



GOOD NEWS

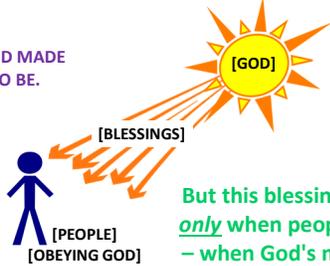
for the unsaved WORLD!

(#73)

Good News – Obedience and covenants (2)

God, by nature, wants to *bless* the people he created "in his image" (Genesis 1:27).

THE WAY GOD MADE THINGS TO BE.



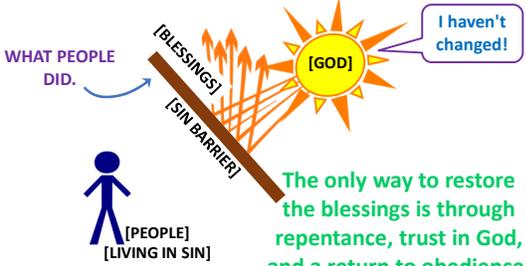
[BLESSINGS]

[PEOPLE] [OBEYING GOD]

But this blessing is possible *only* when people obey him – when God's moral nature is visible in their lives.

When people choose to sin, they create a *barrier* between them and the blessings.

WHAT PEOPLE DID.



[BLESSINGS]

[SIN BARRIER]

[PEOPLE] [LIVING IN SIN]

I haven't changed!

The only way to restore the blessings is through repentance, trust in God, and a return to obedience.

(God does continue some expressions of kindness – Acts 14:17; Romans 2:4.)

Unsaved people tend to live in denial, downplaying the seriousness of their sin, and blaming God for the lack of blessings.

It wasn't me... *God* turned off the blessings!

THEIR CLAIM: GOD HAS STOPPED BLESSING!

[GOD]

I don't want to bless you!

[NO BLESSINGS]

[PEOPLE] [LIVING IN SIN]

To them, the problem is "*God* not blessing me," rather than "*my sin* creating a barrier."

Unsaved people tend to think that they can *work* for God's favor, in order to be blessed.

My works can get God to bless me.



[WORKS]

[PEOPLE] [LIVING IN SIN]

[A "BLESSING PAYBACK"]

THEIR GOAL: TO GET REWARDED WITH BLESSINGS.

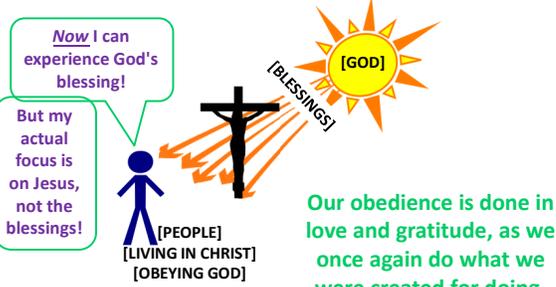
I'm impressed! I think I'll start blessing you!

Many religions have been invented for this purpose. But it *cannot succeed*, and is actually an *insult to God*.

Only trust in Jesus' work on the cross can get us to the point that we are willing to obey – joyfully and from the heart. *Jesus removes the barrier*.

Now I can experience God's blessing!

But my actual focus is on Jesus, not the blessings!



[PEOPLE] [LIVING IN CHRIST] [OBEYING GOD]

[BLESSINGS]

Our obedience is done in love and gratitude, as we once again do what we were created for doing.

NOTE: The previous illustrations focused on the "blessings" issue. One of the other issues is this: The "mirror opposite" of being blessed is being cursed.*

This is the natural result of people placing a barrier between them and God.

* (Not the "empty" curses that people often utter, but genuine serious judgment.)

Obedience, covenants, and God's blessing.

TODAY'S FOCUS: PART 2

[REVIEW]

1. God has always had a desire to bless the people he created.
2. People have turned from God, and by their sin, placed a barrier between them and God's blessings.
3. God has continually offered to restore blessings to any who would be willing to repent (turn from their sin), and trust and obey him.
4. Down through history, this offer was made in the form of various covenants.

[Last time, we ended with this covenant.]

About 3500
years ago

GOD MADE A COVENANT WITH ISRAEL

❖ Also called "the Law of Moses." ❖

(Today, we can call it "the Old Covenant.")

- ✓ It showed people how to live.
- ✓ It did not change people's hearts. (That wasn't its purpose.) But it did make people aware of their sinfulness.
- ✓ Because the people kept choosing sin over obedience, God told them he was going to make a new covenant with them – one that would change their hearts.

THE LAW WASN'T A METHOD FOR ATTAINING SALVATION.

- False teachers may claim that people must perform ceremonial rituals in order to be saved. **Example:**

"Unless you keep the ancient Jewish custom of circumcision taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."

Acts 15:1b (NLT)

- However, the sin nature makes it impossible for us to perfectly fulfill all that the rituals require!

[Why place on Gentiles] a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear?

Acts 15:10b (NLT)

- Our only hope is in what Jesus accomplished... not our own merit.

Through [Jesus] everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

Acts 13:39 (NIV)

About 2600
years ago

GOD ANNOUNCED THE COMING OF THE NEW COVENANT *

Like the previous covenants, obedience was a part of it.

Unlike the previous covenants, God would embed within people's hearts the willingness to obey.

"The day will come," says the Lord, "when I will make a **new covenant** with the people of Israel and Judah. This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors... They broke that covenant..."

"But this is the **new covenant** I will make with the people of Israel on that day," says the Lord. "I will put my laws in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Jeremiah 31:31-33 (NLT)

* (Moses also hinted at the New Covenant, in Deuteronomy 30:6.)

About 2000
years ago

JESUS BROUGHT US THE NEW COVENANT

❖ He put it into effect with his own blood. ❖

(His blood paid for the sins of his people; his resurrection gave them a new life with a new focus.)

IT IS AN
"UNCONDITIONAL"
COVENANT.

It changes hearts
and forgives!

Jesus accomplishes
this change in the lives
of all who come under this covenant.

"The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a **new covenant**..."

I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.

... I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Hebrews 8:8b, 10b,12 (NIV)

THE NEW COVENANT IS BROUGHT TO US BY JESUS

- He told us to commemorate it:

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the **new covenant** in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

1 Cor. 11:23b-25 (NIV)

- He told us to proclaim it.

He has made us competent to be ministers of a **new covenant**, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Corinthians 3:6 (CSB)

NOTE THE CONTRAST:
The Law ("letters" written on stone) could not give life.
The New Covenant empowers us with the life-giving Spirit.

THE NEW COVENANT RESULTS IN OBEDIENCE.

- This obedience is the result of what God does in the New Covenant:

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Hebrews 8:10 (CSB)

- This obedience is the natural expression of genuine faith (trust) in God!

The everlasting God ordered that what the prophets wrote must be shown to the people of every nation to bring them to **the obedience that is associated with faith**.

Romans 16:26b (GW)

As we've seen in the past, this obedience doesn't mean "instant sinless perfection." It's a growing obedience.

Salvation begins with a major turn-around, but it continues as a lifelong endeavor of becoming more "Christ-like."

OBEDIENCE IS THE RESPONSE (NOT CAUSE) OF SALVATION.

- Salvation originates in God's grace, not in our works.

For it is **by grace** you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- **not by works**, so that no one can boast.

Ephes. 2:8-9 (NIV)

- It's not a mixture of both.

And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Romans 11:6 (NIV)

Scripture strongly condemns those who attempt to combine grace and works.

- Even our actions (works) are something we give God credit for!

It is God who produces in you the desires and actions that please him.

Philip. 2:13 (GW)

WHY DIDN'T THE JEWS ACCEPT THE NEW COVENANT?

- They wanted the perceived benefits of a physical kingdom, but saw no need for the New Covenant's heart-changes.

The kingdom that Jesus proclaimed, had to begin in the heart.

THE NEED FOR A HEART-CHANGE WASN'T INVENTED BY JESUS! GOD HAD ALREADY WARNED THE JEWS, SO THEY HAD NO EXCUSE.

- The Old Testament taught that heart-changes were needed.

Though the changes weren't part of the Old Covenant (the Law), they were still a part of "following God."

Moses told them about this needed change. Later, the prophets warned them. But most of the Jews were unwilling to listen.

EVEN THE JEWISH RITE OF CIRCUMCISION TAUGHT THE NEED FOR A HEART-CHANGE!

- ✓ Circumcision was given to Abraham (and his offspring) as an outward sign of the covenant God had made with him.

- It was a covenant that was made when Abraham willingly trusted and obeyed God (= an expression of a changed heart).

And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while still uncircumcised.

Romans 4:11 (CSB)

- To share in this covenant, Abraham's offspring (Israel) also had to be circumcised – the outward sign.
- But this outward sign was to be a reminder of the faith that Abraham had – and which they also needed – a faith that comes from a changed heart.

- ✓ The Law (Old Covenant) was given to people who claimed to have a willingness to trust and obey God.

They agreed before and after being given the Law!

"We will do everything the Lord has said."
BEFORE Exodus 19:8b (GW)

"We will obey and do everything the Lord has said."
AFTER Exodus 24:7b (GW)

- ✓ But the "willingness" wasn't real. There was no genuine heart-change. In a short time, the people turned back to their unsaved ways (just like those mentioned in 2 Peter 2:21-22).

[God said to Moses] "They have already turned from the way I commanded them to live. They have made an idol shaped like a calf, and they have worshiped and sacrificed to it."

Exodus 32:8a (NLT)

✓ They knew their obligation to love God with all their hearts.

And you must love the Lord your God with all your **heart**, all your soul, and all your strength.

Deut. 6:5 (NLT)

- But they weren't very interested in doing it.
- Instead, they preferred the ritual (such as circumcision) without the heart-change it represented.

✓ Moses had to remind them that the physical ritual wasn't enough. It had to reflect what was happening in the hearts.

Circumcise your **hearts**, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.

Deut. 10:16 (NIV)

- Regretfully, they didn't listen.

✓ The prophets reminded them... but they didn't listen.

Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, circumcise your **hearts**, you men of Judah and people of Jerusalem, or my wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done— burn with no one to quench it.

Jeremiah 4:4 (NIV)

✓ Even after Jesus' resurrection, they still didn't listen.

"You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised **hearts** and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!"

Acts 7:51 (NIV)

✓ God warned them what would happen, if they lived this way and refused to change.

- He warned them that there were only two alternatives: blessings... or curses (Deuteronomy 28).
- He warned (prophetically) what would happen: When they turned away from God, they would experience the curses (Deuteronomy 29).

✓ In the end, God would do what the people were unwilling to do: change their hearts.

- Using the same "circumcision" metaphor that he used previously, he said he would create the changes that they weren't willing to make. The New Covenant accomplished this!

**END
RESULT:
LOVE FOR
GOD!**

The Lord your God will circumcise your **hearts** and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.

Deut. 30:6 (NIV)

WHAT ABOUT US? We have an opportunity!

WE CAN LEARN from what the Jews experienced... and **we can do** the opposite of what they did!

- The apostle Paul exhorts us to learn. When writing about Israel's wilderness experiences (their sin and the judgment they received), he says:

All these events happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us, who live at the time when this age is drawing to a close.

1 Cor. 10:11 (NLT)

- In addition, we have all the more reason to do what is right. Being under the New Covenant, God has placed within us (his people) the desire and ability to do it!

★ **MAKE THIS YOUR MISSION!** ★

Credits

SCRIPTURE

- Scriptures marked "NLT" – Scripture quoted from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright ©1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved. (www.newlivingtranslation.com)
- Scriptures marked "NIV" – Scripture quoted from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved. (www.zondervanbibles.com)
- Scriptures marked "GW" – Scripture is taken from GOD'S WORD®, Copyright 1995 God's Word to the Nations. Used by permission of Baker Publishing Group. All rights reserved.
- Scriptures marked "CSB" – Scripture quotations marked CSB have been taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

PICTURES (original sources/modifications may have been made)

- Megaphone – roshellin / CC0; <https://openclipart.org/detail/167891/megafono>
- Sun – isabc / CC0; <https://openclipart.org/detail/64993/yellow-and-orange-sun>
- Stick person – nicubunu / CC0; <https://openclipart.org/detail/115038/stick-figure-male>
- Arrows (and various modifications) – litarn / CC0; <https://openclipart.org/detail/325030/arrows-pink-blue-and-brown>
- Jesus on cross – isabc / CC0; <https://openclipart.org/detail/63997/christ-on-the-cross>
- Presentation – Dennis Herks © 2020.