

Sermon Title: **Our Church Covenant**

Written: **January 14, 2017**

Preached: **January 15, 2017 at Waterville FBC**

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Scripture Reference: **Exodus 24:1-8**

Thesis: **God created the Mosaic Covenant to give the people the written Word of God to live a life for God;**

Purpose: **Jesus came to establish a New Covenant, the Living Word to help His people fulfill God's purpose for our lives.**

Key Word: "Covenant"

Key Points: #1 The Law Covenant
 #2 The New Covenant
 #3 Our Church Covenant

I) Introduction:

Scripture Reading is: **Exodus 24:1-8**

A) The Setting:

1) Our Covenant is about our relationship with God and with each other.

(a) It is an important statement about our commitment to God

(b) and our relationship with each other in the Body of Christ.

2) Our scripture reading for today is about God's Covenant for the people of Israel; God's chosen people.

(a) We begin here to first understand about God's Covenant with His chosen people.

(b) In understanding this relationship we can better understand our own.

3) God, using Moses, had miraculously delivered the Israelites from the bondage of slavery in Egypt.

(a) God brought them out in an unusual way to say the least.

(b) Through the Red Sea in an event that they could not forget

(c) And in a way that marked the end of the Egyptian dynasty.

4) Isn't it interesting to note that Egypt's most glorious years came during the 400 years while the people of Israel lived in the land of Egypt?

(a) **God blessed Egypt because His people were there.**

(i) God has always blessed a nation when they support his people.

(ii) This should be a warning to those who want to lead our nation away from God and our support of His people in Israel.

(iii) Our nation was formed acknowledging our dependence on God for guidance and HIS blessing.

(b) After the crossing of the Red Sea, Israel was lead by God to go south along the sea until they reached the mountains of Sinai.

5) While this would have been the less traveled route it would make sense for a few reasons.

(a) First, it would be cooler staying near the sea and there would be more of a chance of finding vegetation and food and water from the mountain springs.

(b) Second, it would keep them out of the heart and heat of the desert.

(c) Third, the people of Israel were not yet ready to encounter other people; God needed to take them to the wilderness to teach them about their new life.

(d) Fourth, this is the direction God was leading them through a pillar of fire by night and cloud by day.

6) The people of Israel have arrived at the mountain of Sinai and camped for several weeks.

(a) Moses has been up on the mountain talking with God and getting His instructions.

(b) Moses is getting God's message and rules to live by.

7) Now the time has come for Moses to reveal God's laws as the people pledge to follow them.

(a) This was a life changing event for the people of Israel; a pivotal moment in time when their relationship with God would be changed forever.

(b) The Red Sea marked the end of Israel's history in Egypt; there would be no returning.

(c) Henry Blackaby says "we all have mile markers in our lives. Times we look back and can remember a specific turning point where God had a victory in our life... where we turned away from something or made a new commitment."¹

(d) Today's message is about God establishing a new relationship with His chosen people.

(e) God would speak to them through Moses.

8) **So, with that introduction, let us turn in our Bibles to Exodus 24:1-8 and share this great mile marking day for God's new nation.**

B) *Sermon Prayer*

C) (The Hook)

1) **Covenant, ... this is an old word seldom heard outside of the church anymore.**

(a) What is a covenant?

(b) What is its purpose?

(c) Why would we want a Covenant?

(d) Better and closer to home, why do we have a Church Covenant?

(e) This is what we hope to answer in our study this morning.

2) **God created the Mosaic Covenant to give His people the written Word of God to guide the Israelites in how to live a life centered in God.**

(a) We know God's laws as the 10 Commandments.

(b) Ten rules to live by that help God's people live a life pleasing to God.

(c) It was a covenant sealed with the blood of sacrificed animals.

3) **The problem is that while the people had good intentions as seen in their statement in verse 3 that whatever Moses told them, they would do . . .**

(a) And yet, try as they might, they continually failed to keep these ten rules for living.

(b) Over the year's they even tried invented a system with hundreds of laws to help them keep these 10 rules.

(c) Which only made the rules burdensome, ridiculous, and cumbersome.

4) **This baby nation of Israel needed a few rules to live by so that they would understand what God expects and no longer continue in their old sinful life style.**

(a) No longer were they to be a people who worshiped multiple gods.

(b) No longer did they live under the laws of the Egyptians as slaves.

(c) No longer were they to have idols of Worship.

5) **They needed to learn how to live as free men in a way that would please God.**

(a) All societies need rules to live by; ways to get along and relate to one another.

(b) So God gave his new nation 10 commandments that would guide them.

(c) And HE put these rules in the form of a Covenant.

6) **There are three ways Covenant is used in the Bible.**

(a) **The first one is a Greek word.**

(i) It means a testament or a will.

(ii) Mostly based on what one person wishes to do for another; sometimes with certain conditions.

(iii) For example God said if you will keep my commandments or laws then this is what I will do for you; *and if you do not . . . other things will happen.*

(b) The **second** form of the word used is in Hebrew used to swear an oath or promise; "*I promise to do something for you.*"

(c) The **third** form of the word also comes from its use in the Hebrew which means to be allied with another; to be in league or a binding treaty.

7) **The third form of the word is the one used for the reading of our text today.**

(a) This form speaks to the relationship between God and His people.

(b) We are allied with God (*a partnership if you will*) when we commit ourselves to the Lord.

8) **Some people think of Covenant as the Law;ⁱⁱ**

(a) But the Law or the commandments are the **rules** established by God who is the ultimate authority.

(b) They are rules we must keep obediently or face the consequences.

(c) It ensures that we remain right in our relationship with God.

9) **A Covenant is NOT a negotiated Contract.**

- (a) But a Covenant is of a pledge; an oath or swearing to ensure loyalty.
- (b) It is about protecting the relationship which can bring blessings or curses.
- (c) The goal is to unify the relationship.

TS: **Briefly, let us look at the first. . .**

II) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: The Law Covenant

- 1) The Covenant of the Law is not the law itself.**
 - (a) It is a pledge to keep the law, the rules established by God.
 - (b) God as the supreme ruler established the terms; they were not negotiated.
- 2) These are the laws that God gave to His people.**
 - (a) However, He made an Covenant to be allied with them;
 - (b) God said, if they kept His laws He would bless them.
 - (c) Failure to keep the laws would result in curses or a lack of God's blessing.
- 3) The Covenant is therefore about the relationship between God and His people.**
 - (a) God is always about the relationship!
 - (b) God's desire has always been to have a relationship with His people.
- 4) Sin got in the way of that relationship.**
 - (a) God is Holy and cannot tolerate any sin.
 - (b) He cannot have anything to do with sin.
 - (c) Sin demands a repentance and retribution that results in death.
 - (d) By giving God's people a chance to keep His laws and atoning for their sins through the sacrifice of animals, God was teaching His people about the cost of sin in their lives.
- 5) Without any law we would have no way of knowing that we are sinners with a need to change what we are doing.**
 - (a) Without the law we could never break it; never be in rebellion;
 - (b) Never even know about what God expects.
 - (c) The Law teaches us about God and our relationship to each other.

TS: **That brings us to . . .**

B) Key Point #2: The New Covenant

- (a) The old Covenant failed because the people could not keep from breaking God's laws and thus continually sinned against God.
- (b) There was a need for a new plan.
- (c) One that did not depend on sinful people; but on God's ability.
- 2) Thus Jesus came to establish a New Covenant.**
 - (a) Not a covenant based on our ability to perfectly keeping the laws.
 - (b) But a covenant of Grace sealed with the blood of the sacrificial Lamb of God, Jesus.
 - (c) The only one good enough to satisfy SIN's penalty once and for all time.
- 3) I think the Bible can explain it better than I can and I am going to read it from the New International Version because I think it is stated more plainly;** please turn in your Bibles and follow along reading as I read or mark down this reference to read later from the book of **Hebrews 9:9-22 & 9:27-10:10,**

"This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. 10 They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

11 But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. 12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place

once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. 13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

15 ***For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.***

16 ***In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living.*** 18 ***This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood.*** 19 ***When Moses had proclaimed every command of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people.*** 20 ***He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep."*** 21 ***In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies.*** 22 ***In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.***

27 ***Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.***

Hebrews 10 1 ***The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.*** 2 ***Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.*** 3 ***But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins.*** 4 ***It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.***

8 ***First he (Jesus) said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them"—though they were offered in accordance with the law.*** 9 ***Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will."*** He sets aside the first to establish the second. 10 ***And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.***(NIV)
(***Recommend reading this text at home several times to study all the in depth doctrine revealed here***)

4) Jesus said that He is the New Covenant.

- (a) He came to establish a new relationship . . .
- (b) a relationship no longer based on keeping the law and offering sacrifices of blood.

5) We now live in the age of GRACE.

- (a) Where our relationship is restored when we admit our helpless state and ask Jesus to come into our hearts and begin the transformation.
- (b) Cleansing us by His blood so that when we stand before God we are clean and pure, a new creation.

TS: By now you are probably asking what does all this have to do with . . .

C) Key Point #3: Our Church Covenant

- I)** The first paragraph of our Church Covenant is about our relationship with God and our relationship with each other.

- 2) **It says that by the abiding, in faith; a faith that (*remains, endures, survives, and is unshakable*) in God which has led us to receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior,**
 - (a) You see we are basing our relationship on the fact that we believe Jesus is the Son of God.
 - (b) And therefore, we submit to HIM as our Lord, King and Ruler; and boss of our life.
- 3) **And we profess our allegiance to Him every time we share worship together in communion and follow His example in the waters of Baptism.**
 - (a) We are fulfilling God's plan for His body.
 - (b) We are glorifying God through our intentional worship.
- 4) **Therefore, we are making a pledge, an oath, to give ourselves to God to be used by God however God wants . . . for His own glory.**
 - (a) We don't do this reluctantly out of a sense of duty; but whole-heartedly.
 - (b) We are full of JOY at the thought of God allowing us to ally ourselves with HIM through His Church which makes up the Body of Christ.
- 5) **It is first and foremost about our relationship.**
 - (a) God wants a relationship with us.
 - (b) And God knows that we need a relationship with each other as the Body.
 - (c) This is the best way for us to grow spiritually mature.
 - (d) This is the best way to make sure we have a healthy body.
 - (e) This is the best way to support each other using our gifts and talents for the glory of God and the building up of His church.

TS: **Our Concluding thoughts remind us first that . . .**

III) Conclusion (Life Application)

A) Egypt always represents Sin.

- 1) When God brings us out of the bondage of sin; He often brings us in to the wilderness.
- 2) The Wilderness is the place that God takes us to teach us more about Him.
- 3) We need to be together to support each other in the Body of Christ.
- 4) This will make our journey in life a little easier.

B) That is why we covenant together.

- 1) We really do need each other; and we really do need to do our part to grow the body of Christ.
- 2) **That is why the church was established.**
 - (a) It is the best way for God's people to function for God.
 - (b) And that is why we need every one of you here to do your part.
- 3) **Please pray and ask God to reveal your purpose as a member of His church.**
 - (a) Don't just read the words of our Covenant and forget them.
 - (b) Take them to heart; live them, let us commit ourselves to being an active part of our body.

C) Let us pray!

i LESSONS FROM THE WILDERNESS, by Rick Hope, Semoncentral.com, Aug 2006

ii Adapted from Joseph H. DeRoulhac, Jr., The Relevance of Covenant for Social Criticism (Ph.D Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1983 and presented to the 2012 ABCUSA National Leadership Council, Orlando FL.