

Gospel Meetings - Part 1

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer emphasizes the transformative power of the New Covenant, contrasting it with the Old Covenant and calling believers to a deeper understanding of their faith.

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Scripture: Jeremiah 31:31

Topics: "Gospel", "New Covenant", "Regeneration"

Description

Paul Washer emphasizes the significance of the new covenant as prophesied in Jeremiah 31, contrasting it with the old covenant made with Israel. He highlights that the new covenant involves a transformative work of God, where His laws are written on the hearts of believers, creating a new people who genuinely know Him. Washer warns against a superficial understanding of Christianity, urging listeners to recognize the necessity of true regeneration and the evidence of a changed life. He stresses that true believers will exhibit a growing love for God and His Word, and that God's faithfulness ensures that He will never turn away from His people. Ultimately, he calls for a deep, personal relationship with Christ, rooted in genuine faith and obedience.

Transcript

I'll open up your Bible to the book of Jeremiah. Chapter 31, verse 31. Chapter 31, verse 31.

Behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers of the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. My covenant which they broke, although I was a sinner.

But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days. I will put my law, and on their heart I will write it. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they will all know me.

From the least of their sin I will repent. They shall be my people, and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart and one way, for their own good and for the good of all.

I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good. And I will put the fear of me in their heart, so that I will rejoice over them to do them good. Lord, I pray that I for my part would not get in the way.

Lord, I know apart from your grace, there is nothing. Lord, I pray that your people would understand their place before you. That those who do not know you may come to see great things in your law.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Now in Jeremiah 31, verse 31, this text, all-encompassing text here, is the longest sequence of Old Testament verses quoted in the New Testament. It's quoted in the book of Hebrews.

And I'm absolutely amazed. Now let's just stop there. Let's just stop.

So many people who are Christians, or call themselves Christians, are never absolutely amazed by anything in God's Word. Do you know when Jesus, there in the book of Matthew, and during the Lord's Supper, the Passover, He speaks about His blood of the New Covenant. I believe that when He said that, that those disciples around Him, literally their jaw dropped to the floor.

And they began to tremble. Maybe they looked at one another and one said to the other, in a stuttering, stammering, shocked voice, Did I just hear what I thought I heard? Do you mean to tell me that this very night, what Jeremiah spoke of hundreds of years ago, is about to be fulfilled in our very presence? Many people are never astounded by biblical truth. Because they cannot see biblical truth.

Because their eyes have never been turned toward biblical truth. They are mesmerized by absolutely everything in the world. Everything from cars, to houses, to fashion, to people well known.

They're mesmerized by so many things. But they never find themselves mesmerized by the Word. You know, I could actually stop here right now, and finish this, and just ask you one question.

When was the last time you were literally astounded by the truths that you saw in Scripture? And if you say never, I want you to know you ought to be terrifyingly afraid. Because everyone who truly belongs to Him delights in His Law. Sees great and wonderful things in His Law.

And His Law, His Word, is not a burden to them. But so many have a practice of Christianity, in which literally, there's nothing in the Word that they desire. Now let me ask you this question, so that we don't tend toward leaning too much on emotion.

You say, no I'm not like that, I really do love the Bible. How much do you study it, and when was the last time you did? You see, there's things to be afraid of. There are.

But that's another sermon. I am literally astounded by this passage. I am astounded at the ability of the Spirit of God to say things hundreds of years before they happen.

And with such precision. When I want to go into the Scripture and truly understand the doctrine of regeneration. What it means to be born again.

I go to Ezekiel. Man, did he understand that. I want to know about what the church is supposed to be like.

What are the promises governing the church, and lifting up the church, and supporting the church. What does a true church look like? Believe it or not, I can go to Jeremiah. And that's what we have here.

Now he says, behold, verse 31. Take notice. Take notice.

When God says, behold. You better behold. If it is marvelous in God's sight.

And it is not marvelous in ours. Where are we spiritually? If God can say something. Behold.

Look here. I'm going to show you something absolutely amazing. And we respond with a yawn.

Who are we? What kind of people are we? But he says, behold, days are coming, declares the Lord. When I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. He's going to do a new thing.

Make a new covenant. A new testament. A new working of God.

He says, what is this new covenant like? Well, he tells us, first of all, what it's not like. In verse 32, he says, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. Now, I want you to look at two different things right now and set them in comparison and in contrast.

Two tremendously great, if not governing, redemptive works in the world. Two things that God has done. One pointing to another.

That first great work of redemption is when God brings his people, Israel, out of the land of Egypt. And when we get to the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments and Exodus, he makes it clear. He has a claim upon all the world.

He has a claim upon everyone by right of creation. He's Creator. That's why Genesis begins with that.

God has a claim on you. He has a claim on every man who's ever breathed everything. As Kuyper said one time, when Jesus Christ comes back, he's going to stretch forth his hand and say, Mine, mine, mine, mine, mine.

It's all mine. By right of creation, it is all his. But, when he comes to Israel and delivering them out of the land of Egypt, what does he say? He says this, I have another claim upon you.

I redeemed you. I redeemed you for myself. So, this great redemptive work is seen in God redeeming the nation of Israel from the bondage in Egypt.

A terrible, grave, enduring, laborious bondage. And overrun by a cruel tyrant of a man. God defeated him.

God defeated all those so-called gods. God defeated the armies and God delivered his people. He delivered them.

Now, he made a covenant with them. And how was that covenant? He gave them some laws. He made them a nation.

And he brought them in to the land he promised. But now, he says something. He's going to make a new covenant.

And that new covenant is not going to be like the old one. In some ways, there are great similarities between the old covenant and the new covenant. But, he says, I'm going to do a new thing.

I am going to create a new people. And it is going to be so spectacular what I do that it will totally overshadow every other work or so-called work of redemption. I am going to do something that will make your ears tingle.

If you think delivering Israel from the land of Egypt was a spectacular work of redemption, you've seen nothing yet. Because all that work simply points to a greater work that I am going to do. Now, he says something about the old covenant.

He says, not like the covenant in verse 32, which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, declares the Lord. Now, there are two things here that seem to most describe God's working with the nation of Israel.

First of all, God's faithfulness. He took them out of the land of Egypt like a father. Now, I am a father.

I have a five-year-old, a three-year-old, and I have one on the way. Now, and at my age, oh God have mercy. I would die a thousand deaths for those children.

I would starve myself for those children. I would fight the largest and most fearful man for those children. I will throw my body in front of harm's way for those children.

Now, according to the words of Jesus, if I, being evil, can demonstrate such love and compassion and, in a sense, faithfulness to those that I have brought forth, in a sense, how much more? God, when He makes a covenant with a people as Redeemer and Father, He led them in His faithfulness. He was always faithful so that the men of God would say, there has never been any word of all the good words that God has ever spoken that has failed. He is not a man.

He does not lie. He does not repent. Everything He says, He does.

And, oh Lord, great is Thy faithfulness. Such a Savior. Such a Warrior.

But also, even in the Old Testament, do not mistake yourself. And such a Father. People think of this Old Testament God of being harsh and cruel.

Well, He's never been harsh or cruel, but He is holy and just. But sometimes, looking at the holiness and the justice, we forget that we see God as a Father also all through the Old Testament. Such compassion.

Such love for His children. Such willingness to forgive and restore and rebuild. He was faithful to them.

And that marks that Old Covenant. The faithfulness of God. He never failed them.

But there's another thing that marks that Old Covenant. As the faithfulness of God marks it, so the unfaithfulness of Israel marks that covenant. Now, before we go any further, let's stop.

Most people have such ill-conceived ideas about the nation of Israel. There are people who believe that, well, everyone that was in Israel, everyone that came out of Egypt, everyone in the Bible that you read about, all of Israel was this saved nation of regenerate people. That all of them were believers and all of them were followers of God.

And the nation of Israel was this great spiritual entity of followers of Yahweh. No. Not at all.

The nation of Israel was, by and large, a physical nation. It was a physical nation called up out of Egypt. A physical nation that could all trace their heritage back to one man, Abraham.

But when we see this great work of saving them from Egypt and they get in the wilderness and they refuse to obey God and there is grumbling and mumbling and idolatry and immorality and He brings them into the promised land and they turn back and therefore every one of them, except for a few men, perished in the wilderness. They all died. They did not see the promised land.

They were not believing their God. They were not acting by faith. What you need to see is, by and large, the nation of Israel was an unconverted physical nation of people who were prone constantly to idolatry and immorality.

But in that nation, there was a remnant of people kept for God's chosen purpose. They were true believers in Yahweh, not by their own will, but by the work of God in dealing with their heart, in choosing them, in leading them, in bringing them to Himself. And so you have this gigantic nation of Israel that is, by and large, filled with immoral, idolatrous people.

And this small group of people in Israel who were actually true followers of Yahweh, followers of God, true believers, true sons and daughters of Abraham. Not because of circumcision, not because they can trace their lineage back to a man, but because of the work of God in them. Do you understand that? Now, here's the problem.

Most people think that the true church of Jesus Christ is exactly like Israel of old. In that Israel of old, what did we say? By and large, most people think that everybody in Israel was a true follower, but most of them were carnal, idolatrous, immoral, and then there was this small group of truly spiritual people. That's the way they think Israel was.

And it's not at all. Israel was a physical nation, by and large, of people who died and went to hell. But there was a remnant of people, kept for God's purpose, who were true believers in Yahweh.

A small group. So we come to the church and we think, okay, the church is the same way. The church is made up of a bunch of Christians who are the people of God, and by and large, most of them are carnal and worldly and follow the things of the world and the ideas of the world and all so on and so forth, but in the church there's a small group of people who are truly spiritual and following God and they're going to just get greater rewards than everyone else.

That is not the case. That was not the case with Israel, but more so it's not the case with the church. There is no remnant in the church.

There is no remnant of spiritual people in the church. The church is the remnant. And everyone truly in the church is truly spiritual and not worldly and carnal and wicked and bearing such a lifestyle.

Now I want us to look at why that is. He says in verse 33, But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days declares the Lord. I will put My law within them, and on their hearts I will write it, and I will be their God and they shall be My people.

Now, Israel, the nation of Israel in the old covenant, what did they have? They were brought out of Egypt, they were taken to a mountain, and on that mountain they received law. The Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. And in what form did it come? Two tablets of stone.

Inanimate stone. Ten words are laws. And it was given to the people as an external thing that they could look at.

They could look at those tablets. They could hear those tablets being spoken. They could hear the preaching, the teaching of those tablets.

But what it was, was a law handed down to a group of people who basically, by and large, was nothing more than a physical nation of people who had never been changed by God. And so how did they respond? Well, the Bible says, especially in the book of Romans, that the more that law that was given to them was pressed upon them, the more they kicked against it. Because unless God has done a work in the heart of a man, regenerating him, birthing him again, that man has a heart at enmity with God.

And so he's at enmity also with the laws of God. So the more you press the law of God on a man who has not been supernaturally changed or regenerated by the Holy Spirit, the more you press that law upon him, the more he'll hate it and kick against it. And find ways around it, under it, and over it.

He'll exchange true righteousness manifested in the law of God for little religious duties that he performs that are hollow, superficial, and hypocritical. Thus, the Pharisees. Alright, but the church is different.

Why is the church different? He says, I am not going to give them a tablet or two tablets of stone. The church is different. This new covenant which I'm going to bring about through the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Messiah, this new covenant is going to be totally and completely different in this thing.

It is a supernatural work. Based on the work of my Son, His death on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead, I am going to call forth a people made out of Jews and Gentiles. I'm going to call them forth and they're going to come.

And why are they going to come? Ezekiel tells us, because God is going to literally take out their heart of stone that cannot and will not respond to Him, and He's supernaturally going to change them and give them a heart that will respond to Him. He's going to give them a new heart. He's going to not only call a people of flesh, but what He's going to do is He's literally, by the supernatural power of God in the Holy Spirit, He's going to recreate a new people.

He is going to birth every one of them again. Every one of them that are truly in this church are going to be born again. They're going to be new creatures.

They're going to be changed by the power of God. And not only that, He is going to write His law, not on the wall, not in a book, but in their very hearts. He's literally going to write it in their heart.

This is not poetry. One of the greatest problems with some of the greatest promises and realities of Scripture is that we take it as poetry. Just pretty things that God wants to say instead of realities.

That when God saves a man under the New Covenant, when He truly saves him, He literally, not figuratively, He literally recreates him into a new creature. He was depraved, God-hating, righteousness-hating, hypocritical, religious, but without God. And God's going to take him and give him a new heart, recreated in the image of God in true righteousness and true holiness.

God's going to do a supernatural work so that he becomes a new creature who loves righteousness. And not only is he a new creature that is now going to love righteousness, he's going to know what righteousness is because God is going to literally write His laws on their heart. Has that happened to you? A supernatural work of God.

He says, I will put My laws within them and on their heart I will write it. Now, look at this next statement. Some have said, and I agree with them, although you don't see this type of language back there with Adam.

Some have said that the moment man fell, God set forth with a purpose, I believe even before that, and this purpose was this, that He would make for Himself a people. He would be their God and they would be His people. It's something He decreed and set out to do and is going to happen.

And you see that in the language here. He says, I will be their God and they shall be My people. Now, He looks at Israel and was He their God? For the most part, no.

Were they His people? For the most part, no. It was a nation who did not have a heart for God. They were constantly committing idolatry.

They were constantly committing immorality. They were constantly wanting to be like the nations, look like the nations, act like the nations, no fear of Yahweh, no fear of anything. They were not His people.

But He says, I am going to, in this new covenant, create a new people. We're going to call it the church. And every one of them that are truly in My church, they will be My people.

I will be their God. Not because He's going to coerce them. Not because He's going to manipulate them.

Not because He's going to make them follow Him against their wishes. No, He will be their God and they will be His people because He says, I am so supernaturally going to change them that it's going to happen. I am going to take a man who hates Me and I'm going to change his heart so that he loves Me.

I am going to recreate a new people. I believe that's why the book of John begins with, in the beginning. Because John is setting forth for us this whole new idea.

What's happening? In Christ, there's a new creation going on. And that's what makes me so sad in modern day evangelical preaching. It's like salvation.

There's such a low view of salvation. That salvation is just praying a prayer. Okay, I did it.

I'm saved because I prayed the prayer. But there's no change. There's no evidence of a new creation.

There's no evidence of great and growing love for God. Great and growing love for the brethren. There's no evidence of wanting to separate yourself more and more from this world that is passing away in vain and separate yourself more and more unto God.

That is why salvation has been reduced down to nothing more than a decision. Rather than a supernatural recreating work of God whereby the power of God is so manifested it parallels if not exceeds the power of God manifested when He created the world. So now, I will be their God.

And they shall be My people. Now let me just stop here for a second and explain to you something. I hear people all the time saying something that literally makes me furious.

And some of them are good men. I'll hear people say there's just as much sin in the church as outside of the church. There's just as much adultery and pornography and lying and hating and this and that and every sort of immorality in the church as outside of the church.

I hear preachers that preach even against this stuff saying the church of Jesus Christ acts like a prostitute and this and that and everything. I want you to know all of that is bad theology. It's a lie.

The church of Jesus Christ in America is beautiful and pleasing to God and although she is not perfect, she is broken and contrite and trembling at His Word. Here's the problem. What you're calling the church is not the church.

That's the whole problem. And because the gospel that is preached is such a watered down gospel, everybody thinks they're in the church. And since church discipline is no longer practiced, even though Jesus commanded it and the apostles commanded it, since church discipline is no longer practiced, the church is literally filled up with carnal, worldly, wicked people.

But it's not the church. It's a church building. Someone said to me a while back, you know, in the South there are so many churches.

And I said, no there's not. There's a lot of really pretty brick buildings on some finely mowed yards. But they're not churches.

Even if you were to take Baptist confessions of faith as to what a true church is, most Southern Baptist churches now, what our fathers said was a real church, most Southern Baptist churches would not qualify. Now that's not me. That's not my opinion.

That's the old preachers who started this whole thing. So you see, what you need to understand is that everybody sitting here this morning is not the church. Now maybe, I can't look at everyone's heart, but in a typical given situation, everyone sitting here is not the church.

You're all in a church building. But the evidence that you're in a church, that you are the church of Jesus Christ, is what? That He has put His laws in your heart, in you. He has written them upon your heart.

He has changed you and continues to change you. There is a supernatural work of God in your life leading to changes, to separate you from the things of the world and to separate you unto God with greater love and passion for Him. There is a work of sanctification going on in your life.

That's the evidence that you're in the true church. You know, sometimes I heard one famous apologist who I greatly disagree with. He said, you know, we've got to do something.

The youth, the Christian youth, he said, we have discovered that I don't know what percentage of Christian youth, seventy-five percent or something, of Christian youth do not believe that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is that important. And I look at him and I say, brother, if they don't believe the resurrection of Jesus Christ is important, they're not Christian youth. They're church youth who've never had a saving encounter with God.

Then you hear, you know, some old deacon getting up and he's so broken in his heart and he stands up in the middle of a church that everybody's fighting one another and hating one another and he goes, you know, brothers, we shouldn't be fighting like this. We're Christians. If you're fighting like that and hating one another, you're not Christian.

You see? He's saying I'm going to create a new people and it's going to be nothing like the people I created prior. I am going to supernaturally change every one of them. And every one of them, every one of

them will do what? Well, let's look.

Thirty-four. They will not teach again each man his neighbor and each man his brother saying know me or know the Lord for they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them declares the Lord. One of the evidences of true conversion and that someone is a part of the church is that they begin to understand great truths of Scripture and they begin to see them as dear and hold to them.

I'll never forget in my own life just being converted a few days and I was walking out on the mall at the University of Texas and where they would have every kind of thing in the world being hollered at you and preached at you and heretics and cults and everything else and I was walking through there and I heard music, Christian music like what we played in our church. And I was excited, you know, I was a brand new believer and I ran over there, okay, they're playing the same songs. And someone got up and started preaching.

And I wasn't there probably two or three minutes and all of a sudden I didn't know why, but I just knew what they were saying was wrong. And I became so afraid. I mean, I ran out of there like I had been set on fire.

And then I went to this guy who was kind of discipling me and I said, the most unusual thing, they were singing our music and all kinds of things like that, but when the guy got up and started saying things, there were things that I just knew, they were wrong, they were wrong, they were wrong. He said, well, describe the group to me. I described it to him, he said, oh, they're a terrible cult.

There is a supernatural work of God and that's what people can't seem to get in their head. I hear people today saying, oh, I wish I lived back in the time of Moses or the time of this or that when God really did things. The end of all the days have come to us.

These are the greatest of times. None of them knew the work of God or the work of the Spirit as we do. They dreamed of these things.

Scribes and kings and prophets, they longed for these days. Even angels themselves longed to look at the things that had been given unto us and done for us. The problem is we've done the same thing that Catholicism has done.

They reduced the work of salvation down to a little creedal statement that you agree with and a little religious duty that you commit and then you're a Christian. We've done exactly the same thing. And we no longer look for in the life of a professor, what I mean, a confessor of Jesus Christ, we no longer look for evidences of genuine conversion that they truly are part of the church.

Now, he says they will all know me. Does it mean that they will all be professors of Greek and systematic theology? No, it doesn't mean that. Will they all be able to explain the hypostatic union between the two natures of Christ? No.

As a matter of fact, no one's got that one down yet. But they will have a deep sense and a knowledge of who God is. And it may be in a simple form, but that simple form will be true.

And they'll have a great sense of something even more. He goes on to say, For they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity and their sins I will remember no more.

They will have this knowledge that they have been forgiven. Their iniquities have been taken away and it was done in the person of the Messiah. It was done in Christ.

I can remember one time speaking at a First Baptist church in a certain place. And I spoke to the youth. This was years and years ago and I spoke to the youth.

And afterwards the pastor came to me and he said, You know, there's been a charge of heresy against you and I don't know what it is, but you need to come to my office. Somebody there has told me they're shocked at what you said. And I said, I just started thinking, OK, what did I say? What did I do? And so I go in the office and there's the youth leader.

You can always tell them they have moose in their hair, even back then. And there's the youth leader. And I don't know who the youth leader is here, so that's just a pet peeve of mine.

They always have moose in their hair, even if they're 55. Now, so I go in there and he's standing there and the guy is just literally in shock. He's literally in shock.

And I'm sitting there going, oh boy, what did I do? God, what did I do? What did I say? And so the pastor, who I've known for years, preaches the Word. He said, OK, what did Brother Paul say? And the guy stands up and goes, Oh, Pastor, Brother Paul said that Jesus was God in the flesh. And the pastor goes, what? I know, Pastor.

He said that Jesus was God in the flesh. And the pastor said, well, he is God in the flesh. The kid had no clue.

He had no clue of anything. And that's because you can be in a typical Southern Baptist church and end up going to a typical Southern Baptist seminary and come out not knowing anything unless the Spirit of God has regenerated your heart. I'm not blaming it on churches or seminaries.

I'm blaming it on this. You've got to realize men do not get saved apart from God supernaturally changing their heart. And when they do get saved, their heart has been supernaturally changed and they become new creatures and the law of God is written on their heart.

And they begin to understand things about God that a Harvard professor who is not converted cannot understand. Someone asked me, you know, Brother Paul, can a five-year-old be converted? I said, well, let's answer the question another way. Can a 60-year-old Harvard professor in theology be converted? The answer is no, apart from a work of the Spirit.

But if the Holy Spirit works and regenerates their heart, a five-year-old can be saved and a 60-year-old can be saved. Now, they will know Him and one of the greatest truths they'll know about Him is that He has worked a work of redemption. If you look at the nation of Israel, God always was telling them, you know, set up a pile of stones, do this, do that.

Why? To remember. To remember. And to get down to each generation.

What? I redeemed you out of Egypt. And every time Israel went wrong, every time they went bad, where did they have to start again? He'd always go back. I am the God who redeemed you out of Egypt.

Your history starts there. That is to be your knowledge. That is to be the point from which you depart.

Everything I do in you is based on that work of redemption. I brought you out of Egypt. It's the same way in Christianity.

The true Christian is going to have an understanding that absolutely everything begins with Christ and the cross. And that's the focal point of everything. We do not do morality for the sake of morality or to be nice people.

We do morality to honor Christ. Everything. Christ.

Now, I want us to jump over. We're running out of time. I want you to go to chapter 32 and verse 38.

It begins with, They shall be my people and I will be their God. Now, look at this. There is not a wavering here.

We do not have an impotent deity sitting on a throne going, Boy, I really want to do something wonderful here. I'm just not sure everyone is going to cooperate with me. That's not what he's saying.

He's saying, I'm going to do a work. And I'm going to do it for my own glory. And I'm going to do it because I am love.

And I desire to manifest that love. In order to manifest that love, I've got to redeem a people. And I'm going to do it.

I'm going to redeem them. And I'm going to change them. And I'm going to put my law in them.

And I'm going to put my spirit in them. And they're going to be my people. And I'm going to be their God.

And there's no doubt about it. It's going to happen. And it has.

It's called the Church of Jesus Christ. It's called the Church of Jesus Christ. And this is what he says, verse 39.

And I will give them one heart. Now, maybe I ought to drink a glass of water before I get into this. But I want you to listen.

There are so many absurd things done today in the name of Christianity. One of the greatest things, especially when I was younger and in college and seminary, you know, the big thing of we need to have Jesus marches. And we need to do all these different things.

Why? Because the body of Christ is so divided. The body of Christ is just so divided. There's just no unity in the body of Christ.

And the body of Christ is just so divided. So we get together. We have a Jesus hug.

We sing Kumbaya together. And try to get everybody united. Because the body of Christ is just not united.

And he wants us so much to be one. If all of that rhetoric is true, then the New Covenant promises that God made have failed. And there was a prayer that Jesus prayed in John 17 that God did not answer.

There is no need for you to... Well, let me put it this way. Be very careful. Sometimes we take things as promises that are not promises.

They're realities. He doesn't say, I promise to raise up a body and make them one. If you all pray, have group hugs, and sing Kumbaya, and try to do away with denominations.

It's not a promise. It's a reality. I will make a people.

She will be my bride. She will be called to church. She will be made up of Jews and Gentiles.

She will be built upon the rock, which is my Son Christ Jesus. Who died and rose again from the dead. And she will be one.

You say, but hold it. That's not a reality. It says who? It says you.

And you know why you say that? Because again, you don't know what the church is. You think all these people out here running around doing all these things in the name of Christianity is the church. It's not.

Now there are heretical groups that if you're a part of them, there's no way you could be a Christian. I mean, because they deny fundamental doctrines. And theology and doctrine is extremely important.

But the saving work of God goes beyond perfect theology. If it didn't, none of us would be saved. Because we're all wrong in something.

Except for my wife. So there are... Now this is the hardest one to grasp. It's going to take a lot.

There are actually saved Southern Baptists. I've met some. There are some charismatics who we will sit down and we will maybe go over certain things we don't agree with.

And I'm not talking about these wild, wild heretical. But there are people more charismatic that are genuinely born again. There are Methodists who are genuinely born again.

There are Nazarene people who are genuinely born again. That doesn't mean we throw away denominations. It doesn't mean we don't talk about doctrine.

We sit down with people who are genuinely born again from another denomination and we feel like they're wrong. We ought to lovingly and humbly talk to them about it. If we really care about truth and care about them.

But the fact of the matter is, they are our family. Some of them. Not all of them.

Not most of them. But, all around this world and beyond our own denomination, God has saved a whole bunch of people. And here's the amazing thing.

I have gone into offices of big Southern Baptist preachers at times. And if you walk in there talking about church growth and how to make the church big, and how to prosper your ministry, they will listen to everything you say. And if you begin to open the book of Colossians and talk about the glory of Christ, they're looking over your shoulder because they're just not interested.

But at the same time, I have sat down on planes with brethren more charismatic, or brethren more Methodist, or this or that. And the moment you sit down and begin to talk about Christ, it's like you're as close as close can be. God does have a people and they are one.

Let me give you a perfect example. I was on the coast of Peru in a place called Chiclayo. And it was during all the civil war and everything in Peru.

And I was just there on the side of the road around a fire where a bunch of guys were just waiting to get on trucks to head up in the mountains. And there was this section of the mountains that was considered the red zone. The Maoist owned it.

You go up there, you die. But I was praying because there was this church that was really suffering. And they were asking for me to come.

And I knew if I didn't come, I would let them down. And I was going, God, what do I do? I'm going to get married in two months. I really don't want to get martyred.

So what do I do? And so I prayed and prayed and prayed. And it sounds really unspiritual, but I couldn't make a decision and I had to make one. So I pulled out a coin.

I said, Lord, I'm going to flip it three times. If it hits heads all three times, I'm going. I flipped it, hit heads all three times, I jumped in the back of a cattle truck.

Headed up the mountains. Well, there was a grain truck from there. And they covered us with a tarp.

And we laid there in the equatorial heat under that black tarp for 24 hours. And then when it got dark in a place called Acerradero, me and a friend of mine and a few other people, we jumped off the side of the truck and made our way into the jungle. And then we were going up through the jungle.

It was dark. It was cold. We got lost.

It's called Ceja de Selva. It's the high jungle. And so finally, we just started praying.

God, what do we do? And we heard a bell ringing. And then we heard a little boy yelling at someone. And then we realized it was a bell around the neck of a burro.

And it was a little boy trying to get the burro back to where his family was. And so we said, Lord, we're just going to follow him. So we followed him.

And it led us to a little town. Now, I mean a little village that you probably could have fit within the walls of this church. Made out of adobe huts.

And so we're on the edge of that town. And I'm the only American. And I'm like a lot taller than everybody.

So I bend over and I've got a poncho on. I pull this hat down. And we walk in there.

It's really dark. And I told one of my dear friends, Paco. I said, Paco, go see that man right over there and ask him if there are any brothers in this town.

Now, if that town was controlled by terrorists, we're dead. And Paco goes over there and said, Hay hermanos por aquí. Are there brothers here? And the man, he was kind of drunk and angry.

And he goes, Hay una vieja. Go over that way. There's no lady in that house.

So we go over there. And I go to the door. And I knock on the door.

And finally, I hear somebody moving around. And this old lady comes up there. And she opens the door.

And she's got her lantern. I'll never forget her face. She was about this tall.

And she just looks up at me. And I said, Soy pastor evangélico. Necesito ayuda.

I am an evangelical pastor. I need help. She grabbed me.

Pulled me in. Grabbed Paco. Pulled him in.

The other pulled him in. Run us down to this thing that they had carved out of the clay on the side of the hill. It was like a basement.

Chickens down there. And fodder and all sorts of things. And she sat us down right there on just a pile of what looked like hay.

And then she called a little boy. And she said, Vete. Llama a los hermanos.

Go. Get the brothers. So he ran out.

Other Christians started sneaking in the back. Bringing chickens and yuca and coffee. And stay here all night.

In the day you can leave. Stay here all night. And we'll watch.

A group of Nazarenes. Would we agree theologically on everything? No. Were these people born again by the Spirit of God? Absolutely.

For they were willing to risk their life. We are one. And we don't need a bunch of people telling us to do Jesus marches and sing Kumbaya.

We are one. The problem is, most of what's being called the church is not the church. The true church lays down its life for its brethren.

Now, I will give them one heart and one way. They have one way. That way is Jesus Christ.

But don't you leave this country. And go to the places I work saying, Oh yes, Jesus is the way. They'll say, Yes, Jesus is the way.

And He marked out the way. The way you're supposed to follow Him. And it has to do with righteousness and commands and obedience.

We just have this thing, Jesus is a ticket to heaven. He is not a ticket to heaven. He is a way.

We are saved only by faith in Christ and not of works, lest any man should boast. But there is no such thing as salvation apart from obedience. Of growing in sanctification, and walking in the things of God, and following the way that He marked out.

Which is the life of His example, His doctrine, His teaching, and then later on the apostles. The most fearful thing Jesus ever said is, Depart from Me you workers of iniquity. I never knew you.

And what He is saying is this, Depart from Me those of you who claim to be My disciples, but you lived as though I never gave you a law to obey. Is your life governed by the principles and laws and rules of Scripture? He says it is legalism. No it is not.

It is legalism when you use those things as a means of upping your spirituality, or as a means of saving yourself. Do not kid yourself. The One who saved you by His grace gave you laws to obey.

They are summed up in love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. But the practical manifestation of those two things are clearly marked out by the rest of the teaching of Christ and the apostles. He gave us one heart and one way.

And I will tell you what, there can be differences among the people of God, but if you want one thing that delineates the people of God other than their profession of faith in Jesus Christ, it is sanctification. It is a growth in holiness without sanctification. He says strive for sanctification.

Why? Without holiness no one will see the Lord. Now, He is not saying you are saved by believing and working out your salvation. He is saying if you truly believe and you have truly been changed by the power of God, you will work out your salvation.

Now, He says I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear Me always for their own good and for the good of their children after them. For your good. Does He not know what is good for you? A dear saint came last night to hear me preach.

She has this strange, strange disease in which literally it was from contaminated water. At one evening, from what I understand, every joint in her body locked up and has been that way ever since. Do you know what I told her? The same thing I tell people when they ask about all my ailments.

It is this, my dear, the Lord knows exactly what you need to be conformed to the image of Christ. He knows exactly what... You see, the good is not healthy, wealthy and wise. The good is not your best life now.

The good is conformity to the image of Jesus Christ for it is this purpose He has predestined us. To be conformed to the image of Christ. I feel and sometimes my body beats me to death.

It hurts. I mean, when you have MRIs and the doctors personally call you at your house, you know you are not doing well. Don't attribute this work in my life to the work of the devil because you have blasphemed the Holy Spirit or come close.

The song I always sing to my little boys. Oh, my sons, I am weak and I am trembling. For the Lord I am always remembering.

Oh, what a strong shepherd holds you in His arms. He will break you and make you His own. He knows what it takes and He is faithful to sanctify unto us our deepest afflictions.

But then again, most people who come to church on Sunday morning really don't want holiness. They want to retire in Florida. They want a big house and a car.

What do you want? That's the most terrifying thing in the world. That verse that says He will give you the desires of your heart. If the desires of your heart are evil, you get everything you want and then you go to hell.

It is to turn our thing, our eyes, our mind not towards this world that is fleeting. This world is passing away. But the man who does the will of God abides forever.

Now let's finish. Also, for the good of their children after them. What is the greatest good you can do your children? To be a man of God.

To be a woman of God. We're leading our children into the very same bondage that we're in when we spend our money wrongly, when we go in debt like crazy, when we become slaves to those who lend us money, when we need all the clothes that everybody says we need, when we need the cars and the houses and everything else like everyone else says to be happy. And then we work all the time and we cannot live.

We cannot even spend time with our children because we've got to pay off that SUV. And then we take our children and we take them to soccer games and football games and baseball games and twirling batons and pageants and this and that. And they are run literally ragged.

And we put them under the same slavery that's literally consumed our lives. What is the best thing you can do for your children? Obey God. Obey God for your good and for the good of your children after you.

And then he says, I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them to do them good. And all the Southern Baptists go, Yes! Once saved, always saved. Security of the believer.

Well, I want to tell you something. I believe that a person who has truly been saved by the power of God is truly kept by the power of God. So I'll meet you there.

But the way that doctrine has been taught in America today is totally twisted. It's basically this. You pray that prayer.

God saves you. You live like hell and you'll never lose your salvation. No.

You live like hell. He didn't save you. And so what is being said? Now look, we always only look at one side of the coin.

You look at both sides of the coin. I was dealing with some people in Romania just recently and they were really dealing with this security of the believer. They did not believe it.

They believed you could fall away from grace and all these things. And I brought them to this verse and they all went, Whoa! We understand it. Because he says, I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them to do them good.

God's covenant faithfulness to keep those whom He has saved. He will never turn away from them. And you say, Well, Brother Paul, then they'll just live like the devil and still be saved? No! Why? He says this, And I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.

That's the part no one ever reads. God says, I'll make an everlasting covenant with this person I've just saved. I will never turn away from them.

Never. I will always work to do them good. But, I will also put the fear of Me in their heart and they will not turn away from Me.

If they do turn away from Me, I haven't put My fear in their heart, which means I haven't made an everlasting covenant with them. They are not Mine. Do you see how it works? That's how it works.

What does He say in Jeremiah? Over there in verse 31, I will write My laws. I'll put My laws in their heart. But not only does He put His law in their heart, He puts the fear of Him in their heart.

So the fear responds to the law by walking humbly and brokenly beside their God. And when they do sin, and they do sin, they come back to Him broken and contrite of spirit. You see? Isn't salvation an amazing thing? And then He says finally, in verse 41, I will rejoice over them to do them good.

Oh, you can't say rejoice with any more passion than what He just said here. This is like a groom rejoicing over his bride on their honeymoon. I mean, this is big stuff.

This is like, hoorah! He says, I will rejoice over them to do them good. Many people think that God is this grudging deity who just doesn't want to do anything, and He does certain things because He's made this covenant that He's not even really happy with now, and He's just going to do you good because He has to, because He fulfills His promise. That is not.

He says, I rejoice over My people to do them good. And if you're not seeing the goodness of God, maybe you're not His people. But at the same time, you may be His people, but as we begin tonight, so deluded by the mindset of this world, you don't know what's good.

He said, I rejoice over them to give them every good thing that is. That's true. It's just true.

I can testify to that. He says, I rejoice over them to do them good. You say, Brother Paul, both of your hips have been replaced, your wrist is all metal, they're going to take your shoulder out here pretty soon, you've got spurs growing into your spinal column and all these different things, and you're hurting so bad right now, you're nauseous.

He rejoices over me to do me good. This is the very thing I need to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. This is the very thing.

And the Lord has sanctified unto me my deepest affliction. Praise Him. Godliness is the goal.

Being like Christ. Being emptied of self, so that He might fill us. Being weak, so that we can have His strength.

I always hoped that when my boys were born that I would be strong and they would be able to look up at me, the man I used to be, that I would have the muscles and the strength, dig myself in, not back out, you know, work harder than any man. But that's not the father they're going to get because that's not the father God wants them to have. He wants them to have a broken, humble father who relies upon His God's glory.

Man, just about ready to go to preaching, right? When you're ready to eat. Caesare will rejoice over them to do them good and I will faithfully plant them in this land. Now look at this.

With all my heart. With all my soul. Now, I need to be more of an Old Testament scholar, but I don't recall really hearing this anywhere else.

I mean, God is speaking in human terms. He's using human words. But He says, with all my heart and with all my soul.

He never says anything like that. I mean, a man, he goes, I'm going to do it. Well, what guarantee? I'm going to do it with all my heart and all my soul.

Every sinew, every fiber, every thought. I'm going to do it. I'm going to give myself totally to it.

And that's what God's saying. I will bring My people into their own land and I will do it with all my heart, with all my soul, with everything that is deity. I will bring My people to the exact place I want them to be.

Now, that is a direct contradiction to American Christianity that has all these people claiming to be God's people, and yet God can't move them anywhere. He can't do anything with them. He can save them, but He can't bring them into the land.

He can bring them out of Egypt, but He can't bring them in the Promised Land because they just won't cooperate. That's not the God of the Bible. He says, I'm going to do something.

And I'm going to do it for My glory. And I'm going to do it as an opportunity to manifest My love. And this is what I'm going to do.

I am going to make Me a people. And I will be their God. And they will be My people.

And I will work with everything that is deity to bring them to the place I want them to be, which is what? Glorified in Heaven with Him. You say, oh yes, we'll just wander and be sinful and devilish and everything else, but when we die, we'll be glorified. No.

Glorification is just the last step of sanctification. If He's not sanctifying you here on earth, don't expect Him to glorify you in Heaven. Because one of the greatest evidences that you are His people is that He is working now to bring you into your own land.

Well, He is good. His mercies endure forever. He is good.

You say, brother Paul, the invitation. Well, that's been going on now for about an hour. You're invited to what? To come to Christ.

Brother Paul, what must I do to be saved? Repent. What does that mean? Well, let me just ask you. Are you broken over your sin? Do you want to be set free? Do you desire to be like Christ and follow Him? Do you want to escape the wrath that is going to fall on this world? Do you desire Him? Do you want God? Do you want to be conformed to His image? If you say, yes, brother Paul, those things, I see them, I want them, I need them.

Well, those are at least the first fruits of repentance. Now you lack one thing. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved.

Believe Him that He is the One. Cast yourself upon Him. Look to Him.

You say, brother Paul, I don't understand. Well, that's why I'm willing to miss lunch today. I'm not going to get you up here and talk to you five minutes and send you home and mark you as a notch on somebody's belt.

Don't leave here. If you desire to be saved, I've got good news for you. There's never been a person on the face of the earth who truly wanted to be saved that God didn't save them.

Those who come to me won't cast them out. Seek me, you'll find me. Amen.

What a good God.

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