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| Exodus 6:2-13 Jer 31:31-34Rom 12:1-2 | Covenant… What?Covenant Service | Pinelands – 9am – 02/02/2025 |

**A Few weeks ago** at our Tuesday morning prayer meeting,

I was reminded of this story… *(I have adapted it a little)*

a Young man and a Young minister.

They agreed to make a **COVENANT with GOD.**

A **COVENANT** to **TITHE**

10% of their income every year.

They were both young and neither of them had much money.

But over time things changed.

Whilst the minister’s salary did not go up that much,

the man’s salary did

After the **first year**, he earned R100 Thousand…

 So he ***tithed R10 thousand. (Easy)***

**After 5 years**, he was earning R400 thousand…

so he ***tithed 40 thousand rands. (Still happy to do this)***

**After 10 years** he earned R800 thousand…

so he ***tithed 80 thousand rands. (Not so happy - found it difficult)***

However **after 15 years**, he earned 2 million…

but he just **couldn’t bring himself** to give…

***R 200 thousand to the church.***

***So…*** He telephoned the minister,

long since having moved to another church,

and asked to see him.

Walking into the minister’s office the man

*begged to be let out of the covenant*, saying,

 ***"This tithing covenant has to stop.***

***It was fine when my tithe was 40 thousand rands,***

***BUT… I just cannot afford 200 thousand rands.***

***You’ve got to do something!"***

After a few moments the ***minister knelt on the floor***

and prayed silently for a long time.

Eventually the man said,

***"What are you doing? Are you praying that***

***God will let me out of the covenant to tithe?"***

***"No,"*** replied the minister…

***"I am praying for God to reduce your income back to the***

 ***level where 40 thousand rands will be your tithe!"***

For many of us the concept of a **COVENANT** is a ***foreign idea.***

***But*** to the writers of the Bible… New and the Old Testament…

***…IT WAS CENTRAL.***

***IN FACT…*** the theme of **COVENANT…**

goes to the very heart of the **Gospel**

**A COVENANT** between **two parties** is more like a ***contract today.***

There is an **obligation** for both sides… ***to keep to what was agreed***

The **Old Testament** is full of **COVENANTS…**

**God’s** ***Covenant with Noah,***

his ***Covenant with Abraham,***

his ***Covenant with Moses…***

…***and David*** to name a few.

And then you have ***David’s* COVENANT *with Jonathan…***

a covenant **between two friends.**

**You will** also find **COVENANTS…**

between kings on various matters *(Gen and 1 Kings)*

A **COVENANT** worked by… setting out ***BOTH SIDES’…***

 ***RIGHTS*** as well as… both sides ***RESPONSIBILITIES.***

And a **Good COVENANT** was one where ***both parties…***

were **satisfied with what was *AGREED.***

**Example:**

1. The ***closest equivalent*** to a **COVENANT** today…

is the ***wedding covenant,***

where **both parties** ***go into it*** **willingly** and

understanding the ***rights* and *obligations.***

 **Two people in a mutually *agreed* Relationship.**

1. Methodist Ministers are in a…

Covenant Relationship with the Church

 We are **not** employed… we are called / sent

 ***NO*** Contract

 We **do not** earn a salary… we receive a **Stipend**

 We **do not** pay UIF… But we do pay Tax

 ***A Covenantal Relationship***

**God** takes **COVENANTS** very ***seriously…***

 And **he views** our ***Relationship*** with him…

***AS COVENANT RELATIONSHIP***

And it has **its roots** way back in **Exodus 6… *(vs7)***

 ***“I will make you my own people, and I will be your God.***

 ***You will know that I am the LORD your God when I set***

 ***you free from slavery”***

***Wonderful*** – but what does it mean?

The **Covenant of God** with his people is explained…

in more detail in **Deut 4:13…**

***“He told you what you must do to keep the covenant he***

 ***made with you---you must obey the Ten Commandments,***

 ***which he wrote on two stone tablets.”***

In other words,

our part of the **COVENANT DEAL** requires us to…

  **live** the way ***God wants us to live.***

***As Christians***, we keep the **Commandments** God has given us…

not because we earn our salvation but **because…**

when we became Christians we…

**Entered a COVENANT with God**

It is a **COVENANT** that we freely entered and try to keep…

because we **LOVE** him

But there is something special about the **New Covenant in Christ…**

to which **Jeremiah** alluded when he prophesied… **(Jer 31:33)**

***“The new covenant that I will make with the people of Israel will be this: I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”***

No longer will the **law of God** be written on **tablets of stone…**

as it was in Moses day **BUT…** ***ON PEOPLE’S HEARTS!***

In the **New Testament…**

we are reminded of **God’s COVENANT with us…**

by the bread and the wine in ***Holy Communion.***

In it we are reminded that…

***Jesus died on the Cross to demonstrate God’s LOVE for us.***

***Jesus died on the Cross for the Forgiveness of our sins.***

**BUT *SO* OFTEN…** We forget that we have **obligations** too.

We ***ENJOY*** the **right to…**

BE called Sons and Daughters of God.

BE Forgiven and Saved

Worship the Living GOD

***BUT*** we have the **obligations to…**

**LIVE AS** Sons and Daughters of God too.

**TO FOLLOW** Christ’s teachings in our lives

**BE IN** relationship with our ***GOD***

**Interestingly…** the **New Testament** describes…

**The Church *(US)*** as the ***Bride of Christ…***

again alluding to the ***Wedding Covenant.***

I came across this interesting story…

**In the first century,**

when a young Jewish man reached marrying age and

his family selected an appropriate wife for him.

The young man and his father would then go and meet the young woman and her father to negotiate the ***“bride price,”***

the figurative cost of replacing a daughter.

The price was usually very high.

With negotiations complete, **the custom was…**

for the young man’s father to pour a cup of wine and

hand it to his son.

His son would then turn to the young woman,

lift the cup and hold it out to her, saying,

***“This cup is a new covenant in my blood,***

***which I offer to you.”***

In other words,

 ***“I love you, and I’ll give you my life.***

 ***Will you marry me?”***

The young woman had ***a choice.***

She could take the cup and return it… saying… ***“NO”***

**OR…** She could answer without saying a word…

by drinking from the cup…

her way of saying,

***“I accept your offer, and I give***

 ***you my life in response.”***

Our **COVENANT SERVICE** reminds us that we **as Christians…**

have made a **deal with God** to be…

***Followers of Jesus.***

**It MIGHT mean…**

***Putting*** ourselves out for God…

and **giving up things** we enjoy and have got used to,

***Feeling embarrassed*** when we talk about Church or God,

***Suffering*** or being ***Exalted,***

**It WILL mean…**

 ***Yielding*** to God and His will.

 Being prepared to be a…

 **“Living Sacrifice”** for God…

 ***Intentionally Walking with Him***

 ***in the Company of others.***

 Being ***prepared*** to be changed by God,

 God will ***Challenge*** us,

If we **SERIOUSLY** want to see…

***the difference*** Christ can make in our world.

Then we **SERIOUSLY** need to…

take our ***commitment*** to Christ **SERIOUSLY.**

***If we want to see*** **God make a DIFFERENCE** in our World…

 Then it **needs to START with US…**

 Right here right now.

***LET US…*** **Make COVENANT with GOD**

**LORD OF COVENANT GRACE**

(By Adin Harmer – June 2000)

Lord of Covenant Grace,

Descend and fill this place.

Let our praise bring delight,

 As we gather in your sight.

Your house a place of prayer,

 Comprised of your people where,

Each is a living stone,

 And where your love is shown.

Glory to God most High,

 Let His praise rise, rend the sky.

We worship, upturned face,

 O God of Covenant Grace.

**Exodus 6:2-13 God Calls Moses**

God spoke to Moses and said, “I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as Almighty God, but I did not make myself known to them by my holy name, the Lord. I also made my covenant with them, promising to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they had lived as foreigners. Now I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians have enslaved, and I have remembered my covenant. So tell the Israelites that I say to them, ‘I am the Lord; I will rescue you and set you free from your slavery to the Egyptians. I will raise my mighty arm to bring terrible punishment upon them, and I will save you. I will make you my own people, and I will be your God. You will know that I am the Lord your God when I set you free from slavery in Egypt. I will bring you to the land that I solemnly promised to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as your own possession. I am the Lord.’” Moses told this to the Israelites, but they would not listen to him, because their spirit had been broken by their cruel slavery.

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go and tell the king of Egypt that he must let the Israelites leave his land.”

But Moses replied, “Even the Israelites will not listen to me, so why should the king? I am such a poor speaker.”

The Lord commanded Moses and Aaron: “Tell the Israelites and the king of Egypt that I have ordered you to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.”

**Jeremiah 31:31-34**

The Lord says, “The time is coming when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the old covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. Although I was like a husband to them, they did not keep that covenant. The new covenant that I will make with the people of Israel will be this: I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. None of them will have to teach a neighbor to know the Lord, because all will know me, from the least to the greatest. I will forgive their sins and I will no longer remember their wrongs. I, the Lord, have spoken.”

**Romans 12:1-2 Life in God's Service**

So then, my friends, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect

**COVENANT PRAYER**

I am no longer my own but yours.

Put me to what you will,

Rank me with whom you will;

Put me to doing, put me to suffering;

Let me be employed for you or laid aside for you,

Exalted for you or brought low for you;

Let me be full, let me be empty;

Let me have all things, let me have nothing;

I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.

And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

You are mine and I am yours.

So be it.

And the covenant now made on earth,

Let it be ratified in heaven.

Amen.