

Covenant Relationships are Horizontal Too



Relationship with God's People (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week sharing out of truths that life has taught me, truths that can make the difference between success and failure in your life as they have done in mine.

In my talks last week, I dealt with personal relationships. I explained that these are in two directions, like the two beams of the cross. The vertical beam represents our personal relationship with God, the horizontal beam represents our relationship with our fellow man.

Last week I explained that there is only one foundation on which anyone can build an enduring and permanent relationship with God, the foundation of covenant commitment. When a person make such a commitment to God, it opens the way for a deep, intimate, personal relationship with God which is analogous in the spiritual realm to the relationship which the covenant of marriage produces in the natural realm between a man and a woman. This relationship with God is on the vertical plane.

Today, and for the rest of this week, I'm going to speak about the other kind of relationship, relationship on the horizontal plane, relationship with God's people.

I want to start by laying down a basic principle. The same covenant that brings us into relationship with God also brings us into relationship with God's people. Thus relationship with God's people also is based on covenant. This is a thing that we all need to understand. So many Christians have been blinded to this fact. The moment you enter into covenant relationship with God, necessarily you must be in covenant relationship with God's people. You cannot relate to God on the basis of covenant and refuse to relate to those who are related to God by the same covenant. Covenant relationships are always on two planes: vertical toward God, horizontal toward God's people.

I pointed out in previous talks that there is a law in the whole physical world that if the one beam of the cross is out of line then you know automatically that the other beam is out of line. Now this is true in this matter of covenant relationships.

If our relationship with our fellow believers is out of line, then the vertical beam, our relationship with God, also must be out of line. When one is out of line, the other is out of line. If you talk about being right with God but you do not have right relationships with your fellow believers, whether you know it or not, you are deceiving yourself. That's an impossible situation.

Now, I want to go back and look at the example in the book of Exodus where God entered into covenant with Israel. The words of God's covenant approach to Israel are found in Exodus 19:5–6. This is what God told Moses to put before Israel:

> "Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a hold nation." (NAS)

The new relationship which God here offered to Israel was based upon their keeping His covenant. It was the covenant that brought them into this distinctive relationship with God which set them apart from all other nations. It is important to understand that there was nothing especially holy about Israel before God made His covenant with them. What made them holy was His covenant and that is the only thing that can make a man or a people holy is covenant relationship with God.

Thereafter, in the language of the Old Testament a careful distinction is maintained. Israel is called a "people." All other ethnic groups are called "nations." Often the word "Gentiles" is used. But the word "people" is reserved for Israel because to be a "people" an ethnic group has to have a covenant relationship with God. That's what distinguishes a "people" from a mere "nation."

Now, as soon as Godhead entered into this covenant relationship with Israel, He immediately went on to describe to them in the following chapter how they would have to relate to one another as members of one covenant people. In other words, the relationship was not merely vertical with God but it was also horizontal with their fellow Israelites, those who were in the same covenant with God as they were.

Now, in the New Testament, in 1 Peter 2:9–10, Peter, speaking to believers in Jesus Christ, and he actually quotes the words that God used to Israel in Exodus 19 and he applies the same principles. This is what he says:

> "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; [You will notice that Peter is quoting the very words spoken by God to Israel in Exodus 19. Then Peter goes on to say:] for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (NAS)

Notice, before they came into covenant with God through Jesus Christ, they were not a people but having come into covenant with God they became a people. This is true of Israel under the Old Testament, it's true of the church of Jesus Christ under the New. What makes the church a people is our covenant relationship with God and the same covenant that relates us to God relates us to one another. And just like Israel under the Old Covenant so under the New Covenant we have specific obligations to one another as members of one covenant people. The Old Covenant was initiated at Sinai, the New Covenant was initiated at the Last Supper. We read these words in Matthew 26:28. Jesus said to His disciples as He offered them the cup at the end of the Last Supper:

> "...this is My blood of the covenant... [and then He said:] Drink from it, all of you..." (NAS)

It was very important that each disciple shared the cup with Jesus but also in doing that they shared the cup with one another. In other words, the same symbolic covenant act that brought them into relationship with Jesus brought them into relationship, covenant relationship with one another. This is the lesson we have to see and take to heart. That if we claim a covenant relationship with Jesus through the blood of the New Covenant, that He shed on our behalf for the forgiveness of our sins, we cannot evade the responsibilities of a covenant relationship with all other believers. The covenant that brings us into relationship with Jesus brings us into relationship with one another and the outworking of our covenant includes our responsibilities toward our fellow believers just as much as our responsibilities toward Jesus Himself.

Paul brings this out in 1 Corinthians 10:16–17, where he is speaking about the sacrament or the ordinance of the Lord's Supper—or Communion or the Eucharist, whatever name we wish to give it—and he says this:

> "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a

> sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread." (NAS)

You will notice the emphasis on the words "sharing" and "one." Paul is saying that if you partake of that cup which is the blood of Jesus, then you are partaker with all others who partake of that cup. We are all brought into the relationship with one another of being members of one body. I want to drive this point home because so many Christians today are blind to it. The very same ordinance that brings you into relationship with Jesus necessarily brings you into relationship with all who believe in Jesus. You cannot claim the relationship with Jesus and deny the relationship with your fellow believer.

We've seen last week in my talks on relationship with God, that covenant brings us into union with God. What I am saying now is that covenant likewise brings us into union with God's people. The end purpose of covenant is union.

There are two sides to this: First of all, we cannot have true union without covenant. I think events in the world today are a commentary on this. Men are talking about unity and union in so many areas but the truth of the matter is that there is no real union without covenant. It is a very interesting commentary on the history of the United States that the Hebrew name for the United States is artsoat habreet, which means "the lands of the covenant." This name singles out the fact that the United States, nationally, is founded on a covenant and if you go back to the history when that covenant was formed, it is interesting that the first reason given for making that covenant was to achieve a "more perfect union" amongst the states. So we see that even in American history this fact emerges that if you want union it must be by way of covenant. There is no other basis for lasting union. But the other side of the coin is this: that if you are in covenant, you must be in union. You are deceiving yourself if you talk about covenant relationship but deny its implications of union with your fellow believers.

Let me sum it up this way: always the product of covenant is union. And in the talks that I've been giving, you've seen it in three relationships: between God and the believer, between the husband and wife, and among God's people. Everywhere there is covenant, if it works, the result is union.

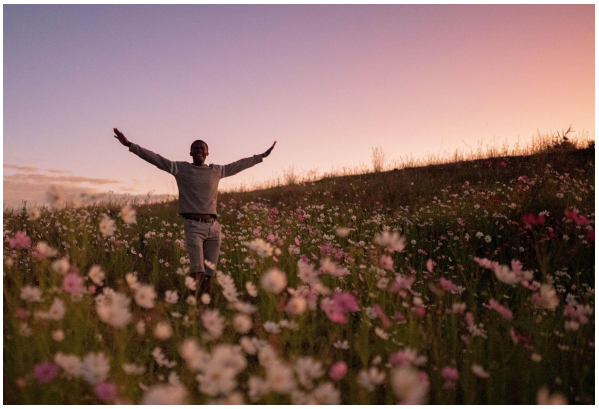
Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. I'll be speaking on the practical outworking of covenant in our relationship to our fellow believer.

Bible Teaching Resources



Books

Illuminate and expand your understanding of the Bible with the Derek Prince collection of Christian books.



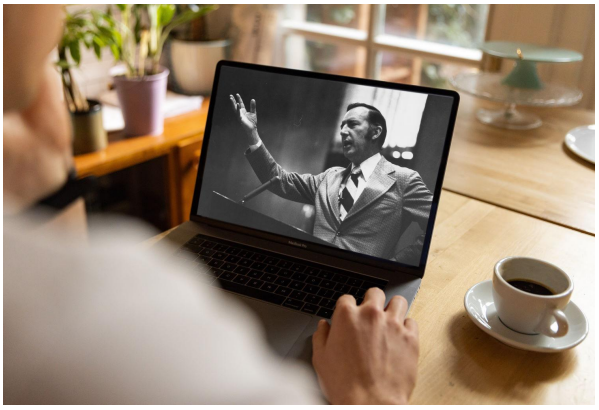
Daily Devotionals

Browse free biblically inspired daily devotionals by Derek Prince for practical teachings to uplift your Christian faith.



Legacy Radio

Listen to inspiring 10-minute messages and connect faith to life with the Derek Prince Legacy Radio podcast.



Sermons

Watch original and digitally remastered sermons by Derek Prince. Includes full message transcripts (free download).



Official App

Available free, download the official Derek Prince Ministries app and equip your faith, anywhere, anytime.



Proclamations

Declare life and experience the transformative power of God's Word with our bible-based Proclamations.

Copyright © Derek Prince Ministries