

## The Covenants, Grace and Law (Part 13)

### Benefits of Christ's Sacrifice

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I will be continuing the series that I began on the covenants a long, long time ago. I do not know whether you have been keeping track of them, but this is actually the thirteenth in this series. This [sermon] will conclude a portion of this, and I will say at the end where we are going to go the next time I speak on this subject.

When we left off the last time, two weeks ago, we were deep into the blessings that accrue to us as a direct result of Christ's unilateral actions. I want to make that clear to us because the New Covenant is very largely based upon what God, through Christ, took upon Himself to do by a voluntary action that, of course, included His death. What we have been talking about here in the last couple of sermons is Christ's unilateral actions, which included His death, the proposal of a New Covenant, and a will stipulating our inheritance from Him.

We also saw earlier, in that particular sermon, that the receipt of these things is not without cost to us. These things have *conditions* attached to them. We must be called. We must be repentant. (*Unconditional surrender to God* is the term that I used.) We must believe the gospel. We must believe in Jesus Christ. We must begin obeying Him, because God gives His Spirit to them that obey. We must be baptized. We must have hands laid upon us for the receipt of His Holy Spirit.

This is far different from the Old Covenant. Not one of those conditions existed for entering into the Old Covenant. All those people had to do was to be born and, if a male, to be circumcised. However, the blessings that enable us to meet the terms of the New Covenant accrue to us IF we meet the conditions.

These blessings—which are actually promises of spiritual blessings—are, like the conditions, also not mentioned as promises that would flow to Old Testament Israelites whenever they made the Old Covenant with God. God was the same then as He is now. He changes not. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His purpose in making the Old Covenant with them was much different from His making the New Covenant with us.

Giving salvation to them was not His purpose at that time. God was merciful to them. He forgave their sins on the basis of their attitude. (You can see that in Psalm 51.) He even occasionally gave someone His Spirit and sometimes eternal life. However, the Old Covenant was heavily oriented towards the physical. Its terms and its promises were more of the *if-you-obey-Me-I-will-bless-you-with-wealth-and-good-health* type.

The New Covenant is almost 180 degrees different: It is heavily weighted with spiritual conditions and promises. In comparison with the Old Covenant, it deals very little with the physical. Thus, in the New Covenant, God promises to work to remove the fault in the people. Remember Hebrews 8:8-10. He promises to work to remove the fault that is in the people who

are making the New Covenant with Him.

The purpose of the New Covenant is eternal salvation. I think that we all understand that, but it is good that we rehearse it from time to time. It is understandable, then, why the Old Covenant had very few conditions to it. With the New Covenant, though, the stakes are exceedingly greater, exceedingly higher, exceedingly more important than the stakes were with the Old Covenant—because now the stakes involve eternity! It is very clearly seen from the experiences God recorded in the Old Testament that we need all the help that we can get if we are going to keep the terms of the New Covenant.

The fault that kept the Old Testament Israelites from keeping the terms of the Old Covenant was spiritual. Did you get what I said? The fault that kept the Old Testament Israelites from keeping the terms of the Old Covenant was spiritual. The problem was in their hearts—in their mind, in their nature. It was simply impossible for them to consistently and steadfastly, with a faithful and joyous heart, submit to God, even within a physically oriented covenant.

Thus, we receive forgiveness of our sins, not merely an initial forgiving, but an ongoing cleansing. That is very important to keeping the terms of the New Covenant. God does not merely forgive our sins at the beginning when we unconditionally surrender to Him, have faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, believe the gospel, get baptized, and have hands laid on us. Yes, we are cleansed of our sins, but that is not the end of God's cleansing! The cleansing continues for the rest of our life.

This is why I John, the first chapter and the beginning of the second chapter, is so important for us to understand. It is *an ongoing process*. We are NOT perfect when we are forgiven; there is much yet to do. For this reason, we are required by God to keep the terms of the New Covenant for the remainder of our natural lives.

We ARE going to sin. That old nature—though its sins were forgiven—is going to keep rearing up; and we are going to need to be forgiven again, and again, and again, and again, and again (*ad nauseum*, to anyone who understands). There is an ongoing cleansing in order that we might be presented to Christ for the completion of the covenant as one that reflects Him back to Himself. We will be like Him.

Let us go back to the place we left off, in the book of Romans.

Romans 5:1-3 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace...And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation works patience.

Romans 5:5 And hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given for us.

I wanted to rehearse that because here we see some aspects of the blessings that accrue to us as the result of what I have termed "Christ's unilateral actions." Here they are specifically stated.

In addition to this, along with these blessings, Paul also gives back to us some of *our*

*responsibilities* in meeting the terms. It is his *modus operandi* that, even though he be deeply within the discussion of a doctrinal matter—such as he is here in these middle chapters of the book of Romans, [where] he is discussing some of the foundational doctrines of the Church of God—he never gets far away from our ethical responsibilities. Because we have received this, we in return have to meet a condition: We have to give back to God something that reflects that we have been, indeed, blessed. Therefore, Paul then gives us some of our responsibilities in meeting the terms of the New Covenant.

We are *justified*. That is what it says. "Therefore being justified..." Justification is an alignment with the law of God. We are declared righteous. It is something that is imputed to us. The righteousness of Christ is accounted to us, and we are declared righteous with the righteousness of Christ.

Paul then comes back with our responsibility. He exhorts us to have peace with God. What we have here is a gentle reminder that the way to have peace with God is to repent! Surrender to Him, since God has cleared the way for us to do so. Since God has done what He has done on His own to make peace with us, what Paul is saying is that we have to strive to retain what He has accomplished. As I mentioned to you last week, what it more specifically says in the Greek is, "Let us have peace." That is more active than saying, "We have peace." He is encouraging us to do something to maintain [peace]. Let us have it. Let us keep it. Let us keep what we have. It is an exhortation to actively hold fast what has been accomplished for us.

You might recall that I described this by saying life is very much like standing on a hill. If we do not make effort to, at the very least, stay where we are, gravity will pull us down the hill. Spiritually, what pulls us down is human nature. What Paul says is that, if we are going to have peace with God, we have to make an effort to at least hold on to what we have. However, it is far better if we make effort to strive to go up the hill and make progress. Human nature is at enmity with God, and it WILL pull us back toward the unconverted state. As Peter very colorfully says, if we go all the way back, it is just like a dog returning to its vomit.

Next Paul says that we have access into this grace. I illustrated that by showing you that what Paul is showing here is that it is as though the Christian is ushered into a place of great space. It is not just empty, though; it is a space that gives the person a feeling of overflowing abundance and great beauty. The concept that he is getting across here with grace is that we have had opened to us liberty, fullness of gifts that God has made available. Also, it opens to us the transcendent beauty of God's holiness.

He reminds us that in this we stand. Again, this word *stand* is far more active in the Greek than it appears in the English. It gives the impression of resistance and, at the same time, stability or balance. What Paul is picturing is that our ability to resist sliding down the hill is actually flowing from God's grace. Do you see what he is saying? In another book (the book of Philippians) he said, "God will supply all your needs through Christ Jesus," even as He supplied all the needs of the Israelites in the wilderness.

Their needs, under that covenant, were primarily physical. Every day, He gave them manna. Do you see the connection to John 6? We have to eat of Christ. He is the Living Manna. Spiritually, in kind, God, by His grace, will supply our every need, even the spiritual strength, the spiritual

power to stand, to be steadfast!

Not only that, he gives the impression of *balance*. I think you understand how important balance is. If you are riding a bicycle and you lose your balance, what happens? You fall. You crash. You get hurt. Well, it is similar here. We are not talking about a balance in terms of just being equal. This is a person who is poised as he moves. He is not just standing. He is saying that in the trials of life—because of the great God giving to us of His Spirit, of His gifts—[He] is enabling us to keep us from being knocked off our feet and losing our balance.

It gives me the impression of wrestling. Have you ever seen a legitimate wrestling match? That is, something in high school or college, not the kind on television, where those people are acting. In one of those [actual] wrestling matches, one of the first things the opponents try to do is knock the each other off balance. If one can get the other on the mat, then there is a pretty good chance that he can gain the upper hand.

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood," Paul said, "but against wicked spirits in high places." Those wicked spirits are trying to knock us off balance. [They want] to help us in some way, shape, or form to lose our faith in God's Word; to lose the vision; to lose our hope; to not be motivated. Then a little trial comes along, and we become exceedingly depressed and lose the things that would ordinarily keep us going. We do not want to allow ourselves to be knocked off balance, and God's grace is given to us to supply that need. We have access, then, into this grace. It comes to us as a result of what Christ unilaterally did.

The next blessing is the hope of the glory of God. Of any enterprise or any project, over the long run, hope is the greatest and the most important of all motivators. If a person has no hope, he gives up. He quits. Abraham looked for a city. God is telling us of his hope.

The glory of God is, first of all, a reference to the infusion of light that appeared above and in the tabernacle when God took up residence there from time to time.

Exodus 40:34-35 Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. [This is to what Paul was referring.] And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle [a type of the church].

That is to what Paul is referring in Romans 5. That gives a starting point for those who understand what he is talking about here—the glory of God. What we have to do is update this, that is, bring it up into the time of Christianity. God was dwelling in the tabernacle, a type of the church. That light was a symbol of the Divine Nature emanating from there because God was present. The implication in Paul's writing in Romans 5 is that the Christian's hope is that he shall be (in an eternally growing degree) a possessor of *the same glory*.

As a personal note, I know that as I age I desire this glory more fervently than I ever did in my youth. There is a proverb that says that the glory of a young man is his strength. I think all of us who are aging and consciously aware of it know that when we were young we did not think about the kind of thing about which Paul is talking.

As I age I see my eyes becoming dimmer. My hearing is less acute. My hair is thinning. My skin is wrinkling. My muscles ache and tire more quickly. My stomach does not seem to agree with food as it once did. I do not sleep as well. Pains and discomforts stab through my body in areas where they never did before. My hands used to be as steady as a rock, but now they shake.

Besides, I see so much corruption in government that I have grown cynical of it. [I see] so much greed in business that I suspect I am going to be cheated, and I get suspicious. There is much disagreement in society and so little stability and generosity of spirit. I see class, ethnic, and economic warfare in every area of our culture. I see families in general wracked by internal strife. Divorce is rampant. Children are goaded into rebellion by entertainment with things like drugs, movies, athletics, TV, and music. I see disease crippling us physically because of poor diets. [I see] mind pollution, air pollution, and water pollution. I see the medical profession, the pharmaceutical industry, and lawyers sucking us dry economically, and I have to cry out, "God, save us from ourselves! Come, Lord Jesus—the hope of the glory of God."

That is what the New Covenant is all about! The New Covenant is all about preparing us for the glory of God, that we might be instruments to change all of these things in order that they can be used for the way that they were originally intended by God.

I Corinthians 15:35-37 But some man will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" You fool, that which you sow is not quickened, except it die: and that which you sow, you sow not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain.

What he is saying here (from a simple illustration in nature) is that, when you sow a seed, a seed does not pop right back out of the ground. What comes out of the ground is different from what you put into the ground. This becomes the illustration to describe to us the resurrection of the dead: What goes into the coffin—into the ground—is not what comes out.

I Corinthians 15:38-40 But God gives it a body as it has pleased Him, and to every seed His own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: But the *glory* [Notice the word change here.] of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

Think back to Romans 5. Because of what Christ did, now we can hope for the glory of God—a glory that Paul is here describing as celestial.

I Corinthians 15:41-42 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption [that body that I described that was my own body];

it is raised in incorruption.

Again, because of what Christ did, Paul is saying that our hope (Romans 5) is to be GOD. Here in I Corinthians 15, he is not speaking of "angelic glory." That other group—the one out of which all of us came—finally reached the conclusion in their doctrinal changes that we are not going to be God. They say we are going to be greater than angels, but we are not going to be God. That is hogwash. I say that by the authority of Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul.

We have hope of the glory of God! We find more proof of this in John 17. This is Jesus giving the prayer that He gave on the eve of His crucifixion.

John 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify You Me with Your own Self with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

Notice the *glory* references here. "The glory I had with You." "Glorify You Me with Your own Self."

Hebrews 1:1-4 God, who at sundry [various] times and in divers [different] manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; Who [the Son] being the brightness of His glory [Does this agree with John 17:5?], and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Remember that word *inheritance*. Christ, by inheritance, has obtained. Are we co-heirs with Christ? Are we going to inherit the same thing that He did. This verse says, "By inheritance He obtained a more excellent name than they [the angels]." Is He greater than angels? There is no comparison between what He is now and an angel! He is their great Creator.

What the writer of the book of Hebrews is doing is tracing it from the standpoint of Jesus, the Man, dying and being resurrected. He is the inheritor of the promises that came to Him as the result of meeting the terms of the Old Covenant, that which was given to Abraham. He became the heir, and what was His inheritance? This verse says that His inheritance was *to be GOD*.

Romans 8:29 For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed [He is talking about us.] to the image of His son, that He [the Son] might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Think of this in terms of humanity. My wife is from a family in which nine children were born. One died in infancy; there were eight brothers and sisters who have grown to adulthood. The

firstborn was a son. There were eight others born after him. Were those who were born after the firstborn any different in what they intrinsically were from the firstborn? They were humans, just like the firstborn was!

Transfer that into the spiritual realm, into the Family of which we are already considered to be a part because we are God's children. Our inheritance is to be in that Family. Christ is the firstborn. Christ is already God. We are to be conformed to His image. When we are born into the Family, are we going to be any less than He is? [No.] We are going to be GOD. We have come later, but we are going to be just like the Firstborn (just like in my wife's family).

I John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.

We are in the God Family already— in embryonic form, as Mr. Armstrong used to say. We ARE sons of God! When you were baptized "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," you were put into the Family of God! We are now sons of God; we bear that name; and we had better do everything in our power to uphold that name. It is the greatest name in the universe! There is none greater. Your last name is now GOD.

I John 3:1-2 Therefore the world knows us not [we are of a different race, as it were], because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be. But we know [this we know for sure] that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him.

Is He God? Is He greater than the angels? How in the world those people could ever come to the conclusion that our inheritance is to become any less than God, I do not know. You have to deny the Scripture in order to do that. But this throws a responsibility on you and me, a condition.

I John 3:3 And every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure.

Revelation 1:13-15 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire. And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters.

We are looking at the BORN Son of God. Those people try to tell you that He does not have a body, that He is an ethereal nothing, a blob. It gets me upset.

Revelation 1:16 And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of

His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shines in its strength.

That is the glory of God! We have that hope, and we have it because of what Christ unilaterally did in order that the fault, the flaw (which was in the heart, the nature, of the people making a covenant with God) can be corrected, eradicated, overcome.

Hebrews 2:5-10 For unto the angels has He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that You are mindful of him? Or the son of man, that You visit him? You made him a little lower than the angels [that is what we are now]; You crown him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. [It is coming, brethren. This is part of our hope. We need to be GOD, in order to receive this.] But we see Jesus [the forerunner], who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

There it is in a nutshell. *The hope of the glory of God* is a tremendous claim that the apostle Paul has made [in Romans 5], without going into it in any detail. Once you begin to pull in the Scriptures on the glory of God from other areas, it becomes very clear what the apostle is taking about, now that we have been justified and have been given God's Holy Spirit.

He is not talking about any New Age, pantheistic, Nirvana type of thing in which people are in the presence of God and just caught up in this thing. Rather Paul is talking about a human personality being clothed with infinite knowledge, perfect purity, and perfect love—all combined with eternal life. Our inheritance, as a result of what Christ did and continues to do under the New Covenant, is the Family of God and all things that the Father has created through Jesus Christ.

Paul goes on to say, in Romans 5:5, that the love of God begins to flow in us by means of the Spirit that is given. It is the Spirit that assures us that our hope will not be disappointed. There is an indirect contrast with human love. Human love disappoints; it frustrates, because it is so variable. It has great potential, but it goes up and down; it blows hot and cold. It is essentially self-centered. That is why there is so much divorce in families and so much disagreement in society.

What Paul is saying, in context, is that the love of God infuses us with a consciousness that, despite the trials of life (trials that may even be intensified because we are Christian), we are the objects of God's love and that love never fails. In other words, because that life has begun

in us—and because God has set Himself to do this—He will finish what He starts. Even as He sustained the Israelites all the way through the wilderness, He will sustain us. That is what supports our hope.

Let us go on to another benefit.

I Corinthians 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

There is the subject.

I Corinthians 12:4-8 Now there are diversities [or varieties] of gifts, but the same Spirit. [The same Spirit that he mentioned in Romans 5:5.] And there are differences of administrations [services or ministries], but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal [meaning, for the common good, for the church]. For to one is given by the Spirit..

Then he begins to list what some of those gifts are.

I first alluded to this when we were talking about grace, in reference to Romans 5:2. We have access to this grace. The difference here is that Paul begins to mention specific gifts that we are given to enable us to serve God and the church; and, of course, those gifts are indeed a benefit to us. However, he goes on to show that they certainly are not given for our private enjoyment. There is a big difference between God giving us something that is just for us to use as opposed to God giving us a gift to serve others, from which we also benefit. The intention is that we benefit because we use the gift in the way that God intended. In context, different gifts are given to different people to serve the church in different areas.

I Corinthians 12:18 But now has God set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased Him.

I Corinthians 12:28 And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets...

In a New Testament sense, the word *prophet* probably means "preacher"—someone speaking under the inspiration of God. It would not exclude someone who *foretells* the future; but, in the New Testament context, *prophet* generally means somebody who *forth tells*—tells something strongly, up front, and gives the truth of a matter.

I Corinthians 12:28 ...thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversity of tongues.

I thought of something during the week as I was preparing this sermon. In light of what is happening within the Church of God in the wake of the disintegration of the WCG, I think there is something that might be worth considering. Remember that the church is a spiritual organism. The church is not contained within one corporate body.

Even within the sixty-some year history of the Worldwide Church of God (including the Radio Church of God) in the twentieth century, even then the whole church—the whole spiritual organism—was not contained within the Worldwide Church of God. It was only the largest group.

It is very interesting that, since the Church of the Great God formed, we are beginning to get letters actually from all over the world. The tapes are going all over the place. People are mailing them from wherever they are happening to get them to other parts of the world. I am finding out that there are groups of people who never had any contact with the Worldwide Church of God, although they may have heard of Herbert W. Armstrong. They were brought to conversion. They are keeping the Sabbath. In many cases, they are keeping the holy days. They have the same basics that we had in the Worldwide Church of God. Where did they get those things? I think the inference that we can draw is obvious: God was leading other people in other areas to come to the same doctrinal truths, but the ministry of those people was very limited by comparison to what God worked through Mr. Armstrong.

Now we have the church in the United States splitting up into quite a number of groups. I am wondering, is it possible He is forming His church into these various groups by leading people into those groups? I do not know. He certainly will not take away our free moral agency; and certainly there is our right, in a sense, to overrule God in the use of our free moral agency and take ourselves wherever we want to go. However, I am talking here of a generality.

I am wondering, is it were possible that He is doing this because He has a specific function that He wants each group to perform? Perhaps, by moving people into specific groups, He is giving them the very best opportunity to be prepared for His Kingdom. Prepared not just to be there, but prepared for a specific function within His Kingdom.

I do not know the answers to these questions. It is just a speculation that I am voicing to you. I do know that what is written here in I Corinthians 12 is written partly that we should not feel any superiority over another person or group, because God put us here. We did not just do it ourselves.

We are talking about *gifts received from God*; let us expand on this. II Peter 1 is part of the salutation to the group of people to whom Peter is writing. I chose this passage because it was written by somebody different from Paul and to show you that the apostles thought the same way.

II Peter 1:3-4 According as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue [Does that have a familiar ring to it?]; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

All we have to do—in the light of this last series of sermons, especially the last two sermons—is to connect this to Christ's unilateral action in the making of the New Covenant. Because of what Christ did, this has accrued to use *everything that is needed* to complete the pilgrimage into the Promised Land.

Once you begin to get these pictures, things that Christ said begin to come alive. John 6 really comes alive! He talked about the manna. He talked about His flesh. He talked about His blood, and how we have to "eat" these things. This is where *our spiritual survival* is. This is where *our spiritual strength* is. This is what enables us to get through our wilderness and into the Promised Land.

Physical life gives us a parallel that I feel is easily understood. Think about the Earth, for example. Those of us here live in a place of unusual beauty. It is not stark like much is out West, where so much is brown. Yet, out there, the Rockies and the Sierras show power and grandeur. Think about how big this Earth is, and think about how many lives it is now supporting (5 ½ billion). It can support a great, great, great many more than that.

Is everything that we need for physical life here on Earth? You know it is. Everything we need. Our God supplied that. In the same manner, He supplies everything that we need for spiritual life; we have no excuse. There is no way we can say to Him that we are not really prepared for the Kingdom of God.

Do you know that the major lesson, the focus, of the Feast of Tabernacles in the Old Testament is NOT the Millennium? In the Old Testament it is on how God supplied all their needs in the wilderness, so that they could make it. We may indeed look through a glass darkly, and we may indeed know only in part; but whatever it is that we have, it is ENOUGH to continue what we have begun, because God will continually add more to each person's supply.

For forty years, the manna fell. Every time Israel needed water, He was there to cause it to come out of a rock. When they needed to be protected from enemies, He was there. He was in the cloud. He was in the pillar of fire to give them comfort at night, when they might be more frightened. He said that their clothes did not wear out—a symbol, again, of how He supplies everything!

Ephesians 3:20 Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.

The power by which He supplied every need to the Israelites is at work today. If they needed the Red Sea split, He was there. If they needed food, He was there. He could blow quails from wherever quails blow. Whatever they needed, He was there to supply them with it.

They were in a place where food did not normally grow. Did He demonstrate that He could supply all their needs in a place where there was no possibility of even growing food? He certainly did. God is lavish beyond our understanding. Again, look at the creation for insight. All of this that He has done is intended to be teaching for us, that we may understand that He will give us everything WE need that we might be partakers of the divine nature.

Ephesians 1:13 In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that you believed...

Notice that there is a sequence here. He is recounting how the people met the conditions in order to be in the condition.

Ephesians 1:13-14 In whom also after you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.

The Holy Spirit is described here in two ways. First of all it is *the seal of promise*. The word *promise* refers to the prophecies that were made in previous times that God would change the nature of those who made the New Covenant with Him. We went through one of them in the last sermon, in Ezekiel 36, where He promised through Ezekiel, "And I will put My Spirit in them." Jesus prophesied a number of times in His ministry that the Holy Spirit was going to come. That is what Paul means by *this spirit of promise*.

*Sealing* is a term that was borrowed from both the Greek business operations as well as the Old Testament itself. In Greek business, the sealing was the last thing that was done in a transaction before delivery. In other words, as the business deal was consummated, the two people would talk. Maybe one person was going to buy grain and the other was going to sell it. The buyer and the seller agreed to a price. Then, before delivery, the buyer sealed the agreement.

The way that it was usually done might have been through a means with which you and I are familiar with from seeing movies of medieval characters. Somebody had a ring with an insignia on it. He took a bit of wax, heated it up, plunged the ring into the wax, and sealed the deal.

It may not have been like that at all. Somebody might have had the grain in some kind of a container, like a burlap sack. He tied the mouth of the sack in such a way that it could not be opened again. The deal was sealed. It was the last thing that was done before the delivery. What it signified was that everybody was in agreement, and everything was in order. It also authenticated that the product was okay, and it was a protection against tampering while the product was being delivered.

In the Bible, sealing is used in three ways. If you look it up in its context, it also includes an indication of a finished transaction. It indicated ownership, and it indicated security. That was very close to the same way that the Greeks used it in business.

What we see here is that the Holy Spirit authenticates who we are. It preserves us in transit. Are we going anywhere? We are on our way to the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit has been given to authenticate that we are the sons of God. We are "sealed" while we are in transit, protected from tampering. Tampering by whom? By Satan the devil primarily. It gives the indication that the primary thing is preservation, and it tells us until when: "Until the

redemption of the purchased possession."

Then there is *the earnest*, the guarantee, or the hand money. This word is variously translated as "hand money," "deposit," or "token payment." It is the first installment that assures us that the fullness will follow. The way Paul uses it, it is God's pledge, guaranteeing full delivery on every part of salvation.

This is important, because salvation is a process. Salvation comes in three steps. The first step is one with which we are very familiar. It is *justification*. The second step is *sanctification*. The third step we heard about in the middle of this sermon. It is *glorification*.

We are in the second step. We are in transit—sanctification. We are on our way to the Kingdom of God. Much remains to be done, because we are NOT a finished product yet. We are not yet glorified, but God has given us His Spirit *guaranteeing* on that basis that He will finish what He has started! However, there is a condition: *if we allow Him*.

On His part, He has guaranteed to us that He will do it until glorification comes. Then the fullness of all that is promised—including eternal life, which we must have if we are going to inherit the promises that Christ has willed to us—[will be achieved].

Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds as of many; but as of one, and to Your seed, which is Christ.

Galatians 3:29 And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

This is what Paul is explaining here. In all of mankind that has lived since Adam, since the promises were made to Abraham, only one person has qualified to receive the inheritance of the promises that were made to Abraham. That one person was Christ.

You can see the requirements as early as Genesis 17:1, where God said to Abraham, "Walk before Me, and be perfect." Some Bibles translate it, "Be blameless," which means the same thing; "Be without sin." Christ, at the end of His life, was found to be blameless; therefore, He qualified to receive the promises. He met every condition of the Covenant, and then became the inheritor.

Verse 29 is explaining that, if we are "in Christ" (in union with Him), then we become co-heirs with Him. We become co-heirs, we become "in Christ," IF we have met the conditions that I gave to you earlier. God has called us. We have unconditionally surrendered to God. We believe the gospel. We believe in the blood of Jesus Christ. We have been baptized. We have received the Holy Spirit. We have had hands laid on us. Then we also become "in Christ." The picture is as if we were part of Christ's body, and we are "in" Him. That is not actually what has occurred, but we are within the church. We are *in* Christ.

Christ, being the inheritor of the promises, then made out a *will*, as it were, prior to His death for the forgiveness of our sins. This will is also the New Covenant, which included all the promises and blessings we just saw in the Scriptures.

Christ had to die for a number of reasons. First of all, He was physical; and it is given unto all men once to die. Another reason is that the wages of sin is death; and, when our sins were placed on Him, He then came under the law and the law claimed its penalty; He died. Another reason is that He too had to be "born again." He had to be transformed, glorified by means of a resurrection, because, as long as He was in the flesh, He could not inherit the promises, either. One has to be eternal to inherit them. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.

Hebrews 8:13 In that He saith, A new covenant, He has made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away.

That is the lead-in for the next paragraph, which is the subject of chapter nine. The first thing that Paul does is reflect upon the tabernacle of the wilderness.

Hebrews 9:9 Which was a figure [or a type; it symbolized] for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.

Hebrews 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ...

If you are not aware, the book of Hebrews has a key theme within it; and that key theme revolves around the word *better*. Christ is better, or greater than, angels. Christ is better, or greater than, Moses. Christ is better, or greater than, Aaron. The New Covenant is better, greater, than the Old Covenant. That theme goes right through every section of the book. Here the writer gets back to this theme. How much more, how much greater, how much BETTER is the blood of Christ than all the blood that was offered on the sacrificial altar under the first covenant.

Hebrews 9:14-17 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself...

Remember that I said earlier that Christ became the inheritor of the promises made to Abraham because He alone of all men met all the conditions that were contained within those promises and the covenants that were made. He was perfect, blameless. Being in that position, He did something from which you and I benefit, and that is what is explained here.

Hebrews 9:14-15 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot ["Walk before Me and be blameless."] to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? [This is why He died for sin: that we might serve God!] And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament [the New Covenant]...

Here comes the play on words. [The Greek is] *diatheke*, meaning both "a testament (a will)" and "a covenant."

Hebrews 9:15-17 ...that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that we under the first testament, they which are called [you and I] might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength [it has no legal application] at all while the testator lives.

Christ did this so we can serve God. The concept that Paul is explaining here is that, in order for us to serve God personally, we must be close to Him. Sin separates! What does sin do to relationships, either with humans or with God? It divides us. You steal from somebody. Does that make you closer to that person? If you are married and you commit adultery, does that make you closer to the person to whom you are married? No, it drives you apart. You covet something belonging to some other person. Does that make you closer to him? It drives you apart. *Sin separates*. Above all, it separates us from God.

In order for us to serve God, we must be close to Him. How can we be close to Him as long as we are sinning? Something had to be done, first of all to bridge the gap. The sins had to be forgiven. Therefore, Christ, when He qualified by being blameless, then voluntarily offered Himself to be the sacrifice that would bridge the gulf.

Before He did this, He made out a will. Because He knew that He was going to die, He made out a will; and He said, "When I die, these people who take advantage of My death will inherit what I have inherited." The inheritance, first of all, is to be in the Family! With it goes all the other promises: the promise of the Holy Spirit, the promise of eternal life, the promise of all the gifts, the promise of continual forgiveness.

Whatever is needed, He will supply it. He [Christ] will continue to stand between God and us. A priest is one who bridges the gap between different parties in order to bring them together. He is saying, "When I am resurrected, I will always stand in the gap and be there when you need Me, and I will administer the Spirit of God."

Being brought close to God not only enables us serve Him, it also enables God the Father to serve us. Because we are then in His presence, He can distribute to us the gifts that enable us to continue. Christ, then, is shown to be the sacrifice for forgiveness of sin; the one who mediates peace between God and us; the testator who made out a will and then died, passing on its benefits to us. It is these benefits that work to remove the flaw, which enables us to keep the terms of the Covenant.

We can then have a sustained and wonderful relationship with God. We can have His laws written on our hearts, and thus be transformed into His image and be qualified to share the inheritance of the promises with Him, because WE are like Him.

What we have seen today is a listing of some of the benefits that accrue to us because of what Christ took on Himself to do. It was a voluntary offering that He made for the salvation of God's

purpose: that we could be in His Kingdom. I think that we are now in a position in this series of sermons by which we can begin to look at some of the laws in a specific sense and see how they apply under the New Covenant.