

(Covenant Series) 4. Experiencing the Power & Liberty of the New Covenant

by Al Whittinghill

The new covenant offers us a new heart and a new spirit, and the promise of salvation by faith, but we struggle with unbelief and self-righteousness.

Duration: 1:09:17

Scripture: Exodus 19:6, Exodus 24:3, Jeremiah 31:31, 2 Corinthians 3:2-3, 2 Corinthians 3:6, Hebrews 8:7, Hebrews 8:13

Topics: "Covenant Series"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of deserving good treatment and how it relates to our relationship with God. He compares society's questioning of God's love and allowance of suffering to taking grace for granted. The preacher then delves into the significance of the law given to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, explaining that it was meant to reveal the crookedness of their hearts and lead them to Jesus, the solution. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the importance of having a new heart through salvation and how our thoughts and actions are a reflection of our heart.

Transcript

I'd like to read some 2 Corinthians tonight, first off, in chapter 3. We want to read several verses here, just a section. We won't really be speaking from these verses, but if you'll pay attention to what we read, this will be the substance of the whole lesson tonight. Beginning in verse 2, Paul is writing to a people, and he's saying, You are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men, for as much as you are openly or manifestly declared to be the writing of Christ, the epistle of Christ ministered by us.

He's saying he preached to them God's word, and God wrote it on their hearts. He says here, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart. And such confidence have we through Christ to God's word, not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves.

Our sufficiency is of God, who has made us able ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter, which is synonymous with the law, but of the spirit, for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. But if the ministration, the giving out of death, which is the law, written and engraved in stones, was so glorious that the children of Israel could not even steadfastly look at the face of Moses for the glory of his face, which glory was to be done away with, how shall not the ministration of the spirit be even more glorious? For if the

ministration of condemnation, the letter, the law, be glory, much more does the ministration of grace or righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious, that's the old covenant, had no glory at all in this respect, in comparison to the glory that excels.

For if that which is done away with was glorious, much more that which remains is glorious. That's the old and new covenant contrasted. One kills and one makes alive.

The famous heart surgeon, Dr. Christian Bernard, relates how during one of his operations on a heart transplant several years ago, after it was over, the heart patient asked to see the removed organ after it was all over and he had recovered. And the doctor brought a large kind of gross brown bottle, you know, those kind they use, in, and it had in it that old heart in some fluid. And as this man looked on that old worn-out muscle that had once pumped life through his body, the surgeon realized that this was indeed a historic moment.

Because, you see, it was the first time in human experience that a person had ever seen his own heart. And it was historic. Well, the patient had more than history in mind because he was moved and he saw his old heart that had been with him for years and kept him going and now it was useless.

And had he not received a new heart, his life would have been extinct very soon. And after a long pause, this patient looked up at the doctor and with tears in his eyes he said these words. He said, I'm glad I don't have that old heart anymore.

See, he'd been given a new heart and a new life, really, because when he got a new heart, he got a new life. Well, those were amazing words and they illustrate to us the fact that we are no better than our heart. The Bible says, out of the heart come the issues of life.

Proverbs 4, 23. It says in another place in Proverbs, as a man thinks in his heart, that's what he really is. It says to guard your heart with all diligence.

Well, the Bible says that after the fall of man, that man developed a heart condition. He doesn't have a heart to know God or to please God. In fact, God's diagnosis of the human heart since the fall is succinctly put in Jeremiah 17, verse 9. He says, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

Who can know it? You know, we don't like that diagnosis for our hearts. We just don't. I used to, if anybody would ever say that about my heart, I just loathe to hear it because we're so sincere in trying to be good, but we're in a desperate state, a corrupted humanity.

And yet in the same Bible that diagnoses our hearts as being absolutely corrupt, God promises that he will remedy that problem. Back in the book of Jeremiah, in chapter 24, verse 7, God had said, I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord and they shall be my people and I will be their God. They shall return to me with their whole heart.

And also in Jeremiah, in chapter 32, he makes another wonderful promise about the heart. I'll skip chapter 31 for a moment because we'll be spending some time in a New Testament quotation of that. But in Jeremiah chapter 32, verse 38, he's promising them something that he's going to do to remedy a heart condition.

Jeremiah 32, 38, they shall be my people and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way that they may revere me forever for the good of them all and their children after them. And I will make an

everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them to do them good.

And I will put my fear in their hearts that they not depart from me. I will rejoice over them to do them good. I will plant them in this land.

On and on he says, I will bring them, I will do it. It's all of a sudden God is showing what he's going to do. And then one other scripture, the promise of Ezekiel 36, the remedy for man's heart problem.

God's saying, I'm going to do something wonderful for you. Verse 25, for those people with a heart condition who own up, he says, I will sprinkle Ezekiel 36, 25 and following. I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you will be clean from all of your filthiness, from all of your idolatry.

I will cleanse you. A new heart also will I give unto you and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh.

Oh, how that describes our heart. Heart is a rock and I will give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and I will cause you to walk in my statutes and you will do my judgments and do them.

And you will dwell in the land and I will be your God and I will save you. And I will call, he goes on, I will multiply. And he's saying all the things that he will do.

Now, since the cross of Jesus Christ has come in history and then revealed and the Holy Spirit has been given to men who come to Christ and believe, then the remedy of God is now available. In fact, there are three tenses of salvation. And in our days, which we live, we don't really hear about the middle one.

There's the past tense and there's the present tense and there's the future tense. They're saved from the penalty of sin that has happened. There's being saved from the power of sin that is happening.

And there will be saved from the presence of sin that will happen. But, you know, we hear a lot of people talking about how great it is that they have been saved in the past. I've been saved.

I've been saved from hell. Jesus came into my heart. That's past tense.

And you hear them talking about the future, how glorious it's going to be when we get to all, when we all get to heaven and how Jesus is going to come for his church. But I believe that a lot of Christians sadly neglect that glorious present tense, that eternal now. Today, what is he doing in my life? Well, God has a promise for us.

It's the glorious present tense of victory that we can have continuous every day today, victory in the Lord, Jesus Christ. Is there really a victory? Is there really a new heart transplant that's available? How can we enjoy it? Well, now turn to Hebrews chapter seven, chapter eight, and we want to look at that together. We're going to be looking at a lot of scripture tonight, which is always good.

Even if we read scripture the whole time, it'd be better than anything men could ever say. Just Hebrews chapter eight, beginning in verse seven, all the old covenant we've been talking about, the old Testament telling us what man can do. Now the new covenant showing us what God has done.

And we see tonight the glorious promise from Jeremiah 31 quoted here in Hebrews chapter eight, beginning in verse eight, but we'll read from verse seven. For if the first covenant had been without fault, then there would have been no place found or sought for the second. In other words, if the old Testament,

the old covenant didn't have a fault, then God would never have given the new covenant, the coming of Jesus, the dying on the cross.

Where is the fault? What's wrong with what God gave? Well, verse eight answers, finding fault with them, the people. Behold, the days come, sayeth the Lord, when I will make. There's that language.

I will. It's the language of omnipotence. In these verses, six times, he says, I will.

You've had opportunity to show what you can do. Now I will, I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Not like the one that I made with their fathers.

When I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they continued not in my covenant, I regarded them not, saith the Lord. This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, sayeth the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind.

I will write them in their heart. I will be to them, their God, and they shall be to me a people. And they will not have to teach or teach every man his neighbor and every man, his brother saying, no, the Lord objectively, it means for all shall know me intimately experientially from the least to the greatest.

It's two different words for no use there. I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their iniquities. I will remember no more in that God said a new covenant.

He made the first old or obsolete. And now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away. What a tremendous scripture, because man has a heart problem, because there's fault with him.

God says we can't. He's showing us that he can. He can do everything that we've tried to do and have failed.

And God is not shocked when I try to do it on my own and am unable to perform or to do. Well, in this text right here, we have a promise given to us of six things the Lord says he will do. We'll boil them down into just five, but the first promise is the promise of illumination.

He says in verse 10, this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, sayeth the Lord, I will put my laws in their mind. This is for you and me, friend. God said, I will put my law in your mind.

We have the mind of Christ. He will renew our minds. We'll think differently about things.

It's inward light through the word of God. God promises you a new knower, the capacity to know things like he knows them. What a wonderful promise, a new knower.

Now, these are going to be conditioned to ensure the Christian life against failure, a new knower. But secondly, if you look in verse 10, he also says he'll give a new wanter. We have a new knower.

He says, I'll put my laws in their hearts. And this then talks about new desires. You will want to do the will of God, not just think you ought to do it or make it a drudgery, but he will put inward love.

Oh, there's illumination, which is inward light, but there's inspiration, desire, inward love that he promises. He will put in you and in me. A third thing is sanctification and I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people.

A new holiness, God promises under the new covenant, union living and imparted willingness and ability to do the will of God that I've always failed to be able to do. A new knower, a new wanter and a new holiness. And then fourthly, a new revelation, a new awareness.

All of them shall know me experientially from the least to the greatest, whether you're a moron or a mighty mind, whether you're rich to poor or bond or free or black or white. He's promised that this promise of Jeremiah 24, he would give us a heart to know the Lord. Simple things like a child, a new awareness, deep fellowship.

And then lastly, he'll give us consolation. That last promise that we know so much. I will be merciful, verse 12, to their unrighteousness and their sins and iniquities.

I will remember no more. Now this is a new assurance, free, comprehensive and irreversible of forgiveness. You know, the thing is that we often claim the last one so easily.

I'm forgiven. I'm free. God's forgiven me.

But so slow we are to claim that new mind, that new heart and the new holiness and the new awareness. This is a fact tonight. If we're a Christian and if we're in the new covenant, we need to realize if you can believe him for forgiveness, then believe him for the others as well.

Believe him for all of this. Well, if all of these things are literally and actually true, and they are for every Christian, these are the provisions for a life of continual victory, then why do we see such rarity of this life around us? That's the question tonight. Why is this not true in my experience so much of the time? Is that a valid question? Why are we walking around feeling down and why are we living in these things? Well, there's only one reason and it's a painful one.

But if we face it and if we acknowledge it before God, there is freedom for us if we really face it. The only reason is this, unbelief or pride or self-righteousness. Those three things that beset us and tangle us up.

Now, it's not the kind of thing that we're going around saying, look how great I am or look how good I am. It's not that kind of pride or self-righteousness that I'm talking about. It's that unconscious capacity that we all seem to have, even as a Christian, to try to relate to God on the basis of performance, rather than on the basis of grace.

When I came to him, I knew I was totally undone, but then after I come to him, I seek to fall back in that trap of trying to live up to things I've heard in my own strength. And that really is pride and self-righteousness and unbelief. Now, we hate that, but we are programmed to perform all of our life.

Sincere parents program their children to perform. I find that just as a, just the tendency in my own children to learn to perform, and I'm not trying to program them that way, but just correction makes us do that. And so, self-righteousness is so deep within our hearts, like grain in the wood of this podium.

You can sand it and saw it and glue it and nail it, but the grain is still there. It's just in a different form. And to suggest that self-righteousness is in our heart repulses us.

If you're like me, there's nothing I hate worse than that. That's the one thing that could get to Job. Job could see bereavement and bankruptcy and boils and have a badgering wife, all those four B's.

And after it was all over, he said, blessed be the name of the Lord. And someone came along and says, Job, there might be sin in your life. And he says, what? Are you suggesting that there might be sin in my life? When you can take everything from him, but don't take his righteousness, his self-righteousness, because if you do, you'll tread on him and you hit a nerve.

Well, did you know when it comes to the law or those things that we try to live up to the old Testament, those principles that, that no one has ever been saved or will they ever be saved by the law? Nobody has ever been saved by the law and nobody ever will be saved by the law. Now that's something that is obvious that we don't often meditate on. And God knew that only one person in all of history would ever be able to keep the law.

You know who that is? That's the Lord Jesus who came and said, I didn't come to do away with the law. I came to satisfy it or fill it up. I came to fulfill the law.

Well, God even knew that Israel could not keep the law when he gave it. Did you know that? God knew that Israel couldn't keep the law when he gave it. Now, why then did he give it? That sounds unreasonable.

Let's look at some scriptures that prove he knew this in Romans chapter three, turn quickly to Romans three. And I'm going to be from this point on, we're going to be scorching through the pages of our Testament. Romans chapter three, verse 19, we see about the law, what God is saying the law is for.

Now we know this, and I'm not so sure we know it so, so much experientially, but we know it objectively. We know that whatsoever things the law says, it is saying to those who are under the law so that every mouth can be stopped and all the world become guilty before God. God gave the law to make men guilty.

Therefore, by the deeds of the law and the word Z is not in there. So it says by the deeds of law, there shall be no flesh justified in his sight for by law is the knowledge of sin. Look at verse 28.

Therefore, we reckon or conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Now look at Galatians chapter two, and we see there another blazing statement about the law. Galatians two, verse 16, something that we're knowing, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ.

Even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. Look at verse 21. I do not frustrate.

And the word means cut myself off from. I do not cut off the grace of God for if my righteousness comes by the law, then Christ's death is in vain. If I can maintain or attain or sustain our image before God by my own performance, then Jesus died on the cross without any reason.

Look at chapter three, verse 10. As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse for it is written curse. It is everyone that continues, not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them, but that no man is justified by the law and the sight of God is very evident because the Bible says in Habakkuk, the just shall live by faith.

And the law is not a faith, but the man that does them, he'll live in the law. What that saying is what James says, whosoever shall keep the whole law, all of it, all your life. And you're perfect on every count.

And just before you die, you have a bad thought. You're guilty of all. Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

And if you ever have offended on any point, if you ever told a lie, if you've ever had a lustful thought, if you've ever stolen anything, then you are totally forever disqualified, never again approaching on a legal basis to God. You can forget it. It's over.

You say, well, this brings me to no hope. It's exactly meant to. It is exactly meant to jerk the rug out of everything that we'd ever tried to do to improve ourselves before God.

One slip and I'm forever disqualified from standing before God on the basis of what I've done or haven't done. Well, the question then is why did God give the impossible? Why did God give the law? Good question. Well, this opens up the whole purpose of the old covenant, the old Testament to us.

You know, this is a real source of misery to a lot of people. Look at chapter three, you're still in Galatians three, I hope. And you see a group of people who are saved by grace through faith in Jesus.

And they're going on with God, but now they're trying to work their way to a state of growth. And Paul asked them in verse one, Oh, foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth? Talking about grace before your eyes, Jesus Christ has evidently been set forth, crucified among you. This only what I learned from you.

Did you receive the spirit? Remember that's that life-giving spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith. Are you so foolish having begun in the spirit by grace? Are you now seeking to be made perfected by the flesh, by your own efforts, by, by living by principles, living by duty and all these things. And then he asks the question, have you suffered so many things in vain? If it's really yet in vain.

In other words, all the hard lessons you've learned as a young Christian, have they been needless? All the lessons you've learned in your past that you're not good enough. And they've been painful lessons. Are they in vain? Are you trying now to rebuild again the things that God showed you are worthless? Well, God knew man's inability to keep the law before he gave it.

Man didn't know his own inability. He didn't know his own heart condition. Well, look in verse 19 of Galatians three.

And you see the question then it says, wherefore then serve the law? What's the reason for the law? Why didn't God give the 10 commandments? I mean, are you saying Al that the 10 commandments are unnecessary? Absolutely not. They're totally necessary. Wherefore then serves the law? It says right here, it was added because of transgressions.

It literally says it was added in order to reveal sin as transgression. The law was added because of transgressions. For how long? It says until the seed should come to whom the promise was made.

Well, the seed it says up in verse 16 is Christ. So the law was added until Jesus comes to whom all the promises and in whom they're all yes and amen. And then down in verse 24, wherefore the law was our schoolmaster, our tutor to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

God is ever seeking to bring us away from principles and myths of things to bring us to a person that we might live in the power of a risen life and not just live in the power of a resolving person, which is us. We

mustn't just seek to make new resolutions. Well, God adopted a plan to educate man and show us our incurable sinfulness and our impotence.

Man's got to be given an opportunity in history and to himself to demonstrate to his own satisfaction what he can do. And you've got to have a opportunity to demonstrate to yourself what you can do, which is nothing. And you've got to know that it's nothing.

You've got to have a scale to know it's nothing by, don't you? You've got to say, this is where I'm supposed to be. And it's not there. And so when God gave the law, the Bible says sin was given power.

Now in first Corinthians chapter 15, verse 56, it says the strength of sin is the law. You see, law didn't make sin come into existence. It was there before the law ever was there.

But the law, when it came, it says in Romans, it made sin exceedingly sinful. All of a sudden I began to realize what the real condition of my heart is when I became exposed to law. And through the law, sin becomes exceedingly sinful.

So the truth is that man in his pride and holding out of his own positive self image, bunk, and all those things he wants to think about himself from scripture, uh, that are, that are not true. Like he's good. And, uh, there's a little spark of divinity in all of us.

And we're all the father. He's our fatherhood of all. And, um, all those things, man hates the truth of the Bible, but the law come and paints man in a corner.

The law is a light. And men, Jesus said, when the light comes, hate the light because their deeds, the light show of what evil, the law makes them guilty before God and let them see all have sinned and come far short of the glory of God. Well, naturally we want to do something to be worthy.

Yeah. We want to feel like we've cooperated with God. Don't we? I mean, since we've been saved anyway, we want to seek to improve ourselves.

Now I'm talking to Christians. Now we come, we come mid our lives to Christ. We, we, we repent.

We want to please God and we want to walk in his spirit. So we seek to improve ourselves, try harder and do as much as possible. And we don't really realize though, that our problem was a heart problem.

It wasn't a resolve problem. It was a heart problem. And men will never submit to heart surgery until the situation's desperate.

You know, you'll get a lot of different opinions. You go to counselor to counselor. You'll never let somebody make an incision and break your chest bone and go in there and start messing around with those valves until you know it's serious.

And if once, you know, it's serious, then you'll do it. My question to you tonight, it says in Galatians 3.19, the law was added. That is so key.

What was the law added to? Well, it's simple. It was added to pure grace. It was added to pure grace.

430 years after God's covenant with Abraham, the new covenant that we studied, in a shattered form, his offspring was in the land of Egypt. And God then called them out of Egypt. And he brought them out to a

place called Mount Sinai.

And the law was added to the grace that Abraham's offspring had been walking in that had delivered them from Egypt. They were delivered by grace. They walked through the Red Sea by grace.

They ate manna by grace. They were people of grace who were saved by the blood of the Lamb and led by the pillar of fire and the clouds, which was the Spirit of God leading them, it says in Nehemiah. And so it never nullified, it says in Galatians 3, the covenant of grace when law came.

If it had, if it had superseded and replaced grace, then they all would have died totally. Because you see, they broke the law before it was even given. Moses came down the mountain.

As he came down, they were sinning even before it was given. And people forget when they watch Cecil B. DeMille that Moses went back up the mountain and he got the instructions for the tabernacle. And in them he put the new tablets, the new commandment.

And they kept it in the middle of the people of God, right there as a living testimony that God can dwell in his people. You see, the law was that which was to make them aware of their heart problem. Now, I know this is getting technical, but I want you to listen to me, because if you can get it, it'll change your life.

Even if you know what the law is for, this will show you again tonight. These people, God wanted to show them that they had a heart problem and he wanted them to cry out for grace. I want to look at this for a moment back in the book of Exodus, and I want us to turn there to Exodus 15 and see what was wrong with these people.

Exodus 15, and we see in verse 24, they come to Myra, the waters are bitter, they've been delivered by grace. Verse 24, the people murmured against Moses saying, what shall we drink? Here's a bunch of murmuring people, murmuring against Moses, and God said, you're murmuring against me. Look at chapter 16, verse 2, the whole congregation of Israel against Moses and Aaron.

This is at Elam. And the children of Israel said, we wish to God, we have died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt. When we sat by the flesh pots, we had it easy there.

We ate bread to the fill. You've brought us forth into the wilderness to kill us. They're calling God a murderer.

And then in chapter 17, verse 3, you see something else about their heart. The people thirsted there, talking about now at the wilderness of sin at Rephidim, the people thirsted there for water. The people murmured against Moses and said, wherefore has this brought us out of Egypt to kill us? And now our children and cattle with thirst.

You're not providing for us. You're not what we really need. I'll tell you something.

Only the grace of God kept them. Only the grace of God kept them. Otherwise the ground would have opened up and destroyed them all.

The people didn't know the real nature of their own hearts. They were deceived, by their own sincerity. They were ignorant of grace, because you know why? That's all they'd ever known.

They'd never known not grace. They grew up. They came out of Egypt by the grace of God.

So all they knew was grace. And therefore being ignorant of what grace really is, it was normal to them. We deserve good treatment.

It's not our fault that we're thirsty. It's God's fault that we're thirsty. Kind of like society today that says, if God were really a loving God, why would he allow all of this? You see, that's kind of like taking grace for granted.

And this world is living under the grace of God. Otherwise we'd be a little tiny little Nova, or stars, the little ball of smoke, a wisp like the shuttle. We'd just explode if we weren't under the grace of God.

And so we come to Mount Sinai, the teacher, and God is going to give them a plumb line, because they don't know the wall is crooked. And he's going to show how crooked their wall is by giving them a straight line, the law. He's going to give them a monitor.

He says, you boys want something to see how good you are? Here's a monitor to show you how bad you are. You want something to see the darkness in your heart? Here's a light. And he gives them a mirror that they can look in and see the condition of their own heart.

But the law was never meant to take away the sin it reveals. Suppose I woke up this morning and I was shaving, and somehow in the night I had smeared some charcoal on my face, and I looked like I had grease all over my face. And I walked through the mirror and looked in the mirror.

I went, oh, I didn't know it. So I looked in the mirror that my face was smudged. And so I said, oh no, the mirror has revealed to me that I have smudgy face.

Now, how many of you would think I was absolutely insane if I took the mirror off the wall and began to scrub my face with it? Well, what the mirror revealed to me, the mud on my face, and therefore it should be what I use to clean it, right? Oh no, the mirror is meant to send me to the fountain. And there I go down to the sink and apply clean water on my face, warm water and hot water and soap and wash myself and make me clean. Well, the law was given to reveal to me the condition and the new covenant is the solution.

It's meant to send me to Jesus, the fountain open for sin. Well, in Exodus chapter 19, before God gives the law, they keep insisting on some standard of behavior. Look at this, chapter 19, verse 4. It says, if God says to them, I love you, I love you, before I give you this law, remember grace.

Don't forget grace. Don't forget Abraham, verse 4. You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now, therefore, if you will obey my voice in truth and keep my covenant, he's talking about the Abrahamic covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people and all the earth is mine.

And then a verse quoted in 1 Peter about the priesthood, about us. You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, people of grace. These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel.

And so Moses gets all these words from God and he goes to the people of Israel and he tells them this standard and this standard and this standard. And instead of falling on their face, if they'd really known their own heart, instead of falling on their own heart, on their own face and saying, no, Moses, we can't do that. We don't have what it takes.

Oh God, have mercy on us. We need God to live like that. That's God's kind of life.

We don't want law. We want grace. Instead of doing that, they look at verse 8 and all the people answered together and said, all the Lord has said, Moses, we will do.

You can count on us. We're going to be the best people God has ever seen. And then again in chapter 24, in verses 3 and 7, they say it again.

Three times they say, all that the Lord has said, we'll do. You can count on us, God. We're going to be good people.

And so the law is holy and just and good. It is a good law. In fact, it is an exact picture of what we need to be if we're going to live in God's character.

The law is holy and just and good, it says in Romans 7. It was meant to bring them to desperation and show them their heart condition. But you know what it did? Because of self-righteousness, it made them rededicate their lives. So Israel received God's grace in vain.

They had suffered so many things in vain. And so the law became their teacher. And even to this day, the law is their teacher.

As it says in Romans chapter 10, talking about the law again in Romans 10 of a perfectly polished in the light of what we're talking about here, Romans 10, verse 2, I bear them record, Israel. They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. They are ignorant of God's righteousness.

They go about to set up their own righteousness. They haven't yet submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that is believing.

Jesus kept the law. He satisfied it. Now stay with me, because we are putting this together now.

God's standard is still perfection. Don't let anybody ever tell you that God all he expects is the best you can do. That is not true.

God's standard is still perfection. It must be, or he'd cease to be God. Even the Sermon on the Mount says, be ye therefore perfect.

Even as your father in heaven is perfect. And you say, well, Al, what kind of guilt trip are you trying to put on me? You're trying to make me feel like I could never be good. You're right.

I am. I'm trying to condemn you. I'm trying to bring you to the end.

I'm trying to get you to throw up your hands and say, it's impossible. If I'm ever going to be holy, God's going to have to make me holy. That's exactly where I'm trying to bring you to, because that's where God's trying to bring you to.

God is looking for guilty and broken and bankrupt people that he can by total grace make rich. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. People who have tried and tried and tried and failed and failed and failed.

And they're so tired and they're so in bondage. To these people, Jesus comes and offers grace. I'll give you a new heart.

All the things you've tried to do and you've been so sincere, but you just had to be convinced now that you couldn't produce it. If you'll give up and quit trying to be a Christian, I'll make you into that very thing you long to be. Quit trying to be a Christian.

What do you mean? Quit trying? That's right. Quit trying to be a Christian and start trusting to be a saint. And Jesus will make you into all he died to give you.

It's good news for bad people. It's also bad news for good people, because the gospel is two-sided. It's what's bad news for good people is good news for bad people.

And that's that we're saved by grace through faith. People know better than you or me. People that can't change themselves.

A leopard can change his spots quicker than you can change your heart. So now grace presupposes repentance. Grace presupposes that you've seen this and you're undone and a change of mind will take place.

And now you say, I dare not trust myself anymore. It's all him. This is all my righteousness, nothing but the blood of Jesus.

And so there are a lot of people who just don't see this and they go right on busily trying to get a righteousness of their own. I'm talking about Christians who have been saved, who have trusted Christ as Lord, but who've never seen that the law is through with them in terms of conditions for acceptance with God. If you have a quiet time, if you read your Bible so much, then God will really be pleased with you.

I mean, it does bring God glory and pleasure when we're in our Bible, but it doesn't add one whit to our acceptance with him or how much he loves us. We can't impress him. He's already impressed through the Lord Jesus.

I mean, you can't impress him any more than we're washed in his blood. And so a lot of people struggle as Christians under the old covenant to trying to make a fair show in the flesh, as it says in the New Testament, or resolving to do better. And so enter the law again, the second time, the school for the believer to show me your failure and to show me that I can never do it.

You see, the law is the plow that breaks open the hard ground for the seed of grace and our tears water it, the broken and contrite heart. And only a man who gets to the end of himself is going to be healthy in the new life and beginning of Jesus. The law defeats us, shatters us, and brings us to the feet of Jesus.

And so a lot of people who are truly saved are seeking to continue and grow as Christians by their own self-effort. They don't mean to, but they're on that way of self-effort because of the way they've been all their life. Perhaps they had parents that are over-corrective or over-expecting or over-protective.

And I've never been accepted unless I perform. And so I say all that the Lord has said I'm going to do. And if I don't, if I fail or if I fall, then I begin to feel guilty again.

And I wonder why. The reason is, is because the law is pushing you back to Jesus and saying, see, you're unworthy, you're unworthy, and you're unable. The flesh profits vilge.

That's not in the nothing, actually. That's in John 6, 63. The old covenant ministers death.

It always will. And that's exactly what it was given to do. And until it has done its work in me, it is not through with me.

See, don't think it's all so that when you're a Christian that the law is through with you, because if you get back into that circus ring of self, the law will come right back and whip you and say, get out of this ring. What are you doing performing? You get over there out in the other tent. There's tabernacle and worship God.

Get out of the circus and get into the throne room. So Hebrews 9, 16 says this about the new covenant. It says about the new covenant.

Look at Hebrews 9, Hebrews 9, 16. For where a covenant is, there must also of a necessity be the death of the one making that covenant. For a covenant is in force, it means working power, after men are dead.

Otherwise it has no strength at all while the one making that covenant is living. You see, how do I enter this glorious promise of Hebrews? A new knower, a new water, a new awareness, all those newness of life. The way to enter into newness of life is to realize it's resurrection life.

And who qualifies for resurrection life? Dead men only. And that's why it says here that a covenant is in working power. Even though that you may be written in that covenant, you can't really inherit the riches of it until there's a death taking place.

The old man must die. He is dead at the cross, but I must reckon him indeed dead. I must say, Lord, my life is over.

I'm through with trying to improve myself. I'm through with trying to believe this bunk that I'm hearing about. I've got to love myself before I can love anybody else.

All I have to do is love you and hate my own life, the Bible says, and you'll come through in your beauty. You see, we trap ourselves by trying to get a good self-image out of something that doesn't have a good self. In my flesh dwells no good thing.

It's not possible for me to have a good self-image apart from the only worthwhile thing in the universe, which is Jesus. You see, God has a rich life available for me after I'm dead. That's for everyone who's been to the cross and owned it in their experience and said, it's mine.

I'm through with trying to be righteous on my own. I'm through with trying to prove anything. So this is resurrection life, and it's legally mine in Christ.

When do I experience it? Well, the moment that I come bankrupt, broken before God, and seeing the verdict of the law on me. The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to the cross, to bring us to the end, to bring us to new life. The law is a carnal commandment.

It's fleshly. It's for me, and it makes nothing perfect. And God wants me to have a poverty of spirit and know that I'm nothing apart from him.

Well, I want to show you something here just to show you the similarities between the law and the grace. Remember how we said that in Egypt God's people were in bondage, in a land of bondage, and it was an outer bondage. Look at the relationship here.

God's people later go into Canaan, the promised land. This is a picture of a bondage of God's people that is actually in the promised land, but it's not an outer bondage. They're free from that.

Now it's an inner bondage. During the time of judges and all that, they couldn't get free from their own self-righteousness. And so God has a parallel here.

In Egypt, it's an outer bondage. In Canaan, it's an inner. God's remedy in Egypt is take a lamb.

God's remedy for the inner bondage is also take a lamb. Fifty days after the lamb was slain in the Old Testament, the law was given. They came to Sinai.

When the law was given, three thousand people died. Remember? Moses came down and they had broken it. Three thousand people died.

Fifty days after the Lamb of God, Jesus, was slain in the true Passover, the Spirit was given on Pentecost. You see, Pentecost is the Jewish celebration of the giving of the law. And instead of three thousand people dying, like we read the ministration of the law is, three thousand people are saved and born again gloriously with the power of God.

One is Mount Sinai and the other is because of Mount Calvary. You see, the order in God's Word, it's all there. And look at this, it goes further.

The law in the Old Testament was written on tables of stone. It was written on external tablets that I should and ought to do. The law in the New Testament is written on the inside tables of the heart.

God writes it like he did in Luke 24. And they said, ooh, our hearts burned within us while he opened the scriptures. He was writing his law.

Oh, it's a finger of fire on their heart. Has your heart ever burned? Have you got that inner fire tonight? The law says, do this and live. That's always bondage because you can't do this and live.

You'll always not do this and die. Well, God, in the new covenant of grace, he says, live, you sinners, and now do this. He gives us everything that we require to be all that he says.

You see the difference? It's backwards. Instead of trying to quit the works of the flesh to get into the spirit like so many people are doing, I simply come to the cross, reckon his verdict to be so, and I claim his spirit. And I start walking in the spirit, and I don't fulfill the laws of the desires of the flesh.

You'll never get into the spirit by stopping the flesh. You can only stop the flesh by receiving the power of the Holy Spirit. Well, God says the old is a ministry of condemnation.

You're always feeling guilty. It's because you are. You're looking to yourself for some acceptance with God.

You are guilty. But you see, if you take God's verdict and go all the way down in guilt, I'm totally guilty. I should never be disappointed when I fail.

That's all God ever expects of me apart from him. Then I can take God's blessed, total, absolute righteousness in the spirit as a free gift of grace. I'll tell you, if we see this contrast of old and new, it'll change our life.

It really will. I want to just list some contrasts. You're going to get frustrated now because I've got just a second to run down this list.

But you'll never be able to copy it in a hundred years. So I'll put it up afterwards. If you try to copy it, you'll just get right as cramp, and you'll be under condemnation because you didn't get it down.

So God's covenant, the old covenant, and the new covenant. The old covenant is a shadow. It's not the substance.

The new covenant is the substance. The old covenant shows what we can do, and we had plenty of time to demonstrate it throughout the whole Old Testament, and it's nothing. You can do nothing.

Apart from me, you can do nothing, said Jesus. The new covenant, though, takes our mind off ourself and shows us what God has done. Everything.

He's given us everything that pertains to living and godliness. The old covenant leaves us occupied with ourself, and the new covenant brings us to be occupied with Christ. You see the difference? And they'll tell you that it's tonight whether you're living as a Christian under the old or new.

Are you always thinking about yourself, and how pathetic you are, and how big a failure you are? Or are you already settled for that, and you know it's true? You've taken the verdict. I am a failure. I am pathetic.

Quit fighting the verdict. It's true. You say, you're insulting me.

Well, bless your heart. You hadn't heard of what I've said. I'm not insulting you.

God has to demise us before he can raise us. And then we become occupied with Christ because we see that even though I am pathetic and undone and guilty, I'm totally and absolutely accepted, and never he'll change his mind. And so I'm occupied with him.

Hallelujah. Then the old covenant is just a vain attempt to control my flesh. I might wash it.

I might dress it up. I might make it go to church. I might make it keep the Ten Commandments, if I can, on the outside anyway, while I'm raging on the inside with all those things, like a muzzled dog.

But the new covenant is not attempting to control the flesh. It's the expression of the Spirit. It's resting in Christ and letting him come through in power and glory.

The old covenant, like I said, is tables of stone. The new covenant is on the inside, inside, on the heart. It's written there.

Remember? God does it. And you, it's there. You don't have to work it up.

You say, well, I don't believe it's there. I just don't know why. Well, the reason you don't believe it's there is because you don't believe it's there.

It's a basic reason. But if you will begin to believe that it is there, if you're a Christian, you'll find out that it is there. It's like invisible ink.

When you hold it up to light, the light brings it out. Well, faith is the same way. You believe God's Word.

It is there. I do love righteousness because I'm a Christian. I am holy because you say I'm holy.

And pretty soon you find that it's so, as you begin to agree with God, it's that blessed, I will do it. Well, the old is bondage. The new is freedom.

The old says, do this and live. The new says, live and do this. Here's the classic one.

Tonight, the old covenant says, I ought to do better. I really ought to. The old might pray, forgive us for the many times we fail you.

But the new says, I want to. There's a big difference between I have to and I want to. The old covenant shuts every mouth in guilt.

And I'll say it later. It condemns the best man. The new covenant opens every mouth in praise and saves the worst man.

Just a wonderful difference between the old and new. Condemning the best man as the old and saving the worst man as the new. The old covenant is fighting a battle that's already lost.

You're trying to make yourself righteous in your own eyes or somebody else's. It's a lost battle. But the new covenant claims a victory that's already won.

You are righteous in Christ. You already are. The old nature improves, trying to improve yourself under the old covenant.

Whereas the new covenant is a new nature imparted, not improved. Totally new. All things new.

All things passed away. The old covenant, the key word is obey. I'm trying.

I'm trying. I'm trying. And the new covenant, the key word is believe.

Believe. I'm trusting. I'm trusting.

I'm trusting. Well, you won't believe this, but I have one more page of these comparisons here that I'm going to just take your time and show you. Under the old covenant, we see, we discover what we are, which is sinful.

Under the new covenant, we discover who God is and that is loving and everything he said and more. This may be too fast for you to even get this. I don't know.

But if you're getting just the feel of it, just the gist of it, that's enough. In the old covenant, we fight for victory. You're always fighting for victory.

Under the new covenant, we fight there too, but we don't fight for victory. In fact, we are, we are like, we lose a few battles perhaps. We lose a few fights.

We get beat up a little bit, but we don't fight for victory. We fight from victory. And there's a tremendous difference.

Even though I'm down and apparently defeated, I can say, hallelujah. Thine is the kingdom and the victory and the power. You've overcome, Lord.

And so have I. And in all of these things, I am more than a conqueror because you are my master. Well, the old covenant emphasizes the flesh and works programs and all those things like that. And I'm not throwing rocks, but I'm just saying, uh, the new covenant has an emphasis on the spirit and God's programs and plans and guided faith versus work.

The old covenant says, look to yourself, do this, do this, do this, take care, go to this meeting, that meeting, have notebooks, tapeworms, bookworms, seminars, periodicals, plasters, book, bottle, tape, traumatized, you name it. Bumper bombarded, whatever, bumper stickers. I hate those things.

It says, honk if you love Jesus. I want one that says, don't honk if you love Jesus. Tithe, anybody can honk.

Um, uh, anyway, uh, instead of saying like in the old Testament, uh, look to yourselves and the new covenant, it says, look unto Jesus, look unto Jesus. You probably see a bumper sticker like that before long. The old covenant is bad news.

It shuts us out from God. The new covenant is good news. And we draw near to God, bondage or freedom, bondage worked out by man, trying to work it out, trying to work out my problem or worked in by God, his victory in every situation, freedom, freedom, freedom in the, in the things of grace is not the freedom to do whatever I want.

That's not what freedom is. Freedom is to be free from sin. Freedom is the power to do what God chooses.

That's what freedom is for the Christians. The wages of sin is death. That's the old covenant.

The gift of God is eternal life. Free gift. All you have to do is open your hand and say, thank you, Lord.

That's the new covenant. Mount Sinai or Mount Calvary, a curse invoked under the old covenant, a blessing imparted under the new covenant. Take your choice.

If you're determined to not give up on that old self-image, you've had a hard life. Nobody's ever liked you. And, and before you die, Jesus is trying to make you so that you can think good things about yourself.

Finally, after all these years, you're headed for trouble. I'll tell you that blessed is the man that's poor in spirit, who's taken God's verdict and he's come to the cross and says, there's no hope for me. I'm not on earth for myself.

I'm on earth for Jesus. If he left me here for myself, then I've lost cause. If he didn't leave me here for his purposes, he might as well have drowned me when he baptized me.

Taking me on to heaven. If they didn't have a plan for my life, why not just drown a man and say in the name of Jesus, we'll go to heaven. I'm serious.

God has a plan for him and it's to reveal and glorify and be victorious in every situation. Well, man seeks to keep his obligation to God by dedication and self-effort and resolution. And I want to say tonight, law refers to anything at all from the outside that motivates me to be holy or good.

Anything. Grace is when man realizes he is powerless and that all growth and all maturity and all blessing come by laying hold of what God has for me in Jesus Christ. And it's all by faith.

We believe and we receive on the inside. See, it's got to be on the inside. Truth and the inward part.

It's not enough just to not look at bad things if you're lusting on the inside. Jesus wants truth on the inside. You say, ah, that puts me under condemnation.

No, it doesn't. It sets the plumb line up and shows you who God is and what he'll really give you if you'll own your wickedness and confess it as sin. You see, it's really a freeing thing.

And so as we finish, let me say, we like Israel have been brought out of bondage by the blood of the Lamb. In a totally new way of life, we stand at the bottom of Mount Sinai. We are awed by the majesty and the holiness of God.

We love him for delivering us from bondage in our outer life. Our lives have been changed and we feel obligated to pay God back in some way, honored to belong to him. We feel like it's our duty and it should be expected of us now to belong to him.

And we hear his voice saying, this my child, this my child. And we know it's the voice of a great God. And so in all sincerity, we say, Lord, all that you say, I'm going to do.

Exactly like they did, you see. And we pledge, we promise. And the idea of now being good appeals to us because we have a new nature.

And we don't realize that a paralytic can't run. And that even though we have a new life, we don't have the power to be good apart from Jesus. Even though we have a desire to do, that which I desire to do, I find not the ability to do apart from a conscious every moment dependence on him through the new covenant.

So the good we want to do, we can't seem to do. And we seem to go through futile efforts. We promise and we cry and it may all go well for a while, but soon it all falls apart.

Well, the law again is seeking to bring us back to realize it's finished. You are as righteous tonight as you'll ever be in God's sight. And now you serve him.

Yes, but not out of duty, but out of love, out of gratitude, out of thankfulness. You see every person in here tonight who's born again will never be loved more by God a million years from now than you are tonight. I don't care if you read your Bible 10 hours a day, you won't impress him.

It's just a resting in his life. You say, well, what does that do to a life of discipline? Exactly what it should. It gives God all the credit and takes away all of man's pompousness of saying, look what a great disciple I am.

Because anybody that can say that doesn't understand grace. We've come this far by grace. And so why can't we learn from the scriptures tonight? Why do we keep on trying to do and be what only Christ can do and be in us? We try to do and be in our own power, but only Jesus can produce.

I'll tell you the church by and large stops short of saying, and it's no longer I who lives, but Christ. We're trying to save our own life. We're trying to put together our own act and make ourselves feel better.

Jesus is our surety. He will make it good. When does the surety step in? Brother Greg, when does the surety step in? He steps in when you're bankrupt.

If he's a, if Greg's a surety for me, if I have a loan on a car from the bank and he's co-signed for me, I'm trying my best to pay off my indebtedness and I can't do it. But as long as I'm trying to pay off my own indebtedness, my surety sits idle. The second I declare bankruptcy, he's in the deal and he comes and I'm free.

But as long as I struggle with trying to be better than I am, trying to be more rich than I am, then my surety's power is unknown. Tonight, sink down before the Lord Jesus in helplessness. Lord, I've been walking with you 20 years, but I'm helpless.

Tomorrow, to be good or holy. Tomorrow, I'm just as dependent on you to be good and holy in me as I was the day I was saved. Lord Jesus, what a privilege to trust you and believe him that every blessing of the new covenant is yours, that he has given you a new mind.

And you do hate the things he hates and you do love the things that he loves. And you say, well, Al, I believe all you've said, but I just can't lay hold of it. My, uh, my own weakness is the thing that just keeps me back.

Get this. Finding fault with him. He says a new covenant.

You see, that weakness could do the old covenant to a point, but it was to answer that very thing you just said. My own weakness keeps me from it. That God comes in and says, see your weakness.

The problem is child, you don't really believe you're weak. You think you have a little strength. The second you realize you have no strength, Lord, it's not just weakness.

It's impotence. Then I'll give you all I am my own weakness. It's for that very thing that Jesus gave the new covenant for weak people in weakness.

His strength is made perfect tonight. Your your privilege is a new heart, a new mind, and the Holy spirit. And to reckon that God can do all can God do all he's promised? Well, he says, I will, I will, I will.

The question is, will I let him do it? Or will I continue to think that I'm not as bad as the law shows me the second I say I'm worse than I've even seen Lord. I'm yours. Wash me in the blood.

He'll go down deeper. He'll clean me and bondage and drudgery will turn to joy and delight. And I'll see my total acceptance.

And my obedience may not be perfect to him, but because of the blood and because of a new heart, my obedience is now acceptable. And I can walk with a whole consciousness toward God or Christ in me is my only hope. That's what the Bible says.

He's my only hope, nothing else. Well, let's pray together. Father, we've been in a big circle tonight.

We've seen that there is a glory on the ministry of the law that comes to man and says, you need to be better. You need to think good things about yourself, the power of positive thinking. There's a real glory in that.

And our faces can shine like Moses did when he came down from the mountain, but it is a fading glory. It will pass like the glory of man, all of our own self images and all of our own good deeds and all of our own rededications will fail us. But tonight you say there's a new covenant, one that you have done, not that

man tries to do, but one that you will perform.

You will write in our hearts, that law of God and in our minds, and you will put in us that revelation of God, intimate fellowship, and you will cause us to walk in your word by a joyful delight instead of a fear of what happens if we don't. We want this tonight. This is a miracle.

This is what salvation really is. This is what Christianity must be to shake the world. We know this.

And so tonight we pray that this will become a reality, that bad people, no better than anybody else in this room, will become bankrupt in their own eyes and look today afresh to Jesus for all that he is and say, thank you, Lord Jesus, that I am now by your blood righteous. I wonder if you'd just tell him in your heart that I am righteous, just as righteous as Jesus through the blood of the Lamb. I've been brought out of bondage on the inside.

I'm free, free to be a love slave, and I choose it. I give up all my own rights, all my own ideas of what right and wrong are, situational choosing, and I say tonight that the word of God is right about me. In my flesh dwells no good thing, but in Christ I'm complete, perfect in him, accepted in the beloved.

Father, tonight I pray for chains to be left in here, that people that have been unconsciously trying to be better because of more study, more work, more something, trying to just hold their life together, they've been nervous, they've been anxious, I pray that they'll let go of that and they will be able to afford to be who you've made them and relax and rest in Jesus and grow by your mighty power that can't be stopped when you're given freedom on the inside. Take these words and produce your fruit with them for your own glory, the fruits of righteousness which are by Christ Jesus. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/24/SID24939.mp3>

Source:

<https://sermonindex.net/speakers/al-whittinghill/covenant-series-4-experiencing-the-power-liberty-of-the-new-covenant/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net