

Turn with me in your copies of God's Word to Exodus chapter 24. Our passage this afternoon is an interesting one, one that is vitally important to understanding the covenant nature of Jehovah, one that sheds great light on the faith we profess, and yet it is one that is not often preached on. I don't want to speculate on why this is. I simply want to point out that this passage is far too neglected. The love that the Lord has for His people, the beauty of His salvation, the duties that we are do observed are all found here in these six verses. Turn your attention now to the inerrant Word of the living and true God from Exodus chapter 24 beginning at verse 3.

Read Exodus 24:3-8

Pray

We enter this week into our week of preparation, a time of pointed reflection and preparation to come to the Lord's Table next Lord's Day. As we think upon this meal of communion and what is signified by it, it is important for us to think upon the context in which it is given. Not just the time and place and immediate context in which the Supper was instituted, but also the theological context in which it was given. The partaking of a sacramental meal was not new to the church when Christ sat down and broke bread and passed the cup. The notion of making a covenant with Jehovah following His act of redemption did not begin in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. No, all of these aspects of what we celebrate during this communion season have their roots in something far older. These roots can be traced all the way back to our first parents in the garden of Eden when God made that initial pronouncement of the covenant of grace in Genesis chapter 3 which was then ratified with the killing of the animals and applied through the covering of man's nakedness with the skins. Then we see it made clearer through the covenants with Noah and then with Abraham. And then we get to the Mosaic covenant, which gives us one of the fullest expressions of the covenant of grace prior to Christ. Remember who we are. We are a covenantal people. We don't hold to the false notion that there is stark division between the Old and the New, but we believe there is a

continuity between them. This is the foundation upon which the covenant of which we are made partakers is built. Friends, this covenant is in substance our covenant. That is what we must keep in mind as we approach this text. The theme for us to consider today is that this covenant, sealed in blood, is our covenant. I want us to consider this theme by looking at three key aspects to this covenant ceremony: first, the making of the covenant; next, the sacrifice of the covenant; and lastly, the sealing of the covenant.

Let us first consider the making of the covenant. Look with me at verse 3, “And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.” Moses had written in a book the laws which God had made known to him, the moral, the ceremonial, the judicial; and all these he read in the audience of the people. To these, in the name of God, he required a joyful and complete obedience: and, upon their obedience to these, God promised on his part to favor them with His continued protection, and with the ultimate and peaceful enjoyment of the promised land. In the making of the covenant it is the one who establishes the covenant who has the right to determine the terms of it. It is Jehovah Himself who established this covenant with His chosen people. And despite what some modern theologians want to argue, this is not a covenant of works. This is an administration of that covenant of grace which was so clearly seen in the covenants made with Adam and with Noah and with Abraham. This covenant is rooted in the salvation that the Lord had shown to His people by delivering them out of slavery in Egypt. Recall the words which God spoke prior to giving the Israelites the law at Sinai just a few chapters earlier, “And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” These words of the Lord tell us that this is a gracious covenant, and so the expressions of this covenant between the people of God and Jehovah must be expressions of the covenant of grace.

If God is your God, if He is Lord, if He is your redeemer having delivered you out of slavery to sin and death, then you are the heirs of this covenant and you are bound to be obedient to His commands. This is the covenant He has made with you. Because He has redeemed you, because He has set you free, because He has sanctified you and made you a peculiar people and a royal priesthood, because you are His people and He is your God, you must now serve Him with the whole of your life. You are not called to a life of unfaithfulness or wavering or uncertainty, but you are called to a life of faithful obedience to your God and King. Verse 7 reiterates this, “And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.” Friends, this is not legalism. These are simply the terms of the covenant which Jehovah has established. It’s not that your obedience is what merits you favor with the Lord. It’s not that you must work to earn your salvation or your redemption. It’s not even that you are in this covenant by grace but you are kept in this covenant by your faithful obedience as some modern false teachers proclaim. No, it is obedience that flows forth from a heart of gratitude and love and joy for what the Lord has done for you in bringing you from death unto life, from slavery to sin unto freedom in Christ.

Jehovah as sovereign over all has the authority to command His people to live in obedience to Him. This was true under the covenant of works made with Adam in the garden in Genesis 2:16-17 where we read, “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” God has the absolute right to declare to men what they must do. This is true also under the covenant of grace, that way of salvation. God has the right, the authority, to declare how we as sinful men can draw near unto Him and serve Him acceptably. And this covenant made with the people of Israel is simply an expression of that covenant of grace that God made with Christ Jesus and through Him with His elect.

Jehovah requires of His covenant people absolute, unwavering, faithful obedience to His commands. This is what the people here in our passage are agreeing to, the terms of the covenant. “All the words which the Lord hath said will we do... All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.” But friends, covenant keeping has always been and continues to be simply a matter of placing one’s faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. These Old Covenant saints trusted in Christ as their coming Savior, and you New Covenant saints trust in Christ as your Savior who has come. When this covenant was made the people of God bound themselves to obey whatsoever the Lord commanded. This is your responsibility and duty as well, dear saints. Remember, this is what Christ sent His disciples into the world to do, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Brothers and sisters, if you have taken this covenant of grace upon yourselves, if you have been brought into the covenant people of God, then you must be able to say with the ancient people of God, “All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.”

With the acknowledgement and making of the covenant done, next was the offering of the the animals which would stand as a testament to the nature of the covenant, that it is one which required the shedding of blood to be ratified. So let us turn our attention now to consider the sacrifice of the covenant. Look with me at verses 4-6, “And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.” Moses first builds an altar upon which the sacrifices were to be made, representing God in Christ, as one party in the covenant. He then builds twelve pillars which represent the people of Israel as

the other party in the covenant. Matthew Poole says these “are the outward signs and symbols of a covenant made between God and the Israelites.” While there are two parties in this covenant, it is God alone who must be propitiated, because it is against Him alone that the transgressions of the covenant are made. This is clear in verse 5, “And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord.” The offerings are made unto the Lord as a propitiatory act in the ratifying of this covenant. So we see this continuity in the various administrations of the covenant of grace that the covenant must be accompanied with a propitiatory sacrifice made unto the Lord. This is why in Genesis 3 the animals had to be slain to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve as that covenant was made. That’s why in the covenant ceremony with with Abraham the animals are slain and their carcasses laid on either side for the Lord to pass between. And this is why here the animals must be sacrificed on the altar unto the Lord.

Hebrews 9:22 tells us, “Without shedding of blood is no remission.” God could not enter into covenant with sinners till an atonement had been offered for their sins. And now that this atonement was offered, half of the blood of the sacrifices was poured upon the altar to indicate that God was reconciled to them. And yet the blood of these animals could in no way accomplish the remission of sins for the people. Even at this time the people understood that this blood was merely symbolic, that it in itself was not what made them pure before Jehovah, nor what would be received as propitiation. These sacrifices were imperfect. They could not accomplish the job that was needed. They could not make perfect those who draw near. They were ineffectual. “In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.” (Hebrews 10:6) Bulls, goats, pigeons, these sacrifices were never in and of themselves what the Lord desired. They could never satisfy the penalty that we have incurred against our holy and righteous Lord. These sacrifices pointed towards the sacrifice to come, the one which truly would atone for the sins of the people. Their purpose was to point to Christ

Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, without spot or blemish, who would voluntarily lay down His life as the propitiatory sacrifice for the people of God. Hebrews 9:12-14 says, “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” Friends, the very same propitiation made for the sins of the people here in Exodus 24 is the same propitiation that was made for your sins. That is why this covenant is your covenant. If you are in Christ then your sins have been washed away by the blood of the Lamb.

The love of God and His great mercy are put on display. The sacrifices before the people of Israel were to remind them that it should be them paying penalty for the breaking of the covenant, but that God in His mercy instead accepted the death of another. And it is in the shedding of Christ’s blood on the cross of Calvary which is to ever be a reminder that He has taken your penalty upon Himself and died the death that you should have died. This is what is remembered in the Supper when we drink the wine which is the cup of the new testament in His blood which is poured out for the remission of sins. The Lord’s wrath against your sins was removed because of this once for all sacrifice of the Son of God. You must be confronted with your sinfulness, confronted with your inadequacy, confronted with your inability, and confronted with your failure to keep Jehovah’s covenant every time you fix your eyes upon that great sacrifice of Christ Jesus. Look on Him and be saved. Look on Him and be made whole. Look on Him and be comforted that your sins are forgiven and you stand as one clothed in the righteousness of Christ imputed unto you. This is the Gospel that was preached to Abraham; this is the Gospel proclaimed to the people of Israel by Moses; and this is the Gospel which is presented to you this very

day, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners through the shedding of His blood as the sacrifice of the covenant.

The blood of this sacrifice was then what sealed this covenant between God and man. The sprinkling of the blood upon the altar sealed it with God as providing that which was necessary for the propitiation of sin, and the sprinkling of the blood upon the people sealed it as the sprinkling of their consciences with the blood of Christ, and their obtaining redemption, justification, and access to God through it alone. Look with me in verses 7 and 8, “And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.” The blood that was sprinkled upon the people was to seal upon their hearts and consciences God’s pardoning love and to remind them that all their hope in that covenant depended on the blood of atonement with which it was sprinkled. Calvin writes, “The blood was, as it were, the medium whereby the covenant was confirmed and established, since the altar, as the sacred seat of God, was bathed with half of it, and then the residue was sprinkled over the people. Hence we gather that the covenant of gratuitous adoption was made with the ancient people unto eternal salvation, since it was sealed with the blood of Christ in type and shadow.” It signified that all the benefits of the covenant were conferred upon those who made the covenant in true faith. Upon them was conferred God’s favor and the fruit of that favor. Upon them was conferred all the gifts that accompany one who is in covenant with Jehovah.

And so it is by the blood of this covenant sprinkled upon you dear saints that you are made partakers of the benefits of the covenant. It is because of the blood of Jesus Christ applied to you that you have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. It is because the blood of Christ has been sprinkled upon you that you have been adopted as children of God, being brought into

that covenant family, and are made co-heirs of all things in Christ. It is through His blood you have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. It is in the sprinkling of Christ's blood upon you that you have had this covenant sealed upon you. This is what we mean when we say that the sacraments are an effectual means of grace. This is what we mean when we say that they are signs and seals of the covenant of grace. Christ body broken for you, His blood shed for you, these are the signs and seals of this covenant which have been applied to you who receive them in faith. This is also why the Word must precede the sacrament. It was after the reading of the law of God, after the people of God gave assent to it, after the sacrifice was made as a propitiation unto the Lord, that then the blood was sprinkled and the covenant sealed. So it must be with us as well. When we come unto the Table of our Lord we must first hear the law of the Lord and His commandments to us as His people. We must publicly acknowledge and make full assent to obey whatsoever the Lord has commanded us. We must see Christ Jesus our Lord as though a Lamb that was slain, His body broken and His blood poured out, those elements signifying His sacrificial death put on display. And then we partake of the bread and the wine trusting the the Spirit of God to truly apply the sacramental meal to our hearts, thus sealing that covenant of grace unto us. Without the Word proclaimed, the elements are but empty signs no different than the bread and wine served at a common dinner table.

If you are here today and you are not in Christ, then I plead with you to come unto Christ. See the wickedness of your sin and your need for a Savior. Recognize that without the sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon you there is no remission of sins. That without Him all that awaits you is the torment of the flames of hell which is reserved for those who reject Jehovah. See what awaits you for all eternity by looking at the fate that befell the Son of God. And once you have grasped the immense weight of your sin and you are on the verge of being crushed the gravity of it, turn to Christ. Christ Jesus bore the weight of the sins of His people and nailed them to the cross, thus paying the price that was required of you. He lived a

perfect sinless life, died a gruesome death reserved for the vilest of men, and on the third day He rose again conquering death, hell, and the grave. Turn to Him, put your faith and trust in Him, confess your sins unto Him for He is faithful and just to forgive you of your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Repent of your sins, turning away from them and turning unto Christ. This is the call unto you this day, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Make covenant with Jehovah swearing obedience to those things which He has said, and be welcomed into the covenant family God.

Dear friends, you must constantly keep this sealing of the covenant, the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, ever before you. Let it draw you ever closer unto the Lord. Let it ever be a reminder of what you have covenanted to do, and let it ever remind you of the price that was necessary to secure this covenant. Be constrained by it to exult and glory in the Lord and to devote your entire being unto His service. Let it overcome every aspect, every faculty, of your soul. And let it engrave upon your hearts the covenant whereby you are called to the hope of the kingdom of heaven.