

Do You Know the Stipulations of God's Covenant With You?

All agreements have stipulations. They spell out specifically what is expected of each party and what that party agrees to do in return. Could it actually be this way with God and those He loves?

In looking carefully at the Scriptures, God has **promised** to bless us if we follow His directives—His commands. What are those **commands**? The most ready answer is the Ten Commandments—how we wish! Start adding them up, and it gets way past 10. It can literally get into the thousands with all the other ordinances. Then we add our own commandments and we are way out of sight with things to do to please God.

I have no desire to live in **Old Testament** times. Come to think of it, because of the rules, I have no desire to live in **New Testament** times either. There are lots of rules today as well.

Jesus was careful to make sure we understood the essence of the **old covenant** as well as the new. In both agreements, God simply put forth the most reasonable and understandable stipulations. First, for His part, He would **bless** us. Second, He would **protect** us. This is the theme of Genesis—blessing and protection. All He asked in return was that we love (**respect**) Him and love (respect) others.

If you have in mind that we are to love God as He asks and you don't understand love to be respect, how are you going to love someone you don't know very well? If the word love is correctly translated to mean an action rather than a feeling, the fulfillment is much easier. I don't have to try to love someone I am not familiar with as yet. These are not my words, but rather the teachings of Jesus when He affirmed that all of

the law and the prophets can be condensed into **loving** God and loving others.

Why, then, so many rules? That's easy for someone as thick-headed as me. I need everything spelled out in detail.

So, then, the entire essence of a **relationship** with God is spelled out in two things He will do and two things I am to do. (These things are not works; they are the actions of any relationship.) However, Adam left me with an immense amount of his **rebellion**. I love myself too much to want to give very much away. I would like the blessings and the protection but not the commitment—at least, not until I've had time to enjoy life a bit. And that attitude would have remained with me the rest of my unhappy life if it were not for God's love spelled out in Jesus—that is, Jesus on the cross.

Looking at **God's plan** and what He asks is far different than what the devil has in mind in trying to convince us that he can be trusted for his knowledge. God is the good God He says He is, often only known because of experience in life and from the Holy Spirit.

If I were sitting beside you as you read this and you didn't understand God's love, I would try my best to convince you. It probably would start with the fact that God has proven His love through the blood of Jesus. But I have some reservations as to how effective I would be. That is why a loving God wants to **show** you Himself. That way you will be forever convinced that a relationship with Father God through Jesus outweighs any other option.

As you think about this, even as a Christian who simply wants to draw closer to God, it is good to contemplate the reason we have **access** to the Father: "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19). A holy God has made a way into His presence through **Christ's blood**. This is our opportunity to come without the slightest hesitation.

The point of Jesus' blood must be well understood or our fellowship with God in **prayer** will be hindered. Hebrews reminds us that it is not by "works of righteousness" that we come but by the **sacrifice** of blood offered by Jesus in order to make a way to enter into the wonderful reality of God's presence. In the end, you get God. And you get blessings and protection, especially protection from the enemy of our soul along the way. And what could be better than the privilege of loving God and others?

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13).

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:14).

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