

The Covenants, Grace and Law (Part 3)

Defining Some Terms

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We are going to continue in this series and I have no idea where it is going to end. This may end up being the series to end all series for John Ritenbaugh. But, as I warned you at the very beginning, the changes that have taken place are of such a nature that it actually could include virtually every doctrine. I do not think that I am going to go into every doctrine of the church of God, but we are going to continue to cover some of these very large principles that are involved in our salvation.

In the past two weeks, we have seen that what has necessitated all of these changes is the change of the teaching of the goal as well as the change on the teaching of the nature of God. God has not changed at all. He is the same as He has always been, and the doctrines are the same as they have always been. But the men who are in charge of the Worldwide Church of God have decided that the focus of the gospel is *not* the Kingdom of God, but rather it is on Jesus Christ.

But Jesus Christ Himself called it "the gospel of the Kingdom of God;" and I think that is a pretty good Source to be quoting. The kingdom is a community. And when we look at what God is creating more specifically, we see (beginning in Genesis 1:26) that God is creating an entire kingdom—a family of children—in His image.

In the second sermon, we saw it clearly established that God is doing more than merely saving us. He is transforming us through what I called "a package." And that package includes *a way of life* that the Christian is to follow. We also saw that package makes very direct reference to *good works*.

We are going to begin today at a couple of scriptures that we used in last week's sermon. But it is good to anchor each one of the subjects in these sermons on something that was major in the previous ones.

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship. . . .

Remember that concept—*we are His workmanship!* God is working. What does God do when He works? He creates.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. . . .

Hang on to that, because I want you to understand very thoroughly that God is doing more than merely saving us. He is not only saving us. He is creating something in us. We are part of a vast creation that He has going on.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto [Here is the

very reason. For...] good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk [or that we should live, or that we should abide, or that we should continue] in them.

That is very clear. God is doing more than merely saving us. Let us look at another scripture that we used last week. Notice again that both of these scriptures have the word grace in their context.

Titus 2:11-12 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that. . . .

That word "teaching" is much stronger than that, and in some modern Bibles they translate it disciplining us. Discipline includes verbal instruction. It includes training—as in a repetitious maneuver. Soldiers are put through a drill. They drill, drill, drill—until something becomes a very part of their nature. They march, march, march. They take the gun apart and put it back together; they take it apart and put it back together; they take it apart and put it together. They do it with blindfolds on, and they have to do it within a certain length of time.

The word teaching includes that kind of an approach. Not only *verbal instruction*, it also includes *the discipline of drill*. It also, thirdly, includes the discipline of *painful correction*. And so, when we step out of line (where God feels that it is best if we have a spanking of some kind, to get back in line), then He will do that as well. So the grace of God disciplines us. It teaches us verbally. It puts us through drills. And it also will correct us, to get us back into line.

Titus 2:12-14 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Again we have *grace* and *good works* very clearly tied together. These "good works" include commandment keeping, among other things. The good works accomplish two things. The first is that this is where the witness for God comes from. That is, the witness before men. They see your good works. They see that you are different from others. Therefore, they might be led either to ask a question, or at least it will register on their minds to be used later when their calling comes. Secondly, good works play a part in ingraining the way of God into our character. As it is put in the book of Hebrews, "that the law might be written on our hearts."

That organization, that we have our roots in, is going *away from* that way and *toward* the world. That is, back toward the system that we all came out of. At the end of the second sermon, we were reminded briefly of the fruits of this world's Christianity. The fruits are not good. But I do think that it is good for us, again, to think about it—because there is just reason why. In Matthew 7, Jesus told us that this is the way that you can tell a false minister. He said:

Matthew 7: 15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

They look different from what they actually produce. It is not hard for those of you who are reading this to understand that the world is filled with false ministers. The fruits show that. Now what kinds of fruits did we see? From this world's Christianity, we see a world that is filled with

things that we abhor—things that make us anxious, frightened, and give us cause for concern.

Maybe we could excuse the world's performance—or, the fruits of the world—if Christianity were a very small part of it. But this world's Christianity is the world's single largest religion. It has more adherents than any other religion. Over one billion people in the world claim a loyalty to Christianity; and that is no small group.

Now, I want you to think. If one-fifth of your community were really and truly "Christian," do you not think it would make a difference? Twenty percent—do you not think it would be obvious that there was a group of people in town (in the city, in the county, in the state) who were Christian? I think so. The world's record, which was established largely by Christianity, is found to be wanting.

One of the concepts that I want us to understand as we being this third sermon in the series is going to be extracted from II Corinthians 11: 3, where Paul wrote:

II Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

It is the word simplicity that I want us to think about. As it is translated here, it is somewhat misleading. That is probably because the usage of this word has changed somewhat over the centuries, from the time that the *King James Version* was translated. Simplicity here does not mean simple.

We might say "define the sum of two plus two" would be simple—that is, easy. We would mean that it is not difficult. But here the word means unambiguous. It means clear. It means single. It means pure. It means that it is not a convoluted mass of hard to understand words, and difficult phrases, and twisting logic. The Word of God is *simple*, in the sense of being *clear*.

II Corinthians 4:2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Paul is talking about the way the true ministers of God handle, teach, or preach the Word of God—"not in craftiness." I chose this verse because of its connection to II Corinthians 11: 3, where the word *subtlety* appears. Here, in II Corinthians 4: 2, you can see craftiness directly connected to how people live and their use of the Word of God. The word "crafty" means cunning, sly, shrewd, tricky. Every one of them has a negative connotation to you. And when somebody says the word "crafty," you immediately think in a negative way. You do not think of, let us say, "clever"—which does not have such a negative connotation to it, as the word "crafty" does (or the word "subtle" does).

II Corinthians 1:12 For our rejoicing is this [Paul says], the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

The word simplicity here is the same word as the word "simplicity" in II Corinthians 11: 3. It means free from guile, with integrity, faithful. So let us tie this all together. The point in II

Corinthians 11: 3 is the contrast between what God reveals and what has been put forth by false ministers. When God reveals something, *He reveals it!* It is evident. It is logical, according to faith. It fits together with the patterns already shown in the Old Testament or in other parts of the New Testament, for that matter. It fits right into "the package," just as smooth as oil.

I Corinthians 2: 3-5 And I [Paul] was with you [Corinthians] in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

What Paul was saying is that he delivered the concepts of God, that is, the concepts that make up true Christianity; the concepts that make up the way—the "package"—to the people faithfully, without any ambiguity, without any sophistry. That is, the wisdom of men. When God reveals, He reveals.

I have been using the term "package" in reference to what God is doing a great deal, because I want to emphasize that Christianity is *a way of life* because *God is producing a product!* He is not just saving people. This is so important to understand. The witness that is made before men arises from the fact that we truly are different from others in the community—that community that we circulate in.

Incidentally, that is the meaning of the word holy. It means different, sanctified, set apart. The Sabbath is holy because it is different from other days. It is set apart by God for His use, and for the use of His people. It is not the same as any other day of the week. And believe me, if you keep the Sabbath you are *different!* If you do not keep the Sabbath, then the witness for the way of God is not even made.

God's way is a package.

Jude 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.

The term that is used to indicate "a package" here is "the faith once delivered." Any commentary that you look into that cares to make a comment about that, will tell you that it means *body of beliefs*—a package. We are to contend for the whole package—the faith once delivered.

Philippians 1:27 Only let your conversation [or, conduct] be as it becomes the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.

Again, "the faith" means the body of beliefs that makes up the gospel. He wants us to be unified—one spirit, one mind, for the faith. That is a definite body of beliefs.

Ephesians 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

I think that is enough to establish that principle. Used in that kind of a context, it means *one body of beliefs*.

One man that I spoke with this week called Christianity holistic. The word "holistic" has come into the language in more general usage in the last few years because of the way in which certain people are involved in the treatment of disease, and we will say health in general. They call themselves "holistic"—as in holistic medicine. The word "holistic" means concerned with the whole. And, indeed, Christianity is holistic.

These people treat disease in which the whole body is taken into consideration. That is, the person's psychological makeup (his mind) as well as all of the other parts of his body. They do not treat the liver only whenever the liver is diseased—feeling that, if the liver is sick, then the whole body is sick; and you cannot treat the liver alone. You must treat the entire body.

Christianity, indeed, is holistic. In this light, let me ask this question: Why were the apostles so concerned about false doctrines? The answer is: because alterations in "the package" affect the whole of what is produced. Alterations in the package affect the outcome of the whole—"the whole" being *what God is producing*.

This is not a difficult concept to understand. Maybe this is not quite the right type of illustration, but I am going to give it to you anyway. Suppose you were in charge of the Ford Motor Company and you had an assembly line set up, and you were going to produce Ford automobiles. You had this thing set up in order to produce the whole automobile. Then, sometime in the production, you decided that you were going to start leaving a step out. The step that you decided to leave out is the one that involved putting the starter into the engine. Would that affect the outcome of the whole? Certainly, it would.

Anybody ought to be able to see this. When you are producing something and you begin to leave steps out, you are going to affect what is going to be produced at the other end. You cannot make a cake, you cannot produce bread by leaving ingredients out. You have to follow the steps right on down the line, or what is going to be produced is not going to be what you hoped would be produced.

In a very simple illustration, that is why they were concerned about false doctrines. They understood that God was doing more than saving people. *He is producing sons in His image!* He wants them to be exactly like Him. If you start leaving out doctrines—or you start changing the doctrines—you start affecting the outcome of the whole. This is why I have been telling you that when they started with that "born again" doctrine, they started to interfere with what was going to be produced in the end. Do you think God is not concerned about what is going on in the Worldwide Church of God? It is affecting what He is producing!

I I Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [or, as the modern Bibles say, "a new creation". God is creating something. It is something new.]. Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Each and every one of us—from the time of our conversion—is *a new creation*. And we are also part of a larger new creation. That is, the community—the Family that God is creating in His image. God is busy. God is working. God is creating. God is reproducing Himself. He is very concerned about alterations from the way that is going to produce what He wants to produce. Let us extend this principle into another area.

James 2:7-10 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by which you are called? If you fulfill the royal law according to the scripture; "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well. But if you have respect of persons, you commit sin, and are convicted [or, convicted] of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

Do you see the principle arising here? The Ten Commandments are a package!

James 2:11-12 For He that said, "Do not commit adultery," said also, "Do not kill." Now if you commit no adultery, yet if you kill, you are become a transgressor of the law. So speak you, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

The Ten Commandments are within the greater package that God is using to create a kingdom. The Ten Commandments are also a package. And you do not just willy-nilly decide to throw out one of them or two of them; because each one of those commandments has a purpose in God's creation. And to not keep one or two of them is going to affect what is produced. And believe me, brethren; the affect of not keeping one of them (or two of them) will not be superficial. It will have great affect!

From the December 21, 1994 Pastor General's Report, page 11:

In other words, our relationship with God is based on faith and promise, just as Abraham's was. Laws that were added at Sinai cannot change the promise given to Abraham, and those laws cannot change the promise given to all that are Abraham's children by faith. That package of laws became obsolete when Christ died, and there is now a new package.

That statement—taken by itself—is correct. But within the larger context in which it appears, it leaves one with the impression that The Ten Commandments were added at Sinai. They were not! Anybody with more than a superficial understanding knows that, even though they are not listed prior to Exodus 20, sin existed, did it not? Adam sinned, and death came. The wages of sin is death; and sin is the transgression of those Ten Commandment laws. The Ten Commandments existed before Mt. Sinai. So did tithing. So did the clean and unclean food laws. But they would like for you to believe that they were something new. (We will not go into that. That remains for another sermon. But I just wanted to put that into your mind.)

The statement, within its larger context, also leaves one with the impression that salvation by grace through faith is also something new to the New Covenant. It is not! Men have always been saved by grace through faith. There has not been a single person yet who has earned his way into salvation. Those kinds of things are not stated. They would rather leave you with the impression that grace, and salvation by grace through faith, is something introduced with the New Covenant.

These write-ups, such as this most recently one from the WCG, consistently imply two things. One is that grace is something new and unusual to the New Covenant. And, two, they leave the impression that God's laws are bad and that they impose impossible demands upon mankind—the implication being that God is harsh.

Matthew 11:28-30 [Christ says,] "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy

laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

I have actually read, [what others wrote] using these verses, that His way is easy and His burden is light because He (Christ) takes away the law. Somehow, brethren, we are going to have to get rid of the concept that God's law is bad. Some of God's laws—or we might even say "a body of God's laws"—might impose a burden; but they are not bad. The burden is a reality. And the reason is because we have not obeyed them in the past. So, when we repent, our disobedience of the past comes to the fore; and it imposes a burden upon us.

A very clear example of this is tithing—and also, quite possibly, the Sabbath and the holy days. I know that when Evelyn and I came into the church, in 1959, we had a great deal of debt. We were not over our head. We were living within what I was making, but we were living right up to the tip of our nose. So, when we came into the church and we learned about tithing—and we were determined to do it (to be loyal and faithful to God)—we began tithing. Now we did not have enough money to go around. We could not meet our tithing obligations, and we could not meet our debt obligations.

So our ignorance, our disobedience, and our foolishness from the past caught up with us. That was actually what was imposing the burden. We came out of it okay, but it was a very tight five years or so that it took us to get out of debt. It took a long time. There is where the problem comes from. It does not come from God's law. It comes from our disobedience in the past. And getting into sync to God's laws does impose that "burden," because we have not done it before.

Remember the simplicity issue. God's way is pure. God's way is clear. God's way is unambiguous. It is not convoluted. And the larger issue in all of this is faith. But faith is involved in every covenant—Old Covenant, New Covenant, in business contracts, and in marriage. Whenever a contract is made, it is made because each party believes that the terms of the contract (or, covenant) are in their best interest. In business, "best interest" usually means that I am going to make a profit. And so when people sign a contract, then each one is going to profit in some way from that.

But even aside from that, when a contract is signed, each party believes in *the purpose* of the contract. Each party believes that they are going to do their part, and each party believes that the other party is going to do his part. I wonder if you noticed how frequently the word believe appeared there. Does not that indicate faith? Faith is the issue. When we make a covenant with God, the issue is faith.

Now, of and by itself, the major difference between the Old and New Covenants that these people stress is nothing more than a smoke screen, a diversionary tactic, to get one into thinking in the wrong vein. The real issue, brethren, is *what kind of faith?* When they signed on the dotted line (back there in Exodus 24), the Israelites believed—even as people "believe" whenever they get married. And then, when those people divorce, these are the same people who "believed" whenever the marriage covenant was agreed to. That is, whenever they said, "I do." So, what was the problem? The problem was that one or both did not live up to the terms

of the original agreement; and therefore the covenant, or the contract, could not work.

Hebrews 4:1-2 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

They "believed" in the beginning, but what happened? Their faith did not grow. Their faith did not endure. It did not last. The problem was not with God. It was with the people! And that is exactly what Paul says in Romans 8: 3, and also in Hebrews 8. The problem was with the people! They did not have *the kind of faith* that would enable them to keep, to uphold, and to do the terms of the covenant that they willingly, enthusiastically, excitably, agreeably entered into. That is, the one that they thought was going to be in their best interests. And what happens when faith breaks down?

Hebrews 3:19 So we see that they could not enter. . . .

It means the Promised Land, into Canaan. Something happened between Sinai and Canaan. We know what it is, because we just read it in chapter 4. Their faith broke down.

Hebrews 3:19 They could not enter in because of unbelief.

Unbelief produces something.

Hebrews 3:14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

What did it produce? They disobeyed. They did not keep their word. Israel lost their faith, which they had at the beginning; and the result was disobedience and the breaking of their part of the terms of the covenant.

In business, the faith involved at the signing of the contract is based upon solid evidence of good performance in the past. That is, a good track record—as we might say in business. When the Church of the Great God began, we had a difficult time getting a credit card from a bank. The reason was that we had no evidence that we could show the bank that we were going to be trustworthy. The church had never bought anything on credit. So, they would look for a credit report, and there was nothing there. So, what were they telling us? "You have no evidence." You have to bring something to the table, do you not?

Whenever we covenanted with God, there is a track record on us; and it is all "bad." It is not only bad—it is terrible. It is totally untrustworthy, virtually delinquent in every responsibility toward God. There is nothing, it seems, that we can offer Him. Here is where grace comes into the picture. God offers to supply, or apply, the absolutely perfect track record of Jesus Christ on our behalf *on the condition* (There is a condition.) that we have changed our attitude, begun to change our conduct, and that we believe in the blood of Jesus Christ. And so He overlooks the fact that there is no credit record. He overlooks the fact that what He knows about us is all "bad." And He applies the perfect track record of Jesus Christ.

The Bible uses terms that we generally do not use in every day life. That is, words like justification, covenant, sanctification, holiness, transfiguration, and transformation. But the

concepts that are contained in those words are no different than concepts used every day—at home, at school, and in the business world. Each area of life has its own vocabulary; and once we learn the vocabulary, it makes the understanding a great deal easier.

I remember a young man who was brilliant in mathematics. He went to Clemson University. He was going to make mathematics his area of expertise. He was in awe of the professors because when they spoke he could hardly understand, even though he made almost straight "A's" all through high school in every mathematical course that he ever took. Yet, when they spoke, they used a vocabulary that was above and beyond him. He then began to learn what the vocabulary meant. Then his opinion of these men was altered. It changed. And he could understand because he learned what they were saying.

I feel that it is obvious, when the whole Bible revelation is considered, that the way into the community—that is the Family, the Kingdom of God that God is creating through Jesus Christ—is by means of a covenant with God. That pattern is established back in Exodus 19, where God begins to give overall terms.

Exodus 19:5-6 Now therefore, if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak unto the children of Israel.

Exodus 19:10 And the LORD said unto Moses, "Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes."

Exodus 19:14-15 And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. And he said unto the people, "Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives."

A *covenant* is a formal, solemn, and binding agreement between two or more parties. Synonyms are compact, or contract. The major difference between these words is the situation in which they are used. *Contract* is usually used in a business situation, but really it is no different from a covenant or a compact. A *compact* is usually used between nations when they make an agreement; but in reality it is no different between a covenant or a contract. So "contract" is usually used in business, and "compact" between nations.

Now, covenant is frequently used when a measure of solemnity is present. That is, very frequently God is involved where the term "covenant" is used. The word *covenant* is used to give it a touch, or the symbolism, of *solemnity*. But whether one uses "compact," "contract," or "covenant"—each of these contain terms stipulating what each party must do in order to fulfill his part of the agreement. One of the *terms* of each covenant—Old and New—is that, when it was agreed to and ratified, the individual Israelite or Christian became God's possession.

Ezekiel 16:8 "Now when I passed by you, and looked upon you, behold, your time was the time of love; and I spread My skirt over you, and covered your nakedness: Yes, I swore unto you, and entered into a covenant with you," saith the LORD God, "and you became Mine."

You will see phrases scattered throughout the Old Testament like: "*My heritage*," God referring

to Israel; "*My people*," showing that they are His possession; or "*Israel, My people*." In the New Testament, that is replaced with another term.

Ephesians 1:14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.

"*My people*" or "*You became Mine*" becomes in the New Testament "*a purchased possession*."

Both of these terms fall under the broader term of *redemption*. Redemption is the noun form of the verb "redeem." It has a very simple meaning. It means buy back. It means to buy back something that had been voluntarily given up, taken away, or lost—any one of those three categories. It also means to free from captivity by payment of a ransom, to free from what distresses or harms.

In our society, we hear of people redeeming what had been sold to a pawnshop. They pay the price of redemption. We hear of wealthy people paying a ransom for a family member who had been kidnapped. The person who had been kidnapped had been taken away; and in order for the family to get that person back, they had to pay a "purchase price." So they redeemed the person who had been kidnapped.

Turn with me to Acts 20. Paul is the speaker, and he is speaking to the Ephesian elders. He is not going to see them any more, and so he is giving them instruction and exhortation.

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock [meaning the church], over the which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood.

There is the price of redemption—to *buy back* that which had been taken away, that which had been kidnapped, that which had been taken into captivity. We are the ones that need to be bought back, to be redeemed; and the purchase price is the blood of Jesus Christ. But if we take God up on His offer to make a covenant with Him—a compact with Him—we become His. We become His possession.

I Corinthians 11:25-26 After the same manner also He took the cup [This is right in the midst of the Passover instruction.], when He had supped, saying, "This cup is the new testament in My blood. This do you, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till He come."

There is a very interesting translation of this verse that appears in Barclay's translation of the Bible. In verse 25, where it says, "This cup is the new testament in My blood," Barclay translates that "This cup is the new covenant and it cost Me My blood." The life is in the blood. Therefore what Christ is saying is that, in order for the New Covenant to be made, "*it cost Me My life!*" That is the purchase price, so that we might be redeemed.

You might remember that Israel did not come out of Egypt until the firstborn died. And although it does not say it directly, the implication is very strong that the death of the firstborn of Egypt was the price of redemption so that Israel could be free. Of course, that pattern—that symbolism—comes right into the New Testament where the Firstborn of God, Jesus Christ,

becomes the price of redemption.

And so then, becoming God's possession is a concession, a term, a stipulation that the Israelites (and we) were very willing to meet at the time that the covenant was made with God. It was the *price* that we had to pay for our liberty! Or, that they had to pay for theirs. A *condition* had to be met. Why did they do it? Why did we do it? Because we believed in the purpose of the covenant and because we agreed with the terms—that they were in our best interest that we do so. Is that any different from business? Is that any different from marriage? No, it is no different at all. The principles involved here, the concepts, are exactly the same.

Exodus 19:5 Now therefore, if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine.

Do you see what He is saying there? This is a "term." IF you will obey Me, THEN you will be. . . .

Exodus 19:7-8 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

So these people would show, then, that they were God's possession—by being obedient to Him. By entering into the covenant, they obligated themselves to meet its terms. Hang on to that word obligation. God recorded these things as a pattern so that we would understand when we make the New Covenant. When we make the New Covenant, some of the terms are different; but the concepts are the same.

There is nothing difficult about understanding these concepts. When we borrow money from a bank (to buy a house, or to buy a car), we are entering into a covenant—obligating ourselves to pay the loan back at an agreed upon rate of interest, at an agreed upon amount per month, for an agreed upon number of months. Often, before agreeing to grant the loan, the bank demands that we come up with a certain amount of money for a down payment and collateral to guarantee the loan. The principles involved in the covenant with God are no different.

Romans 6:1-3 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized. . . .

What happened at baptism, brethren? That is when the agreement was sealed.

Romans 6:3-4 into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Brethren, what is it that we must put up before God as our part of the deal? It is us! Even as Jesus Christ, in order to make the covenant, had to die literally, we too have to die. We have to give up our life to Him. And we and our life become the collateral. What we receive in return is *grace*. So it is a good deal, but it is costly.

Even as Israel, when they became God's possession (because He was putting up the price of redemption), became His possession—we become Christ's possession, because He bought and

paid for us in order that we might make the covenant with God. One of the conditions, which we saw in Exodus 19, that they had to meet before hearing a fuller explanation of the terms of the covenant, was that they had to be sanctified. They had to clean their clothes. We read that in Exodus 19:10 and 14-15. Do you know what is being symbolized in that? It is one of the key doctrines in this whole mess. In the Bible, it is called justification. It is a word that we are not very familiar with, but let us look now at Zephaniah 1:7-8.

Zephaniah 1:7-8 Hold your peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD has prepared a sacrifice, He has bid His guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel.

Connect this, if you will, in your mind to Exodus 19. God said, "Before you can come to Me, you have to wash your clothes." If you are thinking with me, you will begin to understand the symbolism that is involved here. If you will remember the parable that Jesus gave in Matthew 22—the parable of the marriage of the king's son. Toward the end of that parable, people were found in the marriage area with clothing that was not suitable. And what happened? They were booted out! You can't be here, at this marriage, with that kind of clothing on."

If you carry it a little bit further, to Revelation 19:7-8, where it says that the Bride has prepared herself. She has made herself ready, and the clothing that she has on is fine linen—clean and white. That clothing is the righteousness of the saints. Clothing is used throughout the Bible to symbolize that a person is clean, that they are holy, that they are righteous (or, we could say "unrighteous"—depending upon the kind that it is).

Justification cleans us and imputes to us (that is, it clothes us) with righteousness. Then we can be brought into the presence of God—as shown by the Israelites being allowed then, and not until then, to go up to the mount to hear the voice of God. When they arrived at the mount, brethren, what did they hear? The Ten Commandments! Not the nine commandments, like the Protestants believe. Not the eight commandments, like the Catholics believe. But they heard the voice of God utter that law which forms the body of the way into His Kingdom. The way which is a major part of the way in which the product that God is producing is going to be produced.

Even before they heard that—the voice of God uttering His Ten Commandments—they had to be cleaned up. They had to be justified. They had to be declared "righteous" before they were allowed into His presence. *To justify* means to make right, to acquit, to align, to declare or prove guiltless. Any one of those synonyms may be used, depending upon the context in which it appears. But *justify* usually is used in a religious context, or a legal one.

Anyone who has ever had a small amount of experience with a computer can understand the principle of justification. When a document, like a letter, is begun, it must first be formatted. Formatting is nothing more than determining what the form of the letter, or the document, is going to be. That is, what the letter is going to look like when it is completed.

When you are doing this, you must determine whether the margins of what you will type will be in alignment with the edges of the paper. Most of the time, you want the left margin to be aligned with the left side of your paper. But sometimes you want only the right. Sometimes you

want both margins to be aligned with both edges of the paper. That *alignment*, in computer talk or the vocabulary of computer operation, is called *justification*.

So when a person is *justified* before God, it means that his standing is in alignment with the standards of God, the law of God. The person is justified. But how is the alignment with the law of God accomplished? When a person is brought into alignment with God's law, does that do away with the necessity of keeping laws? That is a dumb question, but some have come to a screwball answer.

When you align the left edge of what you are going to type with the left margin—when it is justified, does that do away with the left side of the paper? Stupid! When a builder is constructing a building and he wants to know whether the wall is straight up and down, he will use a plumb line. And if he sees that the wall indeed is "plumb" with the plumb line, it is justified. Does that do away with the plumb line? Of course it does not. It is only in religion, where people want to disobey God's law, that when a person is justified they say it does away with the law.

Sometimes you feel like hitting your forehead. We have to bring some logic and truth into this. These people are horrified when you suggest to them that you believe that you must keep God's laws. They come to the conclusion that, if you believe that, you are trying to earn your salvation. But wait a minute. If that be true, then why did Jesus say, "If you will enter into life, keep the commandments"? Who is telling us the truth—Jesus or the people who say that once you are justified you no longer need to keep the law of God, because it is done away?

Why did Paul say, "God forbid! Shall we sin, that grace may abound?" If this be true, why are there literally scores of exhortations to not sin? Why are there so many mentions of specific sins that we dare not commit? Let me turn you to something that I think is really rich in this subject.

I Corinthians 6:9-11 Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards [How many of the Ten Commandments are being mentioned here?], nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. [Now look at the next verse.] And such were some of you: but you are washed [Exodus 19, where He said to wash yourself before you come.], but you are sanctified [Exodus 19], but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Do you know what he said? He said that we dare not commit these sins *because we are justified!* This is the same sense that Romans 6:1-6 and 14-15 are also written in. Again, let us look at this in a human sense—when a person commits a crime for which he goes to jail. Let us say he steals something, and then he serves his time and is released. When the penalty has been paid for his crime and he is released, does that mean that the law covering stealing is simply done away with and that this man need no longer be concerned stealing? That may be a simplification, but it is very close to the sense of what "*the law is done away*" people are saying.

Romans 4:15 Because the law works wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

IF justification by grace through faith does away with the law, THEN there is no sin. Do you understand what I just said? There is no such thing as sin. Christ died in vain. And that flies violently in the face of Jesus Christ and the apostles' exhortations to not sin. Sin exists—today and yesterday. Justification—by grace, through faith—did not do away with the law. We are still sinning today.

God willing, the next time I speak we will pick up this subject of "justification" again and carry it to a very clear conclusion in its application to your life and my life today.