

New Covenant
West Side Meetings
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We've been talking about the great division of the cross. And in various ways, with various focuses, we've been looking at what exists on each side of this great divide. On one side of God's cross there is death and on the other side there is life. On one side there is an Adamic man living in Adamic creation. On the other side there is a new man living as a new creation. On one side there are natural copies, patterns, shadows of spiritual things. On the other side there is the substance and reality of those spiritual things.

We've been looking more specifically at the relationship with God that exists on either side of this great divide. There are two relationships that God has established. One is no more. It is obsolete, it is over, it has been put away. It has served its time, it has served its function, it testified of a different relationship. And when that different relationship came, the first relationship was made obsolete.

I know for most of my life as a Christian I had no idea how significant this was. I had no idea how necessary, how essential it was to understand the nature of God's relationship with me in Christ. It sounded like a theological teaching. I had no idea that it was the most personal and practical reality that I could ever know. For you as a Christian, there is nothing more important than learning, understanding, walking in, the relationship that God has established with you in Christ. Every thing else is vanity and imagination.

I wish I could think of a stronger way to say this. But then again, only the spirit of God can show us how necessary this is. We walk through our lives thinking our thoughts about God, praying the prayers that are important and relevant to our plans, hearing and applying Scriptures in ways that support our own ideas. We don't know that we are doing this, but we relate to God according to a relationship that we have invented, or one that has been described to us by a person, or one that we have read about in a book. This is so familiar to us that it doesn't sound dangerous. This is so common that we never even question it.

I am not suggesting that we do not have a relationship with God. I am simply suggesting that we do not understand or experience the relationship that God has established with us. God has established a relationship with us that is Christ. And only to the degree that we know Christ do we know and experience this relationship. This is so important. God's relationship with you is Christ. I don't mean God's relationship with you is simply *because of* Christ. I don't mean God's relationship with you is merely *through* Christ. I mean, very specifically, that God's relationship with you he **IS** Christ.

The new covenant can be defined in one word. Our relationship with God can be defined in one word. That word is Christ. The question is always do we know Christ

as our relationship with the Father. What does that even mean? What does it mean that our covenant with God is a person. How can that even make sense?

Seven or eight hundred years before Christ's God spoke through the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah recorded the words of the Father to his Son with regard to the coming salvation of Israel. Speaking of Jesus, the Father says this:

***Isa 42:6** "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and **give You as a covenant to the people**, As a light to the Gentiles,*

***Isa 49:8** Thus says the LORD: "In an acceptable time I have heard You, And in the day of salvation I have helped You; I will preserve You **and give You As a covenant to the people**, To restore the earth, To cause them to inherit the desolate heritages;*

We've talked about how a covenant is a relationship. It is a particular nature and character of a relationship. So what does it mean that Christ is given to us as a covenant? Christ is the specific nature and character of a relationship. You see, this is the new covenant. The new covenant is not just a way that God has decided to relate to you. The new covenant is the person, the Son, in whom God relates to you. When we understand the Son, we understand the relationship. When we grow to know Him we grow in our understanding of the relationship.

What do I mean? I mean that every aspect of your relationship with the Father is something that Christ is. Christ is your relationship with God. Christ is how God sees you, where God sees you, how God knows you. Christ is also how you know the Father. It is Christ's relationship with His Father that you have received. You have entered into a relationship that existed and was defined long before you ever came into it.

Most of you have read or listened to my series called Not I but Christ. Do you remember my analogy about my wife when she was pregnant? It's not a perfect analogy, but it gets a point across. Jessie and I had a particular relationship, a covenant relationship before we had any children. The relationship was between her and I. She was bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. We were joined in a specific kind of relationship. To provided for her. I took care of her. For example, I made sure she was safe and healthy and warm. I speak to her in a certain way. These things are part of our covenant relationship called marriage.

Well, after a while, Jessie conceived and had our son Ezra in her womb. So, inside of her is another person. Inside of her is the life of another individual that is joined to her. By virtue of the covenant relationship that Jessie and I have, this baby, which is hidden in Jessie, receives the benefits of a covenant relationship that existed before he was even conceived. By virtue of me fulfilling my covenant with Jessie, I am thereby protecting, loving, providing for, cherishing, and speaking kindly to this indwelling little one. He relates to me in her. He experiences the relationship that I already have with her. If I provide for her, he is provided for. If I hug my wife, he receives a hug. When Jessie goes to sleep in a warm house, he stays warm within her.

Here's my point, for nine months Jessie **is** Ezra's relationship with me. For those nine months, he does not have a relationship with me that is something other than Jessie.

He does not have something other than *her* life and *her* relationship with me. He is however a full partaker and beneficiary of my covenant relationship of her.

This is what I'm trying to say about your relationship with God. Your relationship with God is Christ. You are in Christ, Christ is in you, Christ is your life, you have inherited Christ's relationship with his Father. It is a settled, defined, perfect relationship. It cannot be altered or changed. It can only be known or ignored. If you are a Christian, your relationship, your covenant, with God is the person of Jesus Christ.

This may sound simple, but I promise you that there are hundreds of ways that we do not actually believe this to be true. For instance, we say things all the time like -- "I'm working on my relationship with God". Or, "I'm a Christian, but I don't have a very close relationship with God". Or, "for several years I had a close relationship with God, but now I am distant from God". You see, none of these statements make any sense. **Your relationship with God never changes.** Your relationship with God is Christ. The only thing that changes is your awareness of, experience of, the relationship that exists.

If you are a Christian, your relationship with God cannot get any better. Your relationship with God cannot get any worse. You don't need to work on it. You don't need to fix it. There's no way to change it. You only have to know the person who is your relationship to his Father.

In the eyes of God, everything having to do with your relationship to him was finished as a matter of fact the moment were born again. Immediately God sees you as the body of his Son. You are the body of Christ. Immediately the fullness of God's relationship to his Son is yours. That is why Scripture says that you are a co-heir with Christ, you were made alive with him, raised with him, seated with him, etc. This is why the Scriptures says that the spirit of the Son cries out within you Abba Father. Immediately upon new birth you have come to a relationship with God that is the fullness of Christ. And again, our problem is not that we need a better relationship. Our problem is that we have no idea what it means to be in Christ.

If we fail to see as we are seen, know as we are known, to walk in his understanding of this relationship, walk in the light as he is in the light... then we will walk in the darkness of our own comprehension of salvation. We will walk in the imaginations of what it means in our mind to have relationship with God. When we do not see Christ as our relationship with the Father, and we simply see ourselves. We seek to relate to God according to ourselves. And this is why Christians live their lives trying to develop and improve their own private relationship with God that is not defined and known as the person of Jesus Christ.

This is a huge problem. We seek to establish what God has already established. We seek to establish a relationship with him when he has already established and defined his relationship with us in his Son, as his Son. And so, even though we are born again, we continue to relate to God as though nothing has happened. Yes, we know our sins have been forgiven. We heard that much from the preacher. But as far as we know WE are still living for God. We are still trying to please God. We are still trying to work on our relationship with God.

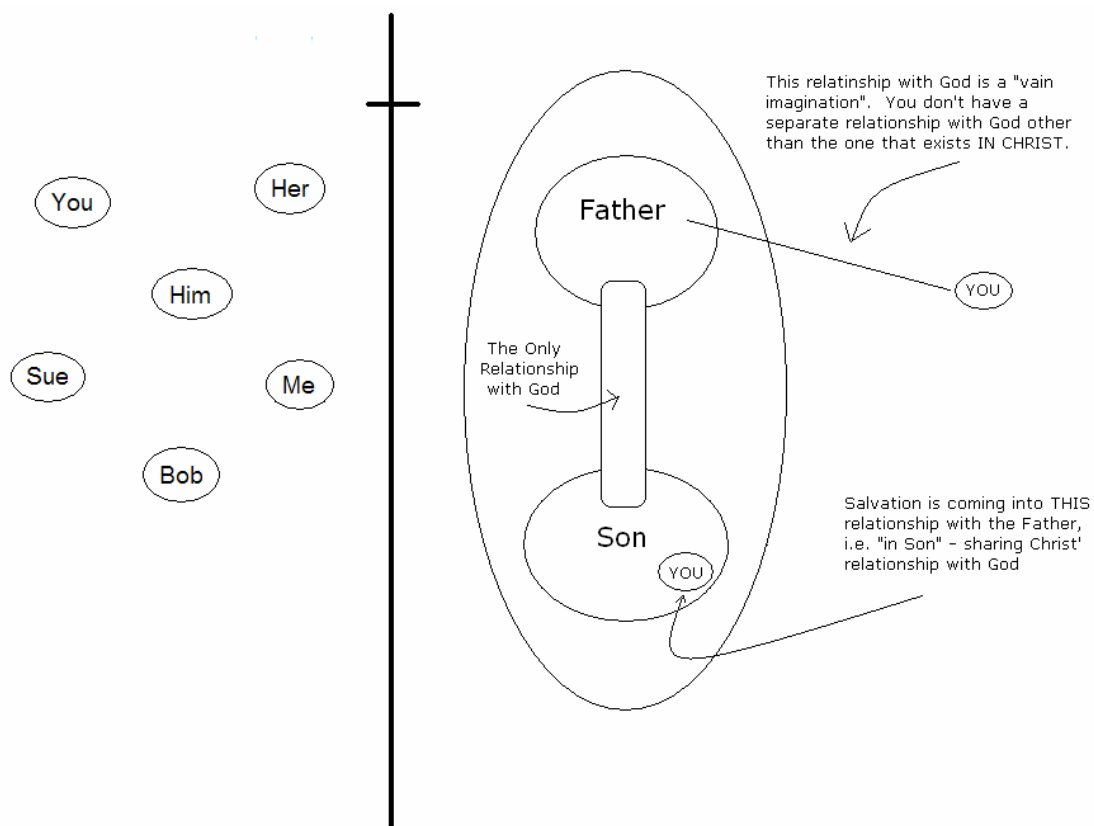
And like I said last week, these imaginations about our relationship with God become firmly entrenched in our hearts. When we add time, and effort, and prayer, and tears

to these imaginations it becomes almost impossible for us to let them go. But we must let them go. We must always be letting him go. Because to whatever extent that we fail to see the relationship as it was established and finished by God in Christ -- to that extent we have created and established a relationship with God that is the figment of our own imagination.

Again, please don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that the relationship itself does not exist. I am saying that the nature of the relationship, the reality of the relationship, must be God's view of his covenant or else it is our fictitious ideas.

You see, this relationship that we have come to in Christ was established in eternity. The relationship between the Son and the Father is what we have come to, what we have been permitted to participate in. We have certainly not become gods. But we have, through the grace of God, been grafted into his relationship with his Son. And this relationship was established before the foundation of the world. It existed between the Father and the Son before you or your world was ever created. It exists for you to participate in, but not for you to define. It exists for you to discover through the revealing of the spirit of truth. But you must never give your thoughts any room to speculate or describe this relationship.

I want you to look at the following diagram and see if this will help illustrate what I'm trying to say.



Long before God ever created anything he had a relationship with his Son. It was a relationship where all things were shared between them. It was a relationship of life,

light, glory, life, all of these words that we read about in the Bible. Before these words were words in human languages, they were part of the Father's relationship to his Son.

The Son left the form of this relationship and became a man. He became a man in order to bear in himself the judgment and end of all that had fallen short of the glory of God. And in doing so, Christ opened a door. He opened a door to relationship -- relationship with his Father. Having judged sin through his death he could now offer salvation through his life. But we need to understand that his life he *is* our salvation.

What we call salvation God calls "my Son". What we call being saved, God calls being in my Son. What we call new life, God calls the eternal life of my Son.

So having been crucified, buried, and resurrected, Christ returns to his Father. He returns to a restored relationship that he had before the world was made. He talks about this in John chapter 17. He says, Father I'm returning to you, to the relationship that we had before the world was created. And yet, Father, I desire that those whom you have given me out of the world be with me where I am -- I am in you, they are in me, and I in them.

So when we are saved God doesn't establish a separate, private relationship with you in me. It's actually far better than that. When we are saved, God grants us access into his exclusive relationship with his one and only Son. This is called being in Christ. This relationship is extremely personal, because he is the life of your soul. But this relationship is not private, or independent, or anything separate from Christ. This relationship that God has given you is called the new covenant and it IS CHRIST.

Let me say something that at first may sound a bit strange, but it is true and it is wonderful. **You do not have your own relationship with God. You have Christ's relationship with his Father.** So many people in the body of Christ like to talk about our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And there certainly is a sense in which that is very true. Our relationship with God is extremely personal because he is the very life of our soul. And he is desiring to, and delighting in, guiding our soul into the truth in every way that we give him room.

But there is also a sense in which this expression can be misleading. You do not have a personal relationship with God that is exclusive and different than everybody else's. God is not a respecter of persons. God is not relating to you according to the flesh. Your personal relationship with God is the same as my personal relationship with God. It is Christ. God only has one kind of relationship with humanity, and that relationship is the person of Jesus Christ. That is the new covenant.

So in this diagram you can see that you and I have been brought into a relationship that existed before we were ever born. Its like Ezra in the womb of Jessie when she was pregnant. We have become partakers in a very personal way of something that existed and was defined before we were conceived. If Jessie had octuplets in her womb, every one of them would have the exact same relationship with me through her. Though they would all be individuals, they still had one way in which they had entered into a covenant relationship with their father.

This is how it works with you and I in Christ. We don't have our own independent relationship with God. All of our thoughts along these lines are imaginations.

Everything that exists in our mind about our relationship with God that is not something that he has revealed about the person of Christ simply isn't true.

So getting back to what I said towards the beginning of this message -- the new covenant is a person. The new covenant is a relationship that we have with God, and that relationship is a person. That relationship is Christ. Christ is our sonship with his Father. Christ is our righteousness in the sight of his Father. Christ is the person and place in whom we are accepted by the Father. We are "accepted in the beloved". We are transferred out of the kingdom of darkness and made to dwell in the Son of his love.

Everything that God has for you is in Christ, and is experienced as Christ. The moment you were born again you enter into a relationship with God that is finished and established and set and perfect. There is nothing for you to add to it. There is no way for you to improve it. There is no way for you to screw it up. Your responsibility is very simple. Simple to say and yet harder to experience. Your responsibility is to let him teach you the relationship that is called Christ. Your responsibility is to make room in your heart for him to write the reality of the new covenant.

This sounds simple, and indeed it is simple. But we resist it, we resist letting him write the new covenant on our hearts because we are still so enamored with our own fictitious thoughts about relating to God. Every realization of Christ replaces a realization of self.

So what does God have to do in order to grow us up in Christ? What is required, how does he deal with us, in order to help us to walk in this relationship, this covenant? Once again, the concept is simple but the experience is often rejected. The idea is basic, but the reality of the cross. **For God to teach us the new covenant he needs to bring us into his view of this relationship.**

I used to use an analogy having to do with one of my children. Lets just use Ezra is an example. Ezra is my son, even my firstborn. But long before Ezra understands what it means to be my son, or what it even means to be a human, I understand. I know what he is before he can even crawl, or eat solid food, or talk. I know who he is in relation to me. I understand the nature of our relationship.

This relationship between me and Ezra is not up for debate. It's not open for interpretation. It is established through birth. It is established through life. There's nothing that Ezra has to do to make himself my son. That's simply how he was born. The only variable in this situation, the only question, is the extent to which he grows up into the full knowledge and enjoyment of all that this relationship can mean.

As for me, the father, I know full well the nature of the relationship long before he does. I know all the benefits that he could enjoy if he learns to walk in this relationship. I know that he has love, protection, instruction, financial provision, etc. all available to him as part of this relationship.

And regardless of what he understands, or how he acts, my understanding of our relationship determines how I deal with him. My understanding does not necessarily have anything to do with how he acts or how he sees himself. But it always determines how I deal with them. In all things, I am faithful to my view, my understanding of our relationship. I'm not going to stoop to his level of comprehension. In other words, I'm not going to consider him less than my son just

because he doesn't know who he is. I'm never going to deal with him according to his comprehension. I am always going to deal with them according to the relationship that I know exists.

And what I'm going to do from the day he is born to the day he is grown is attempt to teach him the full nature and reality of what it means for him to be a son and relationship to a father.

This is precisely how God deals with us in Christ. God's understanding of his relationship with you in Christ is not up for debate. Nobody's opinion has any place in this relationship. God's understanding of his relationship to you in Christ, the new covenant, is going to determine exactly how he deals with you in every situation, and in every day. God's understanding will not determine how you react, or how you respond, or whether you share his view of this relationship. But it will always determine how he relates to you.

In most cases with Ezra, when he was a baby, before he understood anything about who he was, who I was, or about our relationship... in most cases he acted in ways that were very different from what I knew him to be. If Ezra decided that he was Bob the tomato, and I was Larry the cucumber, that would not change the way I related to him. I would still deal with him according to who I knew him to be. I would do all that I could to bring him into a comprehension of the relationship that exists by birth.

Here's what I'm saying. God has given you a relationship with him that is defined in and as the person of Christ. There is nothing lacking in this relationship except in your comprehension of what it is. And when I say comprehension I mean a spirit-given revealing, understanding that is not cerebral but rather spiritual. And God is seeking to do with one primary thing in your life right now. He's not trying to get you to do a bunch of things, and stop a bunch of other things, learn about lessons, to apply a bunch of Scriptures. The spirit of God is seeking to bring you to the same understanding of your relationship with God that he has. The spirit of God is seeking to reveal in you the relationship that you have with God. And that relationship has a name. And that name is Jesus Christ.