

New Covenant - the Root of Sin - Part 2

by Zac Poonen

The New Covenant is about changing the heart and laying the axe to the root of sin, not just cutting off bad behavior, and true righteousness comes from dependence on Christ.

Duration: 8:39

Scripture: Romans 8:3, Philippians 3:6

Topics: "New Covenant", "Inner Righteousness"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, highlighting how the law of the Old Covenant could only cut off the fruit of sin but not change the nature of the tree, while the New Covenant through Jesus lays the axe to the root. It challenges believers to move beyond external righteousness, seeking the approval of men, to embrace the righteousness that comes through dependence on Christ in the New Covenant, recognizing that our own righteousness is like filthy rags before God.

Transcript

And the Bible says that Jesus has come to lay the axe to the root. And that's also something new. There was no possibility of the axe being laid to the root under the old covenant.

In the old covenant we can say all that God did was cut off the fruit. You know, here's a bad tree. It's always producing bad fruit as soon as it comes snip it off.

As soon as it comes out, snip it off. As soon as it's beginning to bud, snip it off. It doesn't come out.

That's what the law did, you see. The law said, you know, the whole commandment, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal. These are the fruits that would come out, but the law was like a pair of scissors that immediately snipped it off as soon as it was coming out.

But it could snip it off only when it came out. It couldn't change the nature of the tree. That was a problem with the old covenant.

And when the Bible says in Romans 8 verse 3 that there was something that the law could not do, but which God did. What was it that the law could not do? The law could cut off the fruit, but it could not lay the axe to the root. So John the Baptist in preparation for the new covenant says, well now, Jesus is coming to lay the axe to the root of the tree.

So, if we don't understand what the root of the tree is, we're still going to spend our life as Christians, even in this church, just cutting off the fruit. And the thing is, if you're very careful in cutting off the fruit, you'll have a very good testimony in the church. Church people will think you're a very fine believer, because there's no bad fruit coming out.

I think with many of us, our lives are so good, we are so careful to cut off all this bad fruit that nobody ever sees it, that many of us have got a very good reputation in the church. But when you look at the thoughts that go on in your heart, and sometimes those thoughts come out in dreams at night, you know that inside, very little has changed. You're careful to maintain a testimony on the outside, but the inside is still the same.

And by great effort, by constant watchfulness, you keep your scissors ready, as soon as the fruit is coming out, you snip it off. And nobody ever sees, when they come by your garden, anything bad on that tree. And they say, boy, what a spiritual brother.

What a spiritual sister. Not at all. We can say, a person who's got the righteousness of the Old Covenant.

That's all you are. But because those other believers, 95% of them don't themselves have any discernment between Old Covenant and New Covenant, they think you're very spiritual. But a spiritual man who's entered into the New Covenant, sees through all that.

He's not easily fooled. Because he can taste your spirit. You know how if you've got a very sensitive nose, you can pick up bad smells all over.

That's one reason not to have a very sensitive nose in the world. Otherwise you're picking up everything. But spiritually, we need that.

And spiritually we're discerning. Our spirit can pick up bad influences, bad spirit in a person, etc. So what I want to say is, the bad fruit, avoiding the bad fruit is seeking the testimony of men.

Now Paul said in Philippians 3, I want you to turn there for a moment. Philippians 3, he's contrasting the righteousness of the Old Covenant with the righteousness of the New Covenant. Now many of us have not understood this.

Many of us only know the difference between sin and righteousness. You're either sinful or holy. No.

You can be sinful or you can have the righteousness of the Old Covenant or you can be holy. There are three options. And with many of us, we may not be sinning, but we may be having only the righteousness of the Old Covenant.

And I'll tell you something. The righteousness of the Old Covenant is pretty good. And it'll enable you to be accepted in most churches in the world.

Almost 100% of churches would accept you. You can be a member in good standing. You can even be an elder brother in almost every church in the world with the righteousness of the Old Covenant.

In other words, the righteousness of the Pharisees. I think if a lot of Pharisees were alive today, they would become elders in many, many, many good Christian churches. Because the people in those churches would not have the discernment that Jesus had to see that this guy has only got an external righteousness.

That's all that a lot of churches look for. That's not being spiritual. That's Old Covenant righteousness.

So Philippians chapter 3, he says, according to the Old Covenant standard of righteousness, verse 6, the last part, I was absolutely blameless. Or as the message says, a meticulous observer of everything set down in God's law. Imagine if you were a meticulous, meticulous means a very careful observer of every commandment of God.

Don't you think you'd get a very good reputation in most churches? I'd say in almost every church, except with a truly spiritual man who would see through you. But that's only about 1% of Christians, so you're lucky. Most people won't be able to see through you.

So that's why I want to say, don't ever be satisfied with the testimony of man. It's fit for the trash can. Throw it away.

So Paul says, all these things which I counted gain, it's all lost for me. And what does he call this righteousness of the Old Covenant in verse 8, last part? It is rubbish. Have you ever thought of calling righteousness rubbish? Isaiah 64 and verse 6 says that our righteousness are like filthy rags in God's sight.

And the original word for filthy rags is this type of rag that you never think of washing again and using. You know, there's some filthy rags you can wash and use again. But this is one of those filthy things which you just throw away.

You don't want to touch it anymore. It's that type of thing. What? Not our sins, but our righteousness.

Paul got light on it. And I'll tell you something, you can't enter into the New Covenant until you get light on this. That my external righteousness is rubbish.

It only brings me honor before men. And so he says, I counted rubbish. I want Christ.

And he says, I'm willing to lose everything. And I want to be found in Christ, verse 9. Now listen to this contrast. Not having a righteousness of the Old Covenant, but the righteousness of the New Covenant.

Let me put it like that. I do not want this righteousness which comes from the law. I want the righteousness which comes by dependence upon Christ.

Faith means dependence.

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