

## COVENANTS

### (Part Four)

### "Power Of Our Restored Relationship"

**Text:** Hebrews 3.7 – 15 (in pew Bible p. 1185 / in large print Bible p. 1843)

**Intro:** -book of Hebrews centers around the term "better":

- Jesus is better than the angels & Moses, and Levitical priesthood.
- Jesus has a better sacrifice & covenant and tabernacle of worship.

-part 4 of series "Covenants."

- Relationship Restored (ch. 8.1 – 13) = focus of Bible is on the New Covenant.
  - Jesus' blood repairs the damage done by sin and ushers us into an internal, intimate covenant with God.
    - born with a disposition to sin – depravity.
    - places us at odds with God – eternal judgment and separation.
  - our sins are forgiven and remembered against us no more.
  - our minds and hearts are set in tune with knowing and serving God.
- Basis Of Our Restored Relationship (ch. 9.11 – 21) = God's love & Christ's blood.
  - God's motivation to offer Jesus – love / hesed (reflex) & agape (attitude).
  - quality of Christ's blood to open way to God – life / vicarious substitution.
- Durability Of Our Restored Relationship (ch. 10.1 – 10) = Once For All & Always At Work.
  - enables us to reciprocate with the perfect sacrifice of obedience.

-today's text teaches us that the New Covenant's power occurs when we are open to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

- **Weakness** = hardening our hearts / failure to enter God's rest (v. v. 8 – 12).
- **Power** = hearing the Spirit's call to believe / responding to the living God (v. v. 7, 13 - 15).
  - **illust.** Power Shortage.

### **Take Home Point:**

-followers of Jesus open their hearts to and listen to the Holy Spirit.

## 1. BARRIERS TO A POWERFUL RELATIONSHIP

-hardened hearts *by testing God* (v. v. 8, 9).

- quoted from Psalm 95.7 – 11.
  - refers to two occasions *of disobedience & provocation*.
  - lost trust in God & barred from entry in God's place of rest.
    - Meribah / rebellion (Exodus 17.1 – 17) / *nation of Israel*.
    - Massah / testing (Numbers 20.1 -13) / *Moses*.
- **quote of** Thomas A Kempis

-not knowing God's ways (v. 10).

- similar to new generation following Joshua's death –*didn't know God or his work / deeds* (Judges 2.10).
- antithesis of being a follower Jesus.
  - relationship involves following Jesus in God's will.
  - not comfortable with sin & unfinished obedience.

-pollution of unbelief (v. 12).

- bodies = temple of Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6.17, 19, 20).
- progressive nature of unbelief:
  - seed of unbelief is sown and allowed to sprout.
  - unbelief leads to hardness of heart.
  - hardness of heart leads to disobedience and rebellion.
  - rebellion leads to apostasy and forfeiting God's promised rest.
- departing from the living God / cf. 9.14; 10:31; 12.22
  - whom to know = eternal life (John 17.3).

## 2. AIDS FOR A POWERFUL RELATIONSHIP

-hear the Spirit's voice (v. 7; chs. 9.8; 10:15).

- unpardonable sin = quenching the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5.19; Luke 12.10).
  - Do not stifle the Holy Spirit.
  - Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man can be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.
- Holy Spirit draws us into a powerful covenant relationship with Him:
  - And the Holy Spirit also testifies that this is so. For he says, "This is the new covenant I will make with my people on that day, says the LORD: I will **put my laws in their hearts**, and **I will write them on their minds**" (Hebrews 10.15, 16).
  - And I will give you a **new heart**, and I will put a **new spirit** in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you **a tender, responsive heart**. And I will **put my Spirit in you** so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations (Ezekiel 36.26, 27).

-regularly encourage other followers of Jesus (v. 13).

- routine gatherings for strength & strengthening (ch. 10.24, 25).
- encourage one another to:
  - not return to their former lives of futile legalism.
  - fully enter into God's place of rest.
- today we allow many detours to side track us from gathering regularly.
  - ministry at L.A.C.C. suffers when you are missing for there is someone in our Church Family for whom you are the best fit.

-participation of proactive belief (v. v. 14, 15).

- Christ is the one through whom we are saved – *know him*.
- persevere in your confidence of God, His Word, and His plan for you.

Modern mankind can go anywhere, do everything and be completely curious about the universe. But only a rare person now and then is curious enough to want to know God (W. Tozer / American Preacher 1897 – 1963 in Craig Brian Larson & Brian Lowery. *1001 Quotations that Connect*. Zondervan, 2009, p. 160).

The enjoyment of [God] is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied ... Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, or children, or the company of earthly friends are but shadows, but enjoyment of God is the substance. These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams, but God is the fountain. These are but drops, but God is the ocean (Jonathan Edwards / Colonial American Congregational Preacher 17903 – 1758 in Craig Brian Larson & Brian Lowery. *1001 Quotations that Connect*. Zondervan, 2009, p. 256).

### **Conclusion:**

#### 1. Know what God wants.

-today's text teaches us that the New Covenant's power occurs when we are open to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

- **Weakness** = hardening our hearts / failure to enter God's rest (v. v. 8 – 12).
- **Power** = hearing the Spirit's call to believe / responding to the living God (v. v. 7, 13 - 15).

-followers of Jesus open their hearts to and listen to the Holy Spirit.

- For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by **measure** (John 3.34).
- And when [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will **convict** the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment (John 16.8).
- The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will **give life** to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you (Romans 8.11).

- For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you **put to death** the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live (Romans 8.13).

2. Know how to do what God wants.

-take care to enter God's place of rest:

- anger of God (v. 10) = response to chronic disbelief.
  - Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us **be thankful and please** God by worshiping him **with holy fear and awe**. For our God is a devouring fire (ch. 12.29).
- **illust.** Staying In Your Orbit.

-obedience to the Spirit's offer:

- like a doctor – can cure us if we follow instructions.
- like a teacher – can make us scholars if we follow curriculum.
- like a trainer – can make us an athlete if we follow discipline.
  - **illust.** Loose Cable.

-joy of becoming a partaker in Christ (v. 14).

- And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to **share his divine nature** and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires (2 Peter 1.4).

-respond today:

- author uses "today" 8 times – *only Luke uses it more often*.
- tomorrow may never come - **illust.** Jack Layton.
  - physical death.
  - second coming of Christ.

-When He shall come with trumpet sound, O may I then in Him be found,  
Dressed in His righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before the throne.

3. Know that you will do it.

-**Closing Hymn:** #404 Solid Rock Less (all verses).

## Power Shortage

On New Year's Day, in the Tournament of Roses parade, a beautiful float suddenly sputtered and quit. It was out of gas. The whole parade was held up until someone could get a can of gas.

The amusing thing was this float represented the Standard Oil Company. With its vast oil resources, its truck was out of gas.

Often, Christians neglect their spiritual maintenance, and though they are "clothed with power" (Luke 24:49) find themselves out of gas (Craig Brian Larson *750 Engaging Illustrations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993, p. 409).

## Thomas A Kempis

If it is Your will that I be in light, may You be blessed, Lord; but if it is Your will that I be in darkness, may You also be blessed. If, in Your mercy, You comfort me, be You blessed; but if it is Your will that I be afflicted, still be You always blessed (Thomas A Kempis in *The Imitation Of Christ*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Corporation, 1993).

## Staying In Your Orbit

On Wednesday, October 11, 1994, NASA's *Magellan* space explorer fell silent. The *Magellan* had circled Venus more than fifteen thousand times since arriving at the planet in 1990, but on this day NASA scientists intentionally changed the satellite's course and set it veering into the planet where it burned to a crisp in the atmosphere.

Why did NASA send the *Magellan* – which cost nine hundred million dollars – crashing into the planet? Because the *Magellan* was virtually out of power. One final experiment had drained its batteries to the point where it could no longer transmit data.

Without power, even the highest technology is worthless. Without the power of God, even the most committed Christian can bear no fruit (Craig Brian Larson *750 Engaging Illustrations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993, p. 408).

## Loose Cable

When Herbert Jackson was a new missionary, he was assigned a car that would not start without a push.

After pondering his problem, he devised a plan. He went to the school nearby and got permission to take some children out of class every morning to push his car off. As he made his rounds, he would either park on a hill or leave his car running. He used this ingenious procedure for two years.

Ill health forced the Jackson family to leave, and the new missionary came to that station. When Jackson proudly began to explain his arrangement for getting the car started, the new man began looking under the hood. Before the explanation was complete, the new missionary interrupted, "Why Dr. Jackson, I believe the only trouble is this loose cable." He gave the cable a twist, stepped into the car, pushed the switch, and to Jackson's astonishment, the engine roared to live.

For two years needless trouble had become routine. The power was there all the time. Only a loose connection kept Jackson from putting the power to work (Craig Brian Larson *750 Engaging Illustrations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993, p. 409).