falling into sin and falling into error. Battling for the authenticity of Christianity is not a sidelight, folks. It's what we do. It's not a weekend job. It's what we live for.

Now, I understand this, and I understand the triumphant character of ministry that he described in chapter 2, verses 14 to 17. I understand that there's joy and triumph in ministry, and I understand that God is using us and leading us in a triumphal parade in terms of ministry. But at the same time that we are triumphing in Christ in this marvelous calling of being gospel preacher, we are ever and always fighting on those two fronts, keeping the church pure in its lifestyle and pure in its theology.

And Paul didn't want anybody corrupting his people's lives, and he didn't want anybody corrupting his people's minds. And one thing he says about an adequate minister – an adequate servant starts this whole passage – verse 6, he says, "...who made us adequate as servants of a new covenant. You tell those Judaizers that the old covenant is gone. It is history. With all of its sacrifices and all of its ceremonies, it is gone."

Judaism had sacrifice after sacrifice after sacrifice after sacrifice, right? So does Roman Catholic – Mass after Mass after Mass after Mass after Mass after Mass, and you know what Mass is. It's the sacrifice of Christ all over again. It is a parallel to the Judaizing of the New Testament church.

You remember now, in defending the integrity and authenticity of his ministry against the Judaizers, he says, "A true minister is known because he preaches the new covenant." A man is not a true minister who sees himself as some ceremonialist, some ritualist. The man who's a true minister who preaches the new covenant, and it was that that launched him to the rest of this chapter, and the rest of the chapter is about the glory of the new covenant. The glory of the new covenant and the passing of the old covenant.

The beloved Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodoxism, and High Church Protestantism is basically old-covenant-style religion – external, and many of you know it because you came out of it and you were in it, perhaps, for years and never knew God and never knew Christ and never had assurance of your salvation because you didn't have salvation. To just have a committee get together and decide that all Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox and sacramentalists are equal brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ is one of the greatest strokes against evangelism I've ever heard of in my lifetime.

What are we gonna say – stop witnessing to people in those systems? What a horrifying thought – we'll confess us as a sin to witness to someone who's caught in one of those ceremonial, external religions and therefore turn our backs on their spiritual need. Ceremonialism is a deadly heresy, and it must be seen as that.

Now, Paul says we must be servants of a new covenant. Now, I know you're asking a question: "What's a new covenant? Make sure I understand it," and I wanna do that. So I'm gonna tell you this morning about the new covenant. We'll get into this passage next time, but I wanna tell you about the new covenant, and I want you to listen very, very carefully 'cause this is foundational.

Matthew 26:28 – don't look it up; just listen – Jesus said, with His disciples, in the Upper Room at the Last Supper with a cup in his hand, "This is My blood of the covenant. It is the new covenant in My blood," here it is, "poured out for many for..." What? "...forgiveness of sins."

That is the distinctiveness of the new covenant. It is a covenant that provides, through the death of Christ, forgiveness for sins. Now, I've got a lot to say on this, and when I've said what I've said this morning, you'll still have some questions. But in the weeks to come, they'll be answered.

Certainly, the Corinthians knew this. They knew the new covenant. After all, they had had the Lord's Table. They had had Paul as their pastor. He taught them all of that. They were saved by believing in the new covenant. They had celebrated the new covenant every time they had Communion. They knew the new covenant. They understood that it was the covenant in the blood of Christ by which sin could be permanently and forever forgiven. That's why that sacrifice never needs to be what? Repeated.

You say, "If they knew that, if they knew that the new covenant forgave sin and was the complete provision, how did they ever lapse back? How did they ever buy into that? How did they ever believe that deceptive lie that sacramental, ceremonial, external ritual is somehow is a means of grace?"

You wanna know something, the old covenant, as wonderful as it was and as glorious as it was, just pointed to the Savior. It's just symbols. All those sacrifices, all those washings, all those ceremonies, circumcision, all of that was all symbolic, not real, and it all pointed to reality. And you can't make the shadow and the picture equal to the reality, or you have confused the reality. If you make the symbol the means of salvation, you have hopelessly confounded salvation. And Paul knew that, and that's why he is so concerned to address it.

And you know that you say, "Well, surely, the Corinthians knew that." Yeah, isn't that amazing that they knew that, he taught 'em that, and they bought into this deadly heresy? You think that's amazing. It is amazing after having been pastored by Paul, you'd think they'd know better than that.

Listen. If a church where Paul was the pastor fell into that, I don't have any illusions about this church 'cause you've got just me. That's why I wanna be a watchman. So we need to understand the new covenant.

Now, I'm gonna take you to a passage, Hebrews 8. Hebrews 8. Hebrews, chapter 8. I want you to understand the new covenant, okay? And your best shot at understanding it is right here at Hebrews 8. Now, we can't cover all this in complete detail, but you're gonna get enough to grab it. verse 6, speaking of Christ who is a better High Priest than Aaron or than the Levitical priests, it says, "He has obtained a more excellent ministry," Christ has, "by as much as He is also the Mediator of a..." What? "...a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises."

The new covenant is a what? It's a better covenant. You say, "Why is it a better covenant?" First of all, it has a better Mediator. The new covenant is the covenant in Christ's blood. That's a better covenant. It has a better Mediator.

Mediator – what is that? Well, it means someone who stands between two parties and brings 'em together, a go-between in a dispute or a conflict, and in order to be a really good mediator, he has to equally represent both sides, right?

Do you know in the Old Testament there were some mediators in the old covenant? According to Galatians 3:19, Exodus 20:19, and Deuteronomy 5:5, Moses was a mediator. He was a mediator in the old covenant. He came between man and God, and the prophets were mediators of a sort because they brought the Word from God to man, and the priests were mediators because they brought the needs of man to God. Moses was a mediator. The prophets were mediators, and the priests were mediators.

And you know, they were – let's just say they were real mediators, but they had a major problem. They didn't equally represent both sides. Moses was a man, but he wasn't God, right? The prophets were men, but they weren't God. The priests were men, but they weren't God. A perfect mediator would have to be both man and God, and so it says the Apostle Paul, writing to Timothy, "We have one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus."

They were shadowy mediators, trying to picture what the true Mediator would be like. They were not false mediators. They were real mediators. There are some false religions that have totally false mediators, but in Judaism, they were real mediators. They were just ineffective, inadequate, shadowy, because they didn't really fully represent God.

But in the new covenant, we don't need any priests, right? We don't need any people to be the mediator between us and God. We don't need any saints. We have the Mediator – Christ, and we don't have to go and look for Him. He's in us. And we don't have to ask Mary if she'll please soften Him up for us, so He'll give us what we want.

The new covenant is a better covenant because it has a better Mediator. And secondly, it's a better covenant because it has better promises. Better promises. All covenants are based on promises. That's what covenants are, and the old covenant made some promises.

But the new covenant makes a better promise. You know what it is? By the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ, once and for all, He'll wipe out our sin forever. That's a better promise, the complete once for all forgiveness of sins through the blood of one sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ. The point is all you need is in the new covenant, right?

You see, when you look at Roman Catholicism, you see all those repeated sacrifices in the Mass all the time. You see all those people with the backward collars being priests and popes and cardinals and all that, and they're starting to carry on the old covenant under a different format. And mingling

that with the new covenant convolutes the purity of authentic Christian faith.

Throw your arms open and embrace that would be like the Apostle Paul saying to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians, "This is a short letter. I'm so thrilled you embraced the Judaizers," signed "Paul." Sure.

Look at verse 7, Hebrews 8: "If that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second." If the first covenant could do it, there wouldn't have been a second covenant, but it wasn't faultless. In fact, verse 8 says "finding fault with them," he says. And then the rest of the passage, all the way down through verse 12 is a quote directly from the Prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 31, and Jeremiah promised the new covenant, and this is drawn right out of that.

The old covenant had faults. It had some real faults, so there had to be a new covenant, and here are seven descriptive factors showing the character of the new covenant. First of all, he says, "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'when I will affect a new covenant...'" First thing about the new covenant, it's from God. It's from God. "I will affect a new covenant." That's what the Lord says. It's based on the sovereignty of God. It is His purpose and His plan and has been so since before the foundation of the world.

Secondly, it's different. He says, verse 9, "Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out the land of Egypt..." It's not gonna be like that. It's different. It's not an enhancement. It's a new one. Its basic nature is different. A new covenant, "new" in the sense of different.

Thirdly – this is really important – it is with Israel. This covenant is with Israel, like the old covenant. Like the old covenant, this new covenant is gonna be with Israel. Look what it says in verse 8: "with the house of Israel," "with the house of Judah," and down in verse 10: "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel."

Now, are you ready for this, now? Think with me. God has never made a covenant with Gentiles. Ever. That's why Jesus said in John 4:22, "Salvation is of the Jews."

Now, you say, "Well, does that leave Gentiles out?" No, no, no. Way, way, way back in the Abrahamic covenant, which predates the Mosaic covenant, way back in the Abrahamic covenant, God said, "I'm gonna bring a people through the loins of Abraham, and in that people, shall all the nations of the Earth be blessed."

He makes the covenant with the people. The covenant is not exclusive to those people. They're just the people who represent Him to the rest of the world on behalf of that covenant. Gentiles, by faith, may share in the benefits of the new covenant just like Gentiles shared in the benefits of the old covenant. Gentiles could share in the Mosaic covenant. They would be a God-fearing Gentile – right?

– who signed up to obey the Mosaic covenant and carry out the sacrifices.

Same is true in the new covenant. Gentiles can enter into the new covenant by faith. It came through Israel. The Messianic line came through Israel. The Messiah came through Israel. The whole plan came through Israel. The message of the prophets came through Israel. The priesthood was Levitical priesthood out of the loins of Abraham, that any Gentile who believes becomes a true son of Abraham, doesn't he?

Galatians, chapter 3, "Therefore," writes Paul, "be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham, and the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All nations shall be blessed in you.'" Then, verse 29 says, "If you belong to Christ, you are Abraham's offspring."

Now, but the covenant was made with Israel, and Gentiles get in on it. Right now, in fact, there are more Gentiles in the new covenant than Jews, right? 'Cause the Jews have rejected, but Romans tells us there's a day coming when all Israel will be saved.

So the new covenant is designed by God. It is different than the old. It is made with Israel. It's a new one. That means the old one is set aside.

Fourthly, it is not legalistic. verse 9, "It's not like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day that I took them by the hand and led them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not care for them,' says the Lord."

In the new covenant, He keeps on cleansing us from all sin. We don't have to go back, all over again, make another sacrifice, do the whole deal all over again like the old covenant. Try to get back in His good grace.

Fifthly, look at verse 10. This covenant is not only written by God, different from the old, made with Israel, not legalistic, but it's internal rather than external. verse 10: "This is the covenant I'll make with the house of Israel after those days,' says the Lord." Here it is, "I'll put My laws into their minds. I'll write them upon their hearts, and I'll be their God, and they'll be My people." Boom – permanent, settled, internal relationship. Minds, hearts – not stone, not parchment, not outside/inside. Ezekiel said He'll plant His Spirit in them. This is internal, not external.

Sixth, it's personal. verse 11: "They shall not teach everyone, his fellow citizen, and everyone his neighbor, saying, 'Know the Lord.'" In other words, you don't have to go around telling everybody on the outside, "Know the Lord. Know the Lord. Know the Lord." Why? "Because they'll all know Me. It'll be on the inside, from the least to the greatest," His law in us, His Spirit in us. That's the new covenant.

And lastly, it brings complete forgiveness. Look at verse 12: "For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." That's the capstone of the new covenant. Here is what men need more than they need anything else – they need the final, full, complete forgiveness of sins.

And then, the writer concludes, in verse 13, with one of the most powerful statements in the New Testament in this regard. Listen to what he says: "When He said," that is when God, speaking through Jeremiah, chapter 31 of Jeremiah, "When He said, 'A new covenant,'" and literally the word "covenant" is added. "When He said, 'New,' He made the first..." What? "...obsolete." That's it.

He took ceremonialism and ritualism and symbolic religion and made it obsolete. That's why you don't come in here, and we're not walking around with all kinds of hanging, dangling, flowery things, and you don't see holy hardware all over the walls, and there isn't incense burning and smoke and altars and all of that. That is obsolete.

And when you reintroduce it, you are, in effect, Judaizing. You can't just throw your arms open and wash this whole bunch into authentic evangelicalism. That's why there was a Reformation. You can't just say, "Well, for some of us Christians, baptism is a means of grace, and, for others, it's a symbol of grace," or you have just told thousands of Anabaptists, who gave their lives as martyrs, that they died for a triviality 'cause they died over the issue of Baptism. It's obsolete, and we can't let it come in.

The end of verse 13, "But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear." Now, this is a strong word to Jews. If you don't think so, try it next time you go to Israel in a local Hasidic synagogue. See if you can get out with your life when you tell 'em that the old covenant is obsolete, but it is.

This is a real stumbling block to many Jews. It's hard for the Jew to realize that the old covenant, with its laws and rituals and ceremonies, was just a symbol, and now the reality has come, and the symbols are gone. But God sure made it clear – didn't He? – when He ripped the veil in the temple from top to bottom at the death of Jesus Christ.

And then, less than five years after this part of Hebrews is written, Jerusalem was no more, and the temple was gone, and the worship was done, and it was finished and the devastation the Roman General Titus made there. And the whole sacrificial system was out, and all of that was gone, and it's still gone to this day.

Why? It doesn't need to be around, and having concocted a new form of it in the sacramentalism that calls itself Christianity is to resurrect what is dead and obsolete and what confuses and convolutes the simplicity of authentic Christian truth. The old covenant was totally replaced by the new.

Now, I wanna close by having you look at chapter 9 just for a couple of minutes, verse 11. This will give you the wrap-up on this new covenant. "When Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come," that's the new covenant, "He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle," a better covenant with a better High Priest with better promises and a better tabernacle, "not made with hands, not of this creation, a heavenly tabernacle."

Now, notice this: All this that Christ has done was, "...not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all..." How many times did the high priests have to go in there? All the time and in the holy of holies once every year.

Jesus, one time, went in, obtained temporary redemption until the next Mass – no – 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?" The old sacrifices had a temporary cleansing of the flesh. How much more has Christ accomplished in eternal cleansing?

And verse 15: " For this reason He's the Mediator of a..." What? "...new covenant. A death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed even under the first covenant..." Christ's death washed the sins away of the first covenant people. There was nothing in that covenant that could do that. The new covenant sweeps backwards in history and even saves old covenant people.

You say, "Well, how could it?" Because they were looking at the old covenant properly. They were seeing it as symbolic of the Mediator to come. Remember when it says that Moses looked ahead and saw Christ? They saw it for what it was – symbolic.

But the Jews of Jesus' day and the ones that confronted Paul had taken the symbols, and instead of seeing them as that which points to the Messiah, they made their religion up of all the symbols, and they had a mechanical religion like a surrogate kind of Christianity we have today.

If the old things were good symbols, how much better is the real thing they symbolized? If the external, physical, and temporary serve the purpose of God so well, how much better will the internal, spiritual, and eternal covenant serve His holy and eternal purposes? We have a better High Priest with a better sanctuary who made a better sacrifice, with better promise, not temporary redemption, but eternal redemption, and, once for all, the forgiveness of sins.

Isaac Watts wrote, "Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain could give the guilty conscience peace or wash away the stain. Christ, the heavenly Lamb, takes all our sins away, a sacrifice of

nobler name and richer blood than they." This is the new covenant, and a genuine minister and a genuine church is new covenant.

Father, we have just begun to understand these truths, and we bless You, and we praise You for the clarity with which the truth comes to our hearts. We thank You that the blood of Christ, who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without blemish to God, has cleansed our conscience from dead works, from these old rituals, to serve the living God.

We thank You that Jesus did everything He did on Earth in obedience to You through the Spirit, especially His supreme sacrifice, and, in so doing, He provided the cleansing of consciences. He frees our conscience from guilt so that we can draw nearer. With hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and bodies washed with pure water, Father, the priests of old cleaned up the outside only symbolically, imperfectly, and temporarily, but Christ cleans the inside.

Father, don't let us get caught in that which is external. Help us to be faithful to that which is of the heart. May we be a genuine new covenant church and new covenant Christians, new covenant ministers.

We thank You, Father, for such a privilege to live in this time, a time that the prophets of old only looked at and searched, a time when things have been completed, how privileged we are. Make us faithful to that new covenant. Protect Your church from the encroachment from the age-old lies, the deadly heresies, ceremonialism. And we pray for every person here, Lord, Your special grace to meet each spiritual need. In Christ's name, amen.

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