

**"The New Covenant"**

**Part 1**

**2 Corinthians 3:6-18**

**Introduction:** The passage which is before us tonight is one that can be very difficult to understand if we do not stop and consider what was happening in Corinth.

**Notice 2 Corinthians 3:6**

Here in this verse Paul begins to write concerning the New Covenant and as he does he will explain why the New Covenant is so much better than the Old Covenant. The verses which are before us could be considered to be a condensed version of the book of Hebrews. Now before we get into these verses I want to raise a question, "Why does Paul go from defending his message in verses 1-5 and then begin to speak about the Law in 6-18?"

Some say his thoughts in the previous verses about "LETTERS" of recommendation reminded him of the LETTER of the Law. This could be what stirred his mind about the two covenants. But the main reason why he includes this section which is before us has everything to do with his critics who had made their way into the church at Corinth. Let me explain some of what was happening at Corinth.

After Paul had spent 18 months at Corinth preaching the Gospel and the church was established the church then came under spiritual attack. One of the groups which Satan used in the attack were Jews who deep into Judaism. These were people who believed that salvation was by keeping the Law. So they made their way into the church and they brought with them their legalism. This was a problem which Paul had to deal with on other occasions also. Let me show you what the Judaizers had done to the Galatians.

**Galatians 1:6-9**

<sup>6</sup> *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:*

<sup>7</sup> *Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*

<sup>8</sup> *But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*

The Judaizers had made their way into the church at Galatia and they had convinced the believers that salvation was by keeping the Law. They had convinced the Galatians that circumcision was a requirement for salvation. Notice what Paul writes later in Galatians.

### **Galatians 3:1-3**

*O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?*

<sup>2</sup> *This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

<sup>3</sup> *Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*

The Judaizers had convinced many of the believers at Galatia that the Law was given for the purpose of salvation.

Now let me get your mind back to Corinth again. The Judaizers had made their way into the church at Corinth and they had brought with them legalism. They were trying their best to mix the Law with grace. We must understand that this was an attempt by Satan to distort the message of GRACE. It was an attempt to pollute the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This was RELIGION and not SALVATION. These Jews who were driven by Satan were attempting to bring the Old Covenant into the church at Corinth. I want to take some time here and explain to you the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

## I. The Old Covenant

We have studied much of the Old Covenant in our study of the book of Hebrews so some of this will be review for us which will help us get this deeper into our minds. The Old Covenant was what we would call a **CONDITIONAL COVENANT**. By that I mean the blessings of the Old Covenant were based upon the obedience of the people.

### **Exodus 19:3-8**

<sup>3</sup> *And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;*

<sup>4</sup> *Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.*

<sup>5</sup> *Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:*

<sup>6</sup> *And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

<sup>7</sup> *And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.*

<sup>8</sup> *And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.*

Here were the terms of the Old Covenant. God promised blessings if Israel kept the Words which God spoke and Israel agreed to keep the Words of the Covenant. But it was not long after this that Israel failed when they made the golden calf. Now along with the Law came the Levitical priesthood sacrificial system. Because the people of Israel were not able to keep the Law God had introduced a sacrificial system in which animals were sacrificed and offered for the ATONEMENT/COVERING for sin.

The Law was never given for a means of salvation. That was not the purpose of the Law. The Law was designed for two main reasons.

1. To help man see the righteousness of God.
2. To expose the sinfulness of man.

### **Galatians 2:16**

<sup>16</sup> *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.*

### **Galatians 3:24-25**

<sup>24</sup> *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

<sup>25</sup> *But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*

So we can see that the Law was never given to save anyone but it was given for the purpose of bringing man to Jesus Christ for salvation.

The Old Covenant could not save one person and the blood of bulls and goats could not wash away sin.

### **Hebrews 10:4**

<sup>4</sup> *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*

So every year the people of Israel had to bring their animals for sacrifices and the sins from the previous years continued to pile up on their debt. It was never ending and when the people of the Old Testament died they could not even get into the presence of God. They were kept in a place known as Paradise.

## II. The New Covenant

In Jeremiah God had foretold that He would establish a BETTER COVENANT with Israel and we looked at this in Hebrews for the writer of Hebrews wrote concerning the New Covenant.

**Hebrews 8:7-12**

<sup>7</sup> For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

<sup>8</sup> For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

<sup>9</sup> Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

<sup>10</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; **I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts:** and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

<sup>11</sup> And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

<sup>12</sup> For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, **and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.**

The New Covenant would be so much better than the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was an external covenant but the New Covenant was an internal covenant for it is written on the heart. It was also a better covenant because Jesus Christ perfected each believer FOREVER.

**Hebrews 10:10-14**

<sup>10</sup> By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all.**

<sup>11</sup> And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

<sup>12</sup> But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

<sup>13</sup> From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

<sup>14</sup> **For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.**

Now what we need to understand is that the ceremonies and the rituals of the Old Covenant were shadows of the New and Better Covenant.

**Colossians 2:16a-17**

<sup>16</sup> *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:*

<sup>17</sup> *Which are a shadow of things to come;*

**Hebrews 10:1**

*For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.*

The Law was only a shadow of good things to come and therefore it could not make one sinner perfect which means it could never bring the common man into the presence of God. But the New Covenant has made a way for every believer to come into the presence of God at any time.

**Hebrews 4:16**

<sup>16</sup> *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

Now let us get back to 2 Corinthians and what was happening within that church. The Judaizers had come in and they were placing the believers under the Law. This was nothing but an all-out attack against GRACE. This was an attack against the Gospel of Jesus Christ so Paul had to write and defend Grace.

There is something else about legalism that we need to keep in mind as we consider the situation at Corinth. Legalism can be intimidating to those who are exercising GRACE. Let me show you what I mean.

**Galatians 2:11-13**

<sup>11</sup> *But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.*

<sup>12</sup> *For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.*

<sup>13</sup> *And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.*

Peter was intimidated by the Jews who believed the Gentiles could have no part in salvation. But Peter knew better because of the vision which God had given to him. But the point I want you to see is how intimidating those in legalism can be.

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*PM Service*

With that said we can understand a little more about the Judaizers influence in the church at Corinth.

**Conclusion:**

There are many churches today who are involved in legalism also. Many have their own set of rules and regulations which the people must follow. Then there are the other legalistic churches that have ceremonies and rituals which they go through every week which they believe are a means of salvation. Either way it is NOT GRACE and therefore it is NOT of God. ANYTHING added to the CROSS as a means of salvation is legalism.

This will be the foundation we will build upon next week.