

Spirit of the New Covenant

by Zac Poonen

The new covenant is not just about higher standards, but about a different spirit of obedience, love, and freedom in Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 5:21, 2 Corinthians 9:7, Galatians 4:7, Hebrews 8:13, Revelation 22:17

Topics: "New Covenant", "Cheerful Obedience"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the difference between the old and new covenants, highlighting that under the new covenant, God values the spirit in which we obey His commandments, not just the obedience itself. While the old covenant focused on external rules and regulations, the new covenant emphasizes cheerful obedience from the heart. Poonen explains that God is looking for sons who obey out of love, not employees who obey out of compulsion. He warns against becoming new covenant Pharisees who impose outward forms without the spirit of cheerful giving and obedience.

Transcript

There were many under the old covenant who came to an exceptionally God-fearing life. One cannot imagine Elijah behaving in an improper way with the opposite sex or John the Baptist running after money or Moses seeking the honour of the world. So the mere fact that we have been freed from such matters does not mean that we have entered into the new covenant. If a weekly paper had been published in old covenant times, many good things would have been found in such a paper. But the underlying note in it would have been "Thou shalt"... and "Thou shalt not"....

Under the new covenant, it is different. It is not just that the standard is higher. The spirit is also different. Consider the words of Jesus in Mathew 5, 6 and 7. The old covenant had commanded "Thou shalt not kill... Thou shalt not commit adultery".... Etc. But when Jesus spoke about the spirit behind these commandments in Mathew 5:21,22,27,28, he did not use the words. "Thou shalt not...", but merely explained that in the kingdom of God anger was equivalent to murder and sexually dirty thoughts were equivalent to adultery. It is important to note this difference in spirit. Under the old covenant, it was compulsory to give 10% of one's income to God. But under the new covenant, there is no command indicating what percentage is to be given to God. On the other hand, it says "Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:7). This is to be the spirit of obedience under the new covenant, to all of God's commandments: NOT UNDER COMPULSION BUT CHEERFULLY.

Under the new covenant, the spirit in which we obey is what God values - not just the obedience. There is a difference between a slave who does what he is commanded, because he has no choice and a grown up son who obeys his father cheerfully out of love. Galatians 4:7 states that, that is the difference between the old and the new covenants. Employees will work in an office for 8 hours a day for a salary. A son however, will work in his father's office if necessary for 16 hours a day without any pay. God is looking for SONS now, not for employees(servants). The old covenant has been abolished (Heb 8:13).` It is possible, even in the church, for people to keep the new covenant commandments in the spirit of the old covenant. Such people usually develop into new covenant Pharisees. They can then hinder the building of the church, for their soulish zeal can come forth with many "Thou shalt's that they seek to impose on others to conform to the outward form in the church.

Most believers not having come to rest in a total security in the love of the Father, have a great desire to be accepted by others around them. Therefore they may conform to a pattern(even without conviction) if that is the price they have to pay in order to be accepted in the church. They may then look all right on the outside, but they are not "cheerful givers" on the inside. Such believers live a 'weary and heavy laden' life because they are living before the face of men. There can even be a conformity out of fear of the opinion of the elders. Such conformity may bring you honour before the elders, but it does not make you spiritual for your offering is not an offering to God, but an offering to men of new covenant words and a new covenant form.

The kingdom of God is not in words but in power. It is not the form but the life that is primary. Immature Christians are more concerned with uniformity and consider this to be unity. They do not realize that the unity of the Body of Christ is a unity in the midst of great diversity in non essential matters. It is the unity of the spirit that we are to do everything to preserve - not a soulish uniformity of pattern. All men are to identify us as Jesus' disciples be our love - not by some external patter that we all follow identically. Immature believers find close fellowship only with those who are uniform in pattern. Mature saints however die to themselves and can become one with all even with those who are different.

The spirit and the Bride do not say "GO", but rather "COME"(Rev 22:17). "GO" is the language of compulsion. "Come" is the language of invitation`. Jesus invites us to the abundant life. He never compels.

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