

DENNIS BURKE MINISTRIES

Insights

The Way to a New Life | MARCH / APRIL 2014

the
COVENANT
of
GRACE



— when *keeping your mouth shut* can save the day



the
COVENANT
of
GRACE

by Dr. Dennis Burke



Throughout the centuries

of human history, God has remained committed to lifting His people out of the limits of their own ways and into the limitlessness of His great ability — and the way He joins Himself with His people is through *covenant*. A covenant joins two parties together, bringing the strengths and weaknesses of each party into the life and situation of the other.

When a person enters the Kingdom of God through simple faith and the salvation purchased by Jesus Christ, that person also embraces the covenant foundation on which this Kingdom operates. As the Body of Christ comes to better understand the power of this covenant life with God, believers will begin to step *out of* the patterns of weakness and defeat they have known for so long and into the victories Jesus obtained for them.

ALL OF GOD'S INHERITANCE IS YOURS NOW

When God entered into a covenant with Abraham, the father of faith, He set in motion the events that would bring Jesus Christ to the earth and, ultimately, to purchase the redemption of all mankind. As a result, you have been given the privilege of living in fellowship with the Almighty God and walking in the grace He continually provides.

This covenant of grace is not like the Law of the Old Covenant. All the benefits of *this* covenant are received by faith — they cannot be earned or

merited. It is by faith and faith alone that you enter this covenant with God, as confirmed by the Apostle Paul: “For by grace have you been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).

Salvation is more than going to Heaven after you die. The inheritance of Jesus became yours to claim after His death on the Cross — not after *your* death. This means that all of His inheritance is yours *now*.

Before the sacrifice of Jesus, the people looked ahead to the promise of God that was to come. Now we look back to the promise that was established for us. In the same way, faith does not look at the blessing that will come one day. It sees the Word of God that has been given and established through Jesus. The promises are linked to our covenant, and they belong to us *now*.

MIX FAITH WITH GOD'S PROMISE

Salvation is wholeness — spirit, soul, and body. Your wholeness is received through faith, but that faith comes by the grace of God at work within you.

According to Hebrews 4, there is a promise of rest in God that releases His power when we diligently trust in His power and not our own. It is faith in the deposit of grace and divine ability that

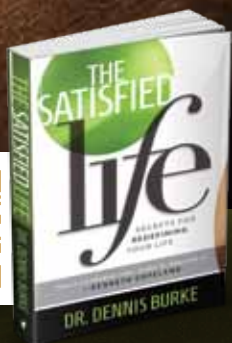
He has placed within our inner man.

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it... There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience (Hebrews 4:1, 9-11).

Disobedience kept the Israelites from entering the territory promised to them. Their example of unbelief demonstrates how faith must be mixed with the promise of God to obtain the results He has offered.

Hebrews 4:3 presents a powerful truth:

For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: “So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest,’” although the works were finished



from the foundation of the world.

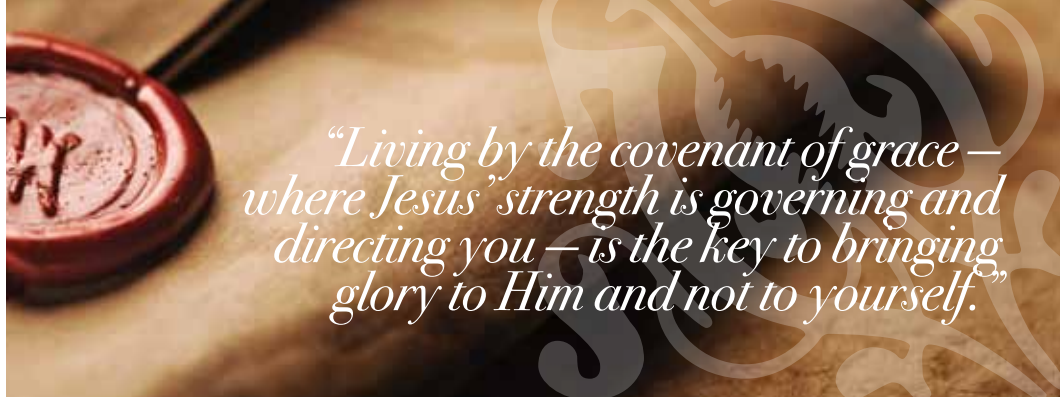
Notice what this verse says: *The works were finished!* Everything the Israelites needed to possess their Promised Land had already been provided before they ever faced the wilderness or the enemies who lived in the land. God had already completed the necessary works for His people to enter the land He had promised them peacefully and at rest.

The work for the Israelites' victory and for *your* victory was completed before the world was established. God's last day of work was Adam's first day of life!

ENTER INTO HIS REST

God's work in the physical world was finished at creation. His work in the spiritual world was finished through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

You have been created to live in God's rest. He has created everything for you. The work was God's part — entering into His rest is *your* part. You



“Living by the covenant of grace — where Jesus’ strength is governing and directing you — is the key to bringing glory to Him and not to yourself.”

must be diligent to make sure your efforts are focused on entering into His rest, *not* on continuing in your own works or strength.

You are to live by grace, not by your own works and ambition. The works were finished at the foundation of the world. Everything must now be founded upon the work God has already completed and upon our diligence to enter into His rest.

Under the Old Covenant, the priests were forbidden to wear anything that would cause sweat as they served before the altar. Why was this? Because sweat was a symbol of the curse, when God declared back in the Garden that man would work by the sweat of his brow (Genesis 3:19). God was pointing His people toward the New Covenant, when His Son's redemptive work would provide them with the grace and ability to fulfill His work in *His* strength.

Jesus said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden

is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

Notice first that Jesus promises rest to you when you bring your load of care to Him. This is imparted rest, freely given to anyone who will receive. Then He tells you how to *find* rest. This rest is learned by taking His yoke upon you. This is the lasting rest that enables you as His disciple to continually handle the weight of the work He has called you to do by drawing on the resource of His strength.

Jesus said that this ability to find lasting rest comes by taking His yoke. The picture He paints is of a double yoke, used to plow a field with two oxen.

When a farmer trained a young ox, he yoked him to an older and fully trained ox. That young ox may have wanted to sit down or run to the right or left. But the yoke on his neck that linked him to the older ox held him to the speed and direction that the old ox knew was best.

When your life comes under the lordship of God, His Word becomes the final authority to you. *God* then determines where and how fast you go — not you. Using the analogy of the double yoke, Jesus taught that this is the key to lasting rest and to the power you need to produce results.

The rest Jesus imparts is wonderful for the immediate relief of some terrible situation. But the true disciple doesn't live for those special imparted moments of rest; rather, he learns and embraces the *life* of rest.

Living by the covenant of grace — where Jesus' strength is governing and directing you — is the key to bringing glory to Him and not to yourself. Your part is to enter into His works and learn the laws of His Kingdom.

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BY VIKKI BURKE

don't talk

to anyone
along the way

We have heard it said for a long time, "Watch what you say." But does it really matter what we say? Do our words even make a difference?

Does anything really change when we speak good things instead of just speaking whatever we feel? Is there any proof that our words really matter? We will find the answer to those questions as we look at the lives of those who experienced miracles when external circumstances were against them.

When trouble seems to assault us with the force of hurricane winds, we can follow the example of those who have been under insurmountable pressure and yet come through their problem unscathed. That's what the writer of the book of Hebrews tells us to do. It says, "...imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."¹ We are to simply study the lives of people who succeeded when things got tough and see how they responded to the challenge. As we copy what they did, we can have the same results they had.

Most likely you won't *feel* like doing what these people of faith did, but I suspect that they didn't feel like acting or speaking contrary to their circumstances either. And then sometimes we just have to learn to develop the art of silence!

Proverbs is a book of instructions that, if followed, will make us wise. Notice what its wisdom says about the words we speak.

“When things are tough is not the time to spew out your worst thoughts or feelings! That’s the time to follow wisdom’s instructions and keep silent.”



- “...A sensible person keeps quiet.”²
- “The wicked are trapped by their own words, but the godly escape such trouble.”³
- “Watch your tongue and keep your mouth shut, and you will stay out of trouble.”⁴
- “Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut.”⁵
- “Those who control their tongue will have a long life; opening your mouth can ruin everything.”⁶
- “A truly wise person uses few words....”⁷

When we face adverse situations, we’re often tempted to go on a tangent, saying things like, “What am I going to do now? How can I ever get out of debt when the economy is so bad? Where will I get the money to pay these bills? There is too much water under the bridge for my marriage to survive. How will my children ever serve God when they are so deeply involved in the world’s way of thinking?”

When things are tough is *not* the time to spew out your worst thoughts or feelings! That’s the time to follow wisdom’s instructions and keep silent. It isn’t always

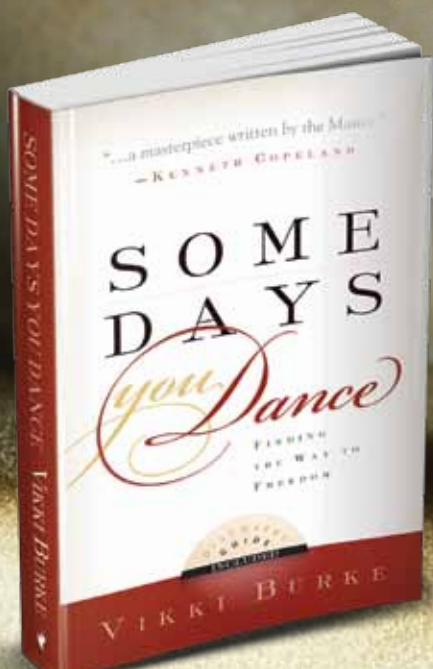
easy, but if you want things to change from where they *are* to where God says they *can be*, you must act wisely.

Paul suggests that we employ a little “cloak-and-dagger method” when the kingdom of darkness attacks us. He says, “Don’t be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself.”⁸ In other words, don’t let the devil see you sweat! If you keep your mouth closed, he has no idea what you’re thinking or feeling. He cannot read your mind. The only way he knows how his attacks are affecting you is from what you speak out of your mouth.

Have you ever been around a person who doesn’t speak? It’s unnerving, isn’t it? You just don’t know what that person is thinking. It’s the same way with the devil. It intimidates him when you don’t say anything about the attack he has launched against you. He doesn’t know if his attack has put pressure on you or not. Paul said it’s a sign of the enemy’s failure and of *your* success!

Remember the Shunammite woman who miraculously gave birth to a son after Elisha spoke it to her? Her son was helping his father in the field one day when the boy experienced pain in his head. They laid the boy on his mother’s lap, but he died. Yet the Shunammite woman refused to accept the death of her dream come true, so she saddled up her donkey and went to visit the prophet of God. As she approached Elisha, he sent his servant to ask her if everything was all right. “...Yes,” the woman told Gehazi, “everything is fine.”⁹

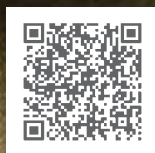
When things looked impossible, this woman spoke words of faith, even though her mind was bombarded with doubt. Although she was facing the most devastating situation a mother could imagine, she refused to speak contrary to what she believed God would do for her. When Elisha arrived at the woman’s home, the child was dead. Elisha went into the room alone and prayed again and again until the child opened his eyes. God breathed new life into the boy—and He



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can breathe life into *your* situation as well! He can resurrect a lifeless dream, marriage, or business—*any* area of your life that has experienced some form of death. But you must do what the Shunammite woman did by keeping your words in line with your desired outcome!

The Shunammite woman practiced the wisdom of Proverbs

18:21 (*Message*):

“Words kill, words give life; they’re either poison or fruit—you choose.” If we are to have the results in life that God has planned for us, we must follow the advice of the psalmist: “Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.”¹⁰

Refuse to let the devil see you sweat! Turn the tables on him, and intimidate *him* for a change! God will miraculously release the promise that negative words have delayed.

Jesus gave these same instructions to us. After He healed a man with leprosy, He said, “Go right over to the priest and let him examine you. Don’t talk to anyone along the way. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy. This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed.”¹¹

Have you ever wondered why Jesus said, ‘Don’t talk to anyone along the way’? If someone was miraculously healed by a minister today, they would most likely publicize it in order to increase the crowds. But Jesus wasn’t interested in increasing the crowd. He was interested only in doing what His Father told Him to do. The reason Jesus told this man not to speak to anyone along the way was that He didn’t want the man to be talked out of what God had for him! So Jesus said,

“Take an offering to the priest and let him examine you *so everyone will have proof*. Along the way, don’t talk to people about what has happened; that way no one can talk you out of the miracle along the way.”

That’s what Jesus would say to us today if we were facing a threatening situation. Until the manifestation of your answer arrives—whether it’s a healing,

a new job, the restoration of your marriage, or the return of your children—don’t talk to anyone along the way. Don’t give anyone the opportunity to say something that might bring doubt to your mind.

Keep your eyes focused on what God has promised, and don’t say a word. I experienced this once when I was standing on the Word for a miracle.

This prophetic word came during a service that my friend and I were attending: “You will receive your miracle in seven

days.” Afterward, I told my friend I was going to see my miracle in seven days. She knew my situation and had been through something similar. But because she hadn’t seen change in her situation for many years, she just sympathetically patted me on the back and looked at me like I was delusional. So I distanced myself from my friend as I believed God for that word to come to pass—and I received my miracle in seven days!

Jesus gave His closest disciples—Peter, James and John—these same instructions at the Mount of Transfiguration. When a voice from Heaven said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him,” the disciples were overcome and fell on the ground. “Jesus commanded them, ‘Don’t tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has been raised

“Over and over again, Jesus instructed people with the same words: ‘Don’t tell anyone.’ He said this when he raised a girl from the dead; when he healed a deaf man; when He healed the blind....”

dennis & vikki burke



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18 | Joshua 6:10 | 17 | Mark 1:43 | 16 | Matthew 16:20 | 15 | Matthew 9:30 | 14 | John 7:36 | 13 | Mark 5:43 | 12 | Matthew 17:9



continued from pg. 7

from the dead.”¹² The disciples struggled enough with doubt after Jesus was arrested and crucified; the last thing they needed was to tell people that they had seen Elijah and Moses appear with Jesus. If they had, don't you think people would have talked them out of what they had seen after Jesus was arrested and looked defeated?

Over and over again, Jesus instructed people with the same words: “Don't tell anyone.” He said this when he raised a girl from the dead;¹³ when he healed a deaf man;¹⁴ when He healed the blind;¹⁵ when Peter revealed Jesus was the Son of the Living God;¹⁶ and when He healed a man with leprosy.¹⁷ Time and again, He warned us to put a watch over our words.

Apparently what the children of Israel spoke was crucial in defeating the powerful city of Jericho. God had promised to give the city to Joshua, but because Jericho feared God's people, the city was shut up tight. God's instructions were clear: “Do not shout; do not even talk,” Joshua commanded. “Not a single word from any of you until I tell you to shout. Then shout!”¹⁸

Why do you suppose they were instructed not to talk—not even a single word? Walking seven laps around the city for seven days would cause a person to become thirsty, hungry, and very tired—the perfect conditions to fuel a desire to complain! Somewhere about the third or fourth day, someone was bound to question whether Joshua had heard from God or if his mind had been affected by the heat. After all, what good was walking around the city going to do anyway? Someone else might suggest how silly they looked, how powerless they were, and how small they felt next to the strength of Jericho's walls. For that reason, God gave them clear instruction: Don't even speak a single word!

God even put these instructions into effect with one of His priests whom He described as: “...righteous in God's eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord's commandments and regulations.”¹⁹ (Even good people can say the wrong thing and goof up God's plan!) As Zechariah was serving in the temple, an angel appeared to him with good news: “Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John.”²⁰ For someone whose wife was barren, this should have been welcomed with an enthusiastic attitude. But instead of welcoming this news with faith and joy, Zechariah questioned the angel sent from God. It is never a good idea to question what God says!

The angel's response reflects his shock at a human being questioning God. The angel said, “...I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent

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me to bring you this good news! But now, since you didn't believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time.”²¹ John's birth was mandatory in order to fulfill the Old Covenant prophecy of one called to “prepare the way of the Lord.” Consequently, the angel had to silence Zechariah until John was born. He could not risk Zechariah speaking the kind of doubt he had verbalized to the angel.

So to answer the question from our opening paragraph — yes, it does matter what we say! Our words do make a difference. The Bible provides all the proof we need to know that our words help determine the outcome of every situation!

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture references are taken from the *New Living Translation*.



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¹⁹Luke 1:6 | ²⁰Luke 1:13 | ²¹Luke 1:19, 20