

Week 9

Pastor Bonnie

“Let Us” References so far:

- Heb. 4:1 – Fear!
- Heb. 4:11 Be Diligent
- Heb. 4:14 Hold Fast our Confession
- Heb. 4:16 Draw Near with Confidence to the Throne of Grace

Personal Application from week 8:

Chapter 3:1-6:

- **Our Confession** – “to say the same thing as”
V1. “...the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus”
- **Our Confidence** “freedom of speech”
v. 6 “...if we hold our *freedom of speech* and the *boasting of our hope* firm unto the end.
Our “*freedom of speech*” and “the boasting of our hope” is from political term in classical Greek: *parresia*. The city of Athens prided itself on having what is guaranteed by the United States Constitution: confidence, expressed in speech. When you lose your freedom of speech you’ve lost your rights as citizen. The idea was nobody could stop you saying what you wanted to say *provided it didn’t transgress certain basic rules*.
- **Until the end:** the need for perseverance, endurance: maintain our confession, our confidence, the boasting of our hope, firm until the end
 - Holy(sanctified)
 - brothers(family)
 - partakers(heirs & participants)
 - heavenly calling(upward, forward, eternal)
 - fasten attention(center yourself now)
 - Apostle (sent by someone to someone for something)
 - High Priest (head of God’s eternal order we have been received into)
 - Confession (the evidence of our participation in that order)
 - House (the purpose for all of this is that God’s house be built)
 - Sons have a greater responsibility than servants
 - Faithfulness is the evidence of participation

- Endurance and hope shows our conviction and anchors our inheritance

Chapter 3:1-6: The Son who was faithful

V 7-11 Be faithful; The Holy Spirit wrote the Bible, quoted: Psalm 95:7-11.

V12 2nd of 5 “solemn warnings”: Warning against unbelief (1st: don’t neglect what we’ve heard, lest we drift away).

V13 Sin is deceptive. Gen. 3:13 “enticed” beauty (look at), body (eat), power (wise); produces hardening of spiritual arteries leading to spiritual heart failure! Ob. 1:1 The pride of your heart has deceived you” *nasha* to lead astray, i.e. (mentally) to delude, or (morally) to seduce:--beguile, deceive, (greatly, utterly, intensified).

V14 We continue to participate in our heavenly calling as long as we hold fast to our confidence until the end.

V15 Repeated exhortation “Today-hear-do not harden your hearts.”

V16-19 The example of Israel’s unbelief, rebellion (refusing to trust and obey), failure to enter the promised rest.

Hebrews Chapter 4

Begins with a “therefore,” referring to the solemn warning against unbelief that began in the previous verses. This warning is 26 verses long from 3:7-4:13!

(Heb. 3:16-19)“For who provoked him when they had heard? And did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they should not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.”

Hebrews 4:1-16:

“Therefore, let us fear lest, there being left to us a promise to enter into God’s rest, any of you should seem to have come short of it. For we also have been evangelized just as they were too; but the word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not mixed with faith in those who heard it. We who believe are entering into the rest. As he said, “As I swore in my wrath they shall never enter into my rest.” Although God’s works were finished from the foundation of the world, He said somewhere concerning the seventh day as follows, “And God rested

on the seventh day from all his works;" and here again, "They shall never enter into my rest." Since therefore it remains for some to enter into God's rest, and those who previously had the good news presented did not enter in through disobedience [unbelief], and again he specifies a day, saying, "Today," through David after such a long time, "Today if you will hear his voice do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest then he would not be speaking about another day. After all that, there remains therefore a keeping of the Sabbath for the people of God; for the one who has entered into His rest has also himself rested from his own works as God did from His. "Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, that nobody may fall through the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and energetic and sharper than any two edged sword and penetrates to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and the marrow and is a judge and discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart, and there is no creature that is invisible before Him, but all things are naked and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Having therefore a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses But one who has been tempted or tested in all points in a way like us but without sin. Let us (4th let us) therefore, approach with freedom of speech to the throne of grace in order that we may obtain mercy and find grace for help at the time we need it.

V 1. Let us "fear": 1st of 12, corporate "Let us" decisions

- There is a place for "fear" in faith: in fact faith is grounded in a certain kind of "fear": The fear of the Lord
- Is 11:2: The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—his delight is in the fear of the Lord.

V 2. "Word of hearing": God's word is designed to be heard and to be effective when mixed with faith, but we can decide to refuse to hear it, and it will have no effect on us.

- 1 Thess 2:13 "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you received it not as a word of man, but as it truly is, a word of God which also works effectively in you who believe it.

V 3. “I swore in my wrath” Quote from Psalm 95; the Hebrew word indicates God’s “color rose,” and He became “livid” over Israel’s repeated failure to believe and trust Him. Each time, Moses patiently mediated between the people and God.

V 4. Concerning the Sabbath: “A keeping of the Sabbath”: (not as under the law, but as in the character of God’s resting on the 7th day to enjoy and be “refreshed” from the fruit of His work).

- He rested on the 7th day: not because he was tired, but to enjoy the works he had done: Sabbath Peace (infers that you have worked faithfully for 6 days and then you enter “enjoyment” of the blessing of your works as God did)
- Genesis 2:2, “And by the seventh day God completed his work which he had done; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done.”
- Exodus 31:17 “It is a sign between me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day he ceased from labor and was refreshed.”

V 8. “If Joshua had given them rest”:

- The generation under Moses did not enter the Promised Land at all
- The generation under Joshua entered the land but did not fully obey the Lord’s commands and so did not enjoy full possession or permanent rest
- Outside your inheritance you cannot rest: the rest is only in the inheritance
- You can be in the inheritance and not rest or fully possess if you get involved with the Canaanites!

V 9. “The one who has entered into His rest has also himself rested from his own works as God did from His”:

- We enter by “ceasing (resting) from our own works”
- No longer doing our own will
- No longer doing God’s will in our own strength

V 10. Rest: Entrance into God’s rest is a decision and a perpetual act of utter faith. God offers us rest not in material or physical situation but in relationship found solely in relationship with God and with one another. It requires a definite personal decision. In Jewish culture the busiest period in the household is just

before Sabbath begins: everything must be gotten ready before the Sabbath begins: “Let us therefore make every effort to enter into that rest”

- God has a Sabbath rest appointed for us
- This rest lies within our inheritance
- Our inheritance is all that becomes ours through our relationship with Jesus (“Whose family we are if we maintain our confidence and boasting to the end”—“For we have become partakers in Christ(he shares everything with us), if indeed we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm to the end.”)
- This inheritance is guaranteed by
 - Jesus’ death on our behalf
 - his life of endless intercession for us
- The great hindrance to entering his rest is unbelief (“Be careful you aren’t following the example of unbelief.”)
- God’s offer is for today, present, urgent (“Today, if you will hear his voice.”)
- Be attentive to hear God’s voice; rest from our own works—committing ourselves to do the work God has appointed for us, relying on God’s supernatural grace & power not on our own ability (“The Father dwelling in me does the works-the words that I speak are not my own.” “Not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit” (Zech 4:6); setting right priorities, eternal before the temporal; maintaining a bold confession of our hope; eliminating any residue of Canaanites (Joshua 2:12).

V 11. “The confession”: The confession of faith that belongs to every Christian and by which we activate the ministry of our Great High Priests “saying the same as”—in “confidence”—the freedom of speech belonging by right to a citizen of the kingdom.

V 12. “The word of God is living and energetic”:

- Derek: “God’s word penetrates to every area of our being. If we regularly expose ourselves to it, it will lay bare any undetected areas of unbelief or disobedience.” Expose yourself regularly to the word and let it judge your thoughts and intentions: don’t judge yourself either that you are in good shape or bad shape but expose yourself to the word and let it do its work!”
- The warning is do not make a decision to not fully receive God’s word.

V 13. “All things are naked and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do”: Severe while comforting & reassuring; “open and laid bare” refers to a wrestler whose throat IS EXPOSED TO his opponent and ready to be chopped on the throat or of a chicken ready to get its head cut off.

- “While you are reading your bible your Bible is also reading you.”
- Either your bible will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from your Bible.

Pride

Stubbornness

Sin is DECEPTIVE, subtle, potentially “beautiful” desirable

1 Corinthians 10:

1 Cor 10: 1-4, “For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers,[a] that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.”

- **Exodus 23:23,** “I am sending my Angel ahead of you.”
- The “Man” who met Joshua before Jericho.
- Moses “struck” Christ in the same way the law “struck” Him as He became the penalty of sin for us.

1 Cor. 10:5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

1 Cor. 10:6 Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.

1 Cor. 10:7 Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.”

- Num. 32:1-6, The golden calf incident

1 Cor. 10:8 We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.

- Num. 25:1-2;9 “The people began to whore with the daughters of Moab. These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel...and the number of them who died were twenty-four thousand”
- Deut. 4:2-3 “You shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish from it at all, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. Your eyes have seen what the Lord did because of Baalpeor: for all the men that followed Baalpeor, the Lord your God has destroyed them from among you.”

1 Cor. 10:9 We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents,

- Num. 21:5-8, “The people became impatient because of the journey. The people spoke against God and Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food.” The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. So the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and you; intercede with the LORD, that He may remove the serpents from us.” And Moses interceded for the people.”

1 Cor. 10:10 Nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.

- Num. 14:37 the evil report of the 10 spies

1 Cor. 10:11-13 Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Incidents of refusing to believe: The Red Sea, bitter pool at Marah, hungry for meat not manna, violated the Sabbath rest, grumbled about water at Meribah-Moses struck the Rock, did not destroy Amelek, resisted God's word at Sinai, golden calf, spared the Midianites, Nadab & Abihu offer strange fire, 10 spies evil report, refused to go to war against the Amorites when God said-then went when He said not to,

Hebrews 4 cont.

V14. "Approach with freedom of speech to the throne of grace": Activate his ministry as High Priest by our confession;

V15. "That we may obtain mercy and find grace for help at the time we need it.": Recognize "the time we need it" is the same time we are most exposed and vulnerable to drawing back because of the circumstance:

V16. The conclusion is continuing to exercise CONFIDENT ACCESS TO GOD through Jesus our Apostle and High Priest.

"Having therefore a great High priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God let us hold fast the confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses But one who has been tempted or tested in all points in a way like us but without sin."

Think of Israel's example of unbelief that made God "livid" His "color rise"

RED SEA

Pharaoh and his army that had been their enslavers for 400 years were bearing down on them. Israel had no arms, they were in carts and on foot, the army was in chariots with shields and bows and spears, in front of Israel was a sea of water!

The "natural" or soulish reaction was they were terrified and cried out to the Lord and immediately turned on Moses: They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"

Moses makes a bold statement of faith: Stand still and see the deliverance of the Lord.

God: "Tel the people to go forward!"

Fear of death will tempt you to disbelieve and disobey God

The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night.

God had already planned the deliverance just as he had done to get them out of Egypt—10 amazing miracles and the next moment they don't believe He is God enough to finish His work

They have a big dancing shouting meeting: "Sing to the Lord He has triumphed gloriously...!"

MARA

Next stop: no water: a day or two in the desert with no water and people start dying:

“they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. 23 When they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore it was named Marah. 24 So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?”

25 Then he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree; and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet.

There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them. 26 And He said, “If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer.”

They came to an oasis Elim

MEAT

Within 6 weeks of the deliverance and days after the Mara incident 2 The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 3 The sons of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the LORD’S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

4 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction. 5 On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.”

Ex 16 Moses: “the LORD hears your grumblings which you grumble against Him. And what are we? Your grumblings are not against us but against the LORD.”

9 Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, ‘Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your grumblings.’” 10 It came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. 11 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 12 “I have heard the grumblings of the sons of Israel; speak to them, saying, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’”

“he who had gathered much had no excess, and he who had gathered little had no lack; every man gathered as much as he should eat. 19 Moses said to them, “Let no man leave any of it until morning.” 20 But they did not listen to Moses, and some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul; and

Moses was angry with them. 21 They gathered it morning by morning, every man as much as he should eat; but when the sun grew hot, it would melt.”

God was attempting to teach them walk in faith of what He had said and in spite of having seen Him do mighty acts on their behalf “they did always err in their hearts”

Sabbath:

God tells them specifically gather for 2 days on the 6th and rest on the 7th:

There are people out searching around for the food God specifically had provided the day before

27 It came about on the seventh day that some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. 28 Then the LORD said to Moses, “How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions? 29 See, the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.” 30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

Ex 17: Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the [b]command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. 2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water that we may drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?” 3 But the people thirsted there for water; and [c]they grumbled against Moses and said, “Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill [d]us and [e]our children and [f]our livestock with thirst?” 4 So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, “What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me.” 5 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 He named the place [g]Massah and [h]Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us, or not?”

Amalek:

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write this in [m]a book as a memorial and [n]recite it to Joshua, [o]that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.” 15 Moses built an altar and named it The LORD is My Banner; 16 and he said, “[p]The LORD has sworn; the LORD will have war against Amalek from generation to generation.”

Ex 19: Moses on Sinai “See how I brought you out of Egypt on eagle’s wings and brought you to myself...Now if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My [b]own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’... All the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do!”

The LORD Visits Sinai

18 Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain [g]quaked violently. 19 When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with [h]thunder. 20 The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. 21 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, “Go down, [i]warn the people, so that they do not break through to the LORD to gaze, and many of them [j]perish. 22 Also let the priests who come near to the LORD consecrate themselves, or else the LORD will break out against them.” 23 Moses said to the LORD, “The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for You [k]warned us, saying, ‘Set bounds about the mountain and consecrate it.’” 24 Then the LORD said to him, “[l]Go down and come up again, you and Aaron with you; but do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD, or He will break forth upon them.” 25 So Moses went down to the people and told them.

God gives the 10 words

Moses the faithful mediator in all God’s house:

19 Then they said to Moses, “Speak [g]to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak [h]to us, or we will die.” 20 Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may [i]remain with you, so that you may not sin.” 21 So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.

3 Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the [a]ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!” 4 Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar [b]at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 He sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD. 6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and the other half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. 7 Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the

people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" 8 So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has [c]made with you [d]in accordance with all these words."

9 Then Moses went up [e]with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, 10 and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet [f]there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, [g]as clear as the sky itself. 11 Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank.

12 Now the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and [h]remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets [i]with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction." 13 So Moses arose [j]with Joshua his [k]servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. 14 But to the elders he said, "Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever [l]has a legal matter, let him approach them." 15 Then Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. 16 The glory of the LORD [m]rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud.

Ex 32 Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us [a]a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." 2 Aaron said to them, "Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." 3 Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. 4 He took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, "[b]This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt." 5 Now when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD." 6 So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

Ex 33 3 Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, because you are [b]an obstinate people, and I might destroy you on the way."

4 When the people heard this [c]sad word, they went into mourning, and none of them put on his ornaments. 5 For the LORD had said to Moses, "Say to the sons of Israel, 'You are [d]an obstinate people; should I go up in your midst for one

moment, I would destroy you. Now therefore, put off your ornaments from you, that I may know what I shall do with you.” 6 So the sons of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward.

12 Then Moses said to the LORD, “See, You say to me, ‘Bring up this people!’ But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, ‘I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.’

13 Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people.” 14 And He said, “My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.” 15 Then he said to Him, “If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here. 16 For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the [g]earth?”

Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and he took two stone tablets in his hand. 5 The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as [c]he called upon the name of the LORD. 6 Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and [d]truth; 7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.” 8 Moses made haste [e]to bow low toward the earth and worship. 9 He said, “If now I have found favor in Your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though [f]the people are so obstinate, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your own [g]possession.”

The Covenant Renewed

10 Then [h]God said, “Behold, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been [i]produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people [j]among whom you live will see the working of the LORD, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you.

11 “[k]Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day: behold, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. 12 Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in

your midst. 13 But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their [l]Asherim 14 —for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God— 15 otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you [m]to eat of his sacrifice, 16 and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons also to play the harlot with their gods. 17 You shall make for yourself no molten gods.

Ex 35 reemphasizes keeping the Sabbath

Numbers 3 3 These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he [a]ordained to serve as priests. 4 But Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD when they offered strange fire before the LORD in the wilderness of Sinai; and they had no children. So Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests [b]in the lifetime of their father Aaron.

Numbers 26:

But Nadab and Abihu died when they offered strange fire before the LORD. 62 Those who were numbered of them were 23,000, every male from a month old and upward, for they were not numbered among the sons of Israel since no inheritance was given to them among the sons of Israel.

63 These are those who were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the sons of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho. 64 But among these there was not a man of those who were numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest, who numbered the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. 65 For the LORD had said [x]of them, “They shall surely die in the wilderness.” And not a man was left of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.

Numbers 31: Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Take full vengeance for the sons of Israel on the Midianites; afterward you will be gathered to your people.” 3 Moses spoke to the people, saying, “Arm men from among you for the war, that they may [a]go against Midian to execute the LORD’S vengeance on Midian. 4 A thousand from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel you shall send to the war.”

15 And Moses said to them, “Have you [c]spared all the women? 16 Behold, these [d]caused the sons of Israel, through the [e]counsel of Balaam, to [f]trespass

against the LORD in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the LORD.

Num 33 The Law of Possessing the Land:

‘When you cross over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, 52 then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their figured stones, and destroy all their molten images and demolish all their high places; 53 and you shall take possession of the land and live in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it. 54 You shall inherit the land by lot according to your families; to the larger you shall give more inheritance, and to the smaller you shall give less inheritance. Wherever the lot falls to anyone, that shall be his. You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers. 55 But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come about that those whom you let remain of them will become as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they will trouble you in the land in which you live. 56 And as I plan to do to them, so I will do to you.’”

Deut 1 I said to you, ‘You have come to the hill country of the Amorites which the LORD our God is about to give us. 21 See, the LORD your God has placed the land before you; go up, take possession, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you. Do not fear or be dismayed.’

22 “Then all of you approached me and said, ‘Let us send men before us, that they may search out the land for us, and bring back to us word of the way by which we should go up and the cities which we shall enter.’ 23 The thing pleased me and I took twelve of your men, one man for each tribe. 24 They turned and went up into the hill country, and came to the valley of Eshcol and spied it out. 25 Then they took some of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought it down to us; and they brought us back a report and said, ‘It is a good land which the LORD our God is about to give us.’

26 “Yet you were not willing to go up, but rebelled against the [p]command of the LORD your God; 27 and you grumbled in your tents and said, ‘Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us. 28 Where can we go up? Our brethren have made our hearts melt, saying, “The people are bigger and taller than we; the cities are large and fortified to heaven. And besides, we saw the sons of the Anakim there.”’ 29 Then I said to you, ‘Do not be shocked, nor fear them. 30 The LORD your God who goes before you will Himself fight on your behalf, [q]just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, 31 and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as a man carries his son, in all the way which you have

walked until you came to this place.’ 32 But [r]for all this, you did not trust the LORD your God, 33 who goes before you on your way, to seek out a place for you to encamp, in fire by night and cloud by day, to show you the way in which you should go.

34 “Then the LORD heard the sound of your words, and He was angry and took an oath, saying, 35 ‘Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land which I swore to give your fathers, 36 except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and to his sons I will give the land on which he has set foot, because he has followed the LORD fully.’ 37 The LORD was angry with me also on your account, saying, ‘Not even you shall enter there. 38 Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall enter there; encourage him, for he will cause Israel to inherit it. 39 Moreover, your little ones who you said would become a prey, and your sons, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, shall enter there, and I will give it to them and they shall possess it. 40 But as for you, turn around and set out for the wilderness by the way to the [s]Red Sea.’

41 “Then you said to me, ‘We have sinned against the LORD; we will indeed go up and fight, just as the LORD our God commanded us.’ And every man of you girded on his weapons of war, and regarded it as easy to go up into the hill country. 42 And the LORD said to me, ‘Say to them, “Do not go up nor fight, for I am not among you; otherwise you will be [t]defeated before your enemies.”’ 43 So I spoke to you, but you would not listen. Instead you rebelled against the [u]command of the LORD, and acted presumptuously and went up into the hill country. 44 The Amorites who [v]lived in that hill country came out against you and chased you as bees do, and crushed you from Seir to Hormah. 45 Then you returned and wept before the LORD; but the LORD did not listen to your voice nor give ear to you. 46 So you remained in Kadesh many days, [w]the days that you spent there.

Old and new in the book of Hebrews:

1. Covenant with Abraham: The covenant God made with Abraham was unconditional. Gen. 15:1-6 "After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." But Abram said, "O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir." Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir." He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars — if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be. Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness."

Abraham: Faith=righteousness->promises=rest

Israel: Unbelief=disobedience->died in the wilderness

The Abrahamic covenant had emphasized God's promise.

The Sinai covenant emphasized human responsibilities.

The law was meant to reveal sin and the need for atonement. The law was given to show the impossibility of man becoming sinless through his own works. The law repeatedly reminded the people they were sinning and needed a "once for all" sacrifice to break the cycle, change the human condition, bring man permanently near to God, and install a new order for life and restored relationship with God and one another. The only possibility was a whole new "law" with new "requirements" and "better sacrifices."

The law of the Spirit, cut by God Himself in the offering of His own body and life's blood in exchange for the lives of men, with new requirements fulfilled through exercising faith. And better sacrifices: Jesus' life laid down once for all making the way for those who follow Him to live in the same way He did. Heb. 8: 7-8: "For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people."

The problem with the old covenant was that the people couldn't do what they said they would do. Their minds were spiritually dull; they did not understand what they heard and though they saw God's miracles in Egypt and in the wilderness they continually went astray in their hearts, minds, and actions.

God knew from the start (in Genesis) another covenant was needed. Hebrews 8:8 quotes Jeremiah reflecting on Israel's past and current state under the covenant with Moses and pointing forward to the better one to come: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord."

V. 10: "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest."

But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

In Isaiah 42:6-7, God is speaking to his Servant:

I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

Jesus Christ fulfilled this prophecy. He is the light for both Jews and Gentiles. He opens the eyes of the spiritually blind, and he brings freedom to those who are enslaved by sin. And he is the covenant that God makes with his people.

Isaiah 59:20:

"The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins," declares the Lord. "As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the Lord. "My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever," says the Lord.

The new covenant involves the Holy Spirit. That's why it is better. The Holy Spirit is given to God's people as a sort of down payment guaranteeing their future inheritance. And the Holy Spirit changes their hearts. The people are transformed, and they grow more and more like Christ, the Messenger and Mediator of the new covenant. The new covenant involves a spiritual relationship, a matter of the heart and conscience and faith.

Jesus said that the cup of wine represented his own blood, which would be the blood of the new covenant (Matthew 26:28). Luke tells us that the cup represents the new covenant in Jesus' blood (Luke 22:20).

The old covenant was sealed with blood. The new covenant was, too. It was ratified, or established, when Jesus' blood was poured out on the cross. We renew that covenant and we reaffirm our commitment to it when we eat the bread and drink the wine, remembering the Lord's death until he returns. We are saying, in effect, "I have faith in my Savior. Jesus Christ has brought me out of slavery and rescued me. All that he says, I will obey."

The Lord's Supper is a reminder of the covenant, a visible sign of the covenant. But the wine isn't sprinkled on us, like the blood was. Rather, we drink the wine. It goes inside us. The new covenant affects our innermost being. The blood of Jesus Christ changes us. Hebrews 9:14 says that his blood cleanses our consciences. His sacrifice sanctifies us, makes us holy, sets us aside for a holy purpose. We are called to be a kingdom of priests, doing God's work in this world. That's part of the new covenant, part of our relationship with God. Jesus Christ is the Messenger and Mediator of the new covenant; he is also the sacrifice — he is the new covenant.

All that our Lord has said, we ought to do. That's part of the Great Commission: "Go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." When we say Lord, Lord, we have the duty to obey what our Lord says.

The whole package was set aside and replaced by Christ. "Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them" (verse 25). First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second (verses 8-10).

In the ancient custom of making a covenant animals were cut in half, and arranged in two rows, and the people making the covenant walked between the halves and took an oath, saying, if I break this covenant, if I break my part of this agreement, let me be cut in half like one of these animals.

"When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates." (verses 17-18)

verse 10 says: "And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Through the new covenant, we have been sanctified, made holy to God.

God (the smoking firepot/blazing torch) passes between the pieces of the sacrificed animals guaranteeing his promise. He cut a covenant with Abraham, formalizing the promise he had made to Abraham because of Abraham's faith and so Abraham becomes the "father of faith" and the progenitor of the faith to come in Christ wherein "the just shall live by faith" or justification before God comes through faith in His promises.

What about the sacrifice? The pieces of the slain animals symbolized the fact that God was going to give His own life for the life of His people. This "dark night" event witnessed by Abraham as God cut covenant with him prophesied the coming crucifixion of the Son of God through whom we would be given better promises, a better inheritance, through a better Mediator of the better covenant. The "sign": God's covenant with Abraham had a sign associated with it. 14 years after God cut covenant with Abraham, God renews the covenant and adds blessings to it. The covenant expands from Abraham personal to many multiplied descendants. Notice the way of God: from self to others; from one to many. Genesis 17: "the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers." Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God....Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.

The circumcision was a natural sign of what would be a spiritual work done by the Spirit in the hearts of all who believe and receive God's better covenant: Christ, as demonstrated in type in the dark night God Himself passed between the pieces of

the sacrifice as the representation that He would give His life for the life of the people. This circumcision of the heart is the remedy for an otherwise “evil heart of unbelief.” It was impossible for the regulations and sacrifices of the law of Moses that would come after the covenant with Abraham to change hearts. The Old covenant dealt with all things external but had no power to change a person at the heart. New Covenant would be better in that it would enter into the inner man and transform him into the image of the faithful and obedient Son.

A “hard heart” means an “uncircumcised” one. The warning for believers is to call to mind Israel’s “faithlessness” and “Today, if you hear His Voice do not harden your hearts as in the day of provocation.”

The land embodied the promised inheritance called the “rest.” Entrance required that the people to receive the promise would have to follow the cloud “My Spirit will go with you and I will give you rest” “As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God”

“Led by the Spirit”: The New Testament has very little to say about following “personal prophecy” while explicitly saying that all prophecy is to be judged by those well trained by it; that prophets brought their prophecies to leading elders to be judged before any word of them were released to the church; and that ALL exercises of the “gift of prophecy” personally was done in the context of the local church congregation for the “common good” and building up of the whole body, and always in the context of being judged before being received.

The principle demonstration of “being led” is demonstrated in the expression of heart toward the people of God and the world in need of the gospel. So, like the Spirit Himself, utter selflessness, that is disregard for one self in relation to others, will be the primary trademark beginning with love for God demonstrated in willing self sacrifice of obedience to His word and keeping His ways (Jeremiah 31). “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship.” Rom 12:1

Faith is demonstrated in a “circumcised heart” toward God, His Son, His word, His Spirit, His people, the world...in that order.

So, because we have been forgiven, we should have a better relationship with God. We should draw near to him, knowing that he accepts us as righteous because we are children of Abraham and heirs of the promise given to him. In the new covenant, each of us can know the Lord. We can have a good relationship with him. And we can also have a better relationship with one another. Let’s continue reading in verse 24:

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching. We are to encourage one another in the faith; we are to encourage works of service. We are all called to worship and glorify God and Jesus Christ. Nothing could be more important. We are to support and encourage each other in that, and we can't do it when we're all accusing and attacking each other.

Excerpt from J. Michael Feazell *The Liberation of the Worldwide Church of God*:
 "The Holy Spirit works in the context of the community of faith, not in the context of detached individuals. When people come to believe that the Spirit is leading them into a path contrary to the Spirit's witness in the history of the church, they are on the wrong path. The Holy Spirit guides the universal church primarily and fundamentally by the means of Scriptures, and the Spirit never contradicts the Spirit's own witness in the Bible."

From the earliest times, including the time in which Hebrews was written, cults led by charismatic persons following personal "revelation" detached from the wider body and affirmed leadership rose up to cause trouble for believers and lead many astray. There always seems to be something in the "deceitful heart of sin" that yearns for and seeks out 'hidden knowledge'—special revelation not privileged to everyone. The Gnostics, the Nazarenes, the Nestorians, the danger was that the heretical groups used many of the same "sacred" texts. This was part of the struggle the early church faced when it came to which texts were accepted - what becomes known as the New Testament "canon" (or rule) for which texts are "inspired" and which were not.

Docetic, which comes from the Greek word meaning "to appear." Those who proposed this heresy maintained that Jesus really did not possess, or inhabit a physical body, but only "appeared" to have a body. The basis of docetism is that Jesus was truly a spiritual being, and as such, could not have had a true body. It seems that 1 John may have been written to combat this heresy, "...every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God." 1 John 4:2
 Marcion

Around the year 85 Marcion was born, the son of a bishop. He traveled around the world as a merchant and moved to Rome around 135 where he became known in the church and began to teach.

Marcion observed the vast differences between the God represented in the Old Testament and the God of Jesus in the NT. His answer was to reject the God of

the OT, seeing him as the evil craftsman (gk. demiurge) creator of an evil world. Marcion constructed a list that represents the first recorded listing of NT texts, basically his personal canon - he excluded the entire OT, and included only Paul's letters and Luke's gospel. He also excluded a few parts of Paul's letters - anything where Paul refers to the OT in a positive way (Marcion claimed these had been tampered with by Jews) and references to hell and/or judgment (for example 2 Thess 1:6-8). It is this unorthodox canon that leads the church fathers to begin naming the "accepted" documents.

Marcion's influence was significant enough for his teaching to be argued against by several church fathers including Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Tertullian. He worked hard as an evangelist and the Marcionite churches spread throughout the Roman world. Marcionite churches held strong until the beginning of the fourth century.

Montanus

Sometime in the 160's on the borders of Mysia (western Turkey) a believer named Montanus broke onto the scene. He testified that he had experienced an ecstatic visitation of the Paraclete (the Holy Spirit) and, along with two women (Maximilla and Priscilla), had the ability to deliver prophetic messages from God. The Montanist message, whether spoken or delivered in ecstatic utterance, consisted of: the promise (or warning) of the immanent return of Jesus and the apocalyptic end of the world, a new outpouring of the Spirit announcing this message, and an encouragement to embrace persecution and martyrdom. The church had not discouraged these messages up to this point, and indeed, did not immediately disagree with Montanus. Probably the most problematic aspect of the Montanists was the view that their prophecies carried the authority of the gospels, and of apostolic teaching. Montanus and his two prophetesses did not see themselves in need of the authority of the church. The leading bishops did, however, prevail even after Tertullian defected from the church and joined the Montanists. Around 179 AD Maximilla complained of the treatment she had received, "I am driven as a wolf from the sheep. I am not a wolf. I am word, spirit and power." (Eusebius, History V.16.17)

In the end, Montanism was rejected more for being fanatical than for being heretical. David Wright concludes his study on Montanism by saying, "The reaction against Montanism brought upon the church impoverishment more detrimental than the upset caused by the unbalanced excesses of the New

Prophecy." It is highly likely that Montanists were among the martyrs in the famous persecution scene of Lyons in the year 177.

Gnosticism

In the early second century a strange movement began to emerge, more strongly concentrated in Egypt, but with pockets of activity throughout the Roman world. Gnosticism was a curious synthesis of Jewish apocalypticism, Platonism, strains of pagan religions, and early Christianity. There are some indications of an early form of first century gnosticism in the NT, but nothing like what developed in the second century. Some scholars want to date various NT documents into the second century based on the apparent references to gnosticism.

The modern story of the awakening and conversion of the Worldwide Church of God is an example of how one man's personal revelation became a movement that ended up in a ditch. Feazell writes; "Herbert Armstrong's fundamental premise was that the truth had long lay "buried" until God raised him up, and that all other Christian churches were hopelessly deceived. In this context Christians do well to separate essentials from peripherals. By the fourth century, Christians had come to general consensus about the biblically rooted essentials upon which their faith had all along been based. These are reflected in the Nicene Creed, formulated in A.D. 381 at Constantinople, and which further specifies the original Apostle's Creed. There would be other important ecumenical church councils to follow, always coming together to clarify the basic truths of Christ revealed in scripture canon and made in order to combat heresies and cults that continued to arise.

2. Covenant at Sinai: the covenant God made through Moses with Israel at Mt. Sinai. In the covenant at Mt. Sinai, God had remembered His covenant with Abraham and brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. As they meet with Him at Mt. Sinai God gives them His word and the people agreed to obey. Exodus 19:5-8 "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' (To Moses God says:) "These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the Lord had commanded him to speak. The people all responded together, "We will do everything the Lord has said."

God gives the Ten Commandments and the people ask not to hear any more—unbelief: “When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.” So Moses became the mediator of the covenant on Mt. Sinai.

Through Moses God told them to make altars in a particular way, to treat servants in a particular way, to punish serious sins, to punish theft, and so on and if they did all that, God would drive out the Canaanites and give the Israelites rest from their enemies, rest from wandering, rest from day to day subsistence, to peace, settlements, gardens and vineyards, in the land. Each person will have his or her own relationship with God. Each person will want to obey God because he or she has a circumcised heart. The laws will be internalized. People will keep the spirit of the law in allegiance with God, no longer in rebellion against him.

3. Covenant in Jesus Christ: The new covenant that is mediated by and in the Person of Jesus Christ.

The book of Hebrews explains more about the old covenant and the new. Jesus is the new High Priest, making the old priesthood obsolete, and he brought a new covenant, making the old covenant obsolete. The new covenant is better, since it has a way to make people perfect, a way to forgive their sins, a way to change their hearts. The old covenant had a tabernacle that was a physical copy of what was in heaven. They had regular sacrifices, but the priests could go into the Holy of Holies only once a year. Heb. 9:9-10: “This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings — external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

Those rituals were temporary works. Now, the new order has come, and the old is obsolete. Those rituals could make people outwardly clean, we are told, but the new covenant is better. We see that in verses 14-15:

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Let us move now to chapter 10, verse 1:

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming — not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

The law pointed people to Christ. The regulations and rituals and rules were good, but they were not good enough. They could not make us perfect, but Christ does. We see that in verse 10: “And by that will [God’s will, that is], we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

And in verse 14: “because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.” This is already being done to us in the new covenant. We have been declared righteous. We are being made perfect and holy.

Jesus did away with many laws, but he also reaffirmed many laws and made them more demanding, since they should be kept in the spirit and not just superficially. We must look to Jesus’ teachings, and the teachings of his inspired apostles, to see the way that Christian faith is expected to work in our lives in the new covenant.

look at a few laws from the covenant made at Sinai.

Consider, for example, the Seventh Commandment, which forbids adultery. Is that in force? Absolutely! The commandment is repeated in the New Testament. Another law in the old covenant is in Exodus 22:22: “Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan.” That commandment is actually given new force in the New Testament, because rather than merely not taking advantage of widows and orphans, we are commanded to reach out to help them. So that law is still in force, and even made stronger.

Let’s consider the First Commandment, in Exodus 20:3: “You shall have no other gods.” That commandment is repeated in the New Testament, so it’s still in force, but in actual application, we obey it in a distinctly different way, because we worship Jesus Christ, and we cannot worship the Father at all unless we come to him through his Son. The First Commandment now requires faith in Christ. So this commandment, too, has been changed by being expanded.

Another law we apply in a different way is Exodus 22:19: “Anyone who has sexual relations with an animal must be put to death.” The principle of the law is still in force (the New Testament forbids all sexual immorality), but we do not enforce this particular penalty. The law has been changed by being reduced. We would remove such a person from our fellowship until repentance, because anyone who does such a thing is obviously not in a right relationship with God. They are violating the new covenant.

Briefly, now let's notice some examples of laws that are completely obsolete. Exodus 20:24, for example: "Make an altar of earth for me." We do not keep that law in any way.

Exodus 22:29-30 is another example: "You must give me the firstborn of your sons. Do the same with your cattle and your sheep." Today, we give all our children to God in one sense, but we do not give our firstborn in any special way. We might give God an offering of thanks, just as we would for anything. But there's no particular requirement that we have to give any certain amount, or even that we have to do anything unusual at all for our firstborn cattle and sheep. Instead, our whole life is a sacrifice to God.

some laws are still binding, and others are changed, and some are done away with. we inherit the promises of Abraham on the basis of faith — and laws that were given to Moses simply cannot take away those promises. verse 2 he asks, "I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?" The answer, of course, is that they received the Holy Spirit by faith, not by the law.

He asks something similar in verse 5: "Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?" The answer, of course, is that the Holy Spirit — and salvation — comes by faith, not by law.

"Consider Abraham," Paul says in verses 6-7. "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham." Paul is quoting Genesis 15. If we have faith, we are children of Abraham. We inherit the promises that God gave to him.

Notice verse 9: "So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith." Faith brings blessings. But if we rely on keeping the law, we will be condemned. We will fall short. But Christ saved us from that. He died for us.

Notice verse 14: "He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit."

The Old Covenant was temporary added until Christ came, it could not set aside the Abrahamic covenant, based on faith in God's promise. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

verse 29: "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The law help us see our need for salvation, and it helps us see that righteousness must be a gift, not something we earn. Christ died for us so that we might live for him. We are saved from the slavery of sin so that we might become slaves of righteousness. We are called to serve one another, not ourselves. Christ demands everything we have, and everything we are. We are expected to obey — but we are saved by faith.

We are in a new covenant, forgiven by our great High Priest. Let's read it: Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

Old covenant = condemnation.

New covenant = justification.

Jesus Christ has established the new covenant on better promises, and he has made the old covenant obsolete.

What about old covenant practices like tithing: Tithing is an expression of faith that demonstrates love to God and trust in Him alone as your sole source for all this life requires. Additionally, tithing demonstrates the heart of faith that says like David, "Why should the concern for my own house come before my concern for God's?" So tithing is a demonstration of love for others before self: the ministry made available for others to benefit from advanced and facilitated by the support I supply.

You can tell where your heart is by seeing where you are putting your money.

"Where you treasure is, there will your heart be also," Jesus said (Matthew 6:21).

A person who has faith in Jesus Christ does not worry about whether tithing is commanded in the New Testament. A person who has faith wants to give all he can to Christ — within his means, of course. Christians should give generously to the church — but again, giving is a result of their relationship with God, not a basis for it. We are given access to the throne of grace through faith, not through tithing. But shouldn't our attitude be willingness to give more than the minimum? Tithing was done before Sinai. The first mention of it is in Genesis 14. Abraham tithed on his spoils of war, giving a tenth to Melchizedek. And immediately after

that, we see that God made his first covenant with Abraham, promising to bless him, and that's the covenant that Christians today are heirs of.

As far as we know, tithing was not required in the days of Abraham. He seems to have done it voluntarily, doing more than was required, because he wanted to glorify God — and God blessed him because of his faithful attitude. Later, Jacob pledged that he would tithe to God, but this is also presented as a voluntary thing rather than a requirement.

Under the old covenant, tithing was required for the support of the old covenant ministers. The hard-hearted Israelites were required to give 10 percent — and their blessing was only a physical one! We who are in the new covenant have much better blessings — spiritual ones. How much more willingly ought we to give in thankfulness for the eternal spiritual blessings we have in Christ Jesus? The Israelites were commanded to give 10 percent under the old covenant that could not make them perfect. How much more joyfully should we give to God under the new covenant? We, who have the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which does cleanse our conscience? Should we give less than a tithe, when the blessings we have are so much more glorious than those of the Israelites?

Avoiding unclean meats: The distinction between clean and unclean animals existed in the days of Noah, long before Abraham. Points to the importance of recognizing and making a distinction between what is holy and what is common or profane.

Keeping Sabbaths: The seventh day was sanctified at creation, long before the old covenant began. It points to entering by faith into the finished work of Christ for our salvation, eternal life and inheritance.

Jewish feasts and holy days: The Passover began before Sinai and points to Christ our Passover who has delivered us from the penalty of sin and eternal death in separation from God. Pentecost and Feast of Tabernacles also each have their fulfillment in Christ. Pentecost in the initial and ongoing outpouring of God's Spirit in the New Covenant; Tabernacles in looking forward to the final ingathering or harvest of souls into Christ's kingdom.

Circumcision began with Abraham points to circumcision of the human heart awakened to God through faith in Christ and becoming the flesh tablets on which the Spirit implants God's laws.

Sacrifices began in Eden before Sinai and continued until Christ, the full and perfect sacrifice. The sacrifices that continue to be offered under the New covenant are the acts of righteousness done in faith by believers, exemplified in general by laying down our lives for one another and for the gospel.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship.” Rom 12:1

In each case, the old have been made new, transformed in the new covenant in the blood of Jesus Christ. Christ liberates us from the law so that we can be free to serve him more, as loving children and not merely as slaves under the lash. He frees us so we can have faith instead of selfish anxieties.

All the commands and sacrifices are summed up, as Jesus said, in obedience to the 2 primary commands upon which all the rest of the law and the prophets hang: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love your neighbor as yourself.”