

The Two Covenants (Part 4)

Rod Reynolds

What is the nature and effect of sin? Why is the Holy Spirit essential to salvation? How are these questions related to the “Old Covenant” that God made with Israel? Continue reading to find the answers!

As we've discussed in previous chapters, the overall reason for the institution of the Old Covenant was because of transgressions (Galatians 3:19). But under that overall reason for the institution of the “Old Covenant,” there were a number of specific ancillary reasons for the covenant. In this chapter we explore additional reasons for the giving of the Old Covenant.

First, let's review. In chapter three we discussed some of these reasons, as follows:

(1) The law or Old Covenant was given to separate and preserve a people for God – and in so doing preserve all of mankind from utter destruction.

“I am the Lord your God, who **has separated you** from the peoples” (Leviticus 20:24).

As it says in Galatians 3:23, “But before faith came, **we were kept** [or preserved] under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.”

(2) A second reason the law was given was as a teaching device: “Therefore **the law was our tutor** to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24).

(3) And a third reason the law was given is as a form of knowledge and truth, as Paul wrote to the Jews in Rome, that they had “the **form of knowledge and truth** in the law [Old Covenant]” (Romans 2:20). The various features of the law were a limited expression of eternal truths, and the physical features of the law of the Old covenant were types of a greater reality, as Paul explained in Hebrews chapters 8 – 10. For example, the sacrifices were a type of Christ's sacrifice. “For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things...” (Hebrews 10:1).

From these types we can induce the spiritual principles behind them, with the guidance of God's word and the Holy Spirit.

Now let's move on to a fourth reason for the giving of the Old Covenant:

(4) The TEACHING OF THE NATURE AND EFFECT OF SIN.

As mentioned before, God and God alone has the prerogative of determining what is good and what is evil. He is the LAWGIVER.

“There is **one Lawgiver**, who is able to save and to destroy” (James 4:12).

God's law tells us what righteousness is. And it teaches us what sin is.

Israel had lost most of this knowledge by the time of the Exodus. The law was given partly to teach them what sin is. And it was given to teach each succeeding generation the same thing. Paul wrote, "...by the **law** is the **knowledge of sin**" (Romans 3:20). And further, "I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.' (Romans 7:7). Paul is saying that he would not have been able to discern that covetousness is a sin had it not been **identified as sin by the law**.

But the law did even more than define sin. It also demonstrated that sinfulness is a **dominant tendency** of human nature apart from God's Spirit. "Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound" (Romans 5:20). How did the offense abound?

Before a man realizes a certain act is wrong he can do it without being conscious of sinning. His conscience is relatively undefiled. But once he **knows** the act is wrong, yet he goes ahead and commits the act again, it defiles his conscience and becomes even more sinful than before. The more he commits the act from that time on -- the more it warps and destroys his character. Yet the flesh is so weak that without the added strength of God's Spirit one is **bound** to sin -- even though he knows it is wrong. The fact is, God created man with an inherent **need** for his Spirit -- a need which we will discuss further shortly.

Paul explains how the law exposes the nature and effect of sin. "For when we were in the flesh [before repentance and conversion], the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death" (Romans 7:5).

What is Paul saying here? Is he saying that before the law was given everybody was pure, sinless, loving his brother, never doing anything wrong? Then when the law was given everyone all of a sudden started lusting, hating, cursing and destroying?

No, that's not what he is saying. Consider: sexual lust, for example, is quite as active apart from any knowledge of the law as it is **with** a knowledge of the law. Maybe, if anything, even more so. The same is true of greed, jealous envy, hatred or any number of other sinful passions. The basic lusts to which all humans are subject prior to conversion proceed from the fleshly mind -- not from the law. Paul refers to this basic tendency as the "lust of the flesh" in Galatians 5:16, and then goes on to list a number of sins which are of the flesh.

So once again, what did Paul mean when he said, "For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death."?

First Paul says, "When we were in the flesh...." This simply is speaking of that time before conversion when one is guided in his thinking not by God's Spirit but by the raw impulses of a fleshly mind. He draws the contrast in Romans 8 as he speaks of those who "walk according to the flesh" and those who, on the other hand, "walk according to the spirit" (cf. Romans 8:4 ff.). So in Romans 7:5 he is speaking of an effect which occurs in the mind of one not yet walking "according to the spirit," i.e., in one totally or partially unconverted.

What happens, then, to one who is "in the flesh" when he becomes conscious of being under the authority of the law? Paul says, "...the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death." What are the "passions," or as in the King

James Version, "motions of sins, **which were by the law**"? The word translated "motions" here by the King James translators is the Greek word *pathema* (translated "passions" in the New King James). The word means *sufferings, afflictions or passions*. These are not ordinary lusts but are sufferings, afflictions and/or passions which are a reaction of a carnal mind to a knowledge of the law. Or they could mean sufferings -- penalties, if you like -- of sin which are imposed by the law. Both in fact are included, but Paul is emphasizing the former -- the reaction of the mind -- throughout this chapter.

What then are the sinful passions which owe their existence to a knowledge of the law? One could be a morbid guilt and fear of God's wrath. Guilt can be a constructive emotion if it leads one to repentance. But guilt can also lead to moroseness, chronic depression or hostility. This was the kind of fear and guilt that Adam and Eve suffered after they had sinned in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:10). They did not want to face up to their sin and repent of it, but rather sought to flee from the face of God. This **affliction** of sin was prompted by the fact that they knew they had sinned and broken God's commandment.

The law was instrumental in the **hatred** of Cain for his brother, Abel. Cain, we are told, slew his brother "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (I John 3:12). This was a combination of guilt, jealous envy and hatred -- products of a carnal mind occasioned by a knowledge of the law.

David knew God's law -- yet before his repentance for a particular sin and an attitude into which he had fallen he is said to have despised both the commandments of God and God himself! God spoke to David through the prophet Nathan after he had committed adultery with the wife of Uriah, and then arranged to have Uriah killed to hide his sin:

"Thus says the Lord God of Israel: `I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more! Why have you **despised the commandment of the Lord**, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, **because you have despised Me**, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.'" (2 Samuel 12:7-10).

Enmity toward God and hatred of his law is another affliction or passion of sin taking occasion in a carnal mind by a knowledge of God's law. "...the carnal mind is **enmity against God**; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are **in the flesh** cannot please God." (Romans 8:7-8).

The effect of an active awareness and knowledge of the law on a carnal mind is the compounding of sin. The sins committed are not only those proceeding from ordinary fleshly lusts -- but to those are added sins which are a result of the reaction of a carnal mind to the challenge and threat imposed by a knowledge of the law. Sin committed at this point becomes far more serious and destructive to the individual's character. Its effect is far more devastating and much more abundantly "brings forth fruit to death."

Paul reiterates this effect, where he says, "...Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence [evil desire, lust]. For without the [knowledge of (previous verse)] the law sin was dead [had no effect on his conscience]. For I was alive without [knowledge of] the law once [he had no feeling of being condemned]: but when the [knowledge of] the commandment came, sin revived [began to actively affect his conscience], and I died [was condemned of his own conscience]. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment deceived [Greek: thoroughly seduced, deceived and cheated] me, and by it slew me [defiled his conscience to the point of total self-condemnation]" (Romans 7:8-11, KJV). Note that all of this is due to the reaction of a carnal mind to a **knowledge of the law**.

As Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked..." (Jeremiah 17:9). But does this mean that the law itself is evil? No, this is part of the purpose served by the law. Notice as Paul further explains: "Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. Has then what is **good** become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, **that it might appear sin**, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment **might become exceedingly sinful**." (Romans 7:12-13).

God intends that the law should expose sin. He intended for the law to challenge and threaten the carnal mind -- so that as the mind reacted to it sin might reach its culmination -- so there would be **no mistaking** that sin results in **death**! When that point is reached the carnal mind becomes self condemned. Finally it may want to escape from its slavery to sin and its awful consequences. The carnal mind can come to the point finally -- as Paul says -- where it consents that the law is good, and delights after the law of God. But it is still under condemnation. The need for a power beyond the human fleshly mind is now apparent. The point of repentance has been reached. The law -- exposing the nature and effect of sin -- was designed to lead men to that point. It also exposes a weakness in human character and reveals the need for God's Spirit, the factor which makes the difference between a "carnal" mind and a converted mind, which Paul goes on to discuss in Romans 8. This is the next reason for the giving of the Old Covenant.

(5) TO REVEAL THE NEED FOR GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT.

The Holy Spirit, as the term is normally used, is **not** a separate person within the Godhead! The Holy Spirit is an invisible POWER, a **force** proceeding from God. It is a part of what God is, through which he can exercise his will. (See our article, "What Is the Holy Spirit?").

God can also grant that same spirit to human beings, and through that means he can empower them to overcome their carnal nature.

Christ told the apostles just before his ascension into heaven, "...you shall receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..." (Acts 1:8). Paul wrote to Timothy, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of **power** and of **love** and of a **sound mind**" (2 Timothy 1:7). A good analogy to use in gaining an understanding of what the Holy Spirit is like is the force of **wind**. Wind is an invisible, though at times very **powerful** force. Harnessed and utilized, it can

do a great deal of work. It is not accidental that the same Hebrew word, *ruach*, is used for both wind and spirit.

Although there are many facets to the use of God's Spirit, a primary use is the implanting of the character -- the **mind** -- of God in the **minds** of human beings who **submit** themselves. The Holy Spirit is the POWER by which God reproduces himself. Human beings can become **children of God** -- renewed, regenerated spiritually, to grow into the spiritual likeness of God.

The Holy Spirit -- symbolized by the tree of life in the midst of the garden of Eden -- was made available to the very first man. It has been available to mankind from the time human beings were created. But Adam rejected the Holy Spirit by **neglecting** God's commandment to eat of the tree of life:

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat' [Hebrew: eating you shall eat]" (Genesis 2:16). This included the tree of life.

God in effect told Adam that if he partook of the Holy Spirit -- represented by the tree of life -- he could have the gift of eternal life. "Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the **tree of life**, and eat, and **live forever**'" (Genesis 3:22).

But God also told Adam that if he disobeyed and partook of another tree forbidden to him he would suffer death. "And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:9).

.....

"...but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17).

God told Adam, in effect, that the **only** source of Eternal Life is his Spirit:

"It is the Spirit that gives life. The flesh does not profit, nothing! The words which I speak to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63, Green's Literal Translation).

"And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Romans 8:10).

But Satan -- in the MOST COLOSSAL LIE OF ALL TIME -- told Adam and Eve that there was ANOTHER way to life -- the way of disobedience and rebellion against God. Notice what Satan said, "You will **not** surely **die**. For God knows that in the day you eat of it [the tree God had told them to leave alone] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing [having the power and authority to determine] good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5).

In other words, they didn't have to listen to or submit to God and his law. They could make their own rules based on their own ideas of what is right and wrong.

Satan, in effect, said that sin produces life. But sin does not produce life, it produces death: "For the **wages of sin is death**, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). "Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and **sin**, when it is finished, **brings forth death**" (James 1:15; American King James Version).

Eternal life is produced only by the Spirit of God through righteousness -- and perfect, godly righteousness is possible only through the **power** of God's Holy Spirit. "...the **Spirit is life because of righteousness**" (Romans 8:10). In the same chapter Paul wrote that Christ, "...condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:3-4). Further, "...to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:6). He went on to say, "...the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you." (Romans 8:7-9).

What about the Holy Spirit then in the Old Covenant? Was spiritual conversion required under the Old Covenant? Was it possible? Did the Old Covenant teach us anything about the Holy Spirit?

The fact is, spiritual conversion was **not** required under the Old Covenant. As stated before, it was a physical covenant given to a physical nation. As a matter of fact, the **primary** difference between the Old and New Covenants is that spiritual conversion **is** a condition of the New Covenant, but was not a condition of the Old Covenant.

Actually spiritual conversion is implied and typified in the Old Covenant -- but was not a prerequisite for entrance into it. Before going on any further I want to define what I mean by spiritual conversion. Spiritual conversion does not necessarily imply spiritual perfection, at least not immediately.

Spiritual conversion is the change of attitude -- the turning around of one's mind -- that occurs when he has learned of the **true God** and the requirements of God's spiritual law and begins to have a true reverence and righteous fear of God. The Word of God says, "The fear of the Lord [profound respect, awe and reverence for] is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10). And what is the attitude toward God's law that is inseparable from this "fear" of the Eternal God? "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil" (Proverbs 8:13). "Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13; Young's Literal Translation). A real love and respect for the true God, and a deep desire to obey his spiritual laws, along with a hatred for evil (in its essence, because of its effect), is spiritual conversion. Paul described it as walking "according to the Spirit," rather than "according to the flesh" (Romans 8:1). It is a result of true repentance, and is not possible without it.

How was spiritual conversion typified in the Old Covenant? In many ways. Here are a few specifics: The laws themselves, as stated before, were a physical application of living, spiritual principles that lay behind them. The "glory" of the Eternal God filled the tabernacle and led Israel in their journeying:

"Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the **glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle**. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys" (Exodus 40:34-38).

This typified the Spirit of God dwelling in and guiding his New Covenant nation, the Church of God: "Do you not know that **you are the temple of God** and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). "And in the **midst of the seven lampstands** [symbolic of the 'seven churches' of Revelation, representative of the Church of God through a progression of time] One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band" (Revelation 1:13). "...and the seven lampstands which you saw **are the seven churches**" (Revelation 1:20).

Paul wrote: "...all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same **spiritual** food, and all drank the same **spiritual** drink. For they drank of that **spiritual** Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:1-4). "Now these things were **our types**... [literal translation, Greek: *tupoi emon*]" (1 Corinthians 10:6).

Although spiritual conversion was not a prerequisite for entrance into the Old Covenant, it was necessary to fulfill the requirements of that covenant. The Old Covenant, believe it or not, was designed to teach **spiritual faith** and the need for **spiritual conversion**. After God gave Israel his ten commandments in their limited form under the Old Covenant he remarked, "Oh, that there **were such an heart in them**, that they would **fear** Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!" (Deuteronomy 5:29). God knew, however that there was **not** such an heart in them, but there **could** have been, had they yielded to his law and repented deeply of their sins and sinfulness. The **weakness** of the "law" (the Old Covenant) was in the fact that the people **were not converted**, and were not required to be as members of the congregation. Paul said "it was **weak** through the **flesh**" (Romans 8:3).

He said, "...but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith..." (Romans 9:31-32). Godly **faith** is a product of God's Spirit. In Galatians 5:22 (KJV) faith is listed as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote that the **gospel** was preached to Israel, "...but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it" (Hebrews.4:2). Because they did not have real **faith** in the ability of God and his way to produce what was promised, Israel was blinded to the real meaning of God's law. Their lack of faith was a result of the fact that they walked not "according to the Spirit" but "according to the flesh." Their hearts were "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13). Paul said, "Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Romans 11:7). They were blinded by their carnality.

This brings us to the question: was spiritual conversion **possible** under the Old Covenant?

Contrary to what some have assumed, the Spirit of God has been offered to men ever since Creation. It was offered to Adam, as already described, but was rejected. It has been offered to others down through history -- not to all -- but to many. When God reveals his law to a person or group of people and reproves them for their sins he is offering them a chance to repent. When they **do** repent God **promises** that he will give them his Spirit to lead them. A person will continue to have God's Spirit ONLY as long as he continues to repent and "walk according to the Spirit." This is a promise of God's word: "Turn at my rebuke; Surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you" (Proverbs 1:23).

David knew that he could retain God's Spirit only by repentance: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51:10-11). "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart -- These, O God, You will not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

There was a small "remnant according to the election of grace," who lived during the "Old Testament" period (cf. Romans 11:1-7). That small group of elect, who sought God's promises through faith, and who lived their lives in faith toward God, and who died in faith are assured of salvation.

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them." (Hebrews 11:13-15).

They did it by meeting the same requirements we must meet, repentance and **faithful** obedience. "**Repent** therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). "We are witnesses to these declarations, as well as the holy spirit which God gives to those yielding to [or who obey] Him" (Acts 5:32, Concordant version).

As a whole, however, Israel failed, because most Israelites continued to walk according to the flesh. They never repented and never received God's Spirit. **This** is the reason the Old Covenant eventually had to be replaced by the **reality** which it was meant to prefigure -- the New Covenant. Of course this was God's intention all along. When Paul seems to be saying we, meaning converted Christians, are "no longer under the law," he is referring to the Old Covenant -- which he almost always called simply "the law," as did all Jews of his day. And for Christians the **Old Covenant** has been replaced -- it is no longer in force for truly converted Christians and has no legal claim over us.

The Covenant God made with Israel in the wilderness was a kind of **marriage** covenant,

Israel being the wife in this analogy, and God the husband.

This can be shown by numerous scriptures. For example, God, speaking to Israel, says: "Return, O backsliding children,' says the Lord; 'for I am married to you..." (Jeremiah 3:14; cf. Jeremiah 31:32)

Through the prophet Ezekiel God speaks of Jerusalem as the center of government for his nation, thus representative of the nation as a whole. He says of Jerusalem, then the capital of Judah, but formerly the capital of all Israel, "Now when I passed by you, and looked on you, behold, your time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over you, and covered your nakedness: yes, I swore to you, and entered into a covenant with you, said the Lord GOD, and you became mine." (Ezekiel 16:8, AKJV). Various commentaries, e.g., Adam Clarke (on Ruth 3:9), explain that the act of "spreading the skirt" symbolized a man taking on the **matrimonial** responsibility of providing for and protecting the wife, and that this phrase is expressive of entering into the **marriage** relation. The **covenant** spoken of in this verse is the covenant God made with Israel in the wilderness when he made them his people (Exodus 19:5-6). That covenant included a promise regarding Jerusalem -- which was eventually to be the **one** true center of government and religion for Israel:

"But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety, then **there will be the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide**. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the Lord. And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion nor inheritance with you. Take heed to yourself that you **do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see; but in the place which the Lord chooses, in one of your tribes**, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you." (Deuteronomy 12:10-14).

Eventually God chose Jerusalem to be the place for his temple to be built, and the place where sacrifices were to be offered. The **covenant** was later reaffirmed in Jerusalem at the dedication of the temple, as you can read in 1 Kings 8.

The fact that God is speaking in Ezekiel 16 of a marriage covenant is implicit in the whole chapter. Note especially God said the infidelity of Israel (Jerusalem, the capital, put for the whole, verse 13 [KJV], "thou did prosper into a kingdom") was the work of "an adulterous **wife**, who takes strangers instead of her husband" (Ezekiel 16:32). So we see that the covenant God made with Israel -- the old Covenant -- was a marriage covenant. But a marriage covenant is binding only as long as **both partners** live (Romans 7:1-3).

It was God acting in the person of Jesus Christ who led Israel out of Egypt, and who spoke the words of the covenant from Mt. Sinai. "...all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4).

Jesus Christ, the Eternal God, who had emptied himself of his divine glory to make himself a

sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sins **died** on the cross. At **that time** the old Covenant became obsolescent. We, who are physical descendants of Israel, if baptized into Christ, are **also "dead"** to the law through the body of Christ" (Romans 7:4). So we see that the Old Covenant, a marriage covenant, no longer has any hold or claim on us. We are indeed "free from [the claims of] the law" -- that is, the Old Covenant.

What are the implications of this "freedom" for a Christian? We will get to this shortly. But there is more to the nullification of the Old Covenant than the fact that the parties to it are accounted as having died.

God's intention from the beginning was that the Old Covenant should be superseded by something greater. Why? Simply because the old Covenant was not, of itself, complete. Notice what Paul said, "...if there **had been a law given** which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin..." (Galatians 3:21-22).

The Old Covenant, though it "was ordained to life" (Romans 7:10; KJV), actually produced death, because the scripture had shown all things -- the **entire** creation (Paul is using hyperbole here, **all** being put for **virtually all**) -- to be under the dominion of sin (Romans 5:21). We have shown before that a few -- small in terms of numbers -- had been granted salvation (Romans 6:12-23). But most, including most Israelites, have remained under the dominion of sin. And the penalty of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

Why were all under the dominion of sin? "...all these nations are **uncircumcised**, and all the house of Israel are **uncircumcised in the heart**" (Jeremiah 9:26). The nations, including Israel, had **not** repented and had **not** received God's Spirit -- the **Spirit of Life through righteousness** (Romans 8:10). The Old Covenant was "weak through the flesh" (Romans 8:2). Therefore "...there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law [i.e., Old Covenant] made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in [or **superinduction**, refer to *Analytical Greek Lexicon*] of a better hope, through which we draw near to God." (Hebrews 7:18-19).

What Paul is saying here is the commandment -- speaking specifically in verse 18 of the commandment which made priests of the Levites (cf. verses 11-12), but broadening it in verse 19 to include the entire Old Covenant -- was nullified because of a **weakness**.

We have already seen that the weakness was the fleshly mind. **That** law could **not** make those under it perfect. This statement is repeated in Hebrews 9:9 and Hebrews 10:1. But, Paul says, we have the **superinduction** of a **better hope**.

What does this mean? It means that the **basis** for this better hope is the law -- the Old Covenant. It means that this better hope was **introduced** by the Old Covenant and is **induced** from it. **Induction** in logic is "the process of inferring or aiming at a **general principle** or **law** from observation of **particular** instances" or "a conclusion reached by this process" (*Reader's Digest Dictionary*). The **specific** hope of sacrifices under the Levitical

priesthood was a **limited** and **temporary** forgiveness of sin (Hebrews 10:1-3), but **induced** from that, in what it typified, was the **permanent** and **total** sacrifice for sin -- Jesus Christ (Hebrews 7:25, 27-28).

It is by this sacrifice, and the Eternal Priesthood that administers it, that "we draw near to God." (Hebrews 7:19, 24-28). And so it is with every part of the Old Covenant. From each specific feature we can induce a **general** principle, which is the corresponding feature of the New, that is, the spiritual Covenant.

But while the old Covenant was the basis for the better hope -- or, you might say, an **introduction** to it -- the Old Covenant and its promises were **not** the perfection, realization, completion or fulfillment of that better hope. Before that better hope could be fulfilled there had to be a fundamental change in the **people**. And the Covenant had to be **expanded** to include the full spiritual reality of all of God's law. "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them [the physical nation of Israel], He says: 'Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah -- not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.'" (Hebrews 8:7-9).

The sum of what I am pointing out then is this: The Old Covenant graphically illustrated, by the **failure** through the weakness of human flesh, the **absolute necessity** of God's Holy Spirit for true righteousness and development of the character necessary for Eternal Life. **Man cannot fully obey God's law without the power of God's Spirit to help him.**

As we proceed in this series, we will continue our discussion of the two covenants, and how the New Covenant supplies what was lacking under the Old Covenant.

Copyright © 2018 by Rod Reynolds

cogmessenger.org

Unless otherwise noted Scripture taken from the New King James Version™
Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).



Messenger Church of God
PO Box 542
Peculiar, MO 64078

USA