

Leadership And The Covenants (Part Five)

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We will begin today with two brief definitions drawn from sermons number 3 and 4. The first involves leadership as it pertains to our calling into a relationship with God. Leadership is a major element that God is looking for in His children but understand this: it is leadership with a specific purpose and therefore characteristic. That is not at all unusual.

We just heard a sermonette involving sports and anybody who is participating in a sports, especially in a professional capacity, their coach or the owner of the team are looking for people who have leadership within the discipline that they are operating in. They want people who know how to play football, baseball, etc. God in that sense is no different. He wants people with specific characteristics working for Him within a relationship.

I have defined it this way. The leadership that God is looking for is leadership in disciplining ourselves in following God's way of life. Here is a brief summary of the term: a leader is one that goes ahead of or in advance of, acting as an influence upon others. The term itself does not imply forcing others but rather that of being a guide, influencing and being an example.

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

I am thinking about the word 'let.' I want you to make a connection with me to the word leadership. Notice the way Paul appeals. He said, 'Let' this happen. Let means allow. Allow this to happen, permit it to happen, quit resisting. The people involved in this context were having a battle. Two women were fighting over something, they had a bitterness toward each other. So he said, "Let this mind be in you."

I want you to make a positive attachment to this word *leadership* because we have to overcome our nature which is at enmity with God. So Paul is asking us to let this happen to you, humble yourselves. That is what he is appealing to these two women.

Why is God seeking leadership amongst His people? First, because it leads to pleasing Him and glorifying Him. This will become more important a little bit later. Secondly, it greatly helps those leading toward growth in being like Him. If we discipline ourselves to follow His way of life that cannot do anything but help. Thirdly, it proves to be a positive

help to others.

Putting this package together what it means is this: the leadership that God is looking for produces a win-win-win, situation. A win for God, a win for ourselves, and a win for others. It is positive in every way.

The second term is *covenants*. I want to recall something that came at a previous sermon. I named it the three C's illustration. The three C's are: compacts, contracts, covenants. All three speak of agreements that define relationships of some kind and the magnitude of one's responsibility within that relationship. Through historical usage *compacts* tend to be used in political agreements. *Contracts* in business agreements, and *covenants* frequently involve the solemnity of God being inferred or directly named within them. One of the best known is the marriage covenant.

These are not absolute usages, they are just general. All three define the terms of relationships and specifically the responsibilities within that relationship. All three say, party one is required to do this, and party two is required to do that.

Why are covenants important to our calling? Because the salvation that we have been promised in our relationship with God is not a simple matter of the gracious forgiveness of the wages of sin from death to life. But rather this covenant requires that we voluntarily cooperate with our Creator within His purpose.

Do we want salvation? Do we want to be prepared for that salvation? Those covenants require our voluntary cooperation with our Creator within His purpose. His purpose is that we be prepared for the life that lies beyond our physical death, and for the responsibilities that also lie beyond that point. This preparation requires overall that we be in the character image of the Father and the Son. That is the overall purpose of the covenant.

The covenants provide us with details regarding our present state of being. That is, being called but still physical, and the covenants define that state and greatly aid in giving encouragement and right guidance to our efforts. In one sense though they may seem complex to us in the pages of the Bible, they are actually that simple. They give direction to our lives.

Over the past two sermons in this series, I have been looking for a single term that encompasses in its meaning and usage as to what this *leadership* I am speaking of means in actual, everyday practice. A term that encompasses the principles of both leading and following. Every leader is a follower, he is following somebody that

preceded him.

What I am looking for is a term that actually balances the two, a spiritual term, something that plays a major role in our life, not only used in spiritual circumstances but it is a wonderful quality. I need a term that we are familiar with because the term leadership, though correct, is vague to our understanding of what it means in practical everyday terms.

What is it that God is looking for in all of this? Turn to Hebrews 3. Who do you feel was the outstanding leader amongst men excluding Jesus Christ? Of all the people named in the Bible, who do you think was the greatest leader of all? Would it be Abraham? He was called the father of the faithful. Apostle Paul? He was really a worker, a real leader in the church. James? Peter? David? I am going to tell you who I think it is. My personal opinion is that it is Moses.

Who else is shown in the Bible as a statesman, a man that God spoke face to face with, gave him personally the Ten Commandments, because he was going to be leading this nation. He also occupied the position of being a Governor. He was a military leader, he was a minister, an author—he wrote 5 books in the Bible. The reason I have chosen him is because as far as I know, nobody else in the Bible occupied those positions of leadership and he did it all in one lifetime, all in one period of forty years. In addition to that he was a shepherd. He is called in the Bible the humblest, and not only that, in one place he told God, take my life so that Israel might be preserved. That is *real* leadership.

I think that this is in a way backed up by the apostle Paul.

Hebrews 3:1-6 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confessions 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. For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

You can see that in Paul's mind Moses was almost incomparable with any other human being, only Christ would compare to him. The term I feel encompasses the kind of leadership that God wants from us is what Moses had in spades. He was ***faithful***, his outstanding characteristic. Whatever God called upon him to do he was faithful in

carrying it out. He was a *leader*.

Hebrews 10:36-38 “For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”

What does God have pleasure in? People who lived live by faith. So we can please Him in that way by living by faith.

We will read a few verses in Habakkuk 2. I want to give a background. In the first chapter Habakkuk is complaining to God in prayer about the circumstances he was living in. He was living in a period of time like we are living in the United States of America, only he was living as Judah was crashing. This was just before they crashed in 605 BC. As Habakkuk was writing, (in chapter 1) they were on their death bed, that is the nation of Judah, and Habakkuk is complaining to God, why not do something, things are so bad, it is hardly safe to go out on the street anymore.

Habakkuk 1:12 Are you not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One? [it is like he is reminding God about the greatness of His power and glory and the purity of His thinking]

Then God comes back and tells Habakkuk to hold on:

Habakkuk 2:1-4 I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He will say to me, and what I will answer when I am reproved. Then the Lord answered me and said, “Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.”

In the situation in which Habakkuk was living he was wondering if he would survive. We are living in this kind of situation that Habakkuk is facing there. God wanted leadership out of this man, because he was His prophet. One word needs to be changed. The word, faith. Because what I read was that a commentator said that word demands to be changed to *faithfulness*. It is a right translation, it is not twisting the word one bit. The just shall live by his faithfulness, not faith all by itself.

What is he telling us here? Faithfulness is different from faith in that faith can be just a belief that is held in the mind, it can be a confidence that we put a lot of trust in. But faithfulness is belief actually working, it is an action term, it is something that is going

on, it is moving.

Is God going to save people who are not using their faith in order to be faithful, actually accomplishing?

James 1:21-25 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in the mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed [for his faithfulness] in what he does.

James 2:14 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

Are you beginning to see why that word in Habakkuk needs to be changed to faithfulness? God is talking about a belief that is active, actively carrying out what God is telling him to do.

James 2:18-19 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble!

The key words to this point are leadership, covenants, and faithfulness. It must be *active*. We are saved within the mixture of our faithfulness. Incidentally, do you know what Habakkuk means? He who embraces. A hug is an embrace. It can also and is frequently translated in the Bible he who clings, hangs on to truth.

A disciple of Christ, a follower of God, is one who is actively busy carrying out his responsibilities as detailed within the covenants (there are at least 6 or 8 of them) that are from God to mankind. Not just the first, or the second covenants, or the last covenant. God wants workers, like the apostle Paul. Being a worker is a leader. The covenants state what we have agreed to perform, that is why we enter a covenant, and we are fulfilling those responsibilities as a complement to the faithful God.

Deuteronomy 7:7-9 "The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to

your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.”

God wants from us a faithful response to Himself. God emphasizes that He is faithful, He will keep His part of the agreement and He wants us to keep our part of the agreement, the covenants, so that our faithfulness matches His faithfulness as much as we are able.

The first covenant, commonly called the Edenic covenant, is God's opening statement to all of mankind. It is a universal covenant, it is made with all of mankind and whether they do anything about it is their problem. But it is addressed to everyone. It states to every human what the Creator's basic requirements are and what His position is regardless of whether or not one has a living relationship with Him. That is why it is called the universal covenant, it is addressed to everybody, not just the church.

This covenant establishes Him as Creator and it reveals that all gifts are to be used in His purpose and that they flow from Him. He has given gifts to everybody out there—the gift of life. That is the only reason we have life, because God gifted it. The only reason there is an earth is because God gave it to us. Air, sunshine, water, you name it, everything is provided by God so that we can live and His purpose can be carried out. He does not mind us having our own purpose in our life as long as they do not transgress His purpose.

Those gifts include the earth itself and the vast multitude of lives—human, animal, vegetation—that we share life with on this planet. This must be understood by all but mostly His own children. Our Creator only is to be worshipped, this is made clear in this first covenant.

All gifts from God are to be understood as given to be successful in God's creative purposes. The emphasis here to you and me is on *God's creative purposes*, because mankind has ignored God in this whole thing. But we cannot afford to do that, it is Him and His Word that we have to embrace.

Within this covenant the Sabbath is a special gift set apart for thoroughly understanding His purpose. It is the only commandment specifically mentioned in this covenant and pointedly set apart in this covenant context. The other commandments are inferred but not specifically named. This infers to you and me the Sabbath's educational importance to God's purpose. Mankind is given dominion, he is placed in a stewardship position

regarding the care of the earth and managing it. Mankind is neither permitted to let it go wild nor permitted to rape it.

This covenant makes clear that man is free to eat of what the earth produces with the singular exception of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Within this same context where that appears it also clearly states that the penalty for breaking God's commands is death. The day that you sin thereof you shall surely die.

Genesis 1:26-28 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

Genesis 2:18-25 And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said; "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

We have just read what is easily one of the most wonderful and important of all aspects that is contained within the folds of this covenant because it establishes the most important of all relationships, except for the one that we have with God. That is of course the relationship between the man and the woman which begins the family.

One of the more important terms as God describes the creation of man is that man is gifted. This begins in verse 26 of chapter 1. He is gifted for the purpose of dominion, rulership, and he is gifted as we begin to see it put to work by Adam. He is gifted to observe, to contemplate, to qualify responsibilities, and to act in order to govern. Animals cannot do this.

Notice first that the creation of man was accomplished in two stages, first Adam, as we find in Genesis 2, then Eve, which is not fully described in chapter 1 as it is in chapter 2. Chapter 2 starting in verse 18, is an expansion of just those two or three verses in chapter 1. First He created Adam, then Eve, thus the term man in Genesis 1:26. Though using the singular, man, this must be understood in the plural and most specifically man in Genesis 1:26 which includes Eve.

Man comes in two parts, man is not just singular, man is the man and the woman. God specifically used the singular in chapter 1 verse 26 so that we would understand this thoroughly. No single person stands alone.

Second, we find in Genesis 2:18 that Eve was created to fill a vital need that chapter 1 verse 26 did not cover. What this begins to show us is that she is most certainly not an afterthought. From the very beginning God was creating man in two parts. She is not an afterthought but on the same level of importance to the man in the plural sense as Adam. In a way she was Adam even as he was Eve.

Adam being created first does not make men better. Unfortunately the King James Version's use of the term helper in chapter 2 let some, both male and female but mostly males, to believe that the woman is inferior, of less importance to the man. How can she be less important when he was not complete until she was added? They are equally important because neither is complete without the other. What we read in Genesis 2 is simply a more detailed elaboration of the brief account of both creations in Genesis 1:26-28.

We will put all of this in a step by step order. Adam was created first therefore he stood alone before God. Unlike the animals, Adam was created with both free will and also the responsibility of obeying. He was way above the animals in terms of gifting within creation. They were not in the same category at all. Animals do not have free will and they cannot sin thus we immediately see that man is different from animals.

Adam was put through the exercise of naming the animals and I am sure that he was gifted to enable him to do this, and clearly distinguishing that unlike the animals there was no one like him amongst them, he stood alone. That is exactly what God wanted to be created in his mind. None of them was suitable toward making life better. God then performed his surgical operation on Adam and created Eve. It was so pointedly clear to Adam. He had a brilliant mind, he had been gifted to see all of these animals, then when he first saw Eve he apparently blurted out his first impression, and God recorded it in Genesis 2:23. I will put this into plain English. What Adam said was, "she's just like me!"

That is basically what he said. That is the point of this whole explanation that I am giving here.

What struck him was her contrast with the animals. When he first saw her he knew she was in no way inferior to him, "she is just like me!" He did not interpret her as being in anyway inferior, she was him.

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

What Adam said was true, she is just like me. Both of them are in the image of God. Neither one is superior to other, neither one is inferior to the other. It takes two in this creation to make one. The term man in Genesis 1:27 includes both Adam and Eve and all of their progeny. Both are created in God's image and therefore equal to each one in terms of creation, so every time a man and woman produce a new baby that is another one that is just like me, another human being. Nobody inferior to Adam and Eve is created. They might be inferior health wise but in terms of what we are talking about here they are all equal.

This also infers that each creation is somewhat incomplete without the other and leads to one of the reasons why God commanded that they join with each other to become one, that is, whole. It was not until Satan and sin entered the picture that the truth about their relationship as God created it became blurred and men began promoting the concept that they are better because they are stronger.

To whom much is given much more is required. That principle is at work here. If God gave physical strength to the man, there is a reason for that being given and it is not because the man is superior. It is given for him to carry out his responsibilities. A woman's circumstance is the same. Adams appreciation did not appear until he was prepared to receive it and the gift, Eve, was given.

I want you to think about the timing of this gifting. Eve was a gift to Adam to make him complete. Adam was a gift to Eve to make her complete. Why is the timing important here? This has interesting spiritual ramifications because it helps establish a pattern for us to understand.

Here is the pattern: first, what did God do with Adam? He gave him a test, he gave him a problem to solve. If we apply this to you and me it very likely that if we are given a test we will consider it a trial. I do not know how Adam looked at it but he responded in the way he should have and used his mind to be able to complete the responsibility that

God had given him—to name all of the animals. In many cases this test or trial is really nothing more than an exercise in preparation before giving us His next gift.

God follows patterns so that we can understand. The trials that we go through are very frequently an exercise in preparation before He gives us His next gift to enhance our life to live as He intends and thus glorifying Him. So Adam's exclamation in Genesis 2:23 is in regard to Eve's suitability as a companion to share life with him. She was exactly what was needed, she is me, is why Adam said that. Adam was learning to appreciate beauty as well.

Genesis 2:22-24 Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

In verse 22, then, the rib which the Lord had taken from man He made into a woman. Your Bible may have a center reference beside the word made. The word more frequently is used in the Hebrew and translated as built. Eve was built by God, she was handmade. That is what the word built implies, she was custom made and she, like Adam, was also one of a kind and even there there was an equality which Adam immediately recognized. That is why he said, "She is flesh of my flesh." He understood a great deal. People generally believe that handmade things are of greater value than mass produced machine made things because they are made with greater care and purpose. That is the way God made Eve. She was perfect for him, she was perfect for His purpose that He wanted to be carried out.

I Timothy 2:11-14 Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.

Adam and Eve are equal in terms of salvation but they are not equal in terms of authority within the family. That is what Paul is referring to here. Far too many men and women have sinned in their respective responsibility and brought a great deal of misery into their marriage.

Genesis 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his

wife, and they shall become one flesh.

After Eve was presented to Adam and he recognized she had been specifically made for him, then God immediately states His intentions for marriage. They are to be joined. This joining has very interesting ramifications because it is a joining of people who have great possibilities of having far different character than one another, far different personalities than one another, and God says that they are to cleave to each other.

Cleave to me has always meant to split asunder, like when you take an ax and you hit the branch and it shatters, splits in two. That is what cleave meant to me and that is what cleave means today. Somehow through the generations it has done an 180° turn, because way back then when this Bible was translated cleave meant to adhere to. Today it is used in the sense of splitting. The Hebrew word that is used here and translated cleave, is dawbak. It has a wide variety of uses in English Bibles. What this word means is cling, it means to stick, it means to keep fast, it means to follow hard, it means to keep close to. A clear usage of this term is in the book of Ruth.

Ruth 1:14 Then they [Orpah and Ruth] lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

In the book of Habakkuk, that is what his name means. Habakkuk shows in the book that he was going to hang onto God for dear life. He is one who clings, despite how bad society was going to be. Habakkuk was going to hang on for dear life.

We have this same word used to the responsibilities of a husband and a wife, they are to cling to one another for dear life and become, as it were, one. The making of them, or creating of them, into two beings who were exactly, in a sense, just like each other was a forerunner of what God is doing with us in relation to His Kingdom. So, even in our life we, husband and wife, are to make every effort on our part to become, as it were, one.

In almost every case where dawbak is used it gives the sense that effort must be made to successfully achieve the joining, the adhering, the clinging, the cleaving, glued. Can you understand why Jesus said, let those two be joined together and nothing separate them?

What God is inferring in Genesis 2 is this: by the use of this word dawbak He is showing us that in order for us to become one, husband and wife, it is going to take a great deal of effort in the use of the fruit of God's Spirit to achieve the level of joining in oneness that God is indicating there in Genesis 2.

Leadership and the Covenants (Part Five) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

In John 17:17-23, Jesus said that it was His prayer to God that each and every one of us become one with the Father and Son. The marriage unit of husband and wife is a forerunner of the kind of unity that He wants us to have in our marriages and with Him.

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