The Making Of A Blood Covenant

Adapted from a series of messages given by Rev. LeRoy Davis

After the Edenic Covenant, all God’s love covenants with mankind have been Blood Covenants. The Bible does not give us a single detailed description of how blood covenants were made. In Bible times, the process of making blood covenants was common knowledge and so the details were not given.

Some of the modern translations take the word “covenant” and translate it “agreement”. Agreement is not a strong enough word. It’s a blood covenant that God has made with His people. When a blood covenant was made it was the pledge of life and resources so that when God cuts a covenant it’s a pledge on behalf of God of the full life and resources of heaven available to the covenant people. It’s total commitment between two parties.

There are several things we need to realize about blood covenants.

First, God made the blood sacred. It was symbolic of the blood of Jesus Christ shed on our behalf to atone for sin. In the Bible and among covenant believers the blood has always had special importance.

Second, it was the practice of the people of Bible times to enter into blood covenants with each other. Blood was looked upon as life itself. Not only a symbol of life but also very life itself. To share blood in covenant making was to share the same nature. Consequently, the relationship of blood covenant was the highest it was possible to have. It superseded natural [i.e. family] relationships. A blood brother was closer than a natural born brother. It was the priority relationship.

Third, the blood covenant is a pledge. It’s the pledge of life and resources on the part of the covenant partners. There was a totally unqualified commitment of each one to the other. Failure to live up to the demands of that covenant meant death. When two people or families made a covenant together, a blood covenant, if one person were to break that covenant the other party was obligated, by the terms of the covenant, to kill the covenant breaker.

Read Exodus 4:24-26.
This explains the story of when Moses was on his way back to Egypt. “The Lord met him to kill him.” Moses had broken the terms of the blood covenant God had made with Abraham and his descendants because he had not circumcised his son which was the sign and the seal of that blood covenant. God, by the terms of that covenant, was obligated to come down and to challenge Moses. If Moses refused to abide by the terms of the covenant God would have to kill him. The terms were fulfilled and Moses’ life was spared. This is a powerful pledge.

God, by that same pledge, is obligated to fulfill His part of the terms of the covenant. He voluntarily obligated Himself upon His life. If God breaks His covenant, He will die. God cannot die for He is the source of life; therefore, God cannot break His blood covenant with. It is impossible. The pledge is irrevocable.

Fourth, the blood covenant expresses a desire for communion with God. There is an inborn desire in every human being’s heart to be at one with God. All through human history there had been attempt by sacrifices to be at one with God. Even cannibalism has its roots in its desire to be at one with deity.

It was understood, in Old Testament times, that the pouring out of blood in animal sacrifice and an eating of that flesh was a sacred ceremony that brought the participants into communion with God and unity with Deity. This was true whether it was the Lord God Jehovah or whether it was pagan gods [demon spirits]. That was the way it was viewed. When people made the sacrifices, spilled the blood, went through the ceremony, and then ate the flesh of the sacrificial animal, they were symbolically becoming at one with their god.

We find this in the story of Moses when they were at Mt. Sinai. Moses and the elders of Israel went up on the mountain and there they had a meal in the presence of God [Ex. 24:9-11]. Symbolically, they were becoming united with Jehovah God.

Fifth, we need to know that the process of making a blood covenant was extremely important. If we are to grasp an understanding of our relationship with God and the foundation of that relationship, we need to have an understanding of the process of making a covenant. The strength of God’s promises and our rights and obligations under the covenant are understood as we look at the process of making a covenant. There are promises, there are rights, and there are obligations or responsibilities to both parties under that covenant. God has a responsibility and we have a responsibility.
Our first source of understanding the process of making a blood covenant comes from the Scripture. When we go through the Bible, we find many times where God talks about “cutting a covenant” or “remembering a covenant.” Throughout the Scriptures we find little scatterings of how a covenant was made. We have it in Gen. 15, we have it in the story of David and Jonathan, and we also have it in many other Biblical stories.

The second source of understanding comes from knowing the practice of ancient societies. The right of blood covenanting was so common in Bible days that the Bible does not give a step by step detail of the procedure. Everybody knew what a blood covenant was and how a blood covenant was made. Of course, each group had their own way and we have to line it in with the Scripture. As a matter of fact, to this very day, Eastern people have a better understanding of the process of blood covenanting than western people do. We have gone away from blood covenanting and we start signing legal documents instead.

There are basically nine steps in making a blood covenant. We will take each step at a time and look at the process of blood covenanting and how it applies to the work of Christ in the New [Blood] Covenant.

**STEP ONE - THE REPRESENTATIVE**

The first step was a representative had to be chosen. There were two individuals, families, or tribes wanting to come together in a blood covenant and so a representative of each group had to be chosen. In the case of individuals, of course, they would represent themselves.

Before we can understand how the representatives were chosen we need to realize that a covenant was “cut” [making a covenant literally means cutting a covenant] on the basis of weakness. They were looking at weakness not searching for common ground. In the covenant the strength of one was to flow to the weakness of the other. They were looking how they could serve and help the other party, not on what they could get out of it.

This principle of matching strength and weakness can be illustrated in marriage. We all have strengths and weakness. If the husband is strong in an area that the wife is weak, he can help her overcome her weakness. If the wife is strong in an area that the husband is weak, she can help him to overcome in that area. By working together they can have a strong relationship and balance each other. It was the same idea
in choosing a blood covenant representative.

Lengthy discussions were necessary. Strengths and weaknesses had to be explored. Part of the discussion was: How we can serve, not whose going to rule. The issue in covenant making was to serve one another - how to fulfill and strengthen the area of weakness so that together there was strength. It wasn’t about who was going to be #1 and who was going to be #2. It was about serving one another in order to make the covenant work.

In the process they would have to iron out their differences and set down the terms of the covenant. They would have to get rid of all the prejudice before they could cut the covenant. There may have been conflicts between certain members of the families. It didn’t really matter. They would have to work those things out until every prejudice was smoothed out. There could be no disloyalty between members of both families for as long as the covenant was in force.

The covenant could be for a period of time or it could be a perpetual covenant. Some covenants went as long as 8 generations which would be about 300 years. So that means the two covenant representatives made the covenant at some point in time and 300 years later their families were still obligated to keep that covenant whether they liked each other or not. They were bound to the covenant. There was no way out of a blood covenant except by death.

Ex. 34:7 talks about God keeping His mercy to thousands and visiting the iniquities of the fathers to the third and fourth generations. He keeps his mercy, i.e. He keeps His covenant. “Mercy” is a covenant word. For example, we read of God remembering His covenant with Abraham then He had mercy upon the people. Because of His covenant He has mercy on us.

Another aspect is that the representatives had to have the qualities of the family. There were certain qualifications, not just anyone would do.

[1] They had to be a good negotiator for the discussions so there would be give and take.

[2] They had to be a good attitude, an attitude of service and the ability to look at what was best for the family. They had to be able to lay their own desires and needs aside and look at the big picture. They had to know what was best for the entire family, not just a few members of it.

[3] They had to be wise.
[4] Most importantly, they had to represent what each family was in essence. For instance, if a warrior family was making a covenant with a intellectual family the two representatives would have to be, on the one side the most efficient warrior, and on the other side the most intellectual person. If it was was between sheep herders and farmers the representative had to be the best on each side. They had to represent in themselves what that family was because they were going to work strength to weakness. The strength of one family had to work to flow to the weakness of the other, so the representatives had to have qualities of the family very prominent in their own lives.

How does this apply to the New Covenant?

Jesus Christ is our representative. Christ had a duel nature. He was fully God - God a very God [as the ancient theologians used to say] - but He was Man a very Man. He was God Man. All of God - the fullness of the Godhead bodily [Col. 2:9] - dwelt in Jesus Christ. He was God a very God - Immanuel, God with us [Matt. 1:23]. But He was also Man. Not two people, but two natures in one human body. As human beings we cannot fully understand how this is possible but the Bible teaches it so we know it is true. Jesus was fully God in human flesh and yet at the same time He was fully man. He was every much a Man as any man that ever walked this earth. And yet He was God a very God.

The exciting part is that the dual nature of Christ means that He was the covenant representative of BOTH God and man. Jesus represented the family of God and all the essence of the family of God was in Jesus. All the essence of the human family was in Jesus also. The Bible says He was even tempted in every point like as we are [Heb. 4:15]. Everything that the human family is, Jesus is - except for the sin. Everything that the God family is, Jesus is. So He can represent both in one. We have a Saviour Who is our representative, but Who is also the representative of heaven. When He speaks, he speaks with the authority of heaven.

STEP TWO - THE COVENANT SITE

The second step in the process of making a blood covenant as the choosing of a special covenant site. It had to be a place where both families could gather and observe the proceedings, after all both families were going to be vitally involved and vitally a part of this covenant. It was going to affect them and change their relationships both to each other and to the other family. They were going to be bound by their covenant representatives, so it had to be an agreed upon common ground where
they could come and observe the process of the making of this covenant. Usually, it was boundary area so that neither one could claim the territory as theirs exclusively but both could claim it as theirs collectively [i.e. No one could say “That’s our ground” but both families could say “It’s our covenant ground.”]

It was sacred. Very often monuments were set up so that future generations could look at those monuments and say, “Our forefathers cut a covenant; therefore, we are obligated by their covenant to honour the terms of that covenant with you.”

Christ came from heaven to earth. Ultimately the earth is God’s territory, but because of sin the earth was under bondage to God’s enemy, the devil. So Christ came to earth, into the enemy’s territory, to proclaim to the captives the covenant of God. Then there had to be a covenant site whereby the covenant could be cut and the family of earth could be joined into the family of God.

Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. [Heb. 13:12]

Jesus suffered outside the city of Jerusalem. He died without the camp. He didn’t die in someone else’s camp, in someone else’s territory. But they took Him up to Mount Calvary. There they hung Him between heaven and earth - suspended - so that the family of God could look down upon the covenant site and the family of earth could up to the covenant site and there behold the common ground where God united man to Himself by the covenant. He was neither in earth’s territory nor was He in heaven’s territory. He was on the boundary in between. The place that would be eternally sacred. And from that day to this the cross has become the monument of the covenant of God.

The very fact the Christ died on the cross changed the nature of the cross. Up until the death of Christ on the cross of Calvary, the cross was a despicable, despised, degrading instrument of death. It was the most inhumane death man could ever suffer. It’s almost indescribable agony was reserved for the absolute dregs of society. The very worst that any could every be - they were crucified. No Roman was crucified by the Roman government. It was too degrading, and yet to the world today the cross has become an emblem and a symbol of covenant relationship. So the nature of the cross was changed from something despised and despicable to something that is honoured and looked to as the source of everything we have in God. Christ changed the nature of the cross. Every time we look at the cross we look at the blood covenant.
STEP THREE - THE EXCHANGE OF COATS/WEAPONS

Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his apparel, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. [1 Sam. 18:3-4]

David and Jonathan give us an example of the third step of making a blood covenant. As each representative was getting ready to go through the walkway of blood [see step four], they would take their coat off and exchange coats. The coat represents who they were. It was their authority, just like the insignia of the general is on the shoulders of his coat. It doesn’t matter if it’s a lance corporal or the commander-in-chief the evidence of their authority is on their coat.

The covenant representatives, by exchanging their coats, were saying, “All that I am, all that I hope to be, and all the authority that I have I put upon you. I give it to you.”

What did Jesus say when He came out of the grave?

And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations... [Matt:28:18-18]

This is a blood covenant statement. Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth. Part of the process of making a blood covenant was a transfer of authority, of identity, and of everything that was wrapped up in a person’s being. When we come to Christ, and enter the New Covenant, we take off our robe of sin [Is. 64:6], we take off our weakness, we take off our rags, and we exchange them for His robe of righteousness, His robe of authority, His robe of His power. We present the gospel of Jesus Christ from a position of confidence and authority because the gospel of Jesus Christ is the answer to man’s needs.

At salvation, we gave God our ragged clothes, which symbolizes everything we are: a sinner, weak, poor, and full of evil. He takes them and He gives us His coat of righteousness so that we are robed with the righteousness of Christ. We have lost what we were and become what He is. We are not dirty, filthy sinners anymore, but we are the sons of the
living God clothed with His authority, clothed with His righteousness, and clothed with His presence. There has been the exchange of coats. When we received Christ and our sins are washed away we become righteous in the sight of God. We have His coat.

In the process of this each representative took off his belt of weapons. In the Scripture above we see Jonathan doing that. He took off his belt of weapons, his sword, his dagger, whatever weapons he had. And by doing that he was saying, “Your enemies are my enemies.

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God... [Eph. 6:10-17]

Again, this is a blood covenant action. Jesus has given us His weapon belt. It is not in what we do, it is in who He is, and the fact that He’s put His coat on us. No matter what we are doing, it is the power of His might, not our strength.

"Put on the whole armor of God.” He has taken His armor belt off and He has given His armor to us.

“Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil for we wrestle not against flesh and blood...” If we could only learn that secret - we wrestle not against flesh and blood! Our enemies belong to Him and there is spiritual wickedness that works to disrupt our walk with God. That’s why He gave us His armor belt and He said, “Who your enemies are, that’s who My enemies are.” We have to be careful that we realize we are in spiritual warfare. The devil will do his
best to wreak us in any way he can. If he can get our minds diverted from serving Christ, if he can get our minds diverted from love of the brethren, if he can get our minds diverted from spiritual things, then he’s made us ineffective in the kingdom of God.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand in the evil day and having done all to stand.” The margins of some Bibles read: “having overcome all.” God has given us His belt.

“(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ...” [2 Cor. 10:4-5].

The biggest area of warfare that we need the armor of God for is in our mind. The majority of the problems that we have in personal relationships or even our relationship with God is our attitude. That’s why He tells us to put on the whole armor of God. He’s given us His weapons. Take the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, etc. God has given us His weapon belt. It doesn’t matter what area of life we struggle with, God wants us to recognize that we don’t have to be under oppression or wrong attitudes. God is saying, “Your enemies are my enemies and I will come to your defense if you will put on the armor that I have given you.”

STEP FOUR - THE SACRIFICE

And he said unto him, Take me a heifer three years old, and a she-goat three years old, and a ram three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon. And he took him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each half over against the other: but the birds divided he not. And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away. And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him. And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.
But thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. And in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full. And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces. In that day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:” [Gen. 15:9-18].

The fourth step, in the process of making a covenant was that a sacrifice was selected. In the above Scripture, we see how God spoke to Abraham and told him to get a heifer, goat, and a ram and to offer them in a covenant-making process.

The sacrifice of a covenant usually had to be a large animal as it was in this case. Very often a cow was used. Once the animal was selected there was a special kind of cut that was made in order for that sacrifice to be a covenant-making sacrifice. Ordinary when a sacrifice was made the animal was killed by the slitting of the throat and the blood was caught in a basin and then the blood was sprinkled or poured out in some form or ceremony [See Lev.]. But the covenant cut was different from any other cut. The animal was split down the spine so that it was parted into two parts and the two halves would fall open. Then the halves would be propped up in some manner so there was a walkway of blood that each person making the covenant needed walk through in order to establish that covenant.

The two covenant making people would walk through the cut animals and then they would turn around and walk back through the walkway of blood. They would usually stop in the middle and, standing in blood - with blood on both sides of them, they would say, “Even as this animal died I stand with you to the very point of death.” It was a serious thing to make that kind of covenant because, not only were they agreeing to support one another, to strengthen one another in the very midst of death, but also they were agreeing to stand against every force together.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of
my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever. [Ps. 23:4-6].

...lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. [Matt:28:20]

These are blood covenant promises. No matter what we face Jesus has promised He will never leave us nor forsake us. That’s part of the covenant. Everyone of the disciples of Jesus died a martyr's death except John. Jesus stood with them all the way. God walked that walkway of blood when He made that covenant with Abram. He stood in the middle of that walkway of blood and said, “Lo, I am with you. I will stand with you. I will make your enemies My enemies and I will be with you even to the very end.“

It may not be popular to talk about the blood today, but the blood is what makes us one with God. The blood of the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament were only temporary. They looked forward to the cross, in themselves they were powerless. In the New Covenant - the final covenant - it was the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only His blood can pay the price of our sin and bring us back to God.

People can get squeamish about it, but without the blood of Christ we are lost, without hope, and there is no way into the presence of God. No only that, but also there is no opportunity for the blessings of God without the blood. God wants to bless His people. God is more desirous to give than we are to receive, but everything is based on the walkway of blood. We need the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will never get away from it or beyond it. EVERYTHING is based at the cross, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without that we have nothing.

The whole covenant was immersed in the aspect of blood, but it is vital to remember that blood represents life. It doesn’t represent death, it represents life. There was a walking in a new life relationship because they walked through this process, this walkway of blood.

**STEP FIVE - THE FAMILY BLOOD**

Next we come to the shedding of the family blood. A blood covenant was permeated with blood because it was to be an example of the seriousness of God’s covenant with us through the blood of Calvary.

In unBiblical blood covenants, a cut was usually made on some part
of the body, normally the wrist or some place where the blood would flow freely. It needed to be seen by all the family/tribe members so that it was an example of life-giving to each member. Remember, blood is life. The shedding of blood is the giving of life. When the representatives would make the cuts in their wrists and the blood would begin to flow, it was an example of the family giving its life for the other. Usually the family representative would show the family of his side the family blood flowing down his arm so that everyone recognized, that with hand lifted up and blood flowing, they were an entering a blood covenant relationship that was going to be binding on all of them.

When they came into the center of this walkway of blood, with blood flowing down their hands, they would call God to witness their commitment. Then the blood of the representatives would be mixed so that there was one blood in two families. Different cultures would do it in different ways. Sometimes they would put the wounds together, or they would suck the blood, or drink the blood directly, or mix it with wine or some other liquid. Whatever the process was, it was assimilating the life of both families so that now they recognized that they were one blood.

For the Jews, wine became a substitute for blood so that drinking wine represented drinking the covenant blood. As a matter of fact, in the Old Testament God gave them that substitute.

...and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape. [Deut. 32:14]  
...and the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering [Ex. 29:40].

The blood and wine were mingled by the heathen in their covenant ceremony but since the blood was forbidden to the Jews the wine was the substitute which represented the blood. So the wine of the grapes - blood of the grapes - being drank was a symbol of participating in the blood covenant relationship with God. In the mutual drinking there was a covenant pledge and the holy compact they entered into was absolutely binding.

So the covenant relationship was based on the same blood. Families that entered into this kind of a covenant could not intermarry. It was considered incest to intermarry because of the blood covenant relationship.

What does the Bible say the blood of Christ does? We are made
one body, one family, one nation, one blood. This is not just with one another but with God Himself. Therein is the greatness of this great covenant.

"And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins." [Matt: 26:27-28]

He took the cup of wine and He said to them, "This represents the blood of the New Covenant so that as you take this, you are taking of My blood and becoming part of Me." In the Gospel of John, Jesus said, "Except you eat My flesh and drink My blood you have no life in you." [John 6:54-56]. Jesus wasn’t talking about being cannibalistic, but He was talking about the blood covenant relationship. That relationship is symbolized at the communion table of the Lord. When we partake of the wine and of the bread, we partake, in a spiritual sense and in a covenantal sense, of the blood and body of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

In the eastern way of thinking the closest relationship you could have, or the greatest affection you could show for some one, would be by partaking of their blood. The Arabic words for "friendship," "affection," "blood," "leech," and "blood sucker" are all variations of the same root word. This shows that in their mind they are all linked together.

Now, of course, we recognize that in Israel the drinking of blood was forbidden. Hebrews could not drink blood. There was animal substitution for human blood and rather than drinking it there was the anointing and sprinkling. Throughout the Old Testament, particularly Leviticus, we have scriptures about pouring out the blood on the base of altar or putting it on the horns of the altar, or sprinkling the people.

"Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens
should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others...” [Heb. 9:18-25]

Have you heard the term “under the blood?” It’s that sprinkling of blood that brought us into covenant relationship with God. In the Old Testament we had the animal blood used symbolically of the blood of Christ that was to cover all the vessels of ministry. In the New Testament WE are the new Tabernacle and the vessels of ministry. No vessel can be of service to God without the blood. Thank God for the blood. You can be a vessel of honour in the house of the Lord because you have been sprinkled with the blood of Jesus.

In the Old Testament there was a constant flow of blood. We tend to get hung up in the Old Testament with all the sacrifices. We see the blood and gore of it all and we forget what happened afterwards. After they had been sprinkled with blood the next step was feasting and rejoicing.

Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. [Is. 12:3]

Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. [Is. 51:11]

The blood is the basis, the foundation. It’s the thing that brings us into covenant, takes care of the sin, and takes care of the separation. Once all that’s been taken care of we come rejoicing in the presence of God. Our sins have been washed away. We have become His people, we are the children of God, we are beloved of God, and we are related to God. He is our Father and we are His children. He rejoices when we come into His presence and we should rejoice when we come into His presence.

Another interesting point is that the covenant parties would die for
each other whether they liked each other or not. Once they entered into a blood covenant there was a binding, irrevocable agreement made between those two families and it didn’t matter what they felt about each other. They were in blood covenant and they could not break that covenant. They had to fulfill the terms of the covenant whether they like the other people or not.

Christians are in blood covenant with God, that makes them brothers and sisters. That’s how powerful the covenant is. Even if we get angry with one another, we are still in an unbreakable covenant together. We are bound to each other, through the blood of Christ, whether we like it or not.

Not only are we brothers and sisters, but through the blood of Calvary and the indwelling Christ, we’ve taken on the blood and nature of the family of God. As Christians we have royal blood in us. We are children of the King. The indwelling Christ has brought us into unity with the family of God and the blood of the family of God flows in our veins. We are at one with Him. We are a covenant people - the New Covenant people. His power, His resources, His strength, His ability, all that belongs to Him belongs to us. All that is His is ours.

That’s why we need to know about the covenant. As we come in to fulfilling our obligations under the covenant we tap into the key which unlocks the resources. God will be faithful to His part of the covenant, to give His resources to His covenant people.

**STEP SIX - THE SEAL [SCAR]**

The sixth step in the making of a blood covenant was the seal of the covenant. God cut the covenant with Abraham in the shed blood of the animals. In the Old Testament every covenant that had deep significance involved the shedding of blood. When it was two individuals - like David and Jonathan - part of the covenant said that if anything happened to one the other one would be responsible to take care of his family. That’s why David brought Mephibosheth in and put him at the king’s table [2 Sam. 9:1-9]. That’s also a major reason why David never rebelled against Saul - he had a blood covenant with Jonathan.

Along with that covenant cut there was something done to that cut that would make a scar. Ashes would be rubbed in or something similar would be done to make a permanent scar on the bodies of the covenant representatives. It was forever to be a reminder of the promises that they had given. It was a sign or a seal that those who had made the covenant
were at one with each other. They had a mark of identification. Every time
that wrist was shown [or wherever the scar was] as the representative
would talk to his family in daily routine there was the scar that everybody
could see.

That scar meant something. Quite often the man that was the
representative then became the chief elder of the tribe because he had the
covenant scar. Commonly it was infected to give it prominence and clarity.
It was to stand out as a reminder to everyone of the covenant to which
they were committed. That covenant had become the law by which the
families lived. Whatever the terms of the covenant were, it was the law by
which they governed their affairs and they were absolutely sworn to
defend and to protect one another regardless of the circumstances. So
every time that they would have a tendency to move away from the laws of
that covenant that scar would remind them that they were in covenant
relationship.

The fact they were in covenant relationship didn’t mean that every
member in that family loved every member in the other family. It didn’t
matter whether they liked one another or not, they were sworn to give
time to develop a relationship, and the closer they were, the more
their lives for each other if that’s what it took to meet the terms of that
covenant. We tend to base things on feelings, but the covenant wasn’t
based on emotions. That may have been the case, as it was with David
and Jonathan, but it wasn’t necessary. The family or the tribe had sworn
by their representatives to uphold the terms of the covenant regardless of
personal feelings even if it cost them their lives.

How does that affect us today? We’re part of the family of God.
We’re brought into the covenant which means that we need to develop a
loyalty to one another whether we like one another or not, or even
whether we approve of what each other is doing or not. We need to
learn to develop a loyalty because of the blood covenant.

Abraham’s covenant seal/scar was in his foreskin rather than in his
wrist. One reason why God chose that place is that the covenant that
Abraham had was with Jehovah God, the Creator of the Universe. God
knew there would be a tendency in the descendants of Abraham to have a
pride in their covenant relationship that was not a proper pride. As a
matter of fact, even though they had the circumcision, they still had an
inordinate pride as we see from reading the Old Testament. But the
location of the mark or scar of the covenant would be a hindrance to that
pride. So that scar of the covenant on Abraham and his seed was a
permanent mark of the covenant that represented loyalty to the promises
and the obligations of the covenant.
In the New Covenant God has some covenant scars. They are the scars He took 2,000 years ago and - just like you and I - God remembers the scars. He declares, “I’ve got a covenant with you and I’ve written you upon My hands. I will never forget.”

God is the Creator of the universe. No matter how great we speak of Him as being and all the wonders of Who He is, we’ve only begun to scratch the surface. And yet He in covenant with us. He has promised to never leave or forsake us. He has the scar and that scar reminds Him that He has a covenant. We can call upon that covenant and God responds. When two people or families were in covenant relationship they could call upon the other without feeling that they were imposing. We can call on God at anytime - and as often as we want to - without feeling we are troubling Him.

We have the covenant scar too. We have that circumcision cut. It’s the circumcision of heart, that cutting away of the body of sin. One of the reasons that we do not experience the full provisions of the covenant, is because we have not had a complete circumcision. We got too much of “us” in there yet. God says by faith He has circumcised us, but there is a practical working it out in our lives.

“And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” [Luke 9:62]

So not only does God have the scar of the covenant but we have the scar of the covenant and we are pledged to faithfulness to God. There is no question of turning back. Looking back is a breaking of the blood covenant relationship. Why would we want to look back? There’s nothing to go back to.

In any case, we have that circumcision of heart which requires of us the same kind of loyalty and faithfulness to God that God has toward us. It is a mutual thing. The more we get into the truth of this and make it a part of our life, the more we are going to see Him fulfill the obligations that He willingly undertook on our behalf. It is not that we somehow force God into doing what He doesn’t want to do. God willingly obligated Himself to us in blood covenant relationship. As we come to fulfill our commitment in that blood relationship He works on our behalf. That’s powerful.

“From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” [Gal. 6:17]
Paul had the covenant mark. Part of that mark was the opposition Paul faced. So the covenant mark in our lives today is the mark of service, the mark of denial, the mark of giving ourselves away for the Gospel. When you are at work, when you are in the store, when you are at home, do you bear the marks of the Lord Jesus? Do the people at work recognize you as one of “them,” not because you talk or dress differently but because there is something different about you? When they say something against another brother or sister, are you quick to defend that brother or sister? We may not like them but we are bound by covenant to defend them.

“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.” [John 20:24-28]

Thomas was doubting the resurrection since he had not seen Jesus when He appeared. Jesus appeared again and Thomas was there this time. Jesus just stretched out His hands and said, “Thomas, this is what you wanted. Here it is.” Thomas responded, “My Lord and My God.” When Jesus showed the scars Thomas recognized covenant.

That’s what Jesus is saying today. To those who are bound in sin, He says, “See the scars.” To the Christian who labours under guilty and condemnation, He says, “See the scars.” To those who are sick, He says, “See the scars.” To those who long for a close relationship with God, He says, “See the scars.” Christ has the scars. We are released, we are free! The Good News is that the covenant has been cut. The Covenant has already been made. God is full of tender mercy and lovingkindness. When we come labouring under guilt and condemnation Jesus stretches forth His hands and says, “See the scars. It’s paid for. It’s cleared. You are free!”
That’s the essence of the Gospel right there. It’s not begging people to come to Jesus - it’s announcing the Good News that your sins are forgiven! It’s already done. For everybody who is going to be saved the penalty has already been paid, the blood has already been shed, the covenant has already been cut. Our job is to tell them: “You’re pardoned, you’re free, you don’t have to come under that garbage anymore.” Jesus shows you His scars. The scars are there.

The scars are not just in His hands but Jesus bears the scars all over His body. When the Romans whipped a prisoner that whip wrapped around their body almost from head to toe and tore the flesh off with each crack of the whip. It caused wounds all over His body. That’s why He said to His disciples, “You lay hands on the sick and they shall recover, you cast out devils, etc.” [Mark 16:17-18]. You can do those things because of the covenant scar.

Another part of the seal of the covenant is the fact that the ring is the sign of the covenant. From time immemorial an armlet or bracelet or ring has been a symbol of the boundless covenant between the giver and receiver - tokens of an unending covenant.

The signet ring appears many times in Bible events. Pharaoh gave his ring to Joseph [Gen. 41:42]. In the book of Esther, Ahasuerus gave the ring to Haman first of all, in which an irrevocable decree was signed [Esther 3:10-12] and later on he gave it to Mordecai for the same purpose [Esther 8:8-10]. In Luke 15:22, we have the return of the prodigal son who has the ring given to him.

Out of all this developed the idea of the wedding ring. It is interesting that the third finger of the left hand for the wedding ring came from the ancient idea that there was a very delicate nerve which ran from that finger to the heart. That’s why it was selected as the ring finger. It’s not true, there is no such nerve, but that was their idea and that’s how that finger became the wedding ring finger.

The ring symbolized the scar and was a reminder of the blood covenant. In some societies they would cut the thumb and the thumb was the ring finger. Then they would bind the bride and groom’s thumbs together to instigate the blood covenant. After that they would infect the wound so that forever the hand would be scarred showing their covenant one to another.

The ring is even used in the coronation of the king or queen of England. It’s used on the fourth finger of the right hand, put on by the
archbishop of Canterbury, showing that there is a covenant between the sovereign and her people.

The blood covenant is something that affects us even to today in our modern society. We’ve done away with the blood but even by the fact that we use rings as the sign of a marriage covenant reveals that the roots of our society are in the blood covenant.

**STEP SEVEN - THE NAME CHANGE**

"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, Jehovah appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be the father of a multitude of nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee....And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and moreover I will give thee a son of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be of her.” [Gen. 17:1-7, 15-16]

The next step in the process of the covenant is the change of name. The covenant partners would exchanged names.

Just as there was an exchange of blood - an exchange of life - so there exchange of names - of personalities - in a covenant of friendship. Whatever that name represents the other person becomes. Each one made the change.

The scripture above shows where God, in covenant with Abram, brought about the name change. Abram was 99 years old here. He had
had the promise of God for 25 years. Now God comes again and takes a man 99 years old and a woman 90 years old and promises them that they are going to bear a son. It was impossible but God specializes in impossibilities. Out of that God says, “I’m going to bless you, etc.” As evidence that God would keep His promise to Abram He changed his name. Abram means “high father”, or “exalted father’ but Abraham means “a father of a multitude.” God changed Abram’s name so that even the very declaration of that name would be a reminder of the promise of the covenant. Sarah’s name was also changed from Sarai which possibly meant “princess” to Sarah, which meant “mother of nations”. Again her name reminded her of the covenant promise.

There is a name change that comes as a result of covenant that involves the total personality in the promise. Not only was Abraham’s name changed but also, in a sense, God’s name was changed. From now on God is called the God of Abraham. He’s not just the Almighty, He’s not just Jehovah, and all the other names of God, but now He is the God of Abraham. The God who is in covenant with Abraham.

"And Jehovah appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham’s sake.” [Gen. 26:24]

"And, behold, Jehovah stood above it, and said, I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed...” [Gen. 28:13]

There are some significant things here. God now became the covenant God of Isaac, as well as Abraham, because Isaac was the inheritor of Abraham. He is also called the God of Jacob. These men - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - were inheritors of the covenant. They were in blood covenant relationship with God.

Now Christians are Abraham’s spiritual descendants [we will look at this in detail when we get to the Abrahamic Covenant]. We are blood brothers with the Lord Jesus. We have had a name change. Our name has been linked with Jesus - Christians - of Christ or Christ’s ones. Now we are in blood covenant with the Lord. If you are in blood covenant with the Lord and I am in blood covenant with the Lord there is a covenant bond between us as well.
Blood covenant means that we get along with one another whether we like one another or not. There’s a commitment to Christ that gets practical. We can get “spiritual” and neglect the practical. The blood covenant is very practical. If I am of Christ and you are of Christ then we are linked. If I say negative things about you, I’m reflecting on my covenant brother. If I’m disloyal to you, I’m violating my covenant brother. If I shut up my heart of compassion to you, I’m hurting my covenant brother.

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” [Matt. 25:40]

Jesus could say that because of covenant relationship. The way we treat one another is actually the way we are treating the Lord because we have had a name change. There’s a personality and identification in the name change which means when I say something about you, I’m saying it about the Lord.

That is not saying we don’t deal with problems that come up between us. We have to deal with issues, but the Scriptural pattern is that you and I work it out in private if possible and if we can’t solve it then we work it out in as small a circle as we can. To the world outside that circle, you’re a great follower of the Lord. Are we lying? No, we are seeing things as they really are. Just because we’re struggling with one another doesn’t change the fact that we both love the Lord and are serving the Lord with all of our hearts. So when I say to others, “You’re a great brother in the Lord and you love the Lord,” ignoring the problems between us I’m not telling what is untrue but what is true. Isn’t that what Paul says in Phil. 4:8? If we would begin to recognize that we are in covenant relationship with the Lord so we need to get along with each other, we would work out our differences a lot better.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. [2 Cor. 5:17]

The new name also means a new nature. God’s not in the rebuilding business. He’s in the new creation business. There’s a new life because we are in Covenant relationship with Christ. We have partaken of His blood; therefore, His life flows within us. We are a new creation. New, - something totally different - we are not the same as we were.
When we become born-again we are made a new creation in Christ and we are totally new.

It's not new in the sense of something recent but new in the sense of total change. All the old life is gone with the results of it. We don’t have to carry over guilt or negative attitudes. We don’t even have to carry over the negative things that happened to us before we came to Christ. [We do have to deal with the past if we have unforgiveness in the past.] When we became a new creation all those old things past away and we are free from them. We are free from the bondages of the past. We are free from the sins of the past. We are free from the guilt of the past.

We also need to mention that there is corporate name change.

"And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord GOD shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name...” [Is. 65:15]

The Old Covenant people had broken the covenant. Remember what happened if you broke the covenant? The other covenant partner was obligated to kill you. That was part of the covenant terms.

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that 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 that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” [Jer. 31:31-14]

That’s the New Covenant he’s talking about. Jesus, at the last supper, passed the cup to His disciples and He said, “This cup is the blood of the new testament which is shed for you” [1 Cor. 11:25]. When the
change was complete, there would be a new nature to go with the new name. “I will put My law in their hearts.” It wasn’t going to be a remodeling but something brand new, something that had never happened before. Those who would be called the people of God would be the people of the covenant. They would have a name change.

“...and the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”
[Acts 11:26]

The disciples were called Christians first at Antichoh and ever since then the people of God are called “People of Christ” or “Christians”. That’s what Christian means: Christ like or Christ ones. We are the people of Christ and part of the covenant. The corporate name of God’s people - all the redeemed - is now “Christian.” They are in covenant relationship with Him. They are in intimate relationship with their name joined with His. When God look's at them He sees Jesus.

The corporate body of God’s people was changed in structure as well. The overall structure of the people of God is different in the new covenant. It happens because the individuals that make up the corporate body are changed. As individuals change the corporate changes.

We are in a new covenant. The new covenant has better promises, a better priesthood, a better covenant, a better sacrifice, better service, and better worship. See the Book of Hebrews.

”...To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”
[Rev. 2:17]

The white stone with the name written shows us the new name. That’s the name that has been given to us and really in essence its the name of Jesus. The word “know” shows intimate relationship [i.e. Adam knew Eve {Gen. 4:1}]. The new name can’t be known or intimately experienced by intellectual knowledge. It has to be known by the new birth.

The white stone or pebble was something that was lasting and imperishable; therefore, it has an eternal purpose. The name on that stone was what made it important. The name, and the meaning of that name, depended on the permanence of the writing. It had to be on lasting material. So our new name is not just left hanging around somewhere but
it’s written on the white stone, i.e. it’s written on permanently.

"Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." [Is. 49:16]

This new name is given to the child of God. In some societies today when a new Christian goes through the waters of baptism he actually chooses a new name. They then become known by that name.

We have been given a new name. We have become a new person. The name is the name of God - the name of power and authority. The name of Christ or name of God is linked with Christians as a eternal possession. You are not going to lose that name and it is symbolic of the wider power of God at work in and through your life.

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.” [Rev. 3:12]

Not only does God write your name on Himself, He writes His name on you. There is a covenant relationship in which a name change has been made and we are the people of God, we belong to the city of God, and we have His new name.

Since we have the name, we need to bear the nature and when we bare the nature we have the authority. True, when God looks at us He sees Jesus but we need to recognize that there is a responsibility. In the New Testament we see the term “walk worthy” and similar phrases. There is a walking worthy of Name that we bear. There should be nothing working in our lives that would bring disgrace to the Name. When we deal with the businesses, when we talk with people in the marketplace, when we gather with friends, everything we do should be an honour to the Name that we bear. Then, as covenant brothers with the Lord, we can also walk in the authority of that Name.

**STEP EIGHT - THE COVENANT OF FRIENDSHIP**

"And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him
that day, and would let him go no more home to his father’s house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.” [1 Sam 18:1-4]

“A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” [Pr. 18:24]

The next step of covenant making is called the covenant brotherhood compact or covenant friendship. In the ancient rite, two friends who wanted to become covenant brothers would go into an open place in a village. There the villagers could witness the sealing of the agreement and the young men would announce to all the people the reason for their covenant. It would be written down in a duplicate contract form to be signed by the covenant brothers with several witnesses. Then one friend would take a sharp knife - in some societies at least - and cut the wrist of the other friend and with a quill he would suck the blood out of his friend. Then he would take the blood that was on the knife and mark the paper that they had signed. The other friend would do the same thing. Finally, that paper was folded up very neatly and very small and put in about a 1 inch packet which they wore around their arm, their neck, or some other place. It was counted as a mark of honour to wear that armlet or that bracelet. It was a token of an indissoluble relationship that had been entered into.

Part of the covenant friendship was: We are bothers in covenant - a covenant made before God - and he who deceives the other one will be deceived by God Himself. That was called the covenant of blood and the people were called brothers of the covenant or blood brothers. There were many types of covenants in the Old Testament times, but blood covenant was the most scared because there was sharing of blood and sharing of blood was the sharing of life.

So now each friend - according to the ancient understanding of covenant - had a double life. He had his life and the life of his friend flowing through his veins because he had taken that friend’s blood. It meant that each would stand for the other even in death. It also meant that if one brother died, the other brother was responsible to take care of his family. That’s why you have the story of Mephibosheth recorded in the 2 Sam. 4. David and Jonathan had entered into a blood covenant so after Jonathan’s death David had an obligation to take care of Mephibosheth.
According to the custom of that time, David should have killed all of Saul and Jonathan’s descendants because to leave them alive would be potentially leaving a festering rebellion that would cause disturbance in the kingdom. But David had a blood covenant with Jonathan that superseded even the custom of his day and he was obligated by covenant to take care of Mephibosheth.

The idea was that each covenant friend was totally devoted to the other. Each surrendered to the other and it was accompanied by a solemn appeal that God Himself would witness the covenant. They asked God to stand as a guard to the covenant.

Now if the covenant was between a man and a woman - which was very rare - they could never marry. It would be considered incest. When it was two men who made that covenant their children couldn’t marry. So strong was that covenant that it would have been considered as if two brothers or two sisters married.

We have heard the term “blood is thicker than water.” That comes out of covenant language. We have misunderstood that expression and thought it meant that family relationship was the strongest relationship. It really means that the blood of the covenant is stronger than natural family relationship. Arab’s have a saying even today that “blood is thicker than milk” which means the blood covenant relationship is stronger than the relationship of those that have shared the same mother’s milk.

Now we recognize, of course, from the the Word of God that blood drinking was totally forbidden by God’s people. We have Lev. 17:10-11, 14 and other Scriptures where God absolutely forbade Israel from entering into a kind of blood covenant where they would take blood. Israelites were not allowed to eat meat with blood in it. God’s reason was two-fold.

First, Blood was forbidden because it represented the atonement. The atonement was God’s provision in the Old Testament for a covering for sin. God is holy, righteous, just, and He cannot look at sin. So God provided a substitute for the covering of sin. The animal died in the place of the sinner and his blood represented a covering of that sin. When you hear the word “atonement” one simple way to remember what it means is: “At One Ment” - it brings us into unity with God because our sin is covered. When Christ came our sin was not just covered, our sin was taken away. Because the blood represents the atonement, they had to respect the blood and honour the blood.
Second, as we have said before, blood represented life. The taking of blood was the sharing of life. The killing or the shedding of blood was the pouring out of life. The only Person we can really share life with is God. In Israel there was an animal substitute used that would make the contract as binding as a blood contract but God and man had the exclusive right to a blood covenant in its highest sense. Human to human covenants then were to be subservient to the human to God covenant. Israel was represented in the Old Testament as God’s covenant people because of God’s blood covenant with Abraham. Any other covenant had to be subservient to that so Israel was not allowed to enter into a blood covenant with individuals by the actual sharing of blood. There were to share God’s life alone.

“And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.” [James 2:23]

Abraham is the only man in the Bible who is called specifically a Friend of God. The reason is that God had a blood covenant with Abraham. God spoke to Abraham to get the animals ready, to split them with the covenant cut, and to walk in between them [Gen. 15]. God made an indissoluble, irrevocable, eternal blood covenant with Abraham making him a covenant friend.

“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ...And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” [Gal. 3:16, 29]

The blood covenant was not only with Abraham but also his Seed - Jesus Christ. But Paul goes on to explain that if you belong to Christ then you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise. In other words, Abraham’s covenant extends to those who are in Christ. Abraham is called the Friend of God. The promises that God gave to Abraham were to and in the Lord Jesus Christ. If we belong to Jesus we are heirs to the promises that God gave to Abraham. That is what Paul is establishing in Gal. 3 so that we have the promises. With that covenant, which belongs to Christ and to those that are in Christ, we have that covenant of friendship. We are covenant friends of God. You are a covenant friend of God, if you belong to Jesus.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his
life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” [John 15:13-15]

This relationship supersedes all other relationships. Jesus expressed that covenant relationship here in the Gospel of John. Jesus died on the cross of Calvary for you. He went voluntarily to the cross [John 10:15, 18]. The mob and the soldiers didn’t cease Him in the power of their might that night to take a helpless Man and nail Him to the cross. They took a Man Who was God in the flesh, Who had the ability just by the word of His mouth to destroy them all. He voluntarily laid His life down because you are His friend.

History tells us that death by crucifixion was the most cruel form of torture that man has ever devised in all human history. The Roman whipping post itself mutilated His body almost from head to toe. The whip had steel balls and pieces of bone and metal that ripped His body to shreds. They plucked His beard out [Is. 50:6]. His body was so disfigured that we couldn’t even recognize Him [Is. 52:14]. He did it voluntarily because He loves you.

We are of such value in the eyes of the Almighty that Jesus said “You’re My friends.” Even when we were rebels, even when we fought against Him, even when we hated Him, He said, “You’re My friends and I lay down My life for you that I might bring you into a covenant brotherhood with Myself.” The book of Romans declares,”We are heirs and joint heirs with Jesus Christ” [Rom. 8:17]. That’s blood covenant friendship.

The ultimate gift - laying down your life on behalf of another - was part of the responsibility of a blood covenant of friendship. Each would lay down their life for the other if required. God in Christ laid down His life for us that we might be friends of God.

Blood friendship required that each friend would lay down his life for the other if that became necessary. It was necessary for us because God had said, “The soul that sinneth it shall die” [Ez. 18:4,20]. The person that sins, dies. We were under the sentence of death. We couldn’t help ourselves. Nobody else could help us either because we were all under the sentence of death. Every human being from the time Adam and Eve until to the end of time is born into this world as a sinner. Sin keeps us
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apart from God. We are all under God’s judgment. We can’t come into God’s presence. We can’t have that assurance unless there is covenant Brother who is willing and able to take our place. The only person who would be willing AND able would have to be a person who is not under the sentence of death. The only way that could happen is for God Himself to come in human flesh, be born of the virgin Mary, live a perfect sinless life, and then take our penalty, die in our place, and release us from the judgment of our sins.

That is exactly what happened. Jesus is our covenant Brother who voluntarily laid down His life in our place that we might have our sins forgiven, washed away. The Biblical term is “justified.” “Justified” simply means that I stand before the court of God innocent. Some remember it as “Just As If I Never Sinned” and while that is an over simplification of the term, it gives us the idea. We stand before the court of the universe totally righteous and totally holy because we have been justified by our covenant Brother dying in our place. It is a privilege to be a friend of God.

God has given us the opportunity to become His close Friend. How much do we take advantage of that opportunity? How much do we respond to the dealings of God in our lives when He calls us to a closer walk with Him and a closer relationship? The devil has fed us a lie. He has told us that God is out to get us. He tries to get us thinking about all things we may have to give up and all the tribulations we may have to go through. Realize, Jesus is your friend. He loves you. He has so many things in store for you. He wants to bless you so abundantly. It’s beyond our imagination. And it’s not just for Heaven, He has prepared great things for His people here and now. He wants to see the promise of all that God has provided in the covenant flowing to you. We don’t have to hold our heads down. The Ruler of the universe is our blood Brother. He has sworn by His very life to stand with us in every circumstance of life and that our enemies are His enemies and His enemies are our enemies. His power is our power. Together we are one.

That covenant friendship provides the full benefits of the covenant. What are the benefits of the covenant? You have about 1200 pages of them - depending on the size of the print in your Bible. It all there, it’s all yours. We need to be people of the Bible because it is a demonstration and a record of what God has provided for us.

There are also covenant responsibilities that we have because of Covenant Friendship.

"If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father,
and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” [Luke 14:26-27]

Twice in the above scriptures Jesus said there are people who cannot be His disciples. They can’t be His disciplined ones. Who can’t be? Those who have any other priority over Jesus. That’s where the priority is. Some misunderstand this verse thinking that they have to hate everyone they hold dear. That’s not what He is saying. The word “hate” there is a Greek word which comes from a root word which means “to love less.” In other words, because we are in a blood covenant with Jesus, He is THE priority. Part of the terms of the covenant is that we have to treat others properly and respectfully including our parents and relatives. Jesus is simply saying that when He has the priority then we are His disciples. That’s what blood covenant is - a priority relationship. That’s why He instructs husbands to leave their parents and be glued to their wife. The blood covenant of the marriage relationship takes priority over the parent/son relationship.

Another responsibility that the New Testament stresses is the unity of the body and the responsibility of each member for every other member.

"...with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” [Eph. 4:2-3]

He didn’t say we all had to agree on everything. God has put the body together, so that your strength flows to my weakness and my strength flows to your weakness. Our tendency is to criticize one another for our weaknesses. The truth of the matter is that God put us together so that together we are strong and our weakness are lessened. We criticize and forget that God put us there because our strength compensates for that weakness.

"Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” [Phil. 2:2-4]
Like it or not, we are part of the covenant family. We have to look out for each other and be concerned about the best interest of the other. Read Rom. 14:1, 15:1-3. Don’t squabble and fight with people over weaknesses. That doesn’t mean we are compromisers and people pleasers but it does mean that we strive to maintain unity and respect our differences.

If you are weak in an area, look for someone who is strong in that area and draw from their strength. If you are strong in an area be willing to let your strength flow into another person’s weakness. That’s what God wants. That’s why God made you strong and that’s why God put you in the body. You don’t have to be proud about it or stir up trouble, rather you can let Spirit of God flow through you and minister life into the situation. Criticism, backbiting, jealousy, malice, bitterness, negative thoughts and attitudes, etc. are contrary to the covenant. That’s not part of the covenant. The covenant says: “You’re my covenant brother and I want my strength to flow to you and I want to draw your strength to me so we have giving and receiving.” Sometimes we see a person’s weakness and we think we can’t receive anything from them. That’s not true, quite often they are strong in an area where we are weak.

STEP NINE - THE COVENANT MEAL

"And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said.

And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and
he hasted to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set \it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat."  [Gen. 18:1-6]

"I am that bread of life...I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world...Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.”  [John 6: 48, 51, 53-56]

In the ninth and final step, which usually took quite a time, the leaders of the clan or tribe of families ate together and the other members of the family intermingled together. They were sharing food which was proof of agreement. In some ancient societies, and some societies even today, the fact of eating together implied that there was covenant relationship.

The meal was a ratification of the covenant that the representatives had made. They had gone through all the process, had followed all of the steps, and now they sat down and ate together as a tribe or as a group. It would be a time of feasting. It was evidence that they were all in covenant relationship so they intermingled and they became as one.

The covenant meal was often bread and wine. Usually it also involved the eating of the flesh of the sacrificial animal. The leaders would feed one another. As they would link through their arms and feed one another, they would say words like: “Eat my body and eat my flesh.” Those were covenant words. They were not saying, “Take a bite out of my hand.” They were declaring that the bread and wine represented their physical body and blood and that as they partook they were becoming one with each other. In addition, they were saying, “I will let you eat my flesh before I’ll let you die.” Powerful words. They would say words for the wine like, “My life is for your life.”

We see that in David and Jonathan with Jonathan risking his life for David. We need to understand how much Christ is committed to us: “My life for your life.” Jesus said, in the scripture quoted above, that we have to
eat His flesh and drink His blood. That Scripture has been misunderstood and misused through the years, but those are covenant words. Jesus was saying, “I am in covenant relationship with you. I’ll let you eat My flesh before I’ll let you die.”

Abraham in Gen 15 provided the covenant animals at the instruction of God and God entered into a blood covenant with Abraham.

Now in Gen 18 we come to the covenant meal. The Lord appeared to Abraham just before He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham recognized who He was. He knew now was the time for the covenant meal so he went and he got the calf and the rest of the meal ready. This was a covenant meal that they had together. It was the celebration of the covenant that had been made with God. Since they were now one in covenant, the Lord shared with Abraham what He was about to do in Sodom and Gomorrah and responded to His covenant partner’s requests.

Later on, in the dedication of Israel, the same basic thing happens. God was working out this blood covenant for His people as an example for what He did for us at Calvary and in the communion table of the Lord. God made a covenant with Abraham and, in the Passover, He established and enlarged that covenant with the nation of Israel. In the process of doing that He gave them the blood covenant meal.

 ”And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.” [Ex. 12:7-8]

They were in bondage in the country of Egypt. God was responding on the basis of His blood covenant with Abraham and was now establishing that covenant with Israel. It was the continuation of the Abrahamic covenant. Now it was being adopted by the nation. [One of the reasons that God’s judgment was so harsh against Israel was because they broke the blood covenant which they agreed to in Egypt through the Passover.] This was a new beginning. It was a starting out of the covenant or a renewing of the covenant.

“This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.” [Ex. 12:2]
From this point on Israel had basically two years. There was the regular year tied to the harvest and the religious year beginning at the Passover. [The same is true of us. When we come to Christ and we receive Him as our personal Saviour, it's a brand new year. Old things have passed away and all things are become new.] The covenant was being renewed. The bondages were going to be broken and they were going to go a free people but also a covenant people covenanted to the Creator of the universe.

God brought the people to Mr. Sinai. There He gave them the terms of the covenant which we know as the Mosaic Law. Then He put half the tribes on one hill and half the tribes on another hill and He gave the blessings and cursings of the covenant. Read Deut. 27 & 28. They declared both the blessing and the cursing of the covenant.

"And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the LORD: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him. And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words. Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid
not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.” [Ex. 24:1-11]

Part of this whole process was the covenant meal. The blood of that sacrificial animal represented the blood of the covenant. It showed God in blood covenant with the nation so that after the sprinkling of the blood they were under the blood of the covenant. They ate the covenant meal as proof of their agreement in the covenant. Not only did they eat it continually in the sacrifices but the leaders of Israel actually ate the covenant meal in the presence of God. There were people that went up into that mountain with Moses, they saw God, and as representatives of the nation they sat down and ate a covenant meal in the presence of God. This was declaring that they were now the people of God.

We also have a new covenant meal.

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.” [1 Peter 1:2]

“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” [Heb. 12:22-24]

The above Scriptures show that the sprinkling of blood in the Old Testament looked forward to the sprinkling of Christ’s blood, poured out a Calvary, in the New Testament. We have been sprinkled with the blood of Christ and have been made partakers of the covenant relationship with God. Central to everything we have, everything we every hope to have, and even eternity itself, is the blood of the cross of Calvary. The cross must always be in the forefront. The cross and the blood that was shed there are not just for the forgiveness of sins, although that is an vital part of it, it is to bring us into covenant relationship with God.

We also partake of a covenant meal. That covenant meal is partaking of Christ. We must constantly be partaking of Him, not just in the
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communion table, but on a daily basis. We need to come into that meal relationship with God where we identify in Him and His life flows within us. Christianity is not something we do on Sunday and then go home and take it off like a suit jacket.

Jesus, when He gave those words in John 6, was giving us covenant words. He was pierced at Calvary. His body was broken and He cried out, “It is finished.” Everything that was needed to establish the New Testament was accomplished - it is finished. The very heart of the self-surrendered victim was broken on Calvary so that we could come to covenant relationship with Him. The life of the Son of God, the seed of Abraham, was poured out that we could come and relate to Him. We become sharers of His life and power. We come without sin for He has already received the wages of sin. He who had life within Himself laid down His own life that we who had nothing but death within might have life. Through Him we partake of the Eternal Covenant or of the Divine nature.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." [Gal. 2:20]

We become one with Christ by sharing His blood. This is through first of all receiving Jesus as our personal Saviour and walking with Him. Second, it is by faith partaking of the communion table of the Lord. There are two sides of the covenant. He gave Himself and when He was crucified I was crucified and the life that I now live is not my own, as Paul says, but it is the life of God. That’s what it means to partake of Him. We need to come to the place where we are not our own but we are bought with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We live in a society today that tells us we have to do our own thing and look out for #1, but that’s not Biblical. The way of God is Christ living in me and by covenant relationship coming to the place where we live for Him and everything we do is for His purpose and His glory. It doesn’t matter how big or small it is or whether its noticed on earth or not but all of our life is for His glory.

We share the body and blood of the Lord Jesus by faith as one with Him in all the privileges of sonship. We share in the full privileges as a son or daughter of God because we are partakers of Him. Eating His flesh and drinking His blood is symbolic talk about the closeness of the union between Christ and His people where we actually begin to assimilate Him,
taking on His nature just as we take we take bread or drink and it becomes a part of our body. So we partake of Him and He becomes a part of us. We don’t show it all at once but there should be a growth and a development in our lives. We should become more like Him today than we were yesterday because we are partaking of Him constantly.

One way we demonstrate the new life within is by assembling together with other Christians. If we are walking with God, if we are assimilating Him, we are part of the covenant with God’s people and we want to be together. The mark of the early church was that they got together every chance they had. They were excited about coming together to worship. They had their down times just as we do but it was a demonstration that they were a part of the family of God. There should be a hunger and a desire in our heart to worship and flow together even when things go wrong. We’re in a battle and things don’t always go our way. What we know is that we come out on the winning side. WE win.

Sure we have battles and sometimes we wonder what’s going to happen, but we have been made partakers of the divine nature so we win. That’s means we keep going even when it is difficult because we are assimilating Him. Everything didn’t always go Jesus’ way either. Jesus ended up on a cross, and while that was the greatest victory humankind ever knew, those who stood around the cross that day didn’t understand it.

”And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” [Matt. 26:26-28]

Our union with Him is then demonstrated by assembling together and by the table of the Lord which is not an altar of sacrifice but a table of communion. The Passover was partly an altar of sacrifice, but the table of communion is not. The table of communion is intended to be a communion of saints who are flowing together in the blood covenant with their blood Brother. The communion table should be one of the most precious times we can have together as God’s people.

”The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”
When we come to the communion table of the Lord we are partaking of Him. He has become our covenant meal. When we partake of the true table of the Lord we, first of all, demonstrate that by faith we are partaking of Jesus and are assimilating more of Him. We are taking a further step of being changed into His image. Second, as Corinthians says, because we have partaken of that one bread we being many are one bread. When we partake of communion, it makes us one as well because He is not divided. We come to communion to remember His death, by faith partake of His body and blood, but also to demonstration our unity one with another. We are having a covenant meal with God, but we are also showing our oneness with one another. That means when we partake of the communion table we are declaring before God that we are in unity one with another. We are committed to standing together even when we disagree.