

CHANGES PROMISED

Kellan set the last few grocery bags on the kitchen counter as his wife hobbled around the corner. She looked confused.

“Did you go shopping?” asked Laila.

“Yes,” said Kellan. “Can’t you sit down while I put the groceries away?”

Looking even more baffled, Laila pulled out a kitchen chair and sat down with her leg extended. She had been wearing a boot for the past three weeks after a bunion surgery. Even though she had time off to recover, Laila had continued to do housework and errands.

“Why isn’t Kellan doing more to help?” her sister had questioned her, right after the surgery.

Laila just brushed over her sister’s remarks. She didn’t like speaking ill of her husband in front of others, especially family. But she continued to pray for him. She prayed for his spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being.

“Baby, I need to apologize,” Kellan said. “I haven’t been taking as good care of you as I should. The Lord has been dealing with me for some time. He’s been faithful to me, but I’ve been ignoring my responsibilities as your husband.”

After Kellan finished putting up the groceries, he turned and said, “I forgot my suit in the car.” He came back in the house with his nice gray suit from the cleaners.

“Going somewhere special?” Laila asked.

“It’s been a while. But you don’t remember? This is my usher’s suit.”

1 When is a time you missed the mark at home, with friends, or at work?

2 What is a prayer that you find yourself repeating?

3 What kind of renewal is something that only God can provide?

²⁹ In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, And the children's teeth are set on edge.

³⁰ But every one shall die for his own iniquity: Every man that eateth the sour grape, His teeth shall be set on edge.

³¹ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, That I will make a new covenant With the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: ³² Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers In the day that I took them by the hand To bring them out of the land of Egypt; Which my covenant they brake, Although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

²⁹ “In those days people will no longer say, ‘The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’

³⁰ Instead, everyone will die for their own sin; whoever eats sour grapes—their own teeth will be set on edge.

³¹ “The days are coming,” declares the LORD,

“when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.

³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.

A New Promise

During Jeremiah’s day, individuals complain that God is unjustly punishing them for sins of their ancestors (see Lam. 5:7). Their attitude is captured by a proverb that states, “The parents have eaten sour grapes”—meaning have done what is wrong—“and the children’s teeth are set on edge”—the children face the consequences (Jer. 31:29). “Set on edge” translates a rare word in the Old Testament, appearing only three times (Eccl. 10:10; Jer. 31:29; Ezek. 18:2). In this context, “set on edge” refers to the “bluntness” or “numbness” of their teeth, a response to unpleasant taste. The people are blaming God for the consequences of their own sin by saying that it is their parents’ fault.

Jeremiah looks forward to a day when this proverb will not be repeated. He offers his own revised proverb, where each person dies for their own sins: “whoever eats sour grapes—their own teeth will be set on edge” (Jer. 31:30). He is correcting the idea that God

punishes individuals for the sins of others. God is just, and He punishes each person according to their own behavior. While the people's ancestors were guilty of disobedience, the present generation is equally culpable. Jeremiah warned them about their guilt, but they stubbornly refused to repent and turn back to God. Now, God can no longer hold back His judgment (see Jer. 7:24–26; 11:1–8; 16:10–13).

But God promises to make a new covenant with His people (Jer. 31:31). The Lord is the one who will initiate and establish this new covenant with Israel and Judah. The two names refer to the division of the nation into two kingdoms: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Under the new covenant, both are included. This promise requires nothing less than restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel, some which have been gone for centuries.

The new covenant shall differ from the former Mosaic covenant, which God made with Israel at Mount Sinai and renewed on the plains of Moab. The Mosaic covenant established a relationship with Israel and specified obligations for God's nation of priests and holy people (Ex. 19:5–6). But it was conditional: *If you do this . . . I will do this*. If Israel was obedient, then God would bless them; if Israel was rebellious, then God would punish them (see Deut. 28). The problem is that the people are not faithful. They violate the covenant with their disobedience, almost immediately (see Ex. 32). In contrast, God is faithful. God is so faithful that He shall make a new covenant to overcome their weakness.

1 What is the meaning of the proverb about sour grapes in Jeremiah 31:29?

2 According to Jeremiah, who bears the responsibility for sin?

3 For whom would God make a new covenant, and why is this significant?

³³ But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, And write it in their hearts; And will be their God, And they shall be my people.

³⁴ And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: For they shall all know me, From the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: For I will forgive their iniquity, And I will remember their sin no more.

¹⁷ For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

³³ “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD.

“I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God, and they will be my people.

³⁴ No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD.

“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

A New Covenant

Beginning in verse 33, God describes the differences that set this new covenant apart. By referring to Israel here, He is not excluding Judah. He is speaking of the whole of Israel, which had divided into two (Israel and Judah). This new covenant would take place “after those days,” looking forward to the return of the exiles to the land. Previously, in verses 27–28, Jeremiah describes the building and planting of the people in the land. Now Jeremiah adds that the people shall experience restoration of their relationship with the Lord (see also Deut. 30:1–6; Ezek. 11:17–20).

God promises to put His “law” within them (v. 33). This law (which means “instruction”) would be written on their hearts and minds, not on stone—which refers to the old covenant on stone tablets (Ex. 32:19; Deut. 30:6). The old covenant failed because of people’s disobedience and wayward hearts, but in the new covenant, God says He shall give a new path forward. He offers inward

transformation. His people's attitudes, affections, and wills shall be changed, enabling them to actually obey the Lord. The result is that the Lord will be their God, and they will be His people (see also Jer. 24:7; 30:22; 31:1). The new covenant allows all to know the Lord (v. 34). There will be no need to exhort others to know the Lord, for they will already know Him. Whereas under the Mosaic covenant, people relied on human mediators to hear from God, the new covenant provides them with direct access (compare Heb. 4:14–16). All people, regardless of background, will know Him.

God's final statement in verse 34 provides the rationale. The foundation of this new covenant is forgiveness of sins. With the removal of sins, the people will be able to experience a restored relationship with their Creator. They will not have to rely on the law, the temple, the sacrificial system, or the priesthood.

As John 1:17 acknowledges, for the followers of Christ, something new arrives through Jesus Christ. The law of Moses was a gift to God's people, but it did not provide a path of forgiveness and inward transformation. Through Jesus, people are offered God's abundant gifts: grace and truth. Jesus is God in the flesh, who has made God known and granted eternal life for those in Him (John 3:15).

1 How is the new covenant different from the old?

2 How can God's law benefit His people when written on their hearts?

3 What makes Jesus the bringer of grace and truth?



Cultivation of grapes played an important role in the daily life of people in Jeremiah's day. While it is technically possible to pick and eat unripe fruit, a much better crop can come from waiting for the harvest, especially in the months of September or October.

Danny Shenar/Israeli Pikiwiki project

What Hope Can Do

My daughter suffers with depression, as do many who are reading these words, I'd guess. There are more people who have depression than statistics report, and it's not something people like to talk about. But do you know what helps? *Hope*.

When life gets overwhelming for my daughter, and perhaps for you, hope is a wonderful antidote. It lifts the spirit and suggests that there may be better days ahead. I've seen her go from "can't-get-out-of-bed" melancholy to actually looking forward to an anticipated event, all because she has grasped that elusive spirit of hope. When she's looking forward to change, she's hoping that better days are ahead, and the anticipated future makes all the difference.

In today's lesson, Jeremiah shared a message of hope with God's people. They had the Mosaic law, but were unable to keep it. God announces He will be making a new covenant, where people won't complain for being held responsible for their parents' mistakes. They won't feel indebted to rules that feel impossible to keep, but God's instruction will be written on their hearts. No doubt, Jeremiah's audience doesn't know what all that means, but it is a *hopeful* message. They could look forward to a future that was better than their present. What encouragement that must have provided! Hope does that.

God provided hope then, and He continues to give hope today. He is called the "God of hope" in Romans 15:13. As we continue to live in a world that is filled by disheartening realities, when many choose their own way rather than God's, let's take encouragement that better days are ahead for us too. No person knows the day or the hour, but Jesus is coming, in all His glory. We have blessed hope.

1 Where have you encountered unexpected hope?

2 When have you felt responsible for the actions of someone else?

3 What promise or truth about God fills you with hope for the future?

A God of Renewal

Jeremiah teaches the people that a solution to the sin problem is not something they can manage alone. There are situations and patterns that only God can fix. Like the people of Judah, we can trust in a God who is capable of performing great miracles.

Reflect on a circumstance in your life that you feel helpless to fix on your own. Have you been taking this to God in prayer? Write a prayer to request renewal that only God can give.

Key Text

I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.
—Jeremiah 31:33b KJV

“I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.” —Jeremiah 31:33b NIV

Quiet Hour® and Cross Daily Bible Readings

Week of October 27 through November 1

- Mon.** Matthew 10:16–27—Speak as the Spirit Leads.
- Tue.** Matthew 10:28–42—Do Not Fear Mortal Powers.
- Wed.** Psalm 37:1–13—Wait Patiently for the Lord.
- Thu.** Psalm 37:25–28, 35–40—God Never Forsakes the Righteous.
- Fri.** Romans 12:12–21—Overcome Evil with Good.
- Sat.** Jeremiah 38:1–6—Speak Even when the Message Stings.

Next Week: Jeremiah 38:7–13

Next week we will talk about a specific time that Jeremiah needed rescue. Can you find any hopeful stories of rescue in the news this week?