

THE FAULT OF THE COVENANT

Beginning in the middle of Hebrews, chapter 8, the Hebrew writer quotes just about verbatim the passage from the 31st chapter of Jeremiah concerning the New Covenant that the Lord had promised to make with His people. In vs. 13, he makes this statement, "When He said, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear."

Now when God declares anything to be out-of-date and of no value, we had better listen to Him . . . and He does that on occasion. A good illustration of that would be the 1st chapter of Isaiah . . . whenever Isaiah points out all of the things that Israel is doing in her worship . . . keeping the temple sacrifices and the temple worship and keeping the feasts, and the ceremonies, and the rituals of the Old Covenant . . . all that God had commanded them to do, they were doing them . . . but God said I hate them and I don't accept them. He declared them of no value because they had lost their meaning (Isaiah 1:13, "Bring your worthless offerings no more . . . vs. 14, I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts . . . vs. 15, So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you . . . Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen . . . 16-17, God gives them the remedy, Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, reprove the ruthless; Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow).

Now why is He going to replace the Covenant? In the 7th chapter of Hebrews, vs. 18-19, "For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God." If it is weak and useless because it makes nothing perfect, then let's do away with it God says.

And so in Hebrews, chapter 8, vs. 7, "For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He says, 'BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD, WHEN I WILL EFFECT A NEW COVENANT . . .' Now notice what he says . . . "If the first covenant had been faultless" and then vs. 8, "**For finding fault with them . . . He made a New Covenant.**" **He implies the first covenant had a fault in it and it did.**

He said "finding fault with them" that is with the people of the covenant. In Exodus 19, the blessings of the first covenant were based on whether they (the people of that covenant) kept the covenant. Had they been able to keep the covenant, the covenant itself would not have been at fault. But Israel could not keep the covenant that God gave.

There is something here we need to latch-onto here and to understand . . . I hope you will be able to see it today.

Back in the Book of Exodus, in the 19th chapter, just before the giving of the Ten Commandments, in vs. 5, God said, "**Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine**" . . . If you will obey My voice and if you will keep My covenant, then you will be My people.

Now go over to the 24th chapter of Exodus . . . after Moses has read the Law to them and has reminded them of their obligations under the covenant, vs. 3 says, "Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, 'All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!'"

Vs. 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!'"

But now, in Hebrews, chapter 8, and vs. 9, he says, ". . . For they did not continue in My covenant . . ." Continuing in the covenant that He made with them was contingent upon whether or not they obeyed Him and kept His Word.

Now understand this . . . they did not continue in My covenant because they did not obey. The blessings of the covenant . . . that is being a part of the covenant and receiving the blessings that God promised in the covenant, depended upon whether or not they obeyed Him and kept His Law. If you keep my commandments, then you will receive the blessings of the covenant . . . but they did not continue in My covenant.

Now, let me show you the difference between the Old Covenant that we have been talking about and the New Covenant that the Hebrew writer is introducing us to . . . in the 36th chapter of Ezekiel, beginning in vs. 25, he is talking about the day He will make a New Covenant, "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols (you don't have to keep certain laws and regulations in order to be clean, **I am going to cleanse you**). vs. 26, "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. Vs. 27, **And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. And you will live in the land I gave to your fathers.**"

I will put My Spirit in you and I will cause you to walk in My statutes . . . you will keep My Law and you will obey My voice not in order to be a part of the covenant but because I cleansed you and because I put My Spirit in you and because I am the one who cause you observe My Ordinances.

So you see there is a great deal of difference between the two covenants and he discusses this in this 8th chapter of Hebrews, vs. 10-12 and we will talk about that later, we don't want to go that far this morning.

What I want to say is . . . this Old Covenant, which was based upon keeping the Law . . . if you keep the Law you will be blessed--If you don't keep the Law you will be cursed . . . if you keep the Law then you will live in covenant life--If you don't keep the Law then the covenant is broken and you will not have a part in it.

Here is what I want you to see . . . this is the covenant that most Christian people live under. And it is the covenant that the world naturally accepts and gravitates towards . . . the natural man understands that covenant . . . and most Christians live under the Old Covenant instead of the New, although they give lip service to a New Covenant, they actually live and pattern their lives after the Old Covenant regulations . . . in order to be saved, you see, or in order to be blessed, in order to have peace, in order to be used of God . . . To be pleasing to God, I must do more service, I must pray more, I must get involved more, I must work more, I must do more, I must be more active in my Christian life in order to receive that and that is what most Christians hear from their pulpits across the land and that is that if you will work harder and strive harder and dig a little bit deeper, THEN GOD IS GOING TO BLESS YOU AND YOU WILL BE SAVED IF YOU ARE FAITHFUL UNTO THE END.

BUT THE QUESTION IS WHAT IF WE FAIL IN SOME OR ALL OF THESE AREAS . . .
. That is a heavy load to carry -- God is not going to bless me unless I continue more in my devotions and continue more in my involvement.

A great preacher of some years ago wrote a book on covenant and in that book he said, "The eternal God has entered into covenant with faithful and believing souls" . . . that is very beautiful and it sounds very spiritual, but it not true because under the New Covenant God entered into the New Covenant when His people were unfaithful and when they were unbelievers . . . He didn't wait until we obeyed Him . . . He didn't wait until we believed in Him . . . He didn't wait until we became faithful and He didn't until we cleansed ourselves by a lot of good works before He accepted us.

It was while we were ungodly that Christ died for us and while we were yet in our sins that He accepted us . . . **the Old way is like a child that has to do something in order for his parents to love him.** He has the feeling that if he does certain things my parents will love me . . . maybe that is true with some parents, **but the way God set up the home is we love our children regardless of what they do.**

The Old Covenant says if you will obey My voice I will bless you . . . the New Covenant says My blessings are you shall obey My voice because I am going to give you a new heart and a new spirit . . . My loving you and My accepting you and My saving you and My blessing you does not depend on what you do . . . **it depends on what I do and I did it in Christ.**

Now hang on . . . we are talking about a covenant of grace and not a covenant of works. And we cannot understand grace because our minds have been conditioned toward works

and toward the keeping of the Law. And this is especially true, I am sorry to say, in most of our Baptist and other Christian churches in our country . . . about all we know about grace is that she is a blue eyed blond. We don't know much about and we don't preach about it unless we preach on eternal security and falling from grace.

And there is a rather difficult passage over in the 3rd chapter of Galatians, but I think it says what I am trying to say . . . Gal 3:18-19, "For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise (if God's blessing is contingent on my works, then it doesn't have anything to do with grace or anything based on a promise). Vs 19, "Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. Now a mediator is not for one party only (you see a mediator is for two parties) whereas God is only one."

I want you to get this . . . let me try to explain it . . . the Law was a covenant that was enacted between God and the Jews requiring fulfillment by both parties. Now fulfillment on God's part was not any problem . . . He was going to fulfill His end of the bargain. But the Old Covenant was a bargain made between two people, between God and the Jewish people **and Moses was the mediator between those two.**

But the promise to Abraham, which is Christ and the New Covenant . . . in that promise that God made, all of the obligations are assumed by God and that is what it means when it says "God is one" in vs. 20. **So Christ, according to the Book of Hebrews, becomes the surety or the guarantee of the covenant and not us.** God has not made a deal with us . . . God has not made the same deal with us that He made with the Old Jewish nation. **God has assumed all of the obligations and Jesus has become the surety of the New Covenant and the mediator of the New Covenant and Jesus is saying it will work . . . I guarantee it . . . we are part of a covenant that is guaranteed . . . not by what we do, but by what Jesus did . . . do we understand that . . . I don't think you do, but think about it.**

It is important that we get this . . . I know this is a dangerous doctrine to preach because automatically the wheels in our little minds are going to start turning and we are going to say "well he says we can live as we please and I don't have to be faithful for God to bless me . . . Paul ran into that in the 6th chapter of Romans . . . he said **shall we continue in sin that grace may abound, God forbid! We died to sin and you can't go on living in sin so don't even think about that . . .** because if God has given you a new heart and put a new spirit in you and guaranteed the covenant and has said I will never leave you and will never forsake you and He has assumed all of the obligations and Christ has paid the price for them, then naturally we are going to walk in His way and we are going to keep His Commandments and we are going to do His will . . . **NOT IN ORDER TO BECOME A PART OF THE COVENANT, BUT BECAUSE WE ARE A PART OF THE COVENANT.**

Well let's go on . . . Heb 8, vs. 8 is what we want to talk about, "For finding fault with them . . . Behold, days are coming when I will effect a New Covenant . . ." -- **Why did He find fault with them . . . vs. 9, I found a fault with them because "they did not continue in My covenant . . ."** He said this new covenant "is not like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day I took them by the hand and lead them out of Egypt . . ." **Why did they not continue in His Covenant . . . That is the question!**

He said they did not continue in My covenant since the day I lead them out of Egypt . . . let's go back to the day when He took them by the hand and lead them out of Egypt and we'll find out why they did not keep the covenant.

Exodus, chapter 13 . . . they are coming out . . . vs. 3, "And Moses said to the people, 'Remember this day in which you went out from Egypt, from the house of slavery; for by a powerful hand the Lord brought you out from this place. And nothing leavened shall be eaten. On this day in the month of Abib, you are about to go forth (this is the passover).'"

Now notice what he says . . . vs. 3, he says I want you to remember this day (I want you to remember what happened this day--how I redeemed you and brought you out of Egypt) . . . but vs. 5 says, "and it shall be when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canannite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, which He swore to our fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall observe this rite in this month."

When you come into the land, you are to observe this rite and you are to remember what happened this day . . . they did not keep the Passover for 40 years when they were in the wilderness . . . they didn't keep the Passover until they went into the land and the reason is it was only in the land that they could celebrate the Passover intelligently. It was only when they were in the land that could remember in an intelligent way and observe what God had done for them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.

As long as they were wondering around in the wilderness, the Passover meant nothing to them because they had been brought out But They Had Not Been Taken In. And he said it is only when you get into the land that you can remember the significance of what is happening this day.

Now, there is only one place where you can intelligently celebrate your redemption through the death of Christ and that is in the fullness of Covenant Life. You cannot appreciate your redemption, and you cannot understand salvation by grace as long as you are wondering around in the wilderness. It is only when you come into the fullness of Covenant Life and realize that you are in the land and that you are at rest and that you have entered into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus that you can celebrate what has happened to you in your life.

If you are still wondering around in the wilderness trying to get in and trying to make God bless you and trying to work you way into heaven, the redemption that you have in Christ is not going to mean anything to you . . . it is only when you enter His Rest that you can understand that.

Now, let's go on . . . in Exodus, chapter 13, vs. 8, "And you shall tell your son on that day (when you get into the land, on that day, then you are to tell your son) saying 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt. And it shall serve as a sign (now listen) it shall serve as to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, that the law of the Lord may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the Lord brought you out of Egypt.'"

It will first of all be in your hand . . . now this was an illustration of what God had done and it was important that these people understood this . . . it will be in your hand . . . the covenant says your redemption changes what you do (your hand).

It will be on your forehead . . . your redemption changes how you think.

And it will be in your mouth . . . your redemption changes what you say.

Now that is what the New Covenant does . . . when you come into the fullness of the New Covenant, and you become a part of God's redemptive covenant through Jesus as your high priest after the order of Melchizedek and you enter into the Holiest of All . . . that changes what you do, and that changes what you think, and that changes what you say.

Now, let's ask another question . . . what did Israel do? Go to the 12th chapter of Deuteronomy, vs. 7-8, "There also you and your households shall eat before the Lord your God, and rejoice in all your undertakings in which the Lord your God has blessed you (that is when you come into the land). **You shall not do at all what we are doing here today (that is the wilderness -- when you get into the land and into the fullness of My Covenant, you will not do at all what you are doing today -- well what are they doing today), every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes (that is what they were doing--doing what is right in their own eyes)."**

Now what have we been doing since our redemption . . . most Christian people are doing the works that they want to do, the leisure that they want to have, they are spending their money the way they want to do it, they are going where they want to go, and doing what they want to do.

Now we this right to do all of that as we want to do it only if we are living in the wilderness.

The moment that we come into Covenant with God, we do not have the right to do what is right in our own eyes, let alone do what is wrong.

When you come to Jesus Christ and He comes into your life and you stand up and say I am a part of His body . . . He is in me and I am in Him and I am accepting by faith His redemption, you confess Him as the Christ before men, you are buried with Him in baptism, and your name is

added to the Church, and you are a part of the congregation . . . the day that you do that you loose your right to do what you want to do with your life.

And that includes your works, your leisure, your money, your time, your talents . . . what your are out there in life . . . where you go and how you go and why you go . . . **it changes the course of your life completely AND YOU CANNOT DO WHAT IS RIGHT IN YOUR OWN EYES.**

What did they think . . . the covenant is to be on your forehead . . . the Covenant changes what you think . . . what were they thinking . . . **it is interesting to see what they were thinking in the wilderness. Chapter 11 of Numbers, vs. 4,** "The rabble who were among them had greedy desires; and also the sons of Israel wept again and said, "Who will give us meat to eat?" **Can you imagine that . . .** who is going to feed us. They had seen God bring them out of Egypt, they had seen the Red Sea open, they had come over on dry land . . . they had already drunk water from the rock when Moses struck it and they had experienced the Manna from heaven . . . now they say who is going to give us meat to eat.

Numbers 11, vs. 5, this is what they were thinking, "We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt (it was a welfare system, but we were well fed -- we remember the fish -- I have the idea they had not tasted fish until they tasted fish when they got into the promised land -- probably what they were eating in Egypt were carp--they probably didn't know what real fish tasted like -- it was free . . . they said they remember the fish), the cucumbers (12 inches of indigestion) and the melons (95% water and 5% seeds) and the leeks and the onions and the garlic (gave them bad breath)" . . . and God had promised to bring them into the land, flowing with milk and honey and bless them above every nation upon the earth and all they can think about is fish and garlic and things they ate back there in Egypt.

And that's all we can think about today . . . what are you thinking about today? You see where their minds were. This occupied their minds **and that's the place where most people have their minds today . . . who is going to feed us . . . what is our Government going to do for us . . . how are we going to get along?**

What were they saying . . . that's what they were doing and thinking, what were they saying (it will be in your mouth)? The 16th chapter of Numbers, beginning vs. 1, "Now Korah the son of Izhar; the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On the son of peleth, sons of Reuben, took action **(the church is famous for taking action . . . they decided to take action -- they were going to do something) vs.2,** "and they rose up before Moses, together with some of the sons of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, chosen in the assembly, men of renown (famous men . . . good men). And they assembled together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them **(here is what they were saying),** "You have gone far enough (you have overstepped your bounds), for all the congregation are

holy, every one of them, and the Lord is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?"

In their estimation, they were saying we are holy enough -- we don't have to listen to you, we don't have to listen to what you tell us . . . we are alright without you . . . they rose up against Moses and Aaron . . . they rose up against God's leadership who were trying to lead them into a better life. They did not want to hear God's voice as He spoke through them. They said we have the spirit of God . . . we don't have to listen to what you say . . . we are holy enough without it.

Isn't that what most religious people say today . . . I'm holy enough . . . I don't have to go to church every Sunday . . . I don't have to meet around the Lord's table, or grow as a Christian, or give, or do all of those things. I don't have to listen to the voice of God because I am going to do what I want to do. We are not brazen enough to come out and admit that, but that is basically the society that we are living.

Now all of that is alright if you are going to be content to live in the wilderness . . . but if you are going to come out of the wilderness and into God's Rest and come boldly before His Throne of Grace and live in the Holy Place, then that kind of life cannot exist.

Let's conclude by going to Heb 13: 20-21 . . . I think this is a great passage, "Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord (you see, the covenant was made with our Lord back in eternity . . ." the main difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is that we cannot break the New Covenant. Now Israel broke their covenant with God, but we cannot break the covenant.

We can be unfaithful to the covenant, we can put ourselves outside of covenant blessings . . . but I don't care what we do, we cannot break the covenant because the covenant is not made with us. The Old Covenant was made with Israel and they failed . . . God said I am never going to do that again. So He did not come down and make covenant with us . . . He made it with His Son, who represented us. The covenant is with Jesus Christ and we can't break it because He is not going to break it. And if we are unfaithful that means we don't enjoy the blessings of the covenant, but the covenant is still there . . . God is still faithful and the covenant is not broken because it is made with Jesus Christ.

So he talks about the blood of the eternal covenant . . . it was made with Christ back in eternity before you were ever born . . . you can't do anything to change that or to make it any better.

And so he says in vs. 21, may he "equip you in every good thing to do His will . . ." we have the mind of Christ . . . He has equipped us with every good thing to do His will . . . **what the Hebrew writer is saying is not so much may God equip you but may you be equipped by what God has already provided for you. He has given you the mind of Christ . . . now you**

can use it or you can decide not use it. You can take it or you can let it go . . . you can live by it or you can live by your own mind. But it is there for you . . . He has equipped you and given you every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm . . . He has given you everything that you need. Everything and all that God is ever going to give you, He has already given you.

And He will "work in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

Now, let me show you a passage that explains that . . . "God working in us" that which will give Him glory and working in us that which is right . . . **Turn to Philipians, chapter 2, vs. 12-13,** "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling . . ." I told about the time I was talking to this lady and we did not agree on this passage . . . her conclusion was you can believe what you want, I can believe what I want, the Bible we are to work out our own salvation, I worked mine out, you work yours out . . . she said I worked mine out so everything is ok.

When he says "work it out" he means you are to take that which God has put in you and work it out . . . let it come out of you . . . you see . . . there is nothing you can do and there is nothing you can work out of you unless God has put there in the first place. What ever you do in the realm of Christianity, you do it first of all because God put it in you.

That wasn't true of the Jews. They had to work it out for themselves because God had not put it them. But God has put it in us . . . He has put a new heart in us so He says work that out . . . vs. 13, "For it is God who at work in you both to will and to work His good pleasure."

It is God in you working out His will . . . He will work out His will as much as you will let Him . . . But is God in you that does it.

Let's close by listing some things that God works out in our lives:

- The love of God (Romans 5:5)
- The Mind of Christ (I Cor 2:16)
- The Power of Christ (John 14:27 and Col 3:15)
- The Faith in the Son of God (Gal 2:20)
- He works out His Joy in our life (John 15:11)
- and finally, He works out His Glory in us (John 17)

That is if we let Him . . . all of this is done and all of this is possible because God has already done it and when God has already done it, He says accept it and walk in it.

God found fault with the first covenant because He found fault with them . . . they did not keep it. But He can't say that about us because the covenant is with Christ . . . and He put within us a new heart and a new Spirit and He says work that out in your life.

We can still make a choice to live in the wilderness or to live in God's Rest, but it is our choice . . . we make that choice . . . It is not a matter of salvation . . . it is a matter of us being what God wants us to be.

I think a person can live in the wilderness all of their life and still be saved and never know the Rest of God, but my what he has missed out on . . . what he has missed that God had for him.