

# Faith in the Covenant - Part 1

## WWJD Journey Preview

2 Corinthians 2:14-16

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God has called us to be disciples. Every believer in Jesus is a disciple. If that's what we are, then we need to be good ones, and, as fully devoted followers of Jesus, we can see and know what the fruit of that will look like in our lives.

2 Corinthians 2:14-16 ESV

*"But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads [diffuses] the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?"*

God's plan is that we would be carriers of his *aroma* - that our very presence would bring the smell of Jesus in wherever we go. God causes the aroma of Christ to come out of disciples by heating us up. He does that by bringing us into situations where we must choose to walk by faith, even when the heat and the pressure are on. Our faith mixed with the heat of his presence will then cause the aroma of Christ to be heated up and stirred up in us so people notice it whenever we enter the room.

The aroma of Christ has a very divisive effect. Not everyone will like it, and we will often be rejected for it because the Bible says that it's the smell of grace and of Truth. Fellow believers will welcome it. Hungry seekers will be drawn to it. But, those whose hearts are not open and who want nothing to do with God will absolutely be repelled by it. The question is, what and who does our fragrance attract when we show up? A good indicator is how people react to the fragrance that we leak out. That's the way it was with Jesus.

We don't get to be people-pleasers and disciples of Jesus at the same time. We have to decide whether we represent him or ourselves and our interests - because we can't do both. We can only do that the same way Jesus did, by the Holy Spirit as we submit to him by faith as disciples of Christ, the unworthy being made worthy, and then inviting other unworthy people in. That's the Gospel - the beginning of the smell of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 3:5,6,18 ESV. - Our sufficiency is from God! He makes us worthy.

*“Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 18] And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.”*

## **Faith in the Covenant**

We serve a covenant making God! There is a strong connection between walking by faith and our ability to experience covenant promises, benefits, and the good things of God. Godly, biblical covenants were life-and-death, binding agreements between God and his people that could never be changed or cancelled. The only way we can experience those things is to be disciples who walk by faith.

Faith is the basis for engaging God in his covenants, and apart from faith, we can't partake in those covenants that he makes with his people. Many of us are robbing ourselves of the glorious things that God has clearly and freely given to us because we are either ignorant or apathetic about engaging and understanding those things.

2 Timothy 2:13 AMP - God makes a covenant knowing the full implications

*“If we are faithless, He remains faithful [true to His word and His righteous character], for He cannot deny Himself.” [He is faithful even when we aren't]*

Ecclesiastes 3:14,15 NKJV

*“I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him. That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been; and God requires an account of what is past.”*

Many Christians approach God with an unbiblical, legalistic mindset that thinks God will only bless us if we're good enough, or if we get everything just right. But that's *not* the heart and character of God. The only basis of engaging God on covenant is not our works or our perfect track record - it's *faith*. He has provided all the grace necessary for us to get to the finish line and to be blessed along the way.

Ephesians 2:12 ESV - to Gentile believers, referring to the Abrahamic covenant

*“Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”*

Scripture says that we have been grafted in to the Vine. Paul links the idea of having no hope without God and the covenants that God made with Abraham, with now having hope and knowing God as New Testament Christians. Before we came to Christ we were excluded from all of those covenant promises. Many Christians approach the astounding covenant that God has made with us, his people through faith, by settling for a minimal, basic Christian life which won't get us through the heat or make us smell like Jesus when things get tough in hard times.

Many of us are *technically* under the covenant, but in reality are still *strangers* to the covenants of promise. It's one thing to be under God's covenant as a believer, but it's another to understand it and walk in it. It's a shame to have been grafted in to the beautiful vine of promises and the family of God and only experience a fraction of what He intends for us because of our ignorance and apathy.

Proverbs 2:1-5 ESV

*"My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding, yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."*

Discipleship and a walk with Jesus are not for casual and convenience-oriented Christians. Every good thing God has for us is hidden just enough where only the diligent can find. These are hidden that we might have the reward of finding them. God does this on purpose. He's not hiding things *from* us, he's hiding things for us - to engage our heart through relationship with us - drawing us deeper and closer into himself because, as we seek after him with our whole heart, he rewards us by allowing us to find him. But it's only for those diligent seekers who *value* him.

A biblical covenant was a solemn, high-stakes, oath-bound relationship between two parties. Biblical covenants are how God expresses his intention towards and promises for his people who will come meet him on his terms. Unlike contracts that can be easily broken today, a covenant was much stronger. It was a literal life-or-death arrangement that could not be broken.

This was foreshadowing the death that Jesus would pay, when he paid it all for us, so that God could uphold his part of the bargain and ours, even though we couldn't do our part. God never lessened the penalty or the stakes of the covenant. He chose to fulfill it all himself, because he loves us that much.

A man separate from Christ is a stranger to his covenants - he does not know what they are, and he's not eligible for their provisions. But, once we are joined to Christ - grafted into the Vine - his covenants become our possession. But to benefit from them, we must put them into practice by understanding what they are and by walking by faith. As Charles Spurgeon once said, *"God's dealings with men have always had a covenant character. It hath so pleased Him to arrange it, that He will not deal with us except through a covenant, nor can we deal with Him except in the same manner."*

The covenants of God are, literally, the platform and the grounds for our faith to stand on and to walk on, so that we can experience what God has designed for us. In order to appropriate these covenant promises, a man must know what they are, be assured that God will keep them, and be aware of what they mean for him.

Scripture has six different covenants that God made with men. The first was with Adam in the Garden. He also made a covenant with Noah to never flood the earth again. Then God made a covenant of faith with Abraham. He also made covenants with Moses and with David. Then, Jesus made the new covenant with us, his Church, through his death, his burial, and his resurrection. There's a direct connection that God made with Abraham, and the new covenant that we now have in Jesus Christ. They are designed to work *together*, and to provide understanding and fulfillment for one another.

### **The Believer's relationship to Abraham**

In Hebrews chapter 11, the Bible talks about Abraham as the "father of faith," not just for the natural descendants of Israel (Isaac, Jacob, and all their descendants), but for all who would ever engage God by faith - including Gentiles who have been grafted in. The person who is in Christ has become an heir of the promises God made to Abraham. An heir is a son or daughter who is in line to receive an inheritance, a legitimate part of the family, included in all of the family benefits.

Galatians 3:7,9,29

*"Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."*

As Gentiles, we've been adopted into this original family that we didn't belong to, as full heirs, receiving a full inheritance of promises, benefits, and good things that we didn't earn, deserve, or otherwise have any right to. Understanding that at a deep, heart level changes every aspect of our life (that literally produced adoption in the world). The blessing of Abraham means that whatever Abraham received, the believer today can receive. That's simple, but it's missed by many in the Church today.

Jewish people throughout history, even those who have not recognized their Messiah yet, have experienced blessing, provision, and favor because the covenants of promise that God made with them continued to be in operation, as they were heirs of those promises. Death triggers any inheritance, and when Jesus died on the cross, that triggered the full inheritance that God originally promised to Abraham.

As people who walk by faith in the full inheritance triggered by Jesus, recognizing him as Messiah, we now walk in a higher level of the full and complete fulfillment of the promises that God made than even God's *original* people did throughout the Old Testament. As we spread the aroma of Christ everywhere, we're declaring the fulfillment of those promises and inviting others to join in them with us.

Hebrews 11:39,40 NLT

*"All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us."*

Abraham didn't experience the fullness of his own blessing, but we can, because it's been fulfilled in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and now we don't just have a *partial* inheritance, we have a full inheritance. Jewish people today, who don't know the Messiah, are walking in a partial inheritance *still*, because God never cancelled it. But, for those of us who know Jesus and have had the death-triggered fullness of our inheritance given to us, we have the opportunity to walk in the fullness of what was promised to Abraham and to show it, not to the Jewish people, but to Gentiles and others who haven't yet been grafted in, and invite everybody to the party.

This is the plan of God - only as we give him our all can we have what our families need. We have to let go of what they think and abandon ourselves to the Lord, and trust that his aroma in us will draw them to Jesus. He will do it *through* us, as he diffuses the knowledge and fragrance of himself everywhere that we go.

## **WHAT DID GOD PROMISE TO ABRAHAM?**

Genesis 12:1-3 - The first account of God's personal dealings with Abraham

*"Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'"*

2 Corinthians 6:17 NKJV

*"Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you."*

God promised seven things to Abraham that are descriptive of his heart, will, desire, and intent towards us as much as towards Abraham:

**1]** *"I will make you a great nation."* God created "nations" That was *his* idea. He deals in nations - individuals, yes - but also entire nations. The character of a nation is formed by whatever its people unite around. If around him, and character forged *by* Him, then the nation whose God is the Lord is whom he can bless. Then we will be a blessing to *others* and he will make a great nation of *us*.

God's desire is that wherever we, his people, are, that we would position ourselves in such a way that He can create a great *nation* out of *us* - as we agree with, believe in, and walk by faith in the very promise that God made to Abraham. Then, a part of us is in elections, prayers, participation, voting, and involvement in the *nation*.

**2]** *"I will bless you."* Bless means *"empowered to succeed."* It's not a mystery - God's heart is towards us - not *messing* with us, or to see how much we can take. Everything he's doing in our life is designed to get us to a place where he can bless us more and trust us with the blessing like a good daddy. This can often involve quite a process!

**3]** *"I will make your name great."* This promise is another way to say, *"I will give you great influence."* God means for his people to wield influence in society, nations, the workplace, families - *everywhere*. The aroma of Christ is not just so we can smell good but to get attention, and to make a difference. People should recognize there is Someone at work in us that takes us far beyond our pedigree and human capacity as we trust him in faith.

God brings the influence of his name to those who are his, lending his influence to us when we become a bearer of his name, having stepped into our inheritance *by faith* as an heir and son or daughter of the King. A *son* of the King is as good as the King *himself* walking into the room. Practically speaking, God allows us outsized influence because of his name - just look at Gideon, Rahab, and Mary the sister of Martha.

**4]** *"You will be a blessing"* We will be bringing aroma everywhere we go.

**5]** *"I will bless those who bless you."* We should learn to receive. God's method is to bless others is through us!

6] *"I will curse those who curse you."* Romans 12:19-21 says, *"For it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'"* and to the contrary, *"if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."* That means when our hands are "on," his hand is "off". When we bless our enemies, it literally unleashes the covenant promise of God to go deal with that person.

7] *"In you all the families of the earth will be blessed."* The family was God's idea, and there's a reason why there's a large-scale, demonic attack on the nuclear family in America today. It's the unit by which God wants to bless *other* families. There is covenant grace for your family if you are in faith. As we in faith strengthen our families in the fear, admonition, and worship of the Lord - teaching the truth, modeling what's right, and what God desires, it won't just be effective for ours, but God will bless other families through ours!

Exodus 2:23,24 ESV

*"During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob."*

Some of us need to cry out for help, like the Israelites did, and understand that his response to *us* will be to remember his covenant to us like he did for *them*. Just like he delivered them miraculously, he can deliver *us*, our *family*, our *situation* ...and whatever we're stuck in.

## Prayer

*Father, in Jesus' name, we recognize that You have given us so much more than we've given You credit for - that there's so much more that You want to do in our lives. And, right now, like the Israelites, we cry out to You for help and want to engage Your covenant and say, Lord, would You remember Your covenant to us? Would You teach us to walk in it by faith?*

*In Jesus' name. Amen*