



Covenant Based on Sacrifice



Relationship with God (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you once more. I'm speaking this week about personal relationships and I've started by looking at the cross, the great symbol of the Christian faith and I've pointed out that the two beams of the cross, the vertical and the horizontal, symbolize two different directions of relationships. The vertical speaks of relationships with God, the horizontal speaks of relationships with God's people.

Today I want to go on to speak more specifically about the vertical beam, about personal relationship with God. I'm going to explain the only basis on which God will enter into such a relationship with man. I'm going to start by reading from Psalm 50, the first five verses:

"The Mighty One, God, the Lord, has spoken, And summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its

setting. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shone forth. May our God come [other versions say 'Our God shall come'] and not keep silence; Fire devours before Him, And it is very tempestuous around Him. He summons the heavens above, And the earth, to judge His people: 'Gather My godly ones to Me, Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.'" (NAS)

Clearly this is a preview of the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory and power at the close of this age. The main purpose that is spoken of here is to gather His people to Himself and He calls out, "Gather My godly ones to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." There is a very important definition there. Who are the "godly ones"? Who, indeed, are His people? The answer in Scripture is "those who have made a covenant with God by sacrifice." More literally, the Hebrew says, "Those who cut My covenant on the basis of sacrifice." In other words, the godly ones, the people who truly belong to Christ, are those who have entered into relationship with God that's based on a sacrifice. It's a covenant relationship. And that is the only basis of relationship which God will accept, a covenant based with a sacrifice. If we look through the history of the Bible we see that every time God wanted to establish an enduring relationship with man, He did it through a covenant that was

based on a sacrifice. That's how He made a covenant with Noah, that's how He made a covenant with Abraham, that's how He made a covenant with Israel and that also is how He made His covenant with the church.

The description of the making of the covenant between Jesus and the church is found in Matthew 26:27-28. This is the end of the Last Supper and it says here:

“And He [that is, Jesus] took a cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is to be shed on behalf of many for forgiveness of sins.’” (NAS)

We see that the only way into the covenant was by drinking of that blood which was the blood of the covenant. Jesus is very emphatic. He says, “Drink of it, all of you.” In other words, there is no other way you can come into the covenant but through the blood which speaks of the sacrifice. Now the sacrifice of the New Covenant is the death of Jesus. It's important for us to understand that from this aspect the death of Jesus was a sacrifice. In fact, it was the sacrifice that consummated all other sacrifices recorded in the Bible. This is clearly stated in Hebrews. Chapter 9:26 says of Jesus:

“...but now once at the consummation [of the ages] He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” (NAS)

And again in Hebrews 10:12:

“but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God...” (NAS)

So you see the truth that emerges. To have a relationship with God you must enter into a covenant, but the covenant must be based on a sacrifice. No sacrifice, no covenant. No covenant, no relationship with God. The New Covenant, the New Testament, is based on the sacrifice of Jesus. He is the final, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His blood is the emblem of the covenant.

Returning to Hebrews again, in Chapter 9:16-17, we find this statement about a covenant:

“For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.” (NAS)

The application is simple and practical: to be in covenant we must lay down our life. Without the laying down of a life, there is no covenant relationship. Jesus set the pattern but to enter into covenant with Him, we have to follow the pattern that He set. He laid down His life for us but the covenant is completed when we, in turn, lay down our lives for Him.

In Matthew 16:25, Jesus says:

“For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it.” (NAS)

That sets before us a very important alternative. A life to lose, a life to find. Jesus says, “I have a life for you to find. It's a life in the security, the relationship of My covenant, but if you want to come into that life, to find a new life in covenant relationship with Me and with My people, first you have to lose your life. You have to lay it down.”

Remember what it says in Hebrews: a covenant is only valid when the one who makes it is dead. This is the most radical demand in the Bible. It is one which has often been soft-peddled and sometimes been ignored. But there can be no personal relationship with God apart from a covenant. And a covenant is valid only when those who make it lay down their lives. Jesus laid down His life, He gave up everything for us. If we are to be in covenant with Him, we have to lay down our lives. I'm not talking now primarily about dying physically as a martyr, although that's often involved and could be the lot of some of us, but I'm talking about relinquishing everything we're holding on to. Letting go of everything and saying to Jesus Christ, “Here I am. Take me as I am. No reservations, nothing held back. I let my life go entirely. I lose and I trust You to give me within covenant relationship the new life which You have promised.”

There are other radical statements of the New Testament which we tend to overlook today in some of our churches. Jesus says in Luke 14:33:

“In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.” (NIV)

Notice that word “cannot.” I think some contemporary Christians have interpreted Jesus as saying, “It's difficult, but there's a way.” He doesn't say that. He says there is no way. There is no way to be My disciple unless you give up everything you have. You cannot take anything with you into the kingdom of God. Jesus said, “Straight is the gate and narrow is the way and few there be that find it.” That's a solemn warning.

Jesus spoke at one point in the gospels about going through the “eye of the needle.” He spoke about a camel going through the eye of a needle. Many people today don’t realize how vivid that illustration is.

Within the memory of men who were alive when I was younger, the entrance to the Jaffa Gate and the west wall of Jerusalem had a big gate which was open in the daytime but was always shut at night. And after that, if a traveler on his camel arrived at the gate and wanted admission, they would never open the big gate because they were afraid of enemies coming in, but there was a smaller gate within the big gate. This was just large enough to admit a camel without any of its luggage, without its rider, without any of its trappings. The camel had to kneel down and just squeeze his way through this little gate within the big gate.

And Jesus said that’s how it is if you want to get into the kingdom of God. You have to be like that camel. You’ve got to let your rider off, you’ve got to let all your burdens and trappings go, you’ve got to let go of everything you’ve been clinging onto and on your knees you can just squeeze through that narrow gate.

That is the way into the kingdom of God. That is the basis of covenant, the laying down of our lives. Just as Jesus initially laid down His life for us, He set the pattern. And our responsibility is to follow that pattern.

Let me put it in another word. I would say the basis for that relationship which Jesus speaks about can be summed up in this phrase: Direct, personal, total, unreserved commitment to God. Let me repeat that phrase once more. I want you to absorb it. Direct, personal, total, unreserved commitment to God.

Well, our time is up for today. I’ll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. I’ll continue with this theme of covenant relationship with God. Tomorrow I’ll be speaking about the covenant that God made with Abraham in Genesis 15. This is a most beautiful and detailed picture of how God enters into covenant with man.

Radio Program

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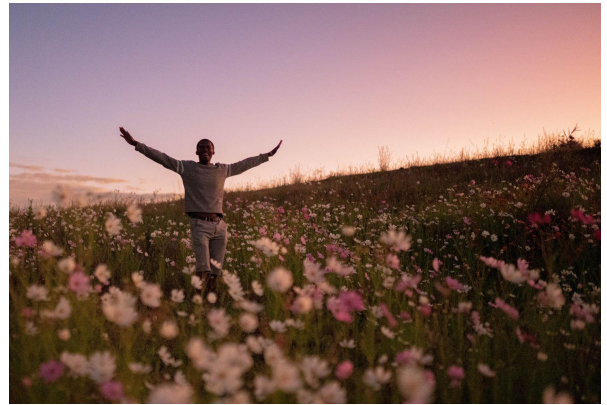
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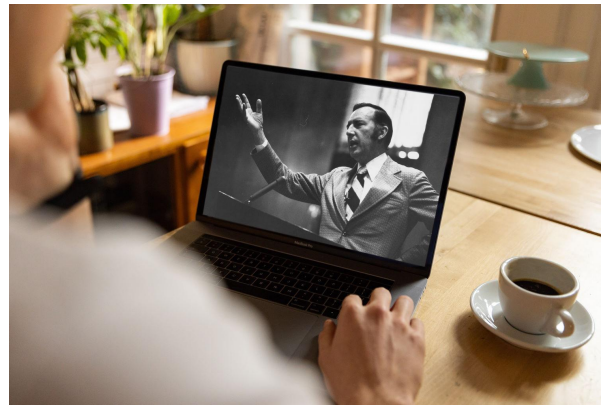
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