



Christ Changed Everything-Part 3

Why Did We Need a New Covenant Anyway?

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Well, some of you know me, and you know I like electronics, but unfortunately, with a busy schedule, I don't always keep up with all the latest innovations and new technology. And I remember a few years back, I bought my cell phone. I thought it was cool because it was smaller than my old cell phone, and it was a cool color. And I thought, yeah, this is a great phone. That was until I ran into a lot of you who have these super high-speed phones, you know, the do-it-all phone, and takes pictures, and has the calendar, and does email, and, you know, fixes dinner for you, and, you know, has a great screen, and dictation, it takes dictation, and then I started feeling pretty inferior about my phone, until lately, I got one of those phones, but then I realized the smaller your phone and the more it does, the bigger the manual gets. Have you realized that?

And I realize there's lots of things on my phone, I don't even know quite what they do, but I know I have a powerful phone, I just don't know how to use all the features on my phone, which may be your problem as well as mine.

And as it relates to phones, you remember the big phones that look like a shoebox you put up to your head? They were so proud to have one of those, no wires, you know. And I realized that when it comes to phone technology, new is definitely better than old.

I recognize too that from a biblical perspective, we are used to at our Bibles with two sides to them, one prefaced with the word old and one prefaced with the word new. And I know we don't think about it this way very often, but basically we've got to the left side of our Bible, this side that says, here's the old stuff. Here's the old way that God dealt with people. And on the right side of our Bible, we have this section that says, here's the new stuff. You don't call it the new stuff, but you call it the New Testament and the Old Testament, which really means a covenant. It's a promise. It's an administration, a way that God sets up with people how to deal with them the old way and then the new way.

And of course, if you've been with us, you know there's several covenants that sit under the old covenant, and there's various aspects to the new covenant as well, but the distinction between old and new is important. And unfortunately, a lot of us new covenant believers live in this great age with all this stuff and all this advantage, and yet we don't ever maximize the advantage because we never really learn how this new covenant works.

If you just laid the old covenant against the new covenant, you'd start to say, wow, there are a lot of improvements. As a matter of fact, there's a lot of newfangled features that we've not even fully tapped into yet. I know that we are not in the setting of this first century audience to which the writer of Hebrews wrote, and we've been struggling with that because none of you grew up wanting to be a Levitical priest and no one's missing bringing their goat or their, you know, their lamb to church to sacrifice. I realize that. And yet we've tried to get in the sandals of these Old Testament folks and say, now, what was the revolutionary difference?

Well, this third installment of a six-part series on what is this difference all about and how did Christ change everything, I think is pertinent for all of us in that there are aspects of the new covenant that a lot of us just fail to maximize. We don't recognize the aspects of the new covenant



that if we saw it from an Old Testament perspective, would revolutionize everything about the way we relate to God, the way we pray, the way we talk to one another about God?

So our goals tonight are to open the eighth chapter of Hebrews one more time and take that second section of that chapter and say, now what exactly is this that makes the new covenant experience so much more superior to the old one? And then I hope walking away tonight saying, here's three or four things that we ought to put into place and start to plumb the depths of in our relationship with Christ that maybe we never have before.

So if you haven't already, take your Bibles—and the great thing I can say now, if you didn't bring one, there's one right in front of you underneath there. You see that there? There's a lot of secrets to these chairs. You're going to like these chairs. You're breaking them in today. That's right. Yeah, grab—as a matter of fact, and I haven't had to say this for a while, but I can, if you don't have a Bible, take that one that's under the pew there, write your name in it, that one's yours, and you can keep that and bring it—oh, I know, that's touching, isn't it? That's just so nice of me.

If you don't have a Bible, we want you to take that one. If you do have a Bible or if you're just putting your name in that one, turn to the eighth chapter of Hebrews with me, if you would, and let's continue our series on trying to figure out, in this case, how Christ changed everything and why it was we needed a new covenant to start with.

Let's take a look at our text. We dropped off in verse 6 last week, where here he says, the ministry that Jesus has received—this is Hebrews 8:6, are you with me?—is as superior to theirs. Now, who's theirs? The Levitical priests, right? We've got Christ who comes in from the line of Judah. He's not from the line of Levi, but yet he is a priest, and we've figured all that out. Great. He has the right to do that, and it's a superior priesthood.

It's as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is a mediator is superior to the old one, and it's founded on better promises. Verse 7, 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.

And he said—now he's quoting Jeremiah 31 now, classic text along with the other latter prophets of texts that say there is a new thing coming called the new covenant—he says, I'm going to make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. And it won't 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.

This covenant, verse 10 says, that I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord—this is the covenant, rather, that I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. And here's what he says, I'm going to put my law in their minds, and I'm going to write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people, and no longer will a man teach his neighbor or a man his brother saying, Know the Lord, because they'll all know me from the least of them to the greatest. For I'll forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more.

And then the writer of Hebrews says, by calling this covenant new, he's made the first one—here's a big word now—obsolete. Wow, that's a strong language about the left side of your Bible. And what is obsolete is aging and will soon disappear.



Now, of course, the Bible's importance written by God. The left side is there. We want you to carry a New and Old Testament because everything in the new is founded in the old. But right here, we're seeing that the crux of the old covenant is no longer valid in that it is called obsolete because there's something so much better. It's so much superior to the old one.

It's so superior, back to our cell phone analogy, that you can't even put the new covenant in the old case. Remember that? Jesus said you can't put the new wine in the old wine skins. Remember, he's trying to say there's something so innovative about the coming of Messiah that it does, I mean, everything has to change. The container has to change. The essence of it is so revolutionary, you got to catch the difference.

And for people in the first century who grew up in Sabbath school, learning about the Jewish commitment to God and God's commitment to them, this is revolutionary. And the whole point of it, the premise is, the old one, it's not adequate.

Pointy finger, number one on your outline, let's just jot this down as a heading and then work through this and figure this out a little bit, that there is a problem with the old covenant. Let's just jot it down that. We need to remember the problem with the old covenant. There's something about that whole arrangement on the left side of the Bible that is just not adequate. There's a problem with it.

And it's not because God didn't know that there was going to be a problem with it. It's because he was leading us to the new. He was leading us into the right side of our Bible. He was bringing on a new economy that needed a foundation laid in the old.

The old covenant in a nutshell. Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 30. If you know about the giving of the Mosaic law and the title of Deuteronomy, you recognize that the word Deuteronomy itself is the second giving of the law. That's what Deuteronomy means, the second giving of the law.

The Mosaic law had come and Moses went up on the mountain. He got the rules. He came down. The Levitical priesthood was put in place. And then he sums it all up and elaborates on it in Deuteronomy. And then he sums it all up in Deuteronomy chapter 30. And if you want to go to the most succinct section, just summarizing in a cliff note way what the old covenant was about, here it is, and it's as simple as this.

Deuteronomy chapter 30, drop down to verse number 15. As the prophet says, God's saying through the prophet, see, I set before you today—are you with me? Deuteronomy 30:15—life and prosperity, that's behind curtain number one, and death and destruction, that's behind curtain number two.

Now that's a no-brainer, right? Thinking I want the former. I choose letter A. He says, here's the catch. I command you today to love Yahweh your God and walk in his ways and keep his commands and his decrees and laws. And then you get life. You get to live and you get to increase. You get prosperity. You get God's blessing. And Yahweh will be—I'm sorry—will bless you in the land that you're entering. Remember they're going into Canaan here. They'd been wandering around in the desert. Off they were going to go.

And the point was, you know what, just do the right thing. Keep God's commandments. Love God. You walk in his ways. You downside. If your heart turns away and you're not obedient, and if



you're drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, God says, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You'll not live long in the land that you're crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you two options. You got life as an option, and you got death as an option. You have blessings behind this curtain, and you got curses behind that one, and God says, it's really not hard to figure this out. Now choose life. That would be good. So that you and your children may live and that you may love Yahweh your God. Listen to his voice. Hold fast to him, for Yahweh is your life. Very profound statement. And he's gonna give you many years in the land that he swore to give your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

You got two choices. But here's what I hope that you do, God says. Let's put it in a nutshell this way. Pointy finger, letter A. You want it in a nutshell? Here it is. Do right, and I'll bless you. It's that simple. Just do the right thing. Obey me, love me, do what is correct, walk the path that I've set out for you, and if you do that, everything will be great. God will bless you. I'll make sure you live long in the land. I'll keep the pestilence from your fields. You'll have everything that you want. You'll have a great relationship with God. You'll listen to his voice. All will go fine for you.

Now, we've heard that before back in the garden, and we recognize there's a bit of a problem with it, and it's not just a problem from a new perspective with a nose in the air and a kind of haughty attitude that, you know, we like the new covenant better because the old covenant wasn't that bad, or was not as good, they recognized even in an old covenant economy that that left us in a pretty tough spot.

God's saying, hey, just do the right thing, but after trying and trying and trying, they always find themselves back at this point. Those that even have an inkling and a desire to love God and serve God, they get down to the cry of their heart that reflects the psalmist. In this case, David.

If you turn here real quick, here's where you get when you live under the old economy of the old covenant. Turn with me, if you would, to Psalm 143 and look at just the first couple of verses that summarize what every godly, quote unquote, generation of God seekers in Israel have always gotten to when they've said, okay, God, you've told us to do right, we'll be blessed. You've told us if we do wrong, we're going to be cursed. You're going to destroy us. Well, where does that leave us?

Psalm 143. Now remember, these were the hymns of the Old Testament. They were singing these words from week to week. David says, Psalm 143, verse 1, Yahweh, hear my prayer. Listen to my cry for—now circle this about three times, because here's where you always end up when it comes to the Old Covenant—my cry for what? Mercy. I need help, I need grace. Why is that? Well, because I'm not doing the right thing. So I'm crying out for mercy, and I'm founding that on the fact that you are a good and faithful God, a righteous God, and I want you to come to my relief.

And do not please bring your servant into judgment. Why? Well, you know what? Not only me, but there's nobody I know that's righteous before you. That's a good line to underscore. For no one living is righteous before you.

Now, that's not a New Testament Romans concept. That's not Paul's new idea. This is what every person who looked at the old covenant and said, it's really simple: do right and I'll bless you.



Eventually, I realize in my living that I can't do right. As a matter of fact, no one does right. That's why I'm left begging for mercy.

Pointy finger, letter B. When it comes to the old covenant, here's part of the problem. It only highlights our sin, or I just put it this way, highlights our problem, and our problem is sin. That's what the old covenant does. It tells me the right things to do, and God delineates it all, and then I try to do it, and all of a sudden I realize, wow, you know, if behind door number two or B here is death, that's what I deserve, because if I look honestly at myself, that's where I end up.

The last passage, one of the last ones we dealt with in Romans chapter three, if you're with us in our Romans study, was that just a summary of verse 20, where he says, you know what, the bottom line is when it comes to the old covenant law, no one's going to be justified by keeping the law, but through the law, we gain a knowledge of sin.

That's the bottom line. We learn. We learn that we are not righteous. As a matter of fact, next to Psalm 143, if you still got that open, jot down, if you would, Galatians chapter 3. Galatians 3, verses 23 through 25. Because basically what we recognize in David's song is that's exactly what the law was intended to do. It was intended to get us to a place where we recognize we can't be good enough to receive God's blessing and life and prosperity, and we're the place where we're reaching out for some kind of solution to the problem.

And that's exactly what the law was intended to do.

We really don't have time for this passage, but as I often say, that's never stopped me before. So let's turn, if you would, to Romans chapter 7, a passage that I want you to look at tonight because I find it's often misquoted in all the small group Bible studies and everybody's little Bible study guides that I read. This is not what people make it out to be. It is a clear and simple statement.

If you look closely at the preface to this, and I'll leave this for your homework, but look carefully at the introductory verses of Romans 7, and what you've got is a scenario of someone trying to receive the blessing of God and the life of Deuteronomy 30 by living under the old covenant rules. And it always leads to this, that you can't.

Look at this poetic way that Paul puts this in Romans chapter 7. He illustrates it in the first person, and he talks about this thing.

What are we going to say? If the law is not going to work for us, am I going to say—this is verse 7 of chapter 7—is the law sin? What are we going to say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not. I mean, that's not the problem. The rules aren't the problem.

He says, indeed, I wouldn't even know what sin was except for the rules. I got to know what the old covenant rules are. Tell me what the right thing to do is. I wouldn't have known what coveting was, for instance. I wouldn't know what it really was if the law hadn't said, don't covet. And then it tells you, Don't covet your neighbor's wife. Don't covet your neighbor's stuff. Don't covet their servant. Okay, now I know what it is.

Now all of a sudden I look in my heart and there it is. It's everywhere. Sin seizing the opportunity now that I know the rules and the cones are laid out here. Now all of a sudden I find myself knocking them over all the time. The opportunity afforded by the commandment produced in me,



every kind of covetous desire. And I realize that it's not just my neighbor's wife or my neighbor's camels or my neighbor's stuff or his house. It's all kinds of stuff that I'm coveting. Look at my heart. I'm way out of bounds. But that's what right is all about.

He says, apart from the law, if I didn't have the cone set up, then I wouldn't be breaking the law. But sin was there, and I mean, that's the problem of verse 9. I was alive before the law, but after the commandment came, sin sprang to life, and I died. And I realized I deserved the dark side, the behind curtain number 2 of Deuteronomy 30. I deserve God's punishment.

I found out, verse 10, that the very commandment that was intended to bring life—there's Deuteronomy 30 concept—it actually brought me death. I couldn't keep the rules. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, the rules, the parameters, it deceived me, and through the commandment, it put me to death.

Verse 12, so then, the law is holy. There's nothing wrong with the rules. The commandment is holy. Nothing wrong with that. It's righteous and good. That that which is good then become death to me? Well, it wasn't its fault. It wasn't the rule's fault.

But in order that—now I want you to underscore this—sin might be recognized as sin. See, I need to know what God's expectations are, what his character is, what God would do. Now that I know that, now I can call sin, sin. That's the point.

It produces death in me through what is good, so that through the commandment—here's another section to underscore—sin might become utterly sinful.

Which, by the way, bookmark there in your mind, let me step out of that and say you do recognize that no one can become a Christian unless you realize and recognize this. That's why the modern gospel pitch that so many people have is not the gospel at all. When you say, hey, you're lonely, you want an invisible friend named Jesus, he'll walk you through every problem of your life. Hey, have Christ. And they go, okay, great, I'll take that. That'll be cool. That's not the gospel.

You have to walk through the old covenant tutelage, as Galatians 3 says, and learn that I am sinful and that my sin is utterly sinful and that I really deserve the bad side of Deuteronomy 30 to be cast out of his presence. I've got to understand that before I ever grasp Christ, because that's what the Bible says the law was intended to do.

You can't have the gospel, and you cannot be saved without recognizing the implications of the law. You can't do it, and yet today, how often are people peddling something other than that? Oh, please, you want to be loved? You want to fill a void? That's not what the gospel is. The gospel is recognizing that sin is sin, and that as I recognize my participation in sin called death, that sin is utterly sinful.

That's the bottom line. That is the predication, the foundation of the gospel, and it's all built on the old covenant. Now, in that regard, it's good, and it does us a service, but in reality, I mean, even in the terms of Paul, it just amplifies, magnifies, or you might even argue from Romans 7, exacerbates the problem that I have.

So the law shows me the problem, but it really doesn't solve the problem. Pointy finger, number three. Let's jot this one down, letter C. The real limitation of the law is it doesn't fix our problem.



The old covenant doesn't fix it. It simply ceremonializes the solution. I don't even know if that's a word. You can look that up later. But it ceremonializes the solution.

That's why we had all this stuff called the Levitical priesthood. And as we looked at last week, the tabernacle and the temples of the Old Testament, because there were some ceremonies we had to walk through to envision as best we could how God's going to solve the problem.

If the old covenant says, do right and you'll be blessed, do wrong and you'll be punished and you'll die, and I realize that I'm a sinner because I'm looking carefully at the rules and carefully at my life, now I've got to say, God, if you're going to be merciful to me, how are you going to solve the problem? What do I cling to besides these seemingly arbitrary attributes of God? Well, I need a solution.

Well, I go to the temple every week, and I bring my animals, and we have a barbecue out in front of the temple, and we talk about sin.

We do this. We've looked at this passage too many times, but let's do it one more time. Leviticus chapter 1, third book of the Old Testament, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus. Here is, in a nutshell, the whole concept of what the ceremonies were about. And if you think, well, this is what I don't like about the Old Testament. They're killing cute, cuddly little animals and furry little lambs, and it's just so terrible.

You do recognize that this was introduced from the very, very beginning. In the garden, when Adam and Eve sinned in Genesis chapter 3, what was one of the first things that happened? They recognized that they were unacceptable and they were ashamed of themselves. They were ashamed of their bodies and they felt all this shame because of their sin.

And God provides a covering for them by doing what? Getting some nice, you know, silk outfits together, nice little robe, some slippers. Oh, no, he makes them some Western apparel, right? He makes it out of leather. He makes them a covering out of animal skins. Covering.

Do you know what the Hebrew word covering translates into in the Old Testament? Here it is. Atonement. We translate it in English. Atonement. Does that sound familiar? The whole Levitical law was about atonement. What is atonement? The covering of sin.

The ceremony that started really in some prototypical way in the garden was, you are unacceptable now to God because you've sinned and because you've chosen door number two, letter B, you should die. But instead of you being immediately killed and snuffed out like some cosmic bug light, what I'm gonna do is I'm gonna cover your sin. I'm gonna cover it up. There's gonna be atonement made.

And the picture from the beginning was the death of something innocent. Why should that cute animal in the garden die for me to have my sin covered? The picture of that was this sense of responsibility and substitution, and it started from the beginning.

And it was ceremonialized every week in the temple ceremonies in Leviticus chapter 1. And from this point on, this is what they experienced all the way through the day that the author of Hebrews was pinning these words.



Leviticus 1. Look at verse number 1. Yahweh calls to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting. What's that? Tabernacle. You were here last week. A plus. He said, speak to the Israelites and say to them, when any of you brings an offering to Yahweh, bring your offering an animal either from the herd or the flock.

If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he is to offer a male without defect. No damaged goods here. Bring the best thing you got in perfect shape. He must present it at the entrance to the tent of meeting. That's the tabernacle so that it will be acceptable to Yahweh.

This is a ceremony. Now you can't do it in your backyard. You got to go to the place of worship and present it there. Now, how do I do it? Verse—the animal, the burnt offering, it's not burnt yet—so that it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement, covering, for him.

Now he's the slaughter, and the Levitical priest did this, the young bull before the Lord, and Aaron's son and priest will bring the blood and sprinkle it against the altar on all sides to the entrance of the tabernacle, the tent of meeting.

So I'm just ingrain into my mind. I am not acceptable to God. I deserve to die, but instead I want God's mercy. I'm crying out for his grace. I need covering for my sin, and I'm going through a ceremony every week where an animal is being killed, and an animal was being sacrificed, and accepted on my behalf.

Death is a terrible thing. It's a cruel thing. We don't like to see animals killed either, but yet they did this in a ceremony before God to do what? To show that though you deserve to die, we are going to have something else, in this case an animal, die in your place to ceremonially show you that there can be a substitute in God's economy, but it hadn't happened yet.

As a matter of fact, the whole Old Testament economy was, I'm just going to ceremonialize it and look to the future to see it. And yet it wasn't seen until John the Baptist lifted up his eyes in John chapter 1, and he sees Christ walking up, and what does he say? He says, behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He doesn't say atone for or covers the sin of the world. Isn't that interesting? He takes away the sin of the world.

The real thing now had stepped up. The real lamb, who is called the lamb, by the way, in this great eschatological picture in the book of Revelation. What happens? Here is Christ in heaven, exalted and glorified, and yet he is still called in Revelation 4 and 5 the lamb of God. And the point is there's a substitute for you.

And yet in the old covenant, all we could do is look through our glasses of the ceremony and kind of think, well, one day maybe God will solve this problem.

Well, the old covenant was good. It was useful. It was holy. It was right. It was a good way for people to relate to God, but they only could recognize their problem and never really grasp a solution. And that is a weakness of the old covenant. And if you and I lived in the old covenant, all we could do is imagine what it would be like for God to really take away our sin. Instead, he simply covered it through a ceremony.

And as Paul liked to put it, is oftentimes he just overlooked it. Well, God can't overlook sin. I mean, in the big picture, he can't. If he's a just God, the judge has got to demand justice. Well, you



never really had that. And in some ways, as a worshiper in the old covenant, the problem with that is you just felt like it's not quite done yet. Something's wrong here. And there was something wrong until the new covenant, which was the perfect complement to the old, could replace it.

And that's exactly what's going on in the rest of Hebrews chapter 8. The quotation is simply an extended quotation from Jeremiah 31. As you look back to it, it's on your worksheet, or you turn back to Hebrews chapter 8.

But something that should call really a flag on the play for everybody here who doesn't have a Jewish mother is, wait a minute, this great new covenant is clearly stated in Hebrews chapter 8, verse number 8, that this is a covenant made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. That the new covenant that was going to be the perfect covenant to supplant the old covenant is a covenant according to verse number 10. What does verse number 10 say? It's a covenant with the house of Israel.

Now I'm thinking to myself, not too many Jews here tonight. And so us Gentile people are sitting around going, well, I'm kind of hoping I can participate in this. But this text doesn't say it, does it? Should cause us some pause. Any Jewish people here? Got a Jewish mom, anybody? Oh, look at this, one, two, three. Anybody else? Four people who are just feeling like, yeah, this is my passage here. Good luck, you guys. I'm part of this, right? New covenant.

And you're right. You should feel a sense of privilege for that, because the promises were made initially to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. And if you can track your lineage back to that, there's some kind of heritage that you should feel, and you should say, wow, that feels right, and that feels good.

But before you look down your Jewish nose at us, recognize this, that from the very beginning, God anticipated that the outsiders, us Gentile people, would one day have an interest into this that wouldn't just be ceremony, it would be real.

As a matter of fact, from the very beginning of the founding of Israel, who started with Abraham, right? He said in the promises that we examined like four weeks ago, do you remember that in Genesis 12, Genesis 15, Genesis 17, that one day through Abraham, all the nations of the world would be blessed. Remember that? God looked forward to that.

You can see it even in the garden, that there was a sense that the whole world would one day see a victory over the problem of sin and the necessary consequence of sin, the consequence of death. And God knew that one day he was going to open up that door.

And if you're thinking, wow, you know what? Did he wait that long to open up the door? Next time you read through the Old Testament, back in, I guess it'll be next January, February, if you're reading through the Bible with us, you'll start to read again through the first five books of the Old Testament.

Every time you see the instructions as to how to celebrate the Passover, for instance, notice there's always a footnote that shows up at the end of these instructions. It's for the alien or the non-native-born person. They're what we often call in theology the proselyte who comes into Israel, and he's not born of Israeli descent. He's not a son biologically of Abraham.



It was interesting how even tucked away in the law, every time you turn around, God says, you can celebrate the Passover. You just got to go through these rules. You got to get circumcised. You got to have the sign of the covenant. But you know what? If you're an outsider and you want to participate in the pictures of God's future grace, you can do it.

And I love that about God, that even in his dealings with Israel in the old covenant, the back door always seemed to be open to people like us that weren't a part of the family of the Israelites.

And in the new covenant, he opens the door wide open, wide open. As a matter of fact, if you know anything about the book of Acts, you can even start at the very beginning of the book of Acts, Acts 1:8. Jesus says to his disciples just before he leaves, he says, I want all you Jewish boys and fishermen and tax collectors to go and be my witnesses. First in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth.

Samaria. I mean, that was even worse than the end of the earth for most of those Jewish boys. They grew up with a hatred for Samaria because they had sold out and intermarried with the Assyrians after 721 B.C. And they thought, man, we don't think God's going to bless those people.

And Jesus commands them in the beginning of the book, you guys go outside the realm of Jerusalem. And I want you to go and reach the ends of the earth. And be sure you stomp off in Samaria and share the good news of the new covenant with them. That was big, and that was tough, and they struggled with that.

The first pastor of the church in Jerusalem, his name was Peter. Remember him? Senior pastor, if you will, of the first church in Jerusalem. It grew from 1,000 to 2,000 to 3,000 to 5,000 in the early chapters of the book of Acts. They were going full guns. They were winning Jews to Christ left and right. And people were becoming followers of the Messiah.

And God said, you know what, this is great. We got the first thing checked off. We're reaching Jerusalem big time. But I really wanted you guys to start reaching the ends of the earth so he had to bring in persecution to scatter the church. Remember that? By the 8th or 9th chapter we've got the church scattering in every direction because Christ didn't just want this to be a Jerusalem Jewish thing.

As a matter of fact, it's interesting how God called the first church service to be held on the day of Pentecost when all the nations would be in town to celebrate that feast. But they didn't get the point right away. God had to distribute the church in all different directions because of persecution.

And finally, we see in the 10th chapter of the book of Acts, the very first clear statement and testimony of a foreigner being won to Christ. And it's almost ironic, God uses the pastor of the church in Jerusalem, a Jewish boy, a Jewish fisherman turned preacher, who had been preaching to 5,000 Jewish Christians on the Temple Mount every weekend.

He used him to be pulled out of the crowd and the senior pastor himself to go and have an evangelistic encounter with a guy from Italy. Remember the story? His name was—Sunday school grads—Cornelius. And he was this commander in the Italian Roman army, and he was one who was a God-fearer. He was one of these proselyte types from the Old Testament who looked and thought well of God's people, and he gave money for the temple services and all of that, and God says, I got a guy I want you to talk to.



And he sends him through supernatural means. He sends the message to Cornelius to send his servants to go off to find up Peter in Caesarea who's hanging out there and he's moving out of Jerusalem and persecution had hit the early church.

Let's pick up the story there. This is good. You got to get your eyeballs on these verses. In Acts chapter 10, God preps the pastor with a vision because he wasn't ready to do this. I mean, he might have in theory and remembering the words of Christ, but he needed a real dramatic reminder that Cornelius was a target for evangelism and that he was going to be a recipient of the new covenant promises.

Interesting text. Do you remember this text? Acts chapter 10. Look at verse number 9. About noon, the following day, as they were on their journey, these are the people from Cornelius's house, and approaching the city, Peter went up to the roof to pray. They had these little, you know, roofs they'd get up on and hang out on. It's like a big patio.

He became hungry, and he wanted something to eat. And while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. That happens to me a lot too.

Verse 11. This is a God thing though. A real vision from God. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to the earth by its four corners. I mean it's like some big pillowcase coming out of the sky in this vision that he's having.

It contained all kinds of, all kinds, that's the key phrase, of four-footed animals as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. And what that spells is stuff that you're not supposed to eat. Now there's all kinds—and so we're assuming there's good and bad animals. By that, I mean clean, ceremonially clean, and ceremonially unclean animals, okay?

He sees all that, and then a voice tells him, middle of verse 13, hey, you're hungry, you're having a vision, get up, Peter, kill and eat.

Now, that's a big deal, because there's a lot of unclean animals in that sheet crawling around. And he says what every good Jewish boy should say, verse 14, surely not, Lord, Peter replied. I've never eaten anything impure or unclean. I can't eat that stuff. I eat kosher. You know that. I'm all about the rules of Leviticus. I got to keep the dietary rules.

Okay, verse 15. The voice spoke to him a second time. Don't, he says, call anything impure that God has made clean.

It's interesting. If you read Levitical laws of dietary rules in the Old Testament, they were by and large a barrier to keep the Israelites from some kind of social intercourse and partying and revelry with the pagans of the land of Canaan. These dietary rules kept them apart. It kept them out of circles that they would normally travel in, and three times a day they had to have a special meal, and they couldn't eat like everybody else. It was a dividing law. It was a ceremonial dividing law, dividing wall.

And he says, I can't do it. This happened, verse 16, three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back up to heaven.



While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was, and they stopped at the gate, and they called out asking if Simon, who was known as Peter, was staying there.

And you can read the rest of the story, and most of you know it. And sure enough, an encounter in Cornelius becomes the first clear and obvious convert from Italy, from non-Jewish descent, that Peter, the pastor, a Jewish pastor of a Jewish congregation, leads to Christ.

And it was a big deal. As a matter of fact, they debated it in Acts 15. It was called the Jerusalem Council. Remember that? They had to debate, what's the deal? God really going to treat these Gentiles like he's treating us, the people that the promise of the covenant was made to?

Now, back to Hebrews in our minds. Why was it that the writer of Hebrews didn't clarify this? Well, the title of the book should help you give you a hint, right? This wasn't written to Gentiles. This was a book that was written to Jews. Therefore, no clarification. But us Jewish people peeking in on this message from the writer of Hebrews, we've got to say, hey, you know what? This applies to us too.

So you three or four or five people here that are of Jewish descent, fantastic. You got nothing on us, though, when it comes to the new covenant, because the Bible is clear that God from the beginning, even in the prophets of the Old Testament, was driving to bless the world and all nations through the promise made to Abraham back in Genesis 12.

Number two on your outline. Let's just summarize it this way. You and I, Gentile people I'm talking to now, most of you, not the five or six of you that raised your hands, we ought to be grateful. We ought to be grateful that we get to participate in this. We're included in it.

Be grateful that we're included, because we are. And if you're going, well, you quoted a lot of New Testament there, then here's some passages for you to read when you get home. Isaiah chapter 40. Isaiah chapter 52. Isaiah chapter 56. Isaiah chapter 60. I mean, there's a very Jewish prophet, okay?

And if you read through all those chapters, let me quote one for you that you know. How about Isaiah 52, the suffering servant? We always look at this as Christ. He's the fulfillment of it. It says this about him. After it says he's been marred more than any man, he was killed. The suffering servant in a prophetic vision. Here he was killed in the future.

And the very next verse in Isaiah 52 says this, and by his blood he will sprinkle many, do you know the next word? Nations. What's that about? How does the suffering servant that's gonna take away the sins and transgressions of the world, or of Israel, how is it said that he sprinkles clean many nations?

See, even from the Old Testament perspective, as God revealed his truths through the prophets of the Old Testament, he always had the Gentiles in view as well.

So the good news is that the blessing, though it came through Israel, the new covenant promise is not just for Israel. It's for us as well. If it's absent in Hebrews 8, it's only because he's preaching to the choir. He's preaching to Jewish people.

Is that sufficient? That proved the case, I hope?



Hebrews chapter 8. What is the covenant? Let's summarize it real quick. Verse number 9, Hebrews 8:9. It's not going to be like the covenant I made with their forefathers, the forefathers of all the modern Israelis and people from the house of Judah, when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt.

Now, that's an important vision, metaphor, picture. It's like he's taking his people and he's dragging them out. And that's kind of what it was like. They were being dragged, were they not? Moses was leading them. I recognize that. But they were sitting around complaining. They were dreaming of the leeks and onions by the Nile. You remember that, right? Oh, we just want to go back so nice and eat. We don't like it. We don't have any food. We're tired of the bread. This man, I think I'm sick of it.

That's what they were doing. And God was dragging them into the promised land. Okay. I led them by the hand. I led them out of Egypt. Because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, I turned away from them, declares the Lord.

As a matter of fact, every adult who was there after they sent their 12 spies in and 10 came back and said, we're scared, we can't do it. God says, fine, then you're all going to die in the desert. And for that generation, they didn't receive the promise of the promised land.

And God continued, even through the captivity in Babylon, you go on and on and on. And every time God had to discipline these people because they broke his promise. And he says, choose life, choose death. You're choosing death. I'm going to have to punish you.

And he says, that was tough. That was really tough.

Verse 10, this is the covenant I'm going to make of the house of Israel. After that time declares the Lord, I will put my laws in their mind and I will write them on their hearts.

Let's analyze this because we're going to try to maximize it. Let's start by filling in the third point. Number three on your outline. Maximize, you got that word right, the new covenant. If we're living in the new covenant age, let's figure out all the features of the new covenant phone here and let's make sure we maximize it and live it to the fullest.

The first pointy finger letter A that we've got to distinguish here and make clear is that in the old covenant, these people were externally taken down a path. They were, I mean, coercion's a hard word, but they were certainly channeled down a path. They were led by the hand. I mean, they were taken, but it wasn't like having the law written on their minds and written in their hearts.

There was, as many of us have experienced before we became Christians, because we were just good church-going non-Christians. We were led from the outside. There was a pressure. God's word would hit us and we'd go, yeah, that's right, I know I should do that. I'm gonna try, I'm gonna try to do the right thing.

But then there's something that happens in the new covenant relationship with God where God says this to the disciples, the spirit will no longer be with you, but he's going to be in you. There was something different there. It's the truth of 2 Corinthians 5:17. If any person's in Christ, he is a new creation. Everything's new. The old stuff goes away. The new stuff has come. I am now new.



As Paul said, the old man's gone. New man has come. And a lot of non-Christian churchgoers, they are led externally by the principles of God's word, but God's word never resonates with their spirit because their spirit hasn't been transformed by the author, and the author doesn't live in their lives. There's a difference there.

Now, this is a dangerous thing to say to you non-Christian churchgoers, but if you're a Christian here, this is how I'd like to put it. Pointy finger letter A. You want to maximize the new covenant? Then here's what I'd like you to do. Live from the inside out. Live from the inside out.

Now, again, that's deadly advice if you're a non-Christian here. And there's a lot of people that think they're Christians that are non-Christians and they're just good church-going people, which means they hear a sermon and they hear what the Bible says and they go, yeah, I need to do that. You're right. Oh, I've got to do that.

And they're trying to do it, but they're trying to do it by external pressure. See? And you know what? Does external pressure work? Yeah, it can work for a while. As a matter of fact, external pressure can keep people from doing a lot of wrong things and suffering a lot of consequences from the wrong things that they do.

And a lot of us, how many of you grew up in the church? Grew up in the church like I did? Grew up in the church and there's all this pressure to do the right thing. You learn all these verses, you go to boys' brigades and chappy chipmunks and all that stuff, right? And Awana today and all that.

And they're teaching you, do the right thing, do the right thing, do the right thing. And you know what? A lot of times you choose the right thing because you don't want to do the wrong thing because there's all that pressure.

But then I became a Christian in college and all of a sudden something happens because inside God now puts his law in your mind. He impresses it in your heart. Or as Ezekiel, the parallel passage to the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 says, he takes away your heart of stone and he gives you a heart of flesh. Remember that? Here's a great phrase. And he moves you by his spirit to keep his decrees so that you'll be careful to follow in his ways.

That's different. It's the difference between being dragged and being driven. Now, that may be a distinction that's too subtle for some, but it's the difference between being dragged into a path of righteousness and being driven into a path of righteousness. One is being pushed from the outside. One is being led and driven from the inside.

And there's a difference there. And I know that's subtle because I know a lot of people are going, I don't know the difference between those. If you've experienced, then you can nod at me if you'd like. If you've experienced it, you know the difference.

Because a lot of us went to church for years before we ever had the internal transformation that takes place in a new covenant relationship with God. And God changes the inside. Now, all of a sudden, we move from inside to the outside.

That means we live a perfect Christian life and never sin ever, ever again, right? Is that what it means? It would mean that if you didn't live in a fallen hardware, the Bible calls it the flesh. That's



the only thing left. You realize that. If you are a Christian, the only thing left for redemption is the redemption of the body, Romans chapter 8.

When you get the hardware changed, then guess what? The software gets to do exactly what it's designed to do. The problem is a lot of people have bad hardware and bad software, but they're being driven by a lot of other computer CPUs to walk down the right path. That's a really bad mixed metaphor, but you get what I'm talking about, right?

There's that clanking and clunking and do this and do that and do that, and they go, but they have no internal software, and their hardware's all screwed up, and they make it down a path that's better than the next guy. And fortunately, a lot of those people stand before God on the last day and they say, Lord, Lord, did we not? And they'll say, depart from me, I never knew you.

See, but for those of us that are Christians, the software gets rewritten instantly at conversion. We are now declared righteous before God and our hearts are really cleansed and our internal heart of stone is replaced with a heart of flesh. And now all of a sudden we're moved internally. The author of the Bible now is inside. The resonance of God's spirit and his word, there's something there.

Whereas before we said, yeah, I know I need to do that. But now in our hearts as Christians, we go, yeah, we should do that. The only barrier now in the Christian life is our flesh, our fallen flesh.

And Jesus made the distinction often. Didn't he say that to his disciples? He says, your spirit is willing, but your flesh is weak.

See, unfortunately for the non-Christian, they're both all whacked out. That's why we're waiting for the redemption of the body. That's why the new Jerusalem, righteousness will not be a problem for you. Why is that? Because not only will you have the right core desires, but you will have a hardware that is ready to go. It is wired to do what's right, and it is ready to follow the impulses of godliness.

Right now, we have impulses of godliness that are encased in sin and weakness, and unfortunately, we still fall to temptation. Am I right?

Now, here's the thing. That's why if you're a Christian and living in a new covenant relationship, in the throes of temptation, you can ask yourself this. What do I really want to do? Ask a non-Christian that, and they're going to go, whatever I can get away with. But if you ask a Christian in the core of his heart, in the midst and throes of temptation, he's going to say, what I really want to do is I really want to do the right thing here. Because really I should be doing what's righteous and pleasing to God.

That's why Christians in the throes of temptation have to constantly turn the noise, the white noise up, so that they don't listen to their own spirit. Because their flesh is... And then they walk right into sin.

And what you've got to recognize is that God wants you to live from the inside out. Which means a lot of times, practically, we just put life on pause. Every morning you ought to be putting life on pause, right? And saying, now, wait a minute. Let me connect again. Let me get straight. Let me figure out the software that God has made. The author of that software is living in my heart. I know



I live encased and fallen hardware, but you know what? Today I want to live for Christ from the inside out.

Does that mean we throw away the Bible? That's what it means. We throw away the Bible, right? Is that what we do? No, it means every time the Bible encounters our life, we look for that inner resonance. Our spirit and his spirit, connect and they affirm with each other that not only we're children of God, as Romans 8 says, but that really we're ready and committed to walking down the path in harmony.

Non-Christians who are churchgoers, who are doing the right thing, are the most miserable people in the world. Really, they are. Christians, though, who are converted, in their heart, it resonates with harmony in their hearts with the truth of God's Word when they hear it.

And a lot of times, I can tell a lot from people when they're walking out the church and they've heard a hard-hitting message from the author of the scripture. If I preach clearly, and sometimes I don't, but when I do, and here comes the word, and it's just clear, and it's plain, if they rebel in their hearts against that, see, there's an issue there. There's a lot more judgment of what's going on in your heart than there is oftentimes of a clear, expounded message of the word, and we've got to get back to saying, God, is my heart right before you?

That's why I think David's prayer was so good. Psalm 139, search me, try me, know my heart, see if there's any wicked way in me. I know we're going to fall because we live in an encased fallen hardware, but man, we ought to be looking for that internal, inside out kind of Christian life. That's a deep concept.

And a book I didn't put on the back reading list, but I should have, and you may want to jot this down, is David Needham's book. I don't agree with everything in his book, and there's only one book I totally agree with, but the point is David Needham's book is helpful in so many regards in trying to delineate the difference between outside in living and inside out living.

And it's called *Birthright*. *Birthright*. A lot of you I've recommended it many times. He rewrote it, repackaged it. Mount Loma published it again years later, and it was called *Alive for the First Time*. That was the second issue when he updated some things and it probably is better, but I read the first one a few times and second one I know is a repackaging of the first.

But what are we talking about? Maximizing the new covenant. We're gonna live from the inside out. Does that make sense? If you're lost on that, Needham's book may help. And it talks a lot about Romans chapter 6, 7, and 8, which is so critical to this discussion.

Secondly, look at verse number 10, second half of the verse. You still there in Romans chapter 8, bottom of verse 10. Okay, I'm going to have the laws on my mind written on my heart. That's internal transformation.

Now look at this. I will be their God, God says, and they will be my people. Now you're thinking, now isn't that the way it was in the old covenant anyway? I mean they were his people and he was their God. Yeah, but there's something different about it.



This is almost to a level of poetry here. It's kind of like the hymn writer who says, I am his and he is mine. There's something sappy about this. There's something intimate about this. There's something more than just, yeah, we kind of go together. There's something profound about this.

Keep reading. No longer will a man teach his neighbor or a man his brother, hey, know the Lord, because they'll all know me from the least of them to the greatest. There will be something that's not based on their knowledge or their insight, just humanly speaking, but there's going to be a knowing the Lord that is so intimate.

It's the kind of thing that can be poetically expressed as I am his, he's mine, there's something more than just head knowledge. There's something here relationally. And the Bible often blurs those two words. Knowledge to know someone can be knowing them on a number of levels.

And I love what the Greek New Testament does. We talked about the Gnostics in the summer, right? Gnosis is the Greek word. Well, a lot of the New Testament writers love to add a preposition that intensifies it, *epi*, and the word is *epigonosko*. And they love to say, you know what we need to do? We need to like *epigonosko* God. We need to really know him. We need to know him intimately. We need to have a knowledge of him that's more than just head knowledge. It's experiential knowledge.

Let me show you one example of that in 2 Peter chapter 1. Peter uses it three times, I think it is, in this first chapter about how we ought to know, really know, *epigenosco* God and *epigenosco* Christ. And as we do, look at the advantages here. I mean, to know him, to really know him, like he's mine and I'm his, is more than just kind of knowing a person. It's dating a person.

It's why the metaphors of marriage and betrothal are so rich in the New Testament and the Old, because God wants to have more than just, hey, we're kind of on the same team. He wants this intimacy to be deeply relational.

2 Peter chapter 1. Simon Peter, servant, the apostle, I'm going to read in verse 1, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours, okay? Precious faith.

Now, here it comes, verse 2. Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the *epigenosco*, the knowledge, the intimate knowledge of God and the intimate knowledge of Jesus our Lord.

Now, unpack that. Let's just understand the semantics here. What do we got going on? I want grace and peace to be mind and abundance through—it's contingent on something—me knowing, really knowing God and really knowing Christ. Now the fulcrum of that, that's important. That's big.

If I can really know God, now what happens? I can experience grace and peace and abundance. Now those are Bible words for Sunday school grads, I realize, but let's get it out of that framework. Grace, what is grace? The favor of God, this goodness of God, this relating to God, this, the blessing of God.

If Deuteronomy 30 is all about life or death, and I want life, I want the favor of God, I want His blessing in my life, I want Him to love me, and I want to love Him without the hindrance and opposition of sin, then here's the thing, if you know Him, if you really know Him, if you relate to



Him, and to the extent that you relate to Him, man, the more grace, the more relationship, the more depth of that blessing you have.

And what's the second word? We don't need to update that one. Peace, grace and peace be yours in abundance. I mean, that just sounds good. That just sounds like it feels good. I'd like to have that peace. The absence of anxiety, the absence of worry, the absence of the tension and the problem, and is there an issue between us?

I want the grace and the peace to be mine and abundance through, man, I gotta know him. And that's exactly what Jesus said salvation and eternal life was all about.

We teach our kids this in Awana, right? This verse came from, if you got your kids in that program, you gotta recite this with them all the time. Comes up every year almost. And that's in John 17, verse 3, when it says about what eternal life is, Jesus as this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, as Jesus prays to the Father, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. That's a big statement. Salvation and everything about eternal life is bound up in really knowing him.

He goes on to say it, and if you still got 2 Peter open, his divine power, verse 3, has given us everything we need for life and godliness. Again, here it comes. It is based and contingent on something, the knowledge, *epigenosco*, of him who's called us by his own glory and goodness. That's just an invitation. It's an invitation to really deepen our knowledge of God. Is that just book learning? No. It's the experience that comes with that. It's the relationship that comes with that.

Pointy finger letter B, let's just put it this way. I mean, if you really want to maximize the new covenant, you and I ought to dig deeper or dive deeper, I think I put it, dive deeper into knowing God. And I put it in quotations, "knowing God," because it's not just, I want to learn more facts about him. It's not a textbook and studying him. It's actually getting into a relationship with God.

And I know we say it all the time. Christianity is not a religion. It's a relationship. Great. I realize that, but make sure that that's real in that I relate to God, not just with knowledge in my head about who he is, but that knowledge draws me close to him in a relationship with him.

I want my relationship with God to go into a deeper. I want it to be more intimate. I want it to be more sincere. I want it to be more honest. I want it more real.

I was again, encountering that passage in Nehemiah where he comes before the king and it says, just before he answers in, he prayed to the Lord and then I answered him. And I think, man, think about that. A guy in the midst, in the throes of his job, when a question comes out, he is so relating to God that in the midst of his work test, he's praying to God. Nobody even sees it.

As he writes about it in his own autobiography there, he says, you know, I just throwing up a prayer to God. There was an intimacy, a relating. A lot of us check our book in the morning. We got our Bible study time. Great. Did our answers for small group and off we go. And there's no relating there.

I mean, we got to make sure this leads us to know him. He said to the Pharisees, you search the scriptures because you think in them you have eternal life. But what you forget is that these words, he says, they testify of me. And the point is, God wants you to get not just into the book, but beyond the book, into relating to the person.



And if your Bible studies become check in a box or your church going is all about, you know, keeping an appointment, man, you got to get past that. So we ditch the Bible and we ditch church, right? That's what he's saying. No, no, no. We just meant we capitalize on those. And we make sure that those are our building blocks digging deeper into a relationship with God because the door is open and it wasn't there in the old covenant like it is now. The knowledge and relationship we can have is so much richer and more deep than the old covenant.

Last thing, verse 12, the bottom line, and this is the most important thing because the atonement was all just a ceremonial covering and God looking over the sin, but look at verse 12. He's not just going to look over our sin. Verse number 12, he's going to forgive our sin. Forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more.

Now, covering sin, God still had to deal with it. He may cover David's sin, but he's still got to deal with it because he's a just God. The great thing about the new covenant is it's actually been paid for. That's why Jesus on the cross said *tetelestai*, paid in full.

And it was paid in full so that no longer did God have to say, well, I'll cover that up and I'll have to get back to it. He actually paid it in full. And now all of a sudden it's been done.

As a matter of fact, as the Old Testament could only dream of, our sins are separated from us as far as the East is from the West. That could only be done on paper before the coming of Christ. Now that he's actually paid the price, it's real now.

It's the distinction between a debit card and a credit card. Just like when we're training our kids to work with money, we don't want them to get tied up with credit cards. Why? Because credit cards, you can spend, spends money, but really it's paperwork. Bottom line is you don't have that money. If you don't have that money, you got to pay it all back. You got to worry about it.

Debit card, on the other hand, that's different. If there is a charge and you have to hit the account with that, at least we recognize this, it's already there. And the riches of the real atonement and forgiveness on the cross is already there. And in the Old Testament, all you could say is, well, one day God's going to have to pay for this. In the new covenant, he's already paid for it.

Number three on your outline, and this a good way to put it. We need to cherish, and I love this word, perfect forgiveness. Cherish it, because it's not just forgiveness on paper. It's real forgiveness.

It's a kind of forgiveness where God looks from heaven at me, and he says, your sins, Mike, have been paid for. It's done. Not one day I'm going to have to deal with that, and one day I'll lay that on the Lamb of God. He looks back on it now in time and space and said, it's already been dealt with. My sins are completely forgiven.

The Old Testament, Old Covenant, was a picture of something that every real person who sought after Yahweh could only look to as a reflection and an image. The New Covenant is the reality.

I was dating my later-to-be wife, Karlyn, when we were in college, thousands of miles apart, and a long-distance relationship. And in my dorm room, I had all the pictures up of my girlfriend at that



time. See, and that's all I had in this long-distance relationship when she was out in California and I was out in Chicago.

But then when she'd get on a plane and fly out and visit me on campus, see, I didn't want to stay enamored with the pictures. As a matter of fact, you know, 19-year-old, the pictures are the person. I want the person, right?

And so the pictures, great, those were great. But all that is is a flat piece of paper bearing an image, but it's not the real thing. I'll leave the pictures. That's fine. I want to walk downstairs. I want to see the person that I love, touch the person that I love. The real relationship is there.

That's exactly what it was for the old covenant person. It was a picture. It was a thought. It was an imagination. It was a one day this is going to be great from a new covenant perspective. And though we're not arrived, we're not in the new Jerusalem, and I know we'll see him face to face one day, but when it comes to our forgiveness, our opportunity to relate to him, and when it comes to the inside movement and drawing of God and all that he does in my heart as opposed to just external pressure, man, it's already there. It's the real thing. And we ought to maximize it.

We've got a great thing called the New Covenant. And I know the manual's kind of thick, but there's lots of aspects to it that you and I need to say, man, it's our commitment to make sure we maximize and fully plumb the depths of what it means to be a New Covenant believer.

So let's work on that this week. Pray with me, please.

God, how important this is for us to recognize what a great thing we have going for us that the Old Covenant believer could only dream of. That it wasn't just about a ceremony and an animal that was, you know, picturing the covering of sin and the replacement and the substitution, but we can look back and though it's a gruesome thought of Christ actually incurring the wrath, the death, the destruction that we deserved, least we can say because of your grace and your kindness that it's been done and that Jesus has said it himself, it's paid in full, and that everything that stood as a barrier between you and between us has been removed.

And God, because of faith and repentance of our sins, you are drawing us in. If we respond and just, if we just respond to your drawing, God, every day can be a deeper and more intimate and real relationship with you. God, please help us to do it. I know we're encased in some fallen hardware, but allow us to cooperate with your spirit this week to know what it is, to experience a relationship with you in a way that we never have before.

God, thanks for our gathering tonight. Thank you, too. We can't help but remember what a great thing it is that we'll be able to see more people reached with the preaching of your word and the gospel of Christ by moving to the mornings. And we pray even in reaching out to our community that you'd allow that to be an act of worship, an act of expressing a heart that you have impressed upon us in a daily time of relating with you to express and live that out and flesh it out in real life here in this community.

God, we thank you for your goodness to us. We want to celebrate it. I want to cherish our perfect forgiveness in Christ. Give us something to sing about, something to talk about, something to be positive about this week as it relates to the new covenant. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.