

The Two Covenants (Covenant of Law versus Covenant of Grace)
(Dispensation of Condemnation versus Dispensation of Righteousness)
by Rene P. Brown

First Reading (RSV):

2Cor 3:5-9 (RSV) "Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, ⁶who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, **not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life.** ⁷Now if the **dispensation of death**, carved in letters on stone [Ten Commandments], came with such splendor that the Israelites could not look at Moses' face because of its brightness, fading as this was, ⁸will not the **dispensation of the Spirit** be attended with greater splendor? ⁹For if there was splendor in the **dispensation of condemnation**, the **dispensation of righteousness** must far exceed it in splendor."

Second Reading (RSV):

Heb 10:12-18 (RSV) "But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet. ¹⁴**For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.** ¹⁵And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, ¹⁶"This is the [New] covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: **I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,**" ¹⁷then he adds, **"I will remember their sins and their misdeeds no more."** ¹⁸Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin."

Hundreds of years before God made a Covenant of Law through Moses God made a covenant with Abraham. This covenant He made with Abraham was completely a covenant of grace. Abraham simply believed and God did it all. There was no requirements for Abraham to perform. This covenant foretells of Jesus' sacrifice and a New Covenant of Grace through faith.

First, it was a covenant of grace: (Gal 3:6-7 RSV) "Thus Abraham "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." ⁷So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham."

Second, it was a covenant of blood - ratified by God's cutting covenant with Abraham

Third, Abraham did no works (In fact, he sinned by lying! God never reprimanded Abraham for this sin.)

Fourth, Abraham only believed.

Fifth, the story of Jacob, grandson of Abraham, is very similar to Abraham's story. Jacob also trusted God, and God reckoned it to him as righteousness. He did this in spite of the fact that Jacob was a schemer and a liar. He stole his brother's birthright. God never reprimanded Jacob for this sin but allowed him to be cheated in turn to allow Jacob to learn from his mistakes.

So we see that the covenant which God made with Abraham was not a covenant of law but rather it was a covenant of grace just as the covenant we have with the Lord God through Jesus is a covenant of grace.

Let us look at these two important covenants in the bible which we call The Old Covenant and The New Covenant.

I. The Old Covenant

The centerpiece of The Old Covenant or “Covenant of the Law given through Moses” is the Law we call the Ten Commandments. [These are the “Laws etched in stone.”]

First: It is a covenant of **performance**.

1. God promises that if His people do something, He responds accordingly. If they do good, they get good things.
2. If His people do evil, He will respond with bad things.
3. Blessings and curses

Deu 11:26-28 (RSV) "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: ²⁷the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day, ²⁸and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods which you have not known."

Deu 28:2 (RSV) "And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God."

Deu 28:15 (RSV) "But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command you this day, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you."

4. Law in the Gospels (The Covenant of Law was still in effect in the Gospels which confuses people about what The New Covenant really is. The New Covenant does not begin until after the cross of Jesus Christ.)

Mat 6:14-15 (RSV) "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; ¹⁵but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Note! This is LAW, NOT GRACE! Therefore it is Old Covenant.)

Second: It is based on **written code** (2 Corinthians 3:6 and also the Law of Moses, Ten Commandments, found in Leviticus, Deuteronomy and other books of the Old Testament.)

Third: It is a **dispensation of condemnation** for sins [from RSV] 2 Corinthians 3:9

Fourth: It is a **dispensation of death** (this covenant can condemn but cannot bring life) [RSV] 2 Corinthians 3:7

Fifth: It **is ratified by blood of lambs** and goats and cattle. (See the Law of Moses in Leviticus, Deuteronomy and other Old Testament books. Compare with New Covenant ratified by blood of Jesus.)

II. New Covenant

First: **It is instituted by the Cross of Jesus - in Jesus' Blood.**

Luke 22:20 (RSV) "And likewise the cup after supper, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Second: It is completely a **covenant of grace through faith.**

(We do nothing to merit this covenant!) Rom 3:24-25 (RSV) "they are **justified by his grace as a gift,** through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be **received by faith.**

This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins;"

Third: It is **dispensation of righteousness.**

Rom 8:10 (RSV) "But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, **your spirits are alive because of righteousness.**"

1Cor 1:30 (RSV) "He is the **source of your life in Christ Jesus,** whom God made our wisdom, **our righteousness** and sanctification and redemption;"

God has made us holy: (Hebrews 10:14 RSV) "For by a single offering he has **perfected for all time** those who are sanctified." (Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ and trusts in Him is sanctified.)

Fourth: It is a **dispensation of life.**

The Spirit gives life. John 6:63 (RSV) "It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life."

Fifth: God's law is **written on our heart and mind**

Not in a book or on tablets of stone. Hebrews 10:16

Sixth God **remembers our sins no more.**

Hebrews 10:17

Seventh: **No more offering for sin is available or necessary.**

Hebrews 10:18

Eighth: **Believers in Jesus Christ (what the bible calls saints) are perfected for all time.**

Hebrews 10:14

Ninth: **It is all ratified by the Blood of Jesus.**

III. New Covenant completely replaced the Old Covenant

Hebrews 8:13 "In speaking of a new covenant he treats **the first as obsolete.** And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."

Hebrews 8:13 (New Living Translation) When God speaks of a "new" covenant, it means he has made **the first one obsolete. It is now out of date and will soon disappear.**

Hebrews 7:22 RSV "This makes Jesus the surety of a **better covenant.**"

1. **God does it all.**

Gal 2:19-20 (RSV) "For **I through the law died to the law**, that I might live to God. ²⁰**I have been crucified with Christ**; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." God dwells within us by the Spirit. His Spirit guides us day by day. God works out His will in our lives as we submit to the work of the Holy Spirit within us.

2. **We are no longer under the Law** (the written code).

Note the Law is for unbelievers, not for believers in Jesus Christ.

a. The law condemns but does not help us to obey in any way.

b. 1 Tim 1:8-11 (RSV) "**Now we know that the law is good, if any one uses it lawfully**, ⁹understanding this, **that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless** and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, ¹⁰immoral persons, sodomites, kidnapers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted."

c. Rom 7:4-8 (RSV) "Likewise, my brethren, **you have died to the law** through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another.

Rom 8:1-4 (RSV) "**There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**. ²**For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death**. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, **who walk** not according to the flesh but **according to the Spirit**."

IV. New Identity

By God's own words: **We are saints - not by performance but by HIS BLOOD**

We are justified by grace through faith.

(Not by our works or performance or good deeds or keeping written laws)

God Himself has written His laws on our hearts and in our minds.

If we fail, He will remind us, He will empower us to keep His word.

If we fail, He will not be angry at us (He took out all His anger on Jesus on the cross).

Even if we sin, we are still sons and daughters.

The Lord wants us to do everything in Union with Him.

That He might be a part of everything we do in our entire lives.

Amen!

*******End of the Message*******

Other Scriptures for previous lesson:

Rom 10:4 (RSV) "For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified."

Gal 3:24 (RSV) "So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith."

Gal 5:18 (RSV) "But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law."

Gal 5:4 (RSV) "You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace."

Gal 5:18 (RSV) "But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law."

Rom 6:14 (RSV) "For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."

Rom 7:4-8 (RSV) "Likewise, my brethren, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit. ⁷What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." ⁸But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, wrought in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead."

Gal 3:19 (RSV) "Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained by angels through an intermediary."

Gal 3:21 (RSV) "Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not; for if a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law."

Eph 2:14-15 (RSV) "For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,"

Heb 8:6-13 (RSV) "But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry **which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.** ⁷**For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second.** ⁸For he finds fault with them when he says: "The days will come, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; ⁹not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and so I paid no heed to them, says the Lord. ¹⁰This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹¹And they shall not teach every one his fellow or every one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest. ¹²For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." ¹³In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."

Rom 3:20-21 (RSV) "For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. ²¹But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it,"

Rom 5:20-21 (RSV) "Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."