

Bible Passage

Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹ "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. ³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

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- 4. Conclusion: A Call to Focus on Jesus and the Holy Spirit
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Notes

The core of our current spiritual journey lies in the New Covenant. This covenant, unlike the Old Covenant, defines our immediate relationship with God. It's fascinating to observe how this specific covenant shapes our walk with the Lord, potentially impacting us profoundly. Often, religious circles and churches adhere to the Old Covenants, deemed 'biblical.' However, the New Covenant introduces a significant shift. It's not about dismissing the biblical essence of the Old Covenants but recognizing that God declared the Old Covenant completed. The New Testament even states that Christ has abolished the old covenants, marking a pivotal change in how we interact with God's covenants.

Jeremiah's prophecy underlines a transformative message: the shift from a relationship based on law adherence to one of intimate, heart-based connection. God's law, given to the Israelites, was never flawed but was intended to guide them as subjects to a holy King. This relationship, exemplified by King David's devotion, evolved over time.

David's desire to build a temple for God, despite his own royal achievements, signifies the depth of his relationship with God. Yet, God's plan was different, focusing on a "temple of flesh" rather than one of stone – a metaphor for a more profound, spiritual dwelling. Ezekiel reinforces this concept, emphasizing the transition from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh. The New Covenant isn't about teaching laws but about God instilling His spirit within us, guiding us to

follow His statutes not out of obligation but from a renewed, living heart.

The New Covenant signifies a radical departure from adherence to laws as a measure of faithfulness. Instead, it focuses on the transformative power of God's spirit within us. This covenant isn't about our efforts but about God's work in us, culminating in the life and mission of Jesus. Understanding the New Covenant is crucial for our spiritual journey. It's not about following rules robotically but about a vibrant, dynamic relationship with God, enabled by His spirit. This covenant, initiated and completed by Jesus, invites us into a living, breathing relationship with God, marked by a heart transformed by His presence and guidance.

The importance of preaching Christ crucified isn't just a ritualistic part of sermons but the essence of every teaching. Understanding the significance of Jesus's sacrifice is crucial in realizing the transformative power of the New Covenant. The New Covenant replaces the Old Covenant, which was focused on works and adherence to laws. Today, many Christians burden themselves with guilt for not doing enough, not realizing that the New Covenant is about what Christ has done, not what we do. Our actions, though important, don't define our salvation; it's Christ's sacrifice that does. There's a tendency to revert to a 'stone heart' mentality, where we equate our relationship with God to our adherence to laws. This mindset can make us appear rigid and unapproachable. However, the New Covenant invites us to have a 'heart of flesh' – a heart that serves and worships

not out of obligation but out of gratitude for what Christ has done.

When people visit a church, they should encounter a community with a 'heart of flesh.' This welcoming atmosphere is a testament to the New Covenant. Our service and worship should stem from a place of joy and thankfulness for Christ's sacrifice, not from a sense of duty or necessity.

Hebrews 9:11 highlights that Christ, through His sacrifice, has secured eternal redemption. Unlike the Old Covenant, where sacrifices of animals were made for atonement, Christ's sacrifice is once and for all. This shift from physical to spiritual sacrifice underlines the profound change brought by the New Covenant.

In ancient times, animal sacrifices were a tangible reminder of the cost of sin. However, in the New Covenant, Jesus's sacrifice replaces these physical offerings. His death signifies the ultimate payment for our transgressions, a concept that may seem distant in our modern context. Many still revert to an Old Covenant mindset, trying to atone for their sins through actions or sacrifices. However, the New Covenant teaches us that God has already paid the price. It's not about our efforts but about accepting and living in the grace provided through Christ.

The New Covenant should unify churches in the understanding that salvation and redemption come solely through Christ's sacrifice. This understanding should permeate every aspect of church life, ensuring that our focus remains on the transformative power of what Christ has

done, rather than on our own deeds. The New Covenant invites us to a life of freedom and grace. It's a call to understand and embrace the fact that our relationship with God is based on Christ's sacrifice, not our works. This understanding should be the foundation of our faith, guiding how we live, serve, and worship within our communities.

The importance of churches focusing on the work of Christ rather than their own achievements applies to all denominations, underlining the universal need for the Spirit's movement and guidance. Contributions to the church should not be about supporting the church's work per se, but rather as an expression of gratitude for what Christ has already done. This shift from work to worship is crucial. Worship should be a response to God's grace, not a burdensome obligation.

There is a thin line between work and worship within church service. There is a need to constantly refocus on Christ to ensure that our service remains an act of worship, not just a duty. Ephesians 2:13 illustrates how Christ's blood has brought us near to God, breaking down the 'dividing wall of hostility.' The nature of this dividing wall is similar to the veil in the temple that was torn during Christ's crucifixion, symbolizing direct access to God.

A key takeaway from the sermon was the idea that Christ abolished the law and its ordinances. This abolition is not just a doctrinal point but a transformative reality that reconciles us to God, removing the barrier of sin that previously separated humanity from the divine. There is a mystery of the Holy Spirit's indwelling in believers, a reality

made possible by Christ's sacrifice. The Holy Spirit, far from being a minor influence, represents the full presence of God within us.

The role of the Holy Spirit in Christian life and ministry is that our own role is as merely an empty vessel, hoping that it's the Holy Spirit who speaks and grows larger in the hearts of the congregation. This underscores the idea that it's not the person but God working through them that matters. The full access believers have to God through faith in Jesus Christ isn't partial or limited but complete, challenging the notion that only certain 'holy' individuals have stronger access to God. Every believer, regardless of their role or status, shares this equal and profound access.

The beauty of ministry is as a collective effort. It's not about one person doing better than another; it's about different people being used by God in various ways. This diversity within the body of Christ allows for a richer, more comprehensive ministry. Under the New Covenant, adhering to the law is not about becoming more righteous. Instead, being close to God naturally leads to a better understanding and following of the law. The Old Testament laws are now seen as expressions of God's holiness, wisdom, and desire for His people.

Sin is a distraction that dulls our sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. The idea is not that sin prevents miracles or God's work but that it hampers our ability to hear and discern God's voice.

The sermon touches on how to handle politically or morally charged topics, like in the upcoming presidential

election. The emphasis is on listening to the Holy Spirit for guidance, speaking with love, compassion, and truth, rather than responding out of emotion or personal opinion. The overarching message was a call to continually focus on Jesus and rely on the Holy Spirit. This focus should govern our conversations, actions, and reactions, especially in challenging situations. The goal is to become more sensitive to the Holy Spirit's presence and guidance, allowing God to work through us in all circumstances.