

# #17

## The New Covenant & Obedience

A covenant is a contract. Under United States law, both parties must offer consideration under a covenant or contract in order for it to be valid and enforceable. Consideration is something of value; it can be tangible as in money or property or intangible such as a promise to fulfill some form of service. Someone cannot create a contract to give something of value to another unless the recipient gives something in return. In the situation where one wishes to give a gift, typically the contract will state, for an in consideration of the sum of \$1.00...

For example, for and in consideration of the sum of \$1.00, Mr. John Doe sells to XYZ Church 40 acres of land. Although there must be consideration, the consideration does not have to be fair compensation. In the example above, the 40 acres of land could be worth \$10 million. The land is a gift but consideration is required to make it legal and binding. Under the Original Covenant, the consideration that Israel gave God was their promise to obey.

In order for a contract to be enforceable, both parties must fulfill their responsibilities or promises under the contract. If someone promised to give you something and didn't fulfill that promise, you have no recourse unless you have a contract. If you went to court, the judge would ask what you promised to give in return. When you said nothing, the judge would throw your case out of court. A promise is not enforceable under the law unless there is a contract and consideration. Both parties must offer something of value.

It is important to remember that most contracts have multiple clauses and that none of them stands alone. You cannot just pick out the clauses you like and ignore all the rest. As I am writing this introduction in early 2008, the USA is embroiled in a mortgage crisis. There are multiple reasons for this. Mortgage teaser rates are one of the causes of this crisis. Many people qualified for their mortgages based on artificially low interest rates. These rates eventually adjusted to higher rates that resulted in larger monthly payments which many people were unable to make. This has resulted in many foreclosures and a nationwide financial crisis.

It would appear that both lenders and borrowers tended to focus on the benefits of the lower teaser rates. It seems they ignored the consequences that would result when the rates adjusted upward. It would appear that both parties focused on the clauses of the mortgage contract that benefited them. At the same time, they ignored the possible consequence that could result from those clauses associated with increases in interest rates.

People tend to do this with the word of God as well. Many find a passage they like and then ignore other texts on the same subject. Often other texts give deeper meaning and/or further instruction. Alternatively, many take a text out of context and then ignore other scriptures that would reveal that their favorite text is being used incorrectly.

Let us examine God's New Covenant with care and thoroughness. Let us examine God's New Covenant in its entirety so that we are sure to receive the eternal benefits promised. Under the Old Covenant God required Israel to give consideration. They were required to obey all that God commanded. Let us see if this rule of law holds true under the New Covenant. More specifically, are we required by God to give something of value to seal his New Covenant agreement with us?

## Abraham Was Accounted Righteous Through His Faith

**Romans 4:13** – <sup>13</sup> For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but **through the righteousness of faith.**

## Abraham's Obedience Was Accounted As Faith

You show your faith or belief through your actions. Abraham truly believed what God told him. He showed his belief or faith through what he did; he obeyed God.

**Hebrews 11:8-9** – <sup>8</sup> **By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed;** and he went out, not knowing whither he went. <sup>9</sup> **By faith he sojourned in the land of promise,** as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

## The Importance of Obedience Under The New Covenant

**John 14:15** – If ye love me, **keep my commandments.**

**John 15:10** – <sup>10</sup> **If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love;** even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

**1 John 3:9** – <sup>9</sup> **Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;** for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

**1 John 5:1-5** – <sup>1</sup> Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. <sup>2</sup> **By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.** <sup>3</sup> For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. <sup>4</sup> For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

**Romans 1:3-5** – <sup>3</sup> Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; <sup>4</sup> And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: <sup>5</sup> By whom we have received grace and apostleship, **for obedience to the faith** among all nations, for his name:

**Romans 16:25-27** – <sup>25</sup> Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, <sup>26</sup> But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations **for the obedience of faith:** <sup>27</sup> To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

**Acts 6:7** – And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and **a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.**

## **If You Do Not Keep The Commandments – You Do Not Love Christ**

**John 14:24** – <sup>24</sup> He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

### **Unrepented Sin Is Not Forgiven**

**Luke 13:3** – <sup>3</sup> I tell you, Nay: but, **except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.**

**1 John 3:8** – <sup>8</sup> He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

**Romans 6:16** – <sup>16</sup> Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

**Hebrews 10:26-28** – **For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,** But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses.

**Romans 8:13** – <sup>13</sup> For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

### **The Blood of Jesus Cleanses Us From The Sin We Hate**

**Roman 7:12-25** – <sup>12</sup> Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. <sup>13</sup> Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. <sup>14</sup> For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. <sup>15</sup> For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. <sup>16</sup> If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. <sup>17</sup> Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. <sup>19</sup> For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. <sup>21</sup> I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. <sup>22</sup> For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: <sup>23</sup> But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. <sup>24</sup> O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? <sup>25</sup> I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

### **Jesus – The Heir of All Things**

**Hebrews 1:2** – Hath in these last days spoken unto us by **his Son, whom he hath appointed heir**

of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

## The Heirs of God

**Titus 3:7** – That being justified by his grace, **we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**

**Romans 8:14-17** – <sup>14</sup> **For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.** <sup>15</sup> For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. <sup>16</sup> The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: <sup>17</sup> **And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;** if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

**Matthew 12:50** – <sup>50</sup> For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

## An Oath Made By God

God has made an oath or promise to those who would be heirs. This promise is made in his new covenant.

**Hebrews 6:17** – Wherein **God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise** the immutability of his counsel, **confirmed it by an oath:**

## Christ's Followers Are Obedient To Their Faith

**Romans 1:4-5** – By whom we have received grace and apostleship, **for obedience to the faith** among all nations, for his name:

**Romans 16:26** – <sup>26</sup> But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations **for the obedience of faith:**

## Entering The New Covenant

Under the New Covenant God has written His law on each of our hearts. When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we enter the New Covenant with God. Under this covenant, God washes away our sins and gives us the free gift of eternal life. There is nothing we can do to erase our sins or earn our salvation; it is plain and simply a free gift. In spite of this, we must give consideration under our contract (covenant) with God. We must agree that His law is good and holy and we must agree to obey it.

Abraham's obedience was critical to the covenant that God made with him. In the covenant that God made with Israel, He asked them to obey. Under the New Covenant God is asking us to obey as well. The Apostle James wrote that the promise of being heirs of God's kingdom has been made to those who love Christ. He writes: "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of

this world rich in faith, and **heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?** (James 2:5) Jesus said that if we love him we will keep his commandments (John 14:15). He also said that God loves and abides with those who keep His commandments: **“If a man love me, he will keep my words:** and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” (John 14:23) Jesus further made clear that those who do not keep His commandment do not love Him. He said: “He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings:” (John 14:24)

The wonders of God are past understanding. We are totally incapable of fulfilling our contractual obligations under the New Covenant. Yet, although we are incapable of fulfilling our obligation, the blood of Christ sets us free. God imputes on us the sinless character of Jesus Christ when we accept Jesus as our Saviour, confess our sins and repent. 2000 years ago Jesus fulfilled our obligation under the contract when He lived a sinless life. After having lived a perfect sinless life, Jesus paid the penalty for our sin. When Jesus died on the cross, He took our place and suffered our punishment.

Although the righteousness of Christ is a free gift, we must consent that the law is good and we must do our best to obey God's law. We must confess our sins and repent. When we repent, we make a decision to amend or change our sinful behavior. Finally, since we are incapable of perfectly keeping God's law, we must seek God's help. It is only through the indwelling Holy Spirit that we can overcome our sinful nature.

The Apostle Paul admitted that he had a problem with sin and that he could not perfectly keep the law. But Paul loved the law and hated sin. Paul desired with all his heart to do what was right at all times but he was incapable. Paul hated his sin and was greatly grieved at his inability to keep the law perfectly (see Romans 7:14-25). It is important to note that Paul was a godly man. He wrote: “For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses” (Hebrews 10:26-28). It is obvious that Paul didn't have a problem with the commandments. Therefore, his problem was his inability to show perfect love and perfect obedience to what God called him to do each day.

We must consider Paul as a great example of an imperfect man. But we need to have the mind of Christ and the strength that comes from His indwelling Holy Spirit. This comes from developing a relationship with God. Important elements of this are prayer, Bible study and worship.

## Summary

A covenant is a contract and under U.S. law both parties must provide consideration which is something of value. We find the same elements under God's New Covenant. The subject of the covenant is our Salvation. We need to be saved because we have sinned and the punishment sin is eternal death. God promises to write his law on our hearts rather than on just stone or paper. The Holy Spirit writes God's law on our hearts when we agree with God to obey His laws and when we accept Jesus as our savior, confess our sins and repent. When we do this, we become partakers of the New Covenant.

The New Covenant does not eliminate our responsibility to obey God! The New Covenant is more a fulfillment of the promise in the Old Covenant. Under the New Covenant we are still required to obey God. So what changed? The New Covenant is designed to accomplish what the Old Covenant could not accomplish, this is our eternal salvation.

Under the New Covenant God provided a provision for our inability to keep his law, he provided his son Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for our sins. The sacrificial offerings of the Old Covenant could never

atone for a persons sins, they were only a symbol of the sacrifice that would be made by Jesus Christ.

The New Covenant has done away with some of the ceremonial obligations in the Old Covenant. Paul talks about the changes in Hebrews 9. He notes certain ceremonial laws which have been done away with. These ceremonies were designed to reveal Jesus as the Messiah and are no longer necessary. Please note, not everything has changed. The only changes are those which are specifically mentioned.

Those things which were done away with include: the earthly sanctuary, the holy items in the sanctuary and the sanctuary services. These were all images or symbols of Christs sacrifice, resurrection and the ministry that he now conducts in the heavenly sanctuary. Paul explains that the sanctuary services were performed "until the time of reformation." (Hebrews 9:10) The death and resurrection of Jesus began the reformation and ushered in the New Covenant.

Now, many say that the law has been done away with and we have no obligation to keep the law. This is not true. Jesus says the law will last for ever: "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:18) He also commanded us to love God. He further commanded: "If you love me, keep my commandments." Do you think there will be anyone in heaven who doesn't love Jesus?

Paul made it clear that Jesus saves us from the sin we hate (Romans 7:14-25). It is also clear from scripture that sin which has not been repented of is unforgivin sin.

Those who have been saved are heirs of God and these heirs are led by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will lead us in to all truth and righteousness, it will never lead us into sin. Paul writes that as Christians "we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith." (Romans 1:5) What Paul is saying is that our faith is evidenced by our obedience. And without faith, we cannot be saved.