

The New Covenant and the Secret of the Lord

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April 17, 2017

“The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant” (Psalm 25:14).

I believe God carefully chose the word “secret” to use in this passage. Its Hebrew root means “to be alert, to be on the lookout, to watch, to be a confidant.” The concept expressed here is powerful: God has a secret he will share only with believers who are willing to pursue it with passion. This company of seekers will become his confidants only by having a deep hunger to know his heart.

In essence, the Lord does not share his secret with just anybody, even within the body of Christ. Flippant Christians won’t grasp it and casual believers will never enter into it. This is why the Bible calls it a secret: It is for his confidants only.

I believe this secret of the New Covenant is a lifeline God casts toward every Christian who is sinking in a mire of sin. Through it, he calls out to every child bound by a lust, habit or evil stronghold, saying, “Lay hold of my covenant. It will be a lifeline to you, providing an escape from sin before you’re swept away.”

Yet—I say this as kindly as possible—only a handful of Christians will grasp this lifeline. A believer can memorize all the glorious promises of the New Covenant, master complex theological outlines and trace each of the biblical covenants from the Adamic to the New. But only a few will set their minds to diligently seek the Lord for an understanding of his life-giving New Covenant.

Here are just a few of the promises and provisions God gives us through the New Covenant: a new heart, a righteous fear of God, dominion over sin, Holy Ghost mortification of all sin within us, a heart to know the Lord, his law written within our hearts so we will not sin against him. God also pledges that we will be taught by his own Spirit and kept from falling; that we will be caused to walk in his ways, do his good pleasure and endure to the end—all through the abiding power of the Holy Ghost.

You may reason, “If God has decreed the New Covenant—if he has sworn an oath to do these wonderful things, and his Word is unchangeable—why should I pray for what he has already decreed? Why should I ask him to deliver me when he has already pledged to do for me what I can’t do for myself? Shouldn’t I just wait on him in faith? If his covenant promises are binding, why should I believe there are conditions attached to them such as prayer and diligent seeking?”

In response, let me ask you: Why would Jesus, who made the New Covenant with his Father, pray diligently as he did so often? In fact, why would he ask the Father three times for an answer to a single matter? And why would he praise a woman in a parable who kept pestering a judge until she got the verdict she wanted?

I hope to prove to you that God has hung the secret of the New Covenant upon the condition of seeking him with all our heart. This condition and its accompanying disciplines—prayer, Bible study, diligent seeking—cannot in any way merit the New Covenant promises for us. But they do prepare our hearts to receive what God has promised.

We see a pattern throughout the Bible: God says, “I give you these promises— but I want you to seek my face until you are fully persuaded of them.”

There has never been a time, from the foundation of the world, when God’s people were not under a covenant. Yet still godly men and women have fasted and prayed throughout the centuries, holding the Lord to his Word. The Bible gives us several examples of this:

1. Jacob was given a sure promise by God through the Abrahamic covenant. The Lord had promised to be his shield so no one could harm him. Furthermore, God had assured him, “Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you” (Genesis 32:9). What powerful promises these were. Who could oppose a man whose God was with him as Jacob’s was?

Still, Jacob was compelled to pray the covenant. He cried out, "Lord, you promised to deal well with me if I returned. Now I'm holding you to that promise" (verses 10-11, my paraphrase). Scripture tells us Jacob then wrestled all night with an angel of the Lord. He told the Lord, "I will not let You go unless You bless me" (verse 26). He was holding the Lord to his covenant.

2. Jesus not only knew the covenant promises, having made covenant with the Father; he was the New Covenant personified. All the covenant promises resided in him. Yet even Jesus himself fasted and prayed.

At one point, a group of desperate people brought a demon-possessed, lunatic young man to Jesus. His disciples hadn't been able to cast out the demonic spirit. Yet when Jesus rebuked the devil, the demon immediately left the young man. The Bible says, "The child was cured from that very hour" (Matthew 17:18).

Jesus' disciples were perplexed. Scripture tells us, "Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, 'Why could we not cast it out?' So Jesus said to them, 'Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting'" (17:19-21).

Think of the implications of what Jesus is saying here. He is inferring that if his disciples had spent time in prayer and fasting, they would have had both the faith and the power for the boy to be delivered. He also implied, "Yes, I had the power to cast out this demon because I am God in flesh. Yet I also set an example for you through my prayer and fasting."

So, what is the secret God wants to share with his people?

The secret of the New Covenant isn't some sudden rush of supernatural power in us, enabling us to resist an overwhelming temptation. Rather, it is God's still, small voice, revealing his love to us *in the midst of our failure and testing*.

I want to illustrate this truth through several letters our ministry has received. One sister in Christ wrote: "Moral weakness and failure—that's me. I continually go back to my old sins. I don't want to hurt my Lord, and I pray for him to keep me from going back. Yet at times I feel he is tired of my failing in this same area all the time. But the truth is, I never hear from him in the midst of my temptation. I feel alienated."

Now, contrast this letter with an e-mail from a young man in Christ: "Last night I was in prayer, experiencing great anguish in my soul. I had failed my Lord and sinned. My heart was breaking inside. I cried before him, but all I could think was that I had gone too far. I asked him, 'How can you still love me? Do you, Lord? Or have I gone too far?' I cried out for a single word from him to let me know he still loves me.

"Then, with perfect timing, your message arrived, 'Keep Yourself in the Love of God.' I was so overwhelmed and awed by the love of the Lord as I read it. I immediately repented, and my heart was flushed with God's love. It has made me love him so much more."

This young man now stands in awe of God's love, and his love for Jesus has grown deeper. Why? When it seemed Satan had won the battle, he received a revelation of God's forgiving love and restoring grace.

The New Covenant promises that God will show mercy toward all our iniquities and unrighteousness. Yet this is not new; the Lord has always been merciful in all of the biblical covenants. What is different about the New Covenant is how God shows us his mercy: He sends his Spirit to empower us with a revelation of the almighty grace and loving kindness of Jesus Christ, at the very lowest point of our Christian walk—even while we are sinking in guilt and failure.

I am convinced the body of Christ has yet to understand just how amazing God's grace to us is.

Consider a Christian who has loved the Lord for years. He is a praying, faithful believer with a gentle spirit and the sweet presence of Jesus about him. But suddenly this godly saint is overwhelmed by a powerful temptation. He

yields to it, and suddenly he is drawn back into an old, besetting sin. Perhaps his bondage is an outburst of temper, or swarms of evil thoughts, or lukewarmness, or gross sins such as drinking, fornication or adultery.

The devil then quickly attacks this Christian using the only real power he has against him: lies. He tries to convince the believer of the following:

1. He has sinned against the light.
2. He has sinned too often after being convicted for so long.
3. He has sinned one too many times.
4. He has crossed a line and is now beyond God's mercy.

Here, at this crucial point, is where the secret of the New Covenant is revealed. Instead of condemning that Christian, the Holy Spirit woos him, saying, "Come back quickly to the sprinkling of Jesus' blood. Repent and accept your forgiveness. Stay in the love of God. You are forgiven unconditionally. Return now to your walk with me."

What is happening at this moment? The Holy Ghost is at work—revealing the love of God to that person, causing him to marvel at the Lord's mercy and grace. And in doing so, he is drawing him into a greater love for Jesus.

That is the keeping power of the Holy Ghost. When you are down and hurting—when you think you've crossed a line, and it's all over for you—the Spirit comes in immediately to lift you up and bring you back into God's grace. Every bit of your sin has been paid for, no matter how awful it may be. How? Jesus paid the price in full. God said by covenant, "I am going to be merciful to your sins—and I have sent my Son to you as the seal of my covenant. Your fear tells you I have every right to damn you. But my covenant says my Son took upon himself everything that would ever condemn you. You are now free."

Here is what the covenant is all about. It is God's love message to his people, saying, "I love you so much, I will never let the devil have you. I won't let him take over your life, even when you fail me. It is impossible for you ever to stray too far from my love. There is no place in heaven or earth you can escape it."

The secret of the Lord is a life-freeing revelation of his loving kindness to us at the point of our failures. It is the Holy Spirit enduing us with a powerful revelation that nothing can separate us from the covenant love of God. He is not mad at you—so get your eyes off your sin, and gladly receive the free access you still have to the father, through the cross of Christ.

This secret is that your Savior wants you to rejoice and be glad—because your past, present and future sins have been taken away. Hallelujah!

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