

## Fully Accepting God'S Sovereignty (Part Two)

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This sermon is the last half of the message that I personally believe was the most important of the four that I gave at the Feast of Tabernacles. It was given on the afternoon of the weekly Sabbath, and involved our fully accepting the sovereignty of God.

The way we think of God has much to do if whether or not we are ever going to glorify Him. But John 17:3 teaches us that eternal life is to *know* God. The word “know” does not merely indicate knowledge about Him, but rather concerns an intimate and personal knowledge of Him obtained by experience with Him in the daily matters of a life lived together.

It is not general knowledge that He truly *does* live or that He is the Creator, or that He lives in heaven, but rather it is *specific* knowledge of His character, His attitude, His patterns of thinking, the way He may react, and the depth of His loving kindness and grace. It is, in brief, a constant awareness of Him. Knowledge of His trustworthiness and patience is very important as a conviction of His awareness in you as an individual. These elements and many more are very important to two who are planning on marrying each other and committing their lives to each other for eternity.

I want you to turn with me to Hebrews 11. In a way this entire sermon is built around one verse in this chapter. The subject here is Moses.

**Hebrews 11:27** By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

This succinct statement contains what made the difference between those who succeeded to live by faith, and thus made it into the Promised Land, from those of the original group which left Egypt that died in the wilderness. Those who succeeded ‘saw’ God.

What we are considering in this verse is perhaps the simplest and the clearest defining of the nature of faith in the entire Bible. People who see God know intimate things about Him that can only be obtained by those in a close relationship with Him.

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Two) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Recall that the book of Hebrews was written to encourage and give counsel to a group of people who were undergoing severe trials. It was written to help them persevere through the trials, thus remaining on track to the Kingdom of God. Now Moses is a specific illustration at this point of living by faith. He is described in his relationship with God as being sustained in persevering as if he saw God with his own bodily eyes.

In verse 1 of Hebrews 11 something is added here, where it says:

**Hebrews 11:1** Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

That word “substance” can also be translated as “that which stands under.” In other words, a foundation. What this verse adds to this degree of faith that Moses had is the foundation that stands under one supporting the manner of one’s life. Now the manner of Moses’ life was lived in faith, so Moses lived his life with confidence, conviction that God was there always.

Now how can one live by faith if one does not have sufficient knowledge of the sovereign greatness, the closeness, and the awesome grace of God shown in the mercy He has already given that allows us to have even the barest of a relationship with Him, and then truly begin to come to a much deeper, broader relationship and really and truly fear Him?

A recent Barna poll reveals that over 80% of Americans believe that God exists, but how is that affecting their conduct? And that thought triggers another thought: that the immorality of the American people reveals that they are not very concerned about being answerable to God. They have heard *of* Him, but they do not *know* Him. If they really *knew* Him, and were behaving the way they are, they would be *terrified*!

Turn now with me to a verse that is very important to you and me to understand in regard to our relationship with Jesus Christ, who is our God.

**II Timothy 2:11-13** This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

In other words—“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.” He is operating

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Two) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

*always* on the same wavelength. His conduct is always the same as His character.

This warning is given directly to God's children. This is not going out to the world. Eventually of course it will, but this was an epistle written to God's children, and it is—that despite how we personally might relate to God as shown by the way we live—God *cannot* deny what He truly is, and thus an important truth begins to appear. God loves—and we certainly can be certain of that—and He generally gives to His children, but *because* God loves, He also judges, thus requiring His children to live up to Family standards that glorify Him and His Family. He will live and act as He truly is regardless of what we personally think or how we choose to live. He cannot deny Himself. His character never changes.

The Friday evening before I gave the first part of this sermon during the Feast, we saw via a DVD showing that others besides the church of God are closely watching what is going on in and to the United States of America. That pastor primarily expounded Isaiah 9:10, but I want us to look briefly at the warning to Israel contained within the entire paragraph.

**Isaiah 9:8-12** The Lord sent a word against Jacob, and it has fallen on Israel. All the people will know—Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria—who say in pride and arrogance of heart: “The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will replace them with cedars.” Therefore the Lord shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and spur his enemies on, the Syrians before and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with an open mouth [like the open mouth of a lion or some other beast attacking].

I do this because, since it is an accusation and a warning to Israel, it is also a warning to God's children as well. It affects us because we live here. Therefore, in verse 11 is a conjunction indicating a conclusion that will follow, and the warning is that because of our collective arrogant pride as a nation shown by our refusal to take His correction, He is going to turn nations against us in such a manner that we will lose our lofty status in the world, and be devoured. That is, our strength will be sapped away from us until we are helpless, almost as a child before a wild beast.

It is already happening, and we are living right in the midst of it. So, do you see God? Remember Hebrews 11:27 and Moses. But do you see God as in a major theme underlying much of my preaching since about 1990?

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Two) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

I can remember a sermon on faith given by Garner Ted Armstrong in which he used an illustration involving Missouri as the "Show Me State." The concept there attracted my attention, but the concept really did not hit me like a thunderbolt, but the "Show me" thought from Garner Ted's illustration lodged in my mind, and it just laid there. It resurfaced during the time that I was pastoring the Glendale-North Hollywood congregation enough that I formed my own sermon around GTA's illustration. I gradually continued to build it slowly, on to when we moved to Charlotte, and then on through the years.

That concept—"Do you see God?"—did not hit my mind as a fully-developed theme, but rather it was more like a seed planted that very slowly, in real time, grew. Now the nucleus—the seed—is the belief drawn largely from my own struggles, as well as my dealings with my brethren in Christ, that though we sincerely believe that God exists, we may have no truly strong conviction He and His Son are *personally* involved with us. The emphasis is on the words *personally involved*.

It is recorded in Luke 18:8 that Jesus asked this question of His followers: "When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on earth?" The answer to that is yes, but two unspoken questions are: (1) to what level is the faith? And, (2) is that faith truly being used? That is not answered in the context.

**Hebrews 3:12** Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;

I think we all know the overall story of the reason for Israel's failure in the wilderness. Of all who began the journey, only a very few actually made it into the Promised Land. It was Joshua and Caleb, and who else? Perhaps their families. God mercifully may have spared them as well because they lived life like Joshua and Caleb did. Everybody else who left Egypt died during the pilgrimage. That is important.

So only a few actually made it to the Promised Land. This reality is a fact intended by God to illustrate to us how much the personal relationship with God means to our salvation. There is no doubt Moses had a personal relationship with God, and Joshua, and Caleb. I am sure that Aaron did too, but neither he nor Moses actually got into the Promised Land. I am sure they are going to be in the Kingdom of God. Very few actually had a personal relationship with God, and we know this, that the ones who did are going to be in the Kingdom of God.

Let me repeat: I think part of the reason that this information about what happened in

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Two) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

the wilderness is important to us is because God wants to illustrate to us how important a personal relationship with Him is to our salvation. It is right here in Hebrews 3 that we have a broad answer as to why the great mass of people failed. They did not believe God. That is simple, but it is why they failed.

Israel's failure shows that just believing that God exists is not sufficient for salvation because it does not motivate people to faith. The people who failed in the wilderness knew God existed. I want us to see that this weakness of faith is not unique to them either. The extensive coverage in the Bible of the Israelites' release from slavery to Egypt, and their subsequent failure in the wilderness, is fully intended for us to learn from. It directly says that in I Corinthians 10.

The lesson to us is this: Their failure followed their symbolic conversion—their baptism in the Red Sea and the making of the covenant at Mount Sinai. Until there, everything was fine. I firmly believe that this current scattered condition of the church was deliberately caused and executed by God. Not Satan—God. Now why? It was to test and to build our faith. It was done to place the church in an entirely different environment so that He could test our reactions.

I recently saw a video of Herbert Armstrong speaking at a Feast of Tabernacles late in his life, and he clearly said in that message—"You people are not ready for the return of Jesus Christ!" Those were almost his exact words as he was sitting there on the stage doing what he did. Now when he died in 1986, it was made clear to the people in the Worldwide Church of God that Mr. Armstrong gave Joe Tkach the responsibility of preparing the church for the return of Christ.

In speaking at the Feast of Tabernacles I put both of these things together so that we would know that at the very end of Mr. Armstrong's life he still thought the church was not ready for the return of Jesus Christ, and that it had to be gotten ready. He gave that job to Joe Tkach. So what does that mean to you and me in practical fact with the story that is here in the Book? We are still on our pilgrimage, and so Hebrews really applies to us directly.

You might wonder, "Why did God do what He did to the Worldwide Church of God?" Well, being in Worldwide with its large congregations was exceedingly comfortable, and that tends to produce complacency, as the message to the Laodiceans shows. But over the past twenty years the practical day-to-day faith of those in the church of God has been seriously challenged. Many have departed from fellowshiping.

Hebrews 3:12 says: "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Two) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

unbelief in departing from the living God.” This word “departing” is a much stronger warning as seen from God’s point of view. The translators really smoothed the underlying Greek term out from what it could have been translated as. The term literally means “turn away.” Are you aware of people whose names and faces you remember that have already turned away from the church of God since you last attended with the Worldwide Church of God?

But it gets even stronger. The word literally means “turn away,” but its meaning within the historical context of the book of Hebrews is rather stronger, and better translated as “rebelled against.” Yes, they turned away, but it was stronger than that. It was “rebelled against,” and this is more clearly seen when compared with the faithfulness of both Christ and Moses as extolled in the first three verses. We are going to read these just so you see the context so that the comparison is made clear.

**Hebrews 3:1-3** Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house.

That is the background for the word “departing” that appears in Hebrews 3:12. Commentator William Barclay, in the Hebrews edition of the *Daily Bible Study*, translates this verse as, “Have a care, brothers, lest an evil and disobedient heart in any of you in a state of rebellion against the living God.” Now Barclay sees this a lot more clearly than the translators of the KJV and the NKJV saw it. At any rate, I believe that is how God sees the destruction of their relationship with Him. It was a rebellion against Him personally.

Now rebellion follows “*warning against*” when used within the context of the entire book of Hebrews (which is extolling the greatness of Jesus Christ who is our Sovereign God) and is the Israelites’ turning away from a living dynamic Person, not merely against some vague belief in a distance God.

I find it very difficult to believe that the Israelites did not believe that God exists after the many powerful witnesses they were given in Egypt with every one of the plagues, at the Red Sea when they walked through on dry ground, and at Mount Sinai when God came down on the Mount, and that whole thing was on fire, and they could barely stand the sound of the trumpet and the quaking of the ground.

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Two) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

The way we have to think of it is this: They had the same human nature we do, and I am sure that those things they experienced were really awesome. Their problem was not believing that God exists. Their problem was trusting Him.

I should expand that out just a little bit because, remember, they entered into a covenant with God and it was symbolically a marriage covenant. Their problem was trusting Him as one being faithful as one should be in a marriage covenant. They had that problem because they really did not know Him, and they did not know Him because during their pilgrimage they did not seek Him; that is, they did not seek to make the relationship grow. They just accepted things.

Now back to the founding of this nation. I have mentioned this many times, but it is an important principle. When this nation was founded a number of those among the Founding Fathers were deists. A deist is a person who can be fairly religious—one who can be quite moral, especially when judged against today's immoral standards—but a deist, though he believes in God's existence and that we are indeed answerable to Him to some degree, does not believe that God is actively involved in the operation of His creation. They believe basically that He created, and then stepped away to more or less observe it through the natural laws that He also created. In other words, they believed that God is not actively governing His creation, even in a broad sense. What this concept does in the human heart is to produce a passive relationship with Him. In other words, it produces Laodiceanism.

God's relationship with the Israelites was completely one-sided. He loved them with all His being, and He provided for them. So following through on the marriage agreement, He gave them food, He gave them water, He gave them protection. He put the cloud overhead. He guided them through the wilderness, and they just passively let Him supply all their needs, but did nothing in return to give that love back to Him.

The relationship was what we might say a guy chasing after the girl, and the girl running as fast away from him as he was running after her, and not running *toward* him like she should have been doing. You get the picture? It was a completely one-sided relationship, and brethren, this is what Laodiceanism is. Their mind is on something else. They are vacant in terms of their responsibilities to the relationship, and so the relationship is passive on the one side. They believe that God exists, but they are doing nothing to strengthen the relationship and meet the needs of both of them.

Thus, in the wilderness, these people really did not see God in their mind's eye, but Jesus said in John 3:3, "Without being born again, one cannot see the Kingdom of God." The Israelites had their problems with faith accepting His personal interest and

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Two) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)  
involvement in their individual lives on a day-to-day basis as they made their pilgrimage.

Now back to Hebrews 3 again. After he mentions this departing from the living God, he says:

**Hebrews 3:13** But exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Drop back to verse 7.

**Hebrews 3:7** Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you will hear His voice. . .

In verse 13 the word “today” comes up again, and in verse 15:

**Hebrews 3:15** While it is said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

By the word “today,” the apostle means, “Don’t put this off. Act!” The word “today,” used in the sense as it is here, means “as long as the opportunity exists.” Who knows when it will end? A very broad, clear way to put this is: This is our day of salvation, and nobody knows when the day will end for you and me. So at the same time that Paul was urging them to do something right away, he was suggesting that these people failed because they did not use what faith they had as a day-to-day function in life. Faith is not something to be held in reserve for the really *big* trials, but is to be the solid foundation for life as it is lived every day. It is an every-day concept.

Now living faith motivates. “*Living* faith” is a special kind of faith. Living faith motivates every thought meant to produce action to begin with what God requires. Paul here is urging the Hebrews, and us, to work toward using faith in God as the driving force of everything we do each and every day.

I want us to notice something vital to understand, especially in regard to faith. It is not something that is clearly stated here as it is at other places in the Bible, but we must understand what the Bible very frequently means by the term “hearing.” Notice what it says in verse 15: “while it is said: “Today, if you will hear His voice.”



I want you to notice that Paul is not urging them to hear the sound of God's voice. Rather, he is urging the people to whom he is writing (and that includes us) to hear the *sense* of what God desires for them, that on this occasion (Hebrews) came through the apostle Paul, the preacher, expounding it to them in this epistle. Paul is then urging them, and now us, to take time to really *get* what God says. Do not just zip right through things. Read it so that you understand the context as well as the mere meaning of the word.

**Hebrews 3:17-18** Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?

**Hebrews 4:2** For indeed the gospel was preached to us [meaning to present-day Christians or in the day that Paul was writing this] as well as to them; [They heard the gospel. How complete it was I do not know, but whatever it was it was enough for God, through Paul, to inspire that they heard the Gospel.] but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

A conclusion for this is: Now whether one actually literally physically hears the voice of God is of no importance. What is important for us (and of course for those people in Hebrews there) is to understand that whether hearing in our personal reading or hearing in preaching, that we might obey, because, unless one actually obeys one has not yet truly heard. That is the conclusion from what Paul said there. They did not obey. They heard the gospel. They heard Moses preaching it, and maybe others, but the words that they heard had no impact on their mind, and so they did not obey. They really did not hear, except for a physical sound.

Another way we can put this is, if the person continues to sin, he has not yet truly heard in the biblical sense what God is saying. Let us turn that again and put it another way. If a person continues sinning because God's Word does not motivate him to obedience to what God says—(Remember, God does not say it directly. A preacher says it, or it is preached to us because we are reading the word in the Book. In either way, we are being preached to. Are we really hearing, or are we just seeing words?)—then that person, in a worst case scenario, either does not believe God, or his belief is so weak he cannot, at this point, bring himself to actually literally, trust Him.

You have to excuse me here a little bit, because sometimes I get ahead of the story,

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Two) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

and we need to understand that hearing God is something that occurs gradually. We do not hear it all at once. We do not understand it all at once. We do not grasp it all at once, and what I personally am urging you, is—**do not give up!** Keep going over and over and over it again, if need be. This is why an exercise of faith is needed every day, and your reading is helping to instruct and build, increment by increment by increment. It might be tiny, but it is growing. In other words, it is growing because you are seeking God, and this is our responsibility.

Once we are converted, God has done a major thing in our life, and now He expects us to respond by seeking Him. He sought us out, and we have to give that love back by seeking Him, and this is where we find it—in the **Book!** We have to do it, though.

Now what happened to these people? They died in the wilderness because there was no relationship with God. They were just there. So the weakness is not that the people did not believe in His existence, but the weakness was that they did not trust what He said, and the reason they did not trust what He said was because, in reality, they really did not know Him.

If they had been growing in *knowing* Him, they would have beaten down the doors to have had a relationship with Him, because, to *know* Him is to *love* Him. Then you see up here (in the mind) what He is like, and that there is nobody better. And so, the Israelites, in the biblical sense—even to this day because they are in their graves now—have not yet heard. We will see more of this as we go along.

In Hebrews 4:2 Paul uses the Greek word *pistis* for the very first time in Hebrews. He will use it 31 more times after this first one. *Pistis* is translated either as “faith” or “faithfulness.” I believe that faithfulness is better here in Hebrews 4:2 because it is what they lacked. They had a foundational belief that He existed, but they lacked trust—that is, faithfulness—because they would not carry it out, and faithfulness is trusting God in continuous fashion. How? As shown by their conduct.

God has given us much, but it is our responsibility to hold firmly to these things by living them, and living them ingrains them into our character as habits that are good. This is the major reason for our works, because through habitual use they become so entrenched in our character we eventually do not even have to call them to mind. We just do it.

That is the way He wants it, because then we are thinking like God, we are acting like God, we are reacting like God. It has become habitual in our mind. Works do not save us. Works glorify God, and works ingrain His mind, His words into our character.

We are now going to go all the way back to Isaiah 55. You are familiar with this. We are going to kind of tear it apart.

**Isaiah 55:1-9** “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the sure mercies of David. Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, a leader and commander for the people. Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, and nations who do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, and the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you.” Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.

This paragraph represents an overall solution to this weakness that the Israelites in the wilderness had and what I do not want us to have. Remember I said earlier that the peoples’ problem in the wilderness was they did not seek God. It was just a passiveness in them that, well, they were just there. So this paragraph represents an overall solution to this weakness.

I want you to notice first of all in verse 1 that this paragraph begins in the form of a command: “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.” It is not merely a suggestion, but a direct charge from our Creator. Notice that this is addressed to His people, as the name of David in verses 3 and 4 indicates; thus the people He is directing this command to already know Him to some degree. The word “return” in verse 7 confirms this. Let us see that.

**Isaiah 55:7** “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LOORD.”

Thus that word “return,” and therefore the paragraph, indicates God and the ones to

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Two) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

whom He is speaking already have some level of a relationship, but there has been some loss of resolve on the part of those spoken to, and drifting apart has occurred.

Now He directly mentioned David in verses 3 and 4. David, at the time this was said and written, had been long dead, at least somewhere between 200 and 300 years. When this was written we see some symbolism involved in this paragraph. David is a symbol, and it puts a note of relationship to whom? To the Israelitish people, and because we know that David has been dead, it moves the time setting in such a way as it becomes not only a message to the people in Isaiah's time—(and we know God sent Isaiah because these people were drifting away from Him)—but the mention of David and the style of what is being said here shows that this could apply as a prophecy to you and me, . . . and brethren, it does. In one sense it applies to God's people all the time, but it especially involves us.

David is mentioned because David is a type of Jesus Christ in His office as King, and that further confirms that God is commanding this of those who already know and have a relationship with Him. In other words, David is, as a symbol, between us and Him. Those receiving this message links us to David, and David links us to God. He is putting all kinds of signs here so we can understand this applies to His children at any time.

That word “return” again shows that we already have a relationship, but the people God is addressing have not only drifted away, they are not making an effort to seek Him and strengthen the relationship. That is why the command. If they were already seeking Him, He would not have to say, “Hey! Come here! Listen to what I have to say.” “Seek Me,” is what He is yelling out to them.

Now we have to establish something else to clarify. One is that the command “to seek” is not being used in the sense of making effort to *find* Him for the purpose of establishing a relationship, because the relationship already exists. How can you return to something that does not exist? The relationship already exists, but rather “to seek” is being used in the sense of seeking Him in order to be like Him, and because He wants us to be more fully intimate with His will.

Verses 1 through 3 are important toward understanding that our relationship with Him is not without cost on our part. It does not come absolutely free.

**Isaiah 55:1** “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and you who have no money, come, buy and eat.” ...

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Two) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

In other words, this is given away, in a sense, freely, but there is a string attached.

**Isaiah 55:1** ... “Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

The cost has nothing at all to do with dollars and cents.

**Isaiah 55:2** “Why do you spend money for what is not bread. . .

Are you beginning to see that almost every term in here is a symbol for something else, even the word money?

**Isaiah 55:2** . . . and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance.

So verses 1 through 3 are important toward understanding that our relationship with Him is not without cost. Remember, in Romans 12 we are to be a living sacrifice. That is how the cost is paid. We sacrifice our life to our Savior, and to His Father. So this paragraph begins in the form of an urgent command—“Come”—and the sense to those addressed is that our paying the cost of seeking is obligatory if the relationship is to grow. It must be done.

There is no way around what we are reading here right now. It is obligatory. We must sacrifice ourselves to God, and so, in that sense, we are giving up our life. It is not money. It is something more precious than money. It is our time, our energy, our devotion, our love. That is what He wants.

Let us understand our position here. God not only loves us, He greatly desires that we be in His Kingdom, and at the same time He wants us to voluntarily show that we desire the relationship. That is costly. In addition, we need to see that He has every legal right to do this. It is not just a matter of creation. There is a legality that is involved here, and I want you to turn to something that you are very familiar with.

**Ezekiel 16:8** “When I [our Savior Jesus Christ] passed by you [Israel] again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you [as in a marriage oath] and entered into a covenant with you [as in a marriage

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covenant], and you became Mine,” says the Lord God.

There is the legality.

It is very interesting, and I find it extremely touching when we read Isaiah 55, that He is pleading for His bride to return to Him. What has happened to her? We know in Israel's case, they just went off and did their own thing. But brethren, what we have got to understand is that *we can drift too*. We have the same kind of mind to some degree, because human nature is a constant in this way. It is always throwing up barriers between us and God.

So here (in Ezekiel 16:8) we have a young woman who is involved in a marriage, and she is a symbol as a type of Jerusalem, that throughout the chapter gradually it expands to what Ezekiel writes into a type of all of Israel, but the fullness of the symbolism can apply all the way to the church. Notice that verse 8 clearly states, “You became Mine,” and then the statement, “I spread My wing over you.” That is a symbol of the caring protection of God and the closeness of their relationship.

Incidentally, this can also imply what Boaz did in accepting Ruth when she came at night and slept at the foot of his bed. That was a pretty bold move in those days. Naomi suggested that to Ruth, and Ruth was willing to pay the price. She acted in faith, not for the Word of God, but she did recognize Naomi as a godly person, and she also recognized in the little relationship she had with Boaz that he also was a godly person, and so she put her faith on the line and went to where Boaz was sleeping, and she put herself at his feet.

When he woke up in the middle of the night and found out she was there, (and Boaz was pretty bright and he was on the ball), he recognized what was working there, and so he threw his cover over her, which was a symbol of accepting her as his partner, but they could not be partners until he had redeemed her. There was a lot going on there. You can see the warmth and so forth that was involved in this relationship.

What Ruth did was pretty bold, because if Boaz did not accept her, then she could easily have been given the reputation of being a whore. Incidentally, Boaz was a just man, and he too was a type of Christ, and he interceded. I think he had the hots for her too. He was seeing something there that was pretty good.

What we have to do is understand the application to you and me. When He says here in chapter 16 and verse 8, “enter into a covenant with you,” God has done the same thing

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with us. He has entered into the New Covenant with us, and that is also a marriage covenant.

**I Corinthians 6:19-20** Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

**I Corinthians 7:22-23** For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

We were bought at a price. Turn now to II Peter 2. This is a fairly often-mentioned New Testament theme. God owns us "body and soul" as the saying goes.

**II Peter 2:1** But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

That fits right into Isaiah 55:1-3, and so it becomes clear this is directed right at the church, and in light of what happened to Israel in the wilderness, we can see how easy it is for people to drift away from the relationship, and the way to keep that relationship going is to put ourselves into building it.

Now back to Isaiah 55. Let us read the first three verses again.

**Isaiah 55:1-3** "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the sure mercies of David.

I want you to look at the terminology. It is not costly in terms of money, but costly in

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terms of our life and how we spend it as we live it. Notice the terminology: waters; eat; wine; bread; satisfy; listen carefully; eat; incline your ear, and come to Me; hear; live.

All of these things taken together within the context imply eating spiritually. This is where our efforts begin to become very practical—efforts made toward making the relationship very good.

Let us go to the book of John. I just want to tie something in here.

**John 6:48-51** I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

All of those symbols we saw back there in Isaiah 55:1-3 have to do with eating spiritually. It has to do with eating Jesus Christ. How do we eat Jesus Christ? You are probably holding in on your lap, or you are reading it. He is talking about the Word of God. You have got to eat Christ's Word, and you have to eat it in a way that produces understanding. Back in Isaiah 55, God says if you will do this, “I will make an *everlasting* covenant,” which removed Isaiah 55 right out of its setting and makes it something addressed to the New Testament church—those who have made the everlasting covenant with Him.

Isaiah 55 is directed directly at the New Testament church because we have made that covenant. And then He really puts the nail in it. He says, “The sure mercies of David.” Do you know what this is referring to? It is referring to Psalm 89:19-37 where God made a covenant with David that he would be king over Israel forever, and He said this promise lasts until the sun and the moon “disappear” from creation. That is what God is offering to us if we will take Him up on what He says in Isaiah 55. He will make that covenant with us—an everlasting covenant—and we will be in the Kingdom of God with David, under Christ, but David as our king.