

New Covenant Living

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the transformative power of the New Covenant in Christ, urging believers to live consistently and wholeheartedly in their faith.

Duration: 57:01

Scripture: Luke 18:1, Romans 3:4, Hebrews 8:8

Topics: "New Covenant"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the New Covenant and the concept of Sabbath rest for God's people. He encourages the audience to study Hebrews chapter 4, which speaks about this rest. The speaker also highlights God's will for believers, which includes rejoicing always and praying without ceasing. He warns against allowing the devil to rob Christians of their inheritance in Christ and references biblical examples of inconsistency in the lives of men of God.

Transcript

One of the things that has changed my Christian life radically, about 30 years ago, was when I discovered that the old covenant that God had made with the Israelites through Moses had been abolished. And that God had made a new covenant through Jesus Christ. And when I looked at my own life, and the lives of most of the Christians I knew, I found it was very similar to an old covenant life.

So, let me describe a little bit about what the old covenant life was like. In Matthew chapter 19, first of all, Matthew 19 and verse 3, the Pharisees came to Jesus and said, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? And Jesus said, Of course not. You remember in the beginning, God made them one man, one woman.

So they said, in verse 7, Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away? So divorce was permitted under the old covenant. And it didn't have to be, like Jesus said, for adultery or fornication. If a man was just tired of his wife, he just sent her off and gave her a certificate of divorce.

And Moses said, You've got to give that certificate of divorce. So, now listen to the answer that Jesus gave. That's the important thing.

Because, verse 8, of the hardness of your heart, Moses permitted you. So, it's when a man's heart is hard that he wants to divorce his wife. It's when a woman's heart is hard that she wants to divorce her husband.

But God's plan, verse 8, from the beginning, was not like that. Then why didn't God, why didn't Jesus, or rather, why didn't God in the Old Testament give the same law that Jesus gave in the Sermon on the Mount that divorce was not permitted except for fornication? There was no question of giving a certificate of divorce. Because, in the New Covenant, there is the possibility of this hard heart of man being softened.

And I discovered that the reason why I and most Christians I knew were living an Old Covenant life was because their hearts were still hard. Now, in the matter of divorce, we may say we are okay. We don't live by Old Covenant standards.

But, in the Old Testament, the experience of the most godly men was up and down, and up and down, and up and down. To begin with, the first man of God mentioned in the Bible, that's Job. I mean, whose life we know in detail.

In the beginning, when he lost his children and property in one day, it says he just fell down and worshipped God. That's amazing. For a man to lose ten children and all his property in one day, and as soon as he hears it, to fall down and worship God.

Genesis, sorry, Job chapter 1. And a few days later, he became sick, with sores and boils all over his body. And again, his attitude is, well, if we receive prosperity from God, shouldn't we accept adversity as well? And it says in all this, Job chapter 2 verse 10, Job did not sin with his lips. That's chapter 2 verse 10.

But five verses later, a few days later, Job said, let the day perish on which I was born. And he goes on complaining, why didn't I die at birth? Now, in between, he suddenly rises to great heights, like chapter 13 verse 15, even if he slays me, I will trust in him. And then again he goes into the dumps, justifying himself.

And then again he rises up saying, I know my redeemer lives, Job 19.25. Back into the dumps again. That was his experience, up and down and up and down and up and down. Now what I want to say is, that is the experience of an old covenant person.

It's the experience of a man whose heart is hard. It's the same with all these men of God. You find Elijah, up on the mountain top, fighting against 850 false prophets, bringing fire down from heaven, and the next chapter you read him running away by the threat of a woman, depressed.

Going to the mountain and saying, Lord, take away my life, I've had enough. And then he's encouraged and he goes back into the ministry again. It was like that with Moses.

And David, who rose to great heights, writing wonderful psalms, and then would sleep with another man's wife and kill the husband and marry the woman. Their life was not consistent. And even in the law, God told them, you've got to worship me one day in seven.

Not all seven days. That's too much for you. But one day in seven, you've got to keep reserved for me the Sabbath.

And even that they found very difficult. And he said, you don't have to give me all your wealth, give me 10%. And even that they found difficult.

God never asked for everything in the old covenant. Don't give me all your children, give me your firstborn son. It was only a token, a portion.

And because God didn't require everything from them, their life was up and down. But when it comes to the New Testament, Jesus said in Luke chapter 14 and verse 33, No one can be my disciple if he does not give up all his own possessions. It's not 10%.

This is one of the fundamental mistakes of Christians who believe that God has called them to give 10% of their income to God. It's an old covenant law. They believe they've got to give one day in seven to God.

It's an old covenant law. And the experience of all these Christians is up and down, up and down, up and down, up and down forever. And they think that's normal, because that's the experience of all the Christians around them.

It was like that with me. But when I read the New Testament, I found it was different. I found there was not a single verse from the day of Pentecost onwards, from the day of Pentecost to the day the New Covenant was established, there's not a single verse after that which said one day in seven belonged to God, or one-tenth of our income belonged to God.

Never. These are the inventions of man, just like child baptism and priestcraft and all the other rubbish in Christianity. This is another part of it.

And that is because... How is it so widespread in Christendom? Because 90% of believers don't read the Bible carefully. That's the reason. I believe those who don't read the Bible carefully deserve to be deceived.

Because God's given them His Word and they don't take it seriously. They just listen to some man and listen to what he says and believe that's Gospel truth without checking the Scripture. There was a wonderful group of believers in a town called Berea, you read in Acts 17, who even when the Apostle Paul preached, imagine that, the Apostle Paul gets up and preaches.

And it says there that they searched the Scriptures, as it were they told Paul, Brother Paul, it's wonderful what we heard, but we can't just follow what you say. We've got to check the Scriptures, whether it's true or not. We'll come back next Sabbath and tell you.

And they went home and searched the Scriptures. It says here in Acts 17, they searched the Scriptures daily, examined it, to see whether what Paul said was correct. And then they believed.

And that's the reason why you never find an epistle to the Bereans in the Bible. Because all the letters, most of the letters anyway, were written for correcting some wrong doctrine or some wrong practice. The Corinthians and the Thessalonians and the Philippian and the Colossians.

But there's no letter to the Bereans. Because it didn't matter which preacher came there. They say, great to hear you brother.

We'll let you know next week whether we agree with you or not. We'd like to check everything you say with Scripture. And they'd go and spend all of that week, comparing what they heard with Scripture, and the result was they never went astray in their doctrine.

If there were more Christians like the Bereans today, we wouldn't have all these false doctrines prevalent in Christendom. And the quality of our Christian life would be much better. Now notice the places in the New Testament where we are told to do something, always.

First of all, you read the testimony of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 2. I want you to notice this word, which comes a number of times. Always, continually, everything. I mean, if you've got a concordance, when you go home, you can look it up yourself.

The places in the New Testament where the word always, continually, everything comes. Here's one of those. This is 2 Corinthians 2 and verse 14.

Thanks be to God who always, this is not once in a while, always leads us in His triumph in Christ. Now always means 24-7. It's not once a week, it's not for a few hours, it's not this up and down experience, it's not thanks be to God who leads us most of the time in victory or part of the time.

No. The experience of the Apostle Paul and the experience of a number of the Apostles in the New Testament was thanks be to God who always leads us in His triumph in Christ. There was victory all the time over sin and the devil and the flesh and the world.

And he says the result of that is we have a fragrance of Christ to God. There was a consistent fragrance. It was a perfume that came out of Paul's life, not once in a while, but all the time.

It wasn't sort of stinking part of the time and a perfume part of the time, like it is the testimony of most Christians. In Philippians 4, verse 4, Paul says, Rejoice in the Lord always. Again that word, always.

And again I say, I meant it. Rejoice. Now remember, Paul was not sitting on a couch and writing this letter.

He was in a Roman dungeon when he wrote this letter. And those Roman dungeons were horrible places. There were rats and cockroaches and mosquitoes all over the place and filth and rubbish.

And he was shivering in the cold. And what did he say there? Rejoice in the Lord always. Is this how God treats His mightiest apostle? Allow him to languish in a prison? God had a purpose in it.

If Paul hadn't been in prison, we wouldn't have got Philippians, we wouldn't have got a number of the Epistles. Because Paul was a man who was always on the go. And the only way God could get him quiet was by getting him in prison.

So even though the devil thought he got a victory, he hadn't. For thousands of years, Paul's letters have blessed us because he was in prison. But what does he say in prison? Rejoice in the Lord always, 24-7.

Now you know, we can look at the commands, I know a lot of people who spend their time arguing about which version of the Bible should be used. And you know, there are lots of people who say, it's solely the King James Version. I say, brother, you can take any version you like.

It says rejoice in the Lord always. What's his arguing about a version? You see, I'm not obeying even one verse written in it. This is one of the diversions the devil has succeeded in taking Christians into.

Rejoice in the Lord always. And when we see something in Scripture like that, we say it's the inspired Word of God. But if you believe it's the inspired Word of God, you will never take these things as suggestions.

I believe if you're honest, many Christians will have to admit that they have taken these verses of Scripture as good suggestions that God has made. You know, take it or leave it type of thing. There are no suggestions in this book.

It's all commandments. And so, rejoice in the Lord always. Is that a suggestion? Or is it a commandment? I'll tell you, for 16 years of my Christian life, after I was born again and baptized, I thought it was a suggestion.

If you can do it, well and good. If you can't do it, OK, it doesn't matter. I never took it as a command of God that I must have a spirit of joy in the Lord, not in my circumstances.

We can never rejoice in our circumstances always. The Bible is very realistic. I mean, if there was a command saying rejoice in your circumstances always, it would be ridiculous.

It says rejoice in the Lord always, in spite of circumstances. Circumstances change, the Lord never changes. Now the question is, is such a life possible? Would an earthly father ask his son or daughter to do something which he knew it was impossible for them to do? I mean, there may be a few evil fathers like that.

But I think most of us would never ask our children to do something impossible like carry 500 pounds on their head or something like that. Now, if you being evil, Jesus said, know how to give good gifts or how not to put heavy burdens upon your children, how much less will your heavenly father put heavy burdens on his children? None of us can claim we are better than God or wiser than Him. Has God given us a command which He knows is impossible to obey? The great tragedy with many Christians is when they look around and compare notes with other Christians, they find that most people don't do this.

So I suppose that's okay. One of the things we got to learn from Scripture is the majority was always wrong in Scripture. It's a very small minority that was right.

In the time of Noah, millions were wrong, and eight people were right. When the children of Israel came to the borders of the Promised Land and were asked to enter Canaan, there were only two people who were right, and 600,000 were wrong. In the days of Jesus, hundreds and probably thousands of Pharisees and Sadducees were all wrong.

There were very few people who were right. So the fact that 30,000 people flocked to a church proves nothing. It doesn't prove that what the person preaching there is right.

Those are for people who haven't read the Bible, who don't see, who don't compare what a person says in Scripture, but who see whether it produces results. We have a Christianity today that follows the laws of pragmatism. If it works, it must be right.

If it doesn't work, it's not right. Let God be true and every man a liar. That's what the Bible says.

That's been a great verse for me. Romans chapter 3 and verse 4. In the middle of that verse it says, Let God be found true, though every man be found a liar. Sometimes the Lord has challenged me as I've studied Scripture and taken these verses very carefully.

What the Lord has asked me was, supposing you did not find a single Christian in the whole world who could testify that he was rejoicing in the Lord always, would you still believe it was possible? I said, yes Lord, I would still believe it. Because let God be true and every man a liar. Now unless you take that attitude to God's Word, where you're going to honor Him and not allow yourself to live by the standards of the Christians you see around you, I want to tell you right now, you'll never, never enter the New Covenant.

You'll never enter into the fullness of the blessing that Christ purchased for us on the cross. We may get a trickle. I believe that most Christians are living on a trickle of blessing when they could have a downpour of heaven upon their lives.

We can't live this life without the power of the Holy Spirit. It's impossible. That is the secret.

Let me show you another verse. Luke chapter 18 verse 1. Jesus said, He told them a parable, verse 1, to show that people ought to pray always, at all times. We're to never give up praying for something.

Which we know is the will of God. And He told the story of this widow who went to the judge and kept on asking for her rights. Now I see the picture like this, that here was a poor widow.

The fact that she had to go to the judge showed that she had no male member in the house, that means no son, no husband, and probably no daughter, because she had to go herself. I don't know how old she was, but she had to go and ask the judge for something which was her right. The enemy is taken something that belongs to me.

Maybe there was a neighbor who was encroaching on her property. And that neighbor was a powerful person, thought, I can take advantage of this poor widow. And she goes to the judge.

And the picture here is of Satan encroaching on the property Jesus Christ has purchased for us. One part of that property is that I can rejoice always. And Satan's stolen part of that makes us rejoice once in a while.

And if I sit back and say, oh well, that's how most Christians live. That'd be like the widow saying, well, if he takes my property, okay. I still got a house to live in.

And then he encroaches some more somewhere else. And Jesus said, you must not allow it. He's talking about God, verse 7, bringing justice for his elect.

Which people? Those who cry to him day and night. What do they cry? Like the widow. Lord, don't let the devil take advantage of me.

Don't let him rob me of what Christ has purchased for me. I want my full inheritance. I mean, if your father was a billionaire and had written a will with properties in different cities in the United States, and he's willed it all for you, I'm sure you'd be very careful that you don't let some cheating lawyer rob you of even 10% of that.

And my guess is that most Christians allow the devil to rob them of 90% of what Jesus has purchased for them on the cross. I know that because that was my own experience for many years after I was born again. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

He's never a rewarder of laziness. As soon as Adam sinned, he said, by the sweat of your brow, you're going to earn your bread. You're not going to get it if you're lazy.

If you're going to be lazy, you won't earn your bread, Adam. You got to sweat and earn your bread. And the same principle applies in the Christian life.

Those whose attitude to Christ and to God is a lazy, sluggish type of thing, go once in a while for a meeting, read the Bible when you feel like it, etc. etc. Do you think in a hundred years God would give

them anything? No! God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

Jeremiah 29 says, You will seek me and find me, verse 13, when you search for me with all your heart. If you don't search for me with all your heart, you won't find me. There is an inheritance purchased by Christ for us, my dear brothers and sisters, which many of us may be missing out on.

And the result is, the church suffers, the work of the Lord suffers. I remember once, seeking the Lord. God called me to India, that's where I live.

That's where I lived all my life. And that's where he's called me to serve him. And I said, Lord, India's got 1.2 billion people.

98% of them don't even know anything about Christ. And the remaining 2%, most of them nominally talk about Christ. Where are the prophets? Don't you love India? I mean, don't you love India to send a few prophets to our nation? And the Lord said to me, I've called many people in this land to be my prophets.

But, most of them fall by the wayside. Somebody goes after money, somebody marries some half-hearted girl and goes away from God's calling for his life. Or one thing or the other.

Somebody goes and joins some organization that will give him a good salary and he misses out completely on my calling for his life. That's happened. Is it possible? I don't want to bring anybody under condemnation.

Condemnation is an old covenant ministry. We made a rule in our church many years ago that we would never talk about the mistakes a person has made in his past life. Even in the church, if somebody makes a mistake, OK.

Repent. Get the Lord to cleanse it in his blood and that's it. But, we must learn something from that mistake.

Otherwise we'll repeat it. So, in that sense, it's good for us to ask ourselves, is it possible that the Lord had a ministry for one of us that we have missed out on? Because we were not wholehearted and radical to seek for it. Like this widow.

Pray always. Let me show you another verse. 1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 16 and 17 and 18.

There are three statements here which are said to be the will of God for our life. Many people have asked me, Brother Zach, how can I find the will of God for my life? Well, I say in many areas it's a bit difficult. But there are three areas at least we definitely know God's will.

Because it's written in Scripture. Let me read them to you. Because at the conclusion of these three statements, 1 Thessalonians 5, 16 to 18, it is written, This is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

One continuous sentence, just separated by semicolons. What is God's will for you in Christ Jesus? Number one, Rejoice always. That's God's will for us.

That's not some top level Christian life or higher Christian life. It's the normal Christian life. Number two, Pray without ceasing.

That is God's will for us. I don't mean to be always on our knees. We got to work eight hours a day.

We got to travel on the roads perhaps another couple of hours a day. We got many other needs at home to take care of. It's the spirit of prayer.

And prayer speaks of a helpless dependence upon God. It's faith is that helpless dependence, leaning of the personality upon God. It's that spirit.

Prayer is not always spoken like in the song we say, Prayer is the soul's sincere desire. Uttered or unexpressed. A desire in the heart that rises up to God.

A continual longing after God. A continual dependence upon God. Pray without ceasing.

Not in words, not in action, but in an attitude of heart. And the third thing is in everything give thanks. Notice in all these three things it's 24-7.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Pray without ceasing. In everything, in every circumstance, in every situation give thanks.

That means no grumbling, no complaining about anything. Now the interesting thing is none of these commandments were found in the Old Testament. Why? Jesus said, because your hearts were hard.

When your heart is hard you can't do these things. And a man who doesn't do these things, his heart is hard. It's clear.

But it need not be hard. The Holy Spirit has come to fill us, to soften our heart, to make these things real in our life. Hebrews in chapter 13.

Hebrews 13 we read and verse 15. Here again you find this 24-7. Continually.

Therefore, through Christ, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God. The fruit of our lips that give thanks to His name. So praise is not something we are to give to God just on Sundays or once in a while like this when He comes on a Friday.

According to Scripture it's continually. Now if you are an Old Testament Jew, I agree. Once in a week on Saturday.

But if you are a New Testament Christian, it's continually all the time. That is one of the big differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament it was one day in seven.

In the New Testament it's seven days in seven. Continually, always. In the Old Testament it was 10% of your income.

In the New Testament I recognize, I don't mean that I take all my salary and put it in the offering box. We are not talking about giving to the church. We are talking about giving it to God.

We are acknowledging that God is the rightful owner of everything I have. And I want to use it in a way that He tells me to. And in the Old Testament you have to give your first born son to God.

Because the Lord said to Israel in Egypt I killed all the first born and your first born should have died but I spared your first born so your first born son is mine. So they had to give their first born child to God. But in the New Testament all our children are to be given to God.

It's our responsibility to bring up every single one of your children to be a God fearing Christian. And that takes labor but it's possible. So you see there's a fundamental difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The New Testament life is not meant to be this up and down type of thing. That may be the experience of most Christians around us but it's sub-normal. The normal Christian life is not that.

Normal Christian life is what I just showed you. Thanks be to God who always leads us in His triumph in Christ. Now I'll tell you something.

When you see a standard proclaimed in God's word and you find your own life is down here below that you've got one of two options either say well that's not exactly what that verse means and twist it and bring it down to your level of your life and then that's where you live. That's what most Christians have done. Or you can say Lord that is your word.

It's your unchanging word. I'm not there. I don't know why I'm not there but I'm not there.

But if it says so in your word then I can be there. I remember certain things when I was claiming those promises from God. I remember once when I was seeking God to be filled with the Holy Spirit as a young man.

I knew I was born again and on my way to heaven and baptized but I didn't have power in my life. I didn't have power to preach. I didn't have power for victory.

And I knew the answer is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And I said Lord I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I really want it Lord and if it takes me 10 years to get there I'm going to get there.

Like like a mountaineer. You know people who are interested in mountain climbing. When they see a mountain they say I've got to climb that.

When they see another mountain they say I've got to climb that. When they see another one they say I've got to climb that. It's a passion for them.

They sacrifice so many other things to keep climbing mountains. Now most of us are quite happy to live on the plains. So much of a trouble going climbing all these mountains.

But it's something like that in the Christian life you know. And I tell you it's not it's not easy to get up to the top of all these mountains. I don't know how many mountains there are in California.

But a lot of people have a passion to climb every one of them. Or every one in the United States. And there are mountain peaks like that in Scripture.

And you can look at them and say that's beautiful. Boy what a life you can live in order to rejoice in the Lord always. It's like admiring a mountain peak and taking a photograph of it and talking about never climbing it.

That's how it is. Many Christians will hang the verse up on the wall and rejoice in the Lord always and pray without ceasing and all that. It's like photographs of mountains that you never climbed.

Is that how it is supposed to be? I hope I can put in your hearts in the hearts of some of you at least I hope many of you a passion to climb some of these mountains. And to say Lord if it takes me 10 years to get to the top of that mountain I'm going to get there. I want to come to a life which these apostles lived.

Which Christ purchased for me on the cross. It's my birthright. Why should the devil why should some cheating lawyer rob me of my inheritance which my father has worked so hard to purchase for me his son.

I want it. Lord I'm seeking you and I've been a Christian 50 years. I was born again in July 1959.

It's exactly 50 years now. When I tell you there are mountains I'm still waiting to climb in scripture. It's an endless thing to the challenges like we read in 1 John chapter 2 1 John 2 It says in verse 6 The one who says he abides in Christ must walk in the same manner as he walked as the living Bible says.

Anyone who says he's a Christian must live as Christ lived. Now think of that. Anyone who says he's a Christian must live as Christ lived.

Now you can look at that verse in two ways. One is boy what a burden to live as Christ lived. Or you can look at it like that great man of God John Wesley looked at it when he read it.

He said boy that gives me the possibility of living on this earth like Jesus lived otherwise God wouldn't command it to me. It's a question of how you look at that verse. You can either look at it as a heavy burden or as a possibility and God is going to help you in this but this is the way he wants you to live.

I'll take another verse. Philippians 2 and verse 5 Have this attitude in yourself which was in Christ Jesus. In every situation have the same attitude that Jesus had when you face a particular trying circumstance have the attitude that Jesus had.

When you have to deal with a difficult person have the attitude that Jesus had. When you're tempted to lust sexually have the attitude Jesus had. Look at money the way Jesus looks at it.

You know if you have a passion for it God will help you. I'll tell you that. Do you think it's possible to have a better attitude to money than the attitude Jesus had? I hope you're not foolish enough to think that.

I mean if you really believe that the way Christ lived on earth was the most perfect way in every area. His attitude to women, his attitude to money, his attitude to his enemies, his attitude to scripture, his attitude to his earthly parents when he was at home for 30 years and his attitude to his work as a carpenter his attitude in every area that is the most perfect attitude we can have. So here's a wonderful verse to ask the Holy Spirit to show us show me Lord what was the attitude Jesus had towards this thing or what attitude would Jesus have to this particular situation? And to ask the Holy Spirit to show us that.

All this is not possible in the Old Testament because in the Old Testament they only had commandments. They didn't have an example. The wonderful thing about the New Covenant is we look unto Jesus.

We don't look unto the law. We don't look unto a written word. We look unto a person.

And Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit has come John chapter 16 the Holy Spirit will take verse 15 the things of mine and show it to you. To me this has been a wonderful experience in my pilgrimage as a Christian. To ask the Lord in the circumstances and trials and temptations I face to ask the Holy Spirit to show me how did Jesus react to this situation in Nazareth when he faced it? I know he faced it because the Bible says he was tempted in every point as we are.

Hebrews 4.15 So this particular temptation I'm facing the circumstances were different obviously He faced a completely different set of circumstances in Nazareth. They never faced road rage in Nazareth. Because there were no fast cars.

But the same temptation to rage and anger that we may face on the road Jesus would have faced in a different set of circumstances. So the set of circumstances is immaterial. To ask the Holy Spirit show me how Jesus faced this particular provocation or temptation.

And give me the grace to react in exactly the same way. I remember once when I was many years ago when I had a headache and I said Lord what's the purpose of this? Is there a reason? And you know I was in the pursuit of overcoming sin in area after area and the Lord said well when you overcome getting irritated with others, when you don't have a headache, that's one class. This is a higher class.

The way you overcome getting irritated with people when you do have a headache. It's a little more difficult. And I saw that there even a sickness can have a purpose.

In teaching us for example you know when we are sick we can suddenly become very demanding. Which we are not normally when we are healthy. And the Lord teaches us to be overcomers.

That you don't make demands on people when you are healthy and you don't make demands on them when you are sick. We are called to serve. And because I can't imagine Jesus making demands on anybody.

There are little things like this. He who says he is a Christian must live as Jesus lived. And I am convinced that most Christians have not taken that seriously and that's why they don't understand the new covenant.

The new covenant was initiated on the day of Pentecost. There would have been no Christianity in the world today if it were not for that mighty baptism in the Holy Spirit. However much people don't like that word theologically baptism in the Holy Spirit has become one of the most controversial phrases and doctrines in Christendom.

But there would have been no Christianity today if it were not for the baptism in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. And I remember when I was seeking God for this baptism. Baptism just means immersion.

That's all it means. It's a Greek word which means dip. And there are two ways we can be immersed.

One is you dip in a pond or a lake or a tank and that's when you are baptized in water. The other way to be immersed is to stand under a waterfall. And the Holy Spirit is pictured like a waterfall or river of God flowing down from heaven to earth.

A mighty waterfall. If I get underneath that I am immersed. That's the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

And I remember when seeking it because I knew the secret of the Christian life is here. The secret of the Christian life is in this thing which the devil has made such a point of controversy. The baptism in the Holy Spirit.

That's the thing that brought people into the new covenant. That's what brought Paul and Peter into this life which they could never have lived otherwise. And I saw in those days when I was seeking it, how I went to certain charismatic Pentecostal groups and I was so turned off by what I saw that inwardly there was a reaction that I don't want that.

But I thank God I didn't stop there. I knelt down before God and I said, Lord, I don't want what I saw there, that fanatic extreme that I see there. But I do want what Peter, James and John got on the day of Pentecost.

That I want. Because I know that transformed Peter, that cowardly fisherman who would deny the Lord even when a little girl asked him a question, who suddenly stands before chief priests and says, you crucified Christ. How did this man change so suddenly? And it wasn't sort of a gradual change that Peter came to in 25 years.

It was instantaneous, in a moment. And I saw the secret was the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And I said, Lord, I don't want all these people who are in different extremes have.

I don't want to go off on a tangent in this. But I want this. I want to enter into the new covenant.

I want to enter into the type of life the apostles lived because I have only one life on earth to live for God. And like someone said, if you spend all that one life accumulating Bible knowledge, God will have to give you another life to live it all out. And you're not going to get another life.

It's this life in which we have to show our gratitude to Christ for all that He's done for us, not just in words and in melodious songs of praise that can move us emotionally, not just in that. But in a life that's broken and poured out. That's the meaning of the breaking of bread and the poured out cup.

A life that's broken and poured out for the Lord. that's what I wanted. The day I was converted, that's what I wanted to live and that's what I want to live today, 50 years later.

I know that's the only life worth living. And when we seek the Lord like this, God fulfills that wonderful promise. You read in Ezekiel in chapter 36, this is a prophecy that was not fulfilled in anybody until the day of Pentecost.

But this is what happened when people were baptized in the Holy Spirit. Ezekiel 36 was a prophecy about what was going to happen in the new covenant. Verse 25 Ezekiel 36, 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be cleaned from all your filthiness, from all your idols.

Symbolically speaking about our being cleansed from our sins in the blood of Christ. What does God do after cleansing us? Now listen to this carefully. Remember what Jesus said? Because of the hardness of your heart Moses gave you those commandments.

Okay, verse 26 I will give you a new heart that's been born again. And I will put a new spirit within you. You know, we've got a spirit.

Our own spirit. All human beings have got a spirit. It's a dead spirit.

But the Lord says I'll give you a new spirit and you'll resurrect it. And, here it is, here's the answer to the old covenant problem. I'll remove that hard heart from you and give you a soft heart.

I cannot produce it in a thousand years. But God can remove it and give me a soft heart. Then I can fulfill these new covenant promises.

I will remove this heart of stone and give you a soft heart of flesh. And then I will put my spirit within you. All the people in the Old Testament had the spirit upon them.

Never within them. He was with them but not in them. But he said, now I'll put my spirit within you.

And that happened on the day of Pentecost. And listen to these wonderful words. It's unbelievable.

You read it slowly. Ezekiel 36, 27 I will cause you, I will make you walk in my commandments. And you will become careful to observe all that I have commanded.

This is not saying you must do this. The Lord is saying I will do this. The big difference between the old covenant and the new covenant is this.

The old covenant is symbolized by the law. Thou shalt, thou shalt not, thou shalt, thou shalt not, thou shalt, thou shalt not. That is the law.

The new commandment is, I will I will make you, I will put my spirit, listen to this. I will sprinkle clean water upon you. I will cleanse you from your filthiness.

I will give you a new heart. I will put a new spirit within you. I will remove the heart of stone.

I will give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you. I will make you walk in my statutes and you will be careful to observe my ordinances.

Very different from the ten commandments which said, you shall, you shall, you shall not, you shall not, you shall not. And if we live by if we imagine that God expects us to grit our teeth and somehow rejoice in the Lord always, somehow pray always, somehow praise the Lord continually, somehow give thanks for everything, we are back under the law. He doesn't say, you must, you must.

I will. You cannot but I will. That's a wonderful thing about the new covenant.

And that's why the Bible speaks about a rest. I wonder how many of you have studied Hebrews chapter 4 carefully. If you haven't, I would give you a little homework.

Meditate on Hebrews chapter 4. In Hebrews chapter 4 it says there is a Sabbath rest for God's people. That remains a Sabbath rest for God's people and we enter into that rest, Hebrews 4 10, 9 and 10 when we stop working ourselves and let God do the work. When we stop Old Testament law was working yourself.

Lord, do a work in me by your spirit. OK. One more verse and then we'll close.

Hebrews 8 This is the new covenant that I will verse 8 onward. This is the new covenant I will make with you. It's not like that old covenant verse 9 which I made with Israel.

Now listen, the new covenant. I will verse 10, put my law into your mind. I will write it upon your heart and I will be your God and I will be merciful and I will remember.

Same thing. There is no thou shalt and thou shalt not. Do you know how liberating this is? This is the way to live the Christian life.

Always in triumph where God's amazing grace keeps us from falling into the sins that humanity falls into and the sins that most Christians fall into. As we seek him for the power of his spirit then we are determined to see when God when you hear a message like this I believe God searches our hearts to see who is taking it seriously and who is willing to pay the price. There are some things in the Christian life that

are free.

Forgiveness of sins absolutely free. But there are some things in the Christian life you got to pay a price for. You remember Jesus told the story of a man who found a treasure hidden in the ground in Matthew 13 and he had to go and sell all that he had in order to buy it.

He couldn't get it free. He said the kingdom of heaven is like that. And then he spoke about another parable about a man who was seeking for precious pearls and he sold all that he had in order to buy this pearl of great price.

He didn't get it free. There are some things in the Christian life for which you have to buy. Or you remember the words of the Lord to the elder in Laodicea, to the church in Laodicea.

You are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked I counsel you to buy from me gold eyesalves and clothing. You have to buy. So there are certain things in the Christian life you have to pay a price for.

Paul says Philippians 3, 7 and 8 Everything that was once gained to me I counted as loss for Christ and I have, I counted all as loss and I have suffered the loss of all things, Philippians 3, 8 and counted all as rubbish so that I may gain the pearl of great price, Christ. Here is a person who found the pearl of great price but he, like that other merchant he had to sell all that he had. He had to give up every earthly ambition.

He had to be detached from his attachment to his wealth and his ambitions and say Lord I want to live totally for you. I promise you you will never be able to live a better life than that. If you say Lord I have lived enough for myself I want to live totally for you from now on.

You will find a qualitative difference in your life from the moment you decide that I count everything as rubbish that I may gain Christ. That is the type of person who enters into this new covenant life and I believe it is possible for every one of us you know when God is asking us to give up our garbage so that we can get his gold. That is what Paul says.

I count it all rubbish. It is all garbage and God gives me Christ, gold instead. It is because the devil has blinded our eyes to think that this garbage is gold.

He has fooled us. He fooled us to think that the great thing is to have to earn a lot of money and to be a successful person in this earth in the eyes of the world. Many who are first will be last when Christ comes again because they live for the wrong goals.

Make it your ambition to please God and let everything else have a secondary place. At least for the rest of our life we can do nothing about the years gone by but we can certainly do something about the days to come. I want to say to you in Jesus name this is the will of God for every one of us and I want to say also this to you that it is possible for every single one of us who are born again to enter this life if you seek the Lord diligently and say Lord I want this.

There is no partiality with God. What He has done for others He will do for you. Nobody is special.

And evaluate our lives in the light of what we have heard. And remember this is not a word of condemnation but rather a word of encouragement. It is as if the Lord is saying to us my son, my daughter come up higher come up higher from the level in which you are living I am inviting you.

That is not a message of condemnation. That is an invitation to live at a higher plane. And the Lord says I will do it for you if you will seek me.

Heavenly Father please give us the faith to believe that what you have done for these apostles you can do for us as you fill them with the Holy Spirit and change them in a moment. You can do that for us Lord. Help us each one to go that way.

In Jesus name Amen.

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