

The Gospel of the Covenant Is the Pilgrimage to Salvation

Lesson 8. Eternity Bodes Sorrow For Covenant-breakers

(De-Hellenizing Mental Muck)

Introduction

First, let's look at how certain teachings today have distorted the Biblical truth about salvation. Some herald the catchphrase, **"Once saved, always saved."** Others warn, **"You can lose your salvation."** While these statements seem like exact opposites, both are equally misleading. "Once saved, always saved" relies on the false premise that the moment a person is declared "born again," they're saved. If this were true, then why would our Lord repeat that *those who endure to the end shall* [future] *be saved* (see Matthew 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13)? And Paul's exhortation to *"continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling"* (Philippians 2:12) indicates a *lifelong pursuit* of obedience as God works in you to align your will and actions according to His purposes (Philippians 2:13).

On the other hand, those who contend that "you can lose your salvation" fail to see the truth of God's Word that salvation is experienced at the Judgment. So if and when our Lord sees your name in the Book of Life and welcomes you into heaven, you're saved. And you'll never lose that status!

Why is it important that you're aware of both of these misrepresentations of Scriptural truth? A number of contemporary denominations and sects have produced a "gospel" in which an individual can mentally agree with certain Bible verses and then be declared "saved." But what defamation of God's Word lies behind that erroneous concept, particularly in regard to the New Covenant in Christ's blood! How many today have

been deceived into believing that they're "saved" here and now no matter how they choose to live—just because they repeated a prayer at some point in their lives? The Biblical understanding of salvation is when Jesus *proclaims your name before the Father and the hosts of heaven* (see Revelation 3:5). The indwelling Spirit continues to *sanctify* you—to help you grow in holiness and character—as you yield to Him and stay on the narrow way Jesus talked about (Matthew 7:13,14). Yet many a professed "believer" has fallen away, as we'll demonstrate from Scripture.

Those who fall away are no longer covered by the blood of the Lamb. Having broken the Covenant with the Father, they're responsible for the penalty of their sins and subject to His just wrath.

Breaking a Covenant Meant Death

"The men who have violated My covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before Me, I will treat like the calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces. The leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the court officials, the priests and all the people of the land who walked between the pieces of the calf, I will hand over to their enemies who seek their lives. Their dead bodies will become food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth" (Jeremiah 34:18-20).

Violating any of our Father's covenants clearly evidenced little regard for His mercy and holiness, or for the seriousness of cutting a covenant at all. Numerous times the Hebrew Scriptures warn of the consequence of being "cut off" from Israel for breaking the stipulations

of a covenant (see Numbers 15:30,31). To be “cut off” can mean being exiled; but it also refers to being *put to death* as an animal was when the covenant was made.

Entering into a covenant in ancient times was such a serious matter that if a man broke a covenant, one of his own family members was obliged to kill him. Willful covenant-breakers don't deserve to live. Each of the covenants our Father establishes offers promises of blessing for those who keep their part of the covenant. However, covenants also contain judgment or curses for those who *break the covenant*.

It's vital that we today realize that nothing in the Bible indicates that the dire consequences of covenant breaking have passed away. Certainly the Older Testament is a great source for understanding our Father's view of covenants, as well as the accompanying blessings or chastisements. Far from being irrelevant to followers of Jesus in the New Covenant, the consequences of Israel's disobedience are intended to deter us from their path:

“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come” (1Corinthians 10:11).

The accounts in the Hebrew Scriptures encourage us that our Father keeps His part of the covenant. They also emphasize our *ongoing obligation* to do our part:

“You keep covenant with Your servants and show them grace, provided they live in Your presence with all their heart” (1 Kings 8:23).

Breaking a Covenant Brings Judgment

To help us avoid becoming Covenant-breakers we need an ongoing *heartfelt appreciation* for the intensity of intimate relationship His New Covenant offers us:

*“Therefore, brothers, since we have **confidence** to enter the Most Holy Place by the **blood of Jesus**, by a **new and living way** opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, and since we have a High Priest over the house of God, let us **draw near to God** with a sincere heart in **full assurance of faith**, having our **hearts sprinkled** to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us **hold unswervingly** to the hope we profess, for **He who promised is faithful**” (Hebrews 10:19-23).*

When we enter Covenant with our Father through the blood of the Lamb, we no longer belong to Satan. The chains of slavery to sin are broken! (See Romans 6:6.) As children who have been adopted by our Father, we have the privilege to approach Him as “*Abba*,” Daddy (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6). HE won't break that Covenant, but if you cast aside your relationship with Him, YOU nullify the adoption by breaking the Covenant. How? Consider the dreadful warning to those who *break* the Covenant through *intentional ongoing disobedience*:

*“If we **deliberately keep on sinning after** we have received the knowledge of the truth, **no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God**” (Hebrews 10:26,27).*

Within the space of a few verses we're told both the *confidence* we should have in our relationship with our Father and also the terrible *consequences* if we break the Covenant. That's the example our disobedient spiritual ancestors left to warn us. Pay special attention to the link between the covenant-breakers of Moses' time and those who insult the Holy Spirit by forsaking the Covenant with Jesus:

“Anyone who rejected the law of Moses **died without mercy** on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man **deserves to be punished** who has **trampled the Son of God underfoot**, who has treated as an unholy thing the **blood of the covenant that sanctified him**, and who has **insulted the Spirit of grace**? For we know Him who said, ‘It is **Mine to avenge; I will repay**,’ and again, ‘The Lord will **judge His people**.’ It is a **dreadful thing** to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:28-31).

You are capable of breaking the Covenant with your Father through intentionally falling away in ongoing sin, treating as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that set you apart for God’s use. Our Father’s part of the Covenant will never be broken, but we, as the Older Testament has shown, are not always that faithful. Ponder the following passages from a Newer Testament writer as a warning to those who willfully break His Covenant:

“**Watch out, brothers**, so that there will not be in any one of you an evil heart lacking trust, which could lead you to **apostatize** from the living God! Instead, keep exhorting each other **every day** [keep working out your salvation together], as long as it is called Today, so that none of you will become **hardened by the deceit** of sin. For we have become sharers in the Messiah, **provided**, however, **that we hold firmly** to the conviction we began with, right through **until the goal is reached**” (Hebrews 3:12-14, JNT).

The writer continues his warning to those who fall away into ongoing unrighteousness:

“It is **impossible** for those who have once been enlightened, who have **tasted the heavenly gift**, who have **shared in the Holy Spirit**, who have **tasted the goodness** of the

word of God and the powers of the coming age, **if they fall away**, to be **brought back to repentance**, because **to their loss** they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting Him to public disgrace” (Hebrews 6:4-6).

Peter as well sounded the alarm about giving way to worldly compromise and becoming entangled in its deceit. They have known Jesus as Lord of their life and deliberately turned their backs on Him and His righteous way of living:

“If they have escaped the **corruption of the world** by **knowing** our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again **entangled in it and overcome**, they are **worse off at the end** than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them **not to have known the way of righteousness**, than to have **known it** and then to **turn their backs on the sacred command** that was passed on to them” (2Peter 2:20,21).

Perhaps now you can grasp the seriousness that surrounds embracing our Father’s new Covenant in Christ. He is looking for your determination to go on living in Covenant union with Him so that you might enjoy the fruit of His Spirit’s presence here and now as well as savor the blessed hope of eternal life.

“**Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; He is the faithful God, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commands**” (Deuteronomy 7:9).

There’s one more point to consider about the seriousness of covenant making and breaking that you may not have taken to heart. Do you realize what a powerful demonstration of love stands behind each covenant our Father has

established throughout Scripture? At least a half dozen times “*covenant and mercy*” are linked together. Out of amazing love God “*keeps His covenant and mercy*” with those He has cut a covenant with “*who love Him, and keep His commandments*” (see Daniel 9:4; Deuteronomy 7:9). Nehemiah reiterates God’s offer of covenant and mercy “*with those who love You and observe Your commandments*” (1:5). God’s *covenant love* initiates a *covenant relationship* with those who in turn *love Him* and show their love through *keeping His commands*.

Those who love God respond by His grace through living in obedience to His ways. That’s why He calls for personal identification with Christ’s death and resurrection through immersion baptism:

“*[T]he water of immersion, which is not the removal of dirt from the body, but one’s pledge to keep a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah*” (1 Peter 3:21, JNT).

This is a good time to pause and review through the eyes of your heart the significance of *believer baptism* that’s presented by Paul in Romans 6:1-14, and what it means to be dead to sin and alive to God in covenant union through Christ. Baptism is your affirmation that your heart’s desire is to uphold your part of the Covenant.

When Jesus declares, “*This is My blood of the covenant*” (Mark 14:24), He is declaring that our Father’s Covenant calls for you to enter into THE most important of all intimate relationships, a relationship that involves eternal consequences. The blood of Jesus has been shed on your behalf as the perfect and only acceptable Sacrifice. Your most important life goal as someone who loves God and is determined to live in a way that pleases our

Father is to live in *Covenant relationship* with Him—to obey by His grace *your part* of the Covenant since He is so faithful to fulfill *His part*.

- **How do you see God’s *love* undergirding each covenant that Scripture records He has made?**
- **Do the covenantal consequences of blessing as well as judgment reveal the connection between His holiness and His mercy?**
- **Having given serious consideration to the passages cited here, do you believe that you can break your part of the Father’s Covenant in Christ?**
- **Do you believe that “*judgment and raging fire*” await you if you do break it through falling away?**
- **Are you living in Covenant union with the Father, sealed by His Spirit and walking by His grace and power in loving and obedient trust?**
- **If you’re not, does dread fill your heart as you recognize the consequences of *not* being in Covenant union with Him as stated in His Word?**