

“He is the mediator of a new covenant ” Hebrews chapter 9 verse

A covenant is a kind of agreement between two parties. As long as both parties observe the terms of the covenant, then its purpose is fulfilled. If one or both parties break those terms, they lose any benefits they might have obtained from it.

The Israelites lived under the covenant that God gave to Moses. It was a covenant of law. In essence, it was very simple. God set the terms by giving Moses his laws and commandments under which they were to live in the promised land. If the Israelites kept them, then they would live and thrive, if they didn't, then they would be ejected from their land and be subject to death. It was in keeping these laws and observances that they would maintain their relationship with God.

But there was always a problem. The law itself was good, perfect in fact, but it required human beings to observe it. And because human nature is corrupted because of the fall of man, people are unable to fully observe God's laws. So the law is weakened by human nature. Since it relies on human compliance to deliver the blessings it promises, it will always be subject to human failure.

Jesus brings with him a better covenant. This one is also defined by God, but it takes into account our human inability to aspire to righteousness for ourselves. God himself, in the person of Jesus, pays the price of our failings in his death on the cross and in doing so fulfils the requirements of his own law that we are unable to fulfil ourselves.

This new covenant is actually a gift to us. Our part is to accept it in faith. We turn from our own way to God, and he receives us without conditions, forgiving us for the wrong that we do and endowing us with the righteousness of Jesus.

No longer are people required to attempt the impossible task of achieving perfection in the observation of God's commands in order to be acceptable to him. Now, in Jesus, we begin by being acceptable to him. From that place of acceptance, inhabited, inspired and enabled by his Holy Spirit, we begin to change under his influence becoming more and more the people God wants us to become. Undoubtedly, we will get it wrong on many occasions, but we need no longer fear God's rejection and judgment. He has promised never to forsake us.

So the new covenant in Jesus is initiated by God and accepted by us in faith, but its success is no longer undermined by our fallen humanity, because it depends first and foremost on God's love and power in our lives and not on our own.

Prayer

Father, how can anyone ever thank you enough for what you have done for us in Jesus. Thank you that I don't have to live in the insecurity of trusting in my own human righteousness to be pleasing to you, and that, by faith and trust, I can live in the righteousness that Jesus won for me. Please strengthen me and help me to live by the leading of your Holy Spirit. In Jesus name, amen.

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