

Expectations: A Superior Covenant

Hebrews 8:1-13

Expectations. We all have them . . . with our friends, our spouse, our parents, our siblings or our boss. We have expectations of God as well. And just like in every other relationship in our lives, it is important to have our expectations of God rooted in reality. Today, we are looking at a passage in which God lays out very clearly what we should expect Him to do if we have come to Him in faith through Jesus Christ. May we hear what God promises to us in the New (superior) Covenant and set our expectations accordingly.

Opening Question: How have you found that expectations (right or wrong) affect the various relationships in your life?

Read Hebrews 8 (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

1. How is Jesus described in Hebrews 8:1-6?
2. What do the terms “copy,” “shadow,” and “pattern” indicate about the Levitical priesthood and the earthly tabernacle (v. 5)?
3. How is this New Covenant described? What are the core things God promises in it (vv. 10-12)?
4. What is the significance that in the New Covenant God writes His Word on our hearts (v. 10; see Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:26-27)?

Steve said:

I love what Paul Tripp writes about the power of God's word to transform us (this is in *Dangerous Calling*):

When the Word of God, faithfully taught by the people of God and empowered by the Spirit of God, falls down, people become different. Lusting people become pure, fearful people become courageous, thieves become givers, demanding people become servants, angry people be-

come peacemakers, complainers become thankful, and idolaters come to joyfully worship the one true God. The ultimate purpose of the Word of God is not theological information but heart and life transformation. (p. 51)

Sometimes I wonder if we (myself included) expect God to do small, insignificant, trivial things in our lives when in fact He's actually promised to write His word on our hearts! We should approach God's word with anticipation and faith (instead of a yawn). As we read and meditate on Scripture, as we listen to the word being taught, and as we have spiritual conversations with friends, we should expect that God's truth will captivate our hearts - to the point where we experience a deep, internal transformation.

5. Do you have an expectation that God's Word actually will bring about "heart and life transformation" in your life? Explain.

Steve said:

The promise in verse 11 is expressed in a way that emphasizes that knowing God would be the common experience of **every single person** who has entered into the new covenant . . . This reality suggests a very tangible expectation: As we live our lives, we should expect to experience God personally in very tangible ways. Depending on your spiritual background, you may subconsciously think that there are only a select few in the body of Christ who really experience God (e.g., pastors, missionaries, elders, and few other really zealous people) . . . and everybody else watches in stunned amazement. Consequently, you may not really expect to hear God's voice through the Scriptures, to teach you things in everyday life, or to use you in significant ways in the lives of others. But based on this promise God makes in the new covenant, we should each assume and expect that God Himself will speak to us and lead us and empower us as we fix our eyes on Jesus, our great high priest.

6. How might it affect you if you had the expectation (based on the New Covenant) that God wants to speak to you and lead you and empower you personally?
7. Verse 12 communicates that God has forgiven our sins in an unqualified and decisive way. What expectations might this truth set for us in our relationship with God?
8. What do you sense is the main thing that God is saying to you through this passage?