

# The New Covenant

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[0:00] You who don't know me may kind of be curious what does he seem kind of worked up about.

! Just bear with me. I'll get over it here in just a minute. But I'm listening to you guys sing and it's just like, wow! I love it. People who know Jesus and are happy with him, they have every reason to make a lot of noise. Would you agree with that? And I have to tell you, listening to you pour out your heart is just like, that's good. Okay, my job is to preach. Your job is to pray. And our singular ambition is to see Jesus lifted up.

So we're going to reverse the order just for a minute. I'm going to pray and you're going to pray. And then we're going to open up the book and we're just going to have our hearts lifted by the Spirit of God. Let's pray.

Precious Father, this morning for us, prayer is not just a routine or an obligation. It is the cry of a soul that is thankful and dependent on you. The Scriptures make it clear that apart from the Lord Jesus, we can do nothing. And so we confess that it is absolutely beyond our capacity this morning to allow the precious glory of the Word of God to make any different at all in our lives apart from your Spirit. And so this morning we would ask that you would kindle in us a sincere longing to see Jesus lifted up, to see Him as the fulfillment of your promises, as the satisfaction of our soul, and to allow those truths to make a significant difference in the lives that we live in the week to come.

We're thankful, Father, also for the fact that we can pray together, your people, for the man that you have set for this hour before them. And I'm thankful that as I come to this pulpit, that I can rely upon the prayers of your people to make the Word clear, to enable an earthen vessel that the Lord Jesus Christ who enjoys the worship of heaven would be worshiped justly here among us.

[2:56] We pray, Father, also this morning for those that are here whose hearts are far from you, believers who have allowed the cares of this world to interfere with that which is their blessing today, and the absolute glory of heaven tomorrow. Help us to make the worship of Christ of preeminent importance, superseding all other things, not only in this moment and time that we have together as a body of believers, but in every moment that we breathe until you take us home, until we see you.

Amen. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I don't know how many times I've actually had you turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 11, and I'm not going to do it this morning just out of habit. I mean, I've done it so many times, it's like you know where we're going. It's already on the screen. But I am going to make a reference just briefly to a statement that is made in that passage, and then we're going to step to a different text. In 1 Corinthians chapter 11, and we probably know it more or less by heart, after Jesus had gotten midstream in the Passover meal, it says that He took the bread and He took the cup.

He broke the bread and said, this is my body, which is for you. And then He took the cup, and He said something rather interesting, that in the ear of the Jewish listener had to be very significant and stunning. He referred to that cup as being the new covenant in His blood.

And so with that thinking from 1 Corinthians, which I want you to recognize, it's so very easy to go through the process of coming to the Lord's table and partaking of it and really just kind of skimming over it. And one of the reasons why in our fellowship, we never come to the Lord's table without setting the entire service apart for that. It's not an add-on. It's not kind of something at the end that you can kind of have done in two seconds or three seconds and out the door you go. And, well, I did have communion. For us, communion is a central feature in our study and, more importantly, in our affection for the Lord Jesus. And so I want you to think about this issue of the new covenant, and to do so, I want you to turn back just for a moment to Luke chapter 22.

I want to read the passage to you, Luke chapter 22, beginning there in verse 17. And He took a cup, and when He'd given thanks, He said, Take, eat, or take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.

[16:02] And He took the bread, and when He'd given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. And likewise, the cup, after they had eaten, saying, This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

Now, I want you to think with me just for a moment, kind of use a little bit of sanctified imagination and kind of pick up on the background of what we're talking about this morning. Here is Jesus. Remember that when He gave instructions to His disciples, in their thinking, they were celebrating the Passover. And the Passover was a very, very significant, and it was a very occupying worship and celebration. People engaged in the Passover, and it was something that they planned for in advance. They came together. It was just a huge celebration. It put probably Thanksgiving and Christmas for all of us kind of over on the shelf in comparison. And when the Jews celebrated the Passover, it was something that they really put their hearts into. And here's Jesus telling His disciples, We're going to celebrate the Passover, and they all into that. And here they are going through the traditional Passover meal.

And in the middle of it, Jesus takes bread, and He completely changes the course of what that meal in their thinking must have meant. Not only did He speak about the bread in relationship to being His body, which is for them, but then He steps forward even further, and look at what He said there in verse 20. And likewise, the cup after they'd eaten, saying, This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant. How many of you know that Jews tend to think of themselves as B'hai B'rith? How many of you have ever paid attention to the word B'nai B'rith? Does anybody besides Caleb know what B'nai B'rith means? Tom, do you remember? Seminary was a long time ago, right? B'nai B'rith means sons of the covenant. And what covenant were they referring to when they would recite themselves or they would identify themselves as B'nai B'rith? They were talking about the covenant that God had made with Abraham, and more particularly, the covenant that God had made with the nation of Israel on Mount Sinai in the Ten Commandments. And what kind of covenant was that? That was a covenant that was similar to the covenants you and I make when we buy a car or buy a house, and we don't have a lump sum that matches the total. You know, you decide you're going to buy a house, and so what do you do? You sign a covenant in which you say, I am going to make thus and so on a monthly payment until I have satisfied the expectation. At the end of satisfying that, what do you get, particularly when you buy a car? How many of you like having free and clear titles?

Okay. Sometimes you have to kind of stretch to get there, but then you end up with that title. Don't leave it in the glove box in case you're wondering. It's something that you should hold on to a little more than that. But as a result of that mutually agreed on relationship, you do your part, the bank does its part, and basically they let you drive it until you own it. It's a covenant in which both parties have certain responsibilities. The bank says, yes, I will loan you, and you say, yes, I will make my payments. Mutual covenants are an example of the kind of covenant that the Old Testament saint understood in the Ten Commandments. You do your part, I'll do my part.

[10:03] And in the passage that we're looking at here, when Jesus said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, he was saying something that really kind of struck the ears of his listeners. For one thing, the Mosaic covenant had been an absolute bust for Israel. Israel had sworn to obey and love God, but they'd failed miserably in their promise. Every Jew knew what was expected of them in the old covenant, the covenant that Moses had made. And yet, when they looked back over their own lives and they looked back over the nation, they recognized that they had been an abject failure in every aspect of it. And so here was Jesus speaking that night on the night in which they celebrated the Passover, where God had taken them out of the place, the nation of Egypt, he says to them, hey, listen, this is the new covenant. Not a, but the new covenant. And I want you to keep your finger there in Luke, because we're going to come back to it, but turn back to the book of Jeremiah. In Jeremiah chapter 31, 1,

we find the prophet giving a very encouraging word to the nation of Israel in the face of their abject failure in keeping the covenant, the old covenant. In Jeremiah chapter 31, verse 31, here is what God says to the prophet, and he communicates to his people, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of

Judah. He says, I'm going to make another, a new, something different, a covenant with you that is going to be different than the covenant that you and I have already made and you have failed miserably to keep. It's not like the covenant, verse 32, 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. But 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. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and 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 iniquities and I will remember their sins no more.

Now, one of the things I would encourage you to do for the sake of your further edification and study on a periodic basis is that you may want to make a note in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. So the next time you see that little phrase, this is the cup of the new covenant that you think about that passage in Jeremiah. And allowing that passage to inform your thinking when you come to this table is part of what God wants us to be engaged in as we worship the Lord Jesus Christ. Now go back, if you will, again to the passage there in Luke chapter 22 and understand that when he made this statement, this cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood, he was reminding his Jewish listeners of something that they remembered in terms of prophetic utterance. But here was Jesus saying, I, I am the one who is the fulfillment of the new covenant and is the one who is going to satisfy it.

I have to tell you that that had to be a pretty significant and stunning blow to the disciples. Pause just for a moment. How well did the disciples do with getting basic spiritual truth the first pass? What's the answer? Not very well. You know, they had right over top of them and they kind of missed it and on they went. But here was Jesus at the time they were celebrating the Passover. He said, this cup is the cup of the new covenant that I am making in my blood. So I want you to think with me just for a moment about the characteristics of the new covenant and kind of hold on to those as you think about what we're going to be engaged in here in a couple of minutes. What were the significant promises of the new covenant? What were the characteristics? For one, the new covenant promised transformation. The new covenant promised transformation. If you were to go back again, keep your finger there in Luke because we're going to come back to it, but go back again to Jeremiah chapter 31 and mark what it says in verse 33. This is the covenant that I will make with the house of

Egypt, my covenant that they broke. He says, this is what I'm going to do. I am going to put my law within you. I'm going to write it on your heart. How many of you recognize that you have a heart that has some problems? I'm not talking about the physiological problems that you have with your heart. [15:08] I remember last week I was sitting in a doctor's office and the nurse took my blood pressure and my pulse and she was counting. How many of you know that when the nurse is trying to count, it's not a good idea to talk? She has to start over and over if you talk. So she was counting, counting, counting, counting. Finally, she looked up and I said, it's below 60. Right? That's not the heart we're talking about. We're talking about that little nasty thing inside of you that is giving you all the problems that you had this morning and the day before and the day before that. It's the heart that is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Isn't that right? How many of you have been utterly surprised at just how wicked and ungodly other people can act on occasion? And then you stop and think, yeah, I can do that. I don't need practice. Here is what God promised His people. He says, listen, I am going to work to bring about transformation into your life.

I'm going to give you a new heart. Jeremiah chapter 32, verse 39 and 40, just to look forward a little bit, here's what it says. I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear me forever for their own good and the good of their children. God is saying this, here's what I'm going to do for you as a result of my grace. I am going to give you a heart that is different than the heart that you have. Let me ask you a question. Be honest with yourself. How many of you sitting here this morning know for a fact that you have a different heart than the one you used to have? If you're sitting here this morning and you do not have a different heart than the one you used to have, I would appeal to you, I would plead with you, you need the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior because apart from a changed heart, there is no salvation. God, in His grace, provides a new heart to the person who has come to faith and cries out to the Lord Jesus and said, I desperately need you to be my Savior. And along with salvation comes transformation, we are not, we are not obligated to stay the way we used to be, particularly if we're a believer. We are given a new heart and as a result of that, we can grow and change. Listen to me carefully because I think it's important for us to understand that. I bump into people regularly who grew up in church, learned the vocabulary, sang the songs, and here's the deal. They can never point to an issue of change significant in their life.

And one of the things I challenge them to think about is that if you can't see the evidence of a different heart at work in your life, there may be reason to recognize that you do not know Christ.

[18:16] You better stop and think about it. The new covenant made a promise of transformation because of a change in our heart. Let's look at a second thing. The new covenant also promised complete forgiveness through Christ's blood. You're there in Jeremiah chapter 31 and mark what it says there in 34, the latter part of the verse. 34 says, I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more. I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more. Let me just take a little side shot at something that every now and then kind of puts my fur on end. Everybody listening?

Have you ever heard people say, I can't forgive myself? Have you ever heard that kind of thing? That is probably one of the more idolatrous things an individual can say. Here's why. Who are you worried about forgiving yourself? Do you understand that? When God settles it and forgives you, the case is done. This business of being obsessed about, well, I'm so important, I'm really having trouble forgiving myself. That's just memory of the baggage that you had. Understand, forgive it, forget it, forget it rather, and let it go. Don't be obsessing about, I can't forgive myself. Well, who are you?

You're going to be room temperature here in a couple days. Don't worry about it. He's forgiven. The case is settled. And here is what the scripture says. I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more. And here you are walking out of the courtroom and you have been pardoned and some low life is over and over and over and said, do you remember that sin you did? I'm done. I'm gone.

It's gone. Forget it. Here's what the new covenant was a promise of. It was a promise of complete forgiveness. Look over also, if you would, at Jeremiah chapter 33 verse 8.

I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me. And I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. Let me ask you this. How many of you have laid awake at night just kind of obsessing and struggling with the burden and the blackness of your own heart and the sins that you've committed and they have been almost overwhelming? And then you've been reminded that because of the blood of Christ, all of that has been forgiven. It's settled. Do you know what?

[20:50] It says that he throws those things in the sea of his forgetfulness. He is not bringing it up. And every time Satan brings it up, here's a little thing I would encourage you to think is say, thank you, Satan, for reminding me of how wonderful it is to be completely forgiven of all of my past. Can I tell you something? Satan does not like Jesus getting any credit and he'll kind of tamp it down and say, well, let me try a different strategy.

Thank you, Jesus, for giving me for all of that. By the way, Satan, if you want to remind me again, I'm just going to thank Jesus again. All about his forgiveness. Let me have you look at a third characteristic of the new covenant. And it is a complete, full, and unchanging relationship.

You look there in Jeremiah chapter 31 and mark what God says here. He says, I will be, in verse 33, I will be their God and they shall be my people. I will be their God and they shall be my people. When he says that, he is not just referring to a formal and legal relationship. He is talking about communion and intimacy. He's talking about someone who knows you personally. One of the things that has been such an encouragement to me is to stop and think about the fact that the creator of this universe actually pays attention to me personally. He knows my every need. He knows my thoughts before I think them. He knows my down-sitting and my uprising. And he pays attention. He affectionately cares for me personally. And that thought should just cause our hearts this morning to say, man, I'm satisfied.

I have him. He is the one that satisfies that longing of my heart to be significant to someone. He is the one who loves me unconditionally. And he has made a commitment that he will be my God and I am his.

Well, let's stop and ask ourselves a question, though, because we do need to pay attention to the text. Jeremiah chapter 31, verse 31, it says, Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, where I will make a new covenant with the house of what? Maranatha. Look in the Bible. See if you see it there. Does it say Maranatha? Does it say Kenoyer? Does it say, you know, Gibbs? Does it?

[23:30] So, do I have the right to just arbitrarily, how many of you understand that little song, every promise in the book is mine? You know, it's a nice thought, but it's really not accurate, entirely Bible. How many of you understand that there are some promises in the Old Testament and some promises in the Scripture that don't fit you? Okay? So, back up a little bit. Here is a promise that is made in Jeremiah to which specific group of people? The Jews. How many of you are Jews here this morning? I mean, full-blood. Anybody? Full-blood Jew? Anybody? So, all of you are not part of this picture in terms of Old Testament prophecy. Would you agree with that? Okay.

So, did I just kind of jerk this out of context and I decided, well, let's wing it? I mean, what am I going to preach on Sunday? Well, let's try this. No. So, how is it that we are included in the New Covenant? What right do we have to think that this passage has application to us this morning? Number one, obviously, when Paul wrote this to the church, by the way, which church was this? Was this the church in the New Jerusalem? This is a church in what? In Corinth. What kind of people lived in Corinth predominantly? Pagan, Gentile, unbelievers until they came to Christ. And here is Paul writing to them and says, hey, listen, guys, when you do this communion thing, and I want you to straighten up because you guys are way left of center in your behavior and your heart attitude towards this.

And he explains that when you take the bread and take the cup, you are celebrating the Lord's death. His substitutionary atonement, his dying in my place. And secondly, you are celebrating the, the new covenant. He spoke to Gentiles. So, how is it that Gentiles, by the way, Jews, an ethnic group, Gentiles, non-Jews? How is it that we as Gentiles are included and have a right to expect the blessings of the new covenant to have bearing on us? In fact, this morning, we're going to hold up that cup and we're going to say, this cup is a reminder of the new covenant. How does it fit us? Turn in your Bible to Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2. Think with me of what the apostle says to another church in a Gentile environment. Gentiles there in Ephesus, he says this in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 11. He says, therefore, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, that's who you write into in the church, called the uncircumcision. By the way, did you know that to be called uncircumcised was a very dismissive, it was kind of like, I don't want to use a term, you know, you know, it was a bad term. You're uncircumcised. Really? Bad thing. He says, the uncircumcised by what was called is the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands.

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. That's where you were. That was your condition. But now listen to verse 13.

But now, in Christ, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Do you understand that? How many of you know just how many different times, I shouldn't say how many you know, but I want you to mark how many times Paul refers to us being in Christ, in Christ, in Christ, in Christ, in this intimate, sweet, blessed relationship with Him and in Him? Here's Paul. You once were far off, now in Christ, you've been brought near. He brought you near by His blood. He

also made you into a new person, and He made you part of a new body. Ephesians chapter 2, verse 15, by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinance, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. There was a time in which the Jew and the Gentile really fundamentally had nothing to do with one another. They disliked each other. They hated each other. They didn't want to have anything to do with the different communities and the different cultures. And Paul says, listen, because of the Lord

[28:24] Jesus Christ, we have been made one new man. That's the reason that when we come together as a body of believers, we come together by virtue of our relationship with Christ. We do not come by virtue of our ethnicities or backgrounds or anything else. There is one thing that informs our relationship.

It is the sweetness of this Word and the clarity with which we stand upon it in the reality of our relationship with Christ. I want you to recognize one other passage. Ephesians chapter 3, verse 6. This mystery, and by the way, in the Bible, a mystery is something that we wouldn't know if we hadn't been told. A mystery is something that God reveals to us by revelation, and apart from His revealing it, we wouldn't know it. So when we use the term mystery, most of the time in the Bible, we're talking about something God is showing us. He says, this mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs. How many of you know what an heir is? Just theory, theory, theory, theory, theory. How many of you would like to have parents that when they died left you \$20 million? Don't nod your heads. I mean, you're not thinking, but you're spiritual. But how many of you would like to find out that somebody else only had two children, and they decided three weeks before they died that they were going to adopt you into their family? Would you like that?

Would you like to be the heir in that situation? Would you be okay, Tim? You're all right with that? That'd be all right. Doug, you're working on that, right? Okay. We don't mind being heir if there's something to be gained. Am I right? Here's what Paul says. Look at the passage. Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and listen carefully, and we'll tie this up, and partakers of the promise in Christ through the gospel. Why do I have a right? And why does Paul refer to me having a blessing in terms of the new covenant? It's because of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in Christ that I have all the privileges that were granted in the promises that God made to the nation of Israel in relationship to the new covenant. And so when I come this morning and I take the bread, I remind myself, Jesus died for me.

And when I take the cup, I say, and this cup is the testament or it is the witness to the new covenant that He has made that I have the privilege of being partaker of. And what is the new covenant?

[31:16] It is life transformation. It is complete forgiveness. And it is personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ who is actively engaged in my life, helping me grow and change and drawing me towards heaven. Is that true for you? If it is, then we come to this table this morning as believers. I ask the deacons to come, and we gather around this table to celebrate the reminder of what Jesus has done for us.