#### <u>KEY TEXT</u>

Deuteronomy 7:9 (ESV) – Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations...

Isaiah 54:10 (ESV) – For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

# Jeremiah 32:40 (ESV) – I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.

## **INTRODUCTION**

# Men often make covenants Covenants –Important themes in the Bible

# TITLE: "OUR COVENANT-MAKING AND COVENANT-KEEPING GOD"

## **Outline:**

- Definition of "covenant"
- The Beginning of the covenantal story
- Seven key Bible covenants and their signs
- Abraham and Our Covenant God
- Blessings for those who know their
  - **Covenant God**

#### MAIN POINTS

#### **1. WHAT IS A COVENANT?**

A covenant is a relationship between two partners who make binding promises to each other and work together to reach a common goal.

They are often accompanied by oaths, signs and ceremonies. Covenants define OBLIGATIONS AND COMMITMENTS but they are different from a CONTRACT because they are RELATIONAL AND PERSONAL.

#### E.g. Marriage Covenant relationships are found throughout the Bible. There are:

Personal covenants between two individuals
E.g. David and Jonathan -1 Samuel 23

Political covenants between two kings or nations
E.g. Solomon and King Hiram -1 Kings 5

Legal covenants with a nation
E.g. Laws about freeing Hebrew slaves

Entering into covenants was a major part of what it meant to live in the ancient Near East.

So, God PARTNERED WITH HUMANS through a structure they already understood.

"CLOSENESS" correlates closely with "COVENANT".

Both concepts carry the following implications:

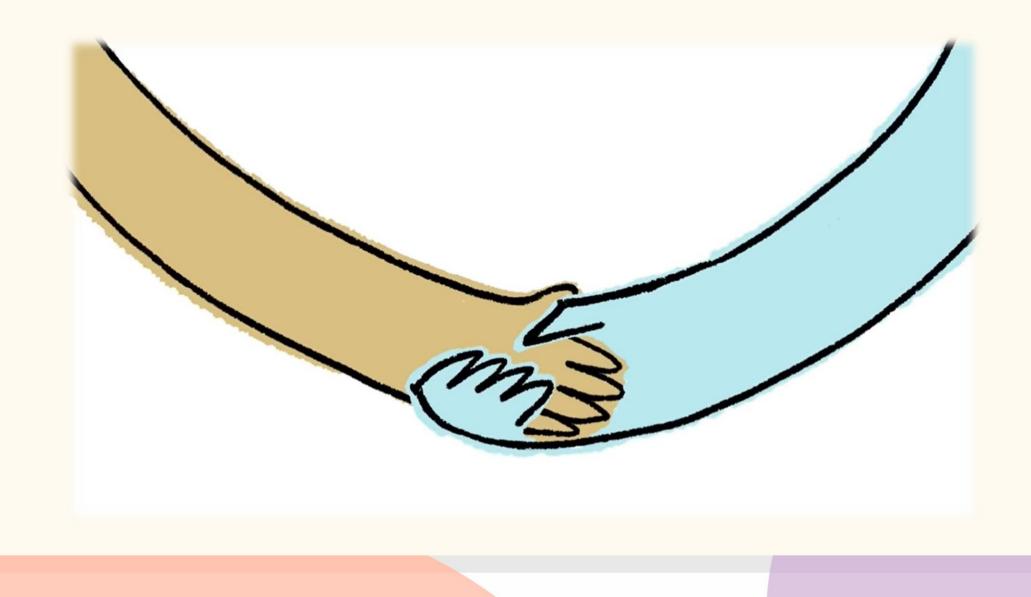
Favor – they express God's LOVE and FAITHFULNESS.

 Responsibility – they place a COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY on Israel to be FAITHFUL TO GOD'S COMMANDMENTS.

 Vocation (Calling) – they serve the aim of promulgating God's "design" for the world by establishing a model society based on FAITH IN HIM.

#### Summary -A COVENANT ISAPARTNERSHIP WITH GOD WHERE GOD MAKES <u>PROMISES</u> WITH US AND HE REQUIRES OUR <u>COMMITMENT.</u>

#### **Partnership** between God and man



#### **<u>2. BEGINNING OF THE COVENANTAL STORY</u>**

The covenantal story began when God created humans in His image to partner with Him in spreading goodness throughout the world.

The word "covenant" (Hebrew word "*berit"*) is not explicitly used in Genesis 1, but the details of the relationship are similar to later covenants in the text.

God invites Adam and Eve to be **PRIEST-KINGS** and represent His generous rule on Earth. They could enjoy and reproduce blessings of eternal life as long as they continued to trust and partner with Him.

But as God lays out the TERMS OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP, He warns them not to eat from the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil* because it would bring the CURSE OF DEATH ON HUMANITY.

And in their first test of COVENANT FAITHFULNESS, humans failed.



# The rest of the Bible is all about how God is repairing this **BROKEN PARTNERSHIP WITH HUMANS.**

**3. SEVEN KEY COVENANTS IN THE BIBLE AND THEIR SIGNS** There are seven foundational covenants that God made with different men.

The seven covenants are:

#### • THE ADAMIC COVENANT

The Adamic Covenant can be thought of in two parts: the Edenic Covenant (innocence) and the Adamic Covenant (grace – Genesis 3:16-19).

#### The Edenic Covenant is found in Genesis 1:26-30; 2:16-17.

The Edenic Covenant outlined man's responsibility toward creation and God's directive regarding *the Tree of Knowledge of the Good and Evil.* 

The Adamic Covenant included the curses pronounced against mankind for the sin of Adam and Eve, as well as God's provision for that sin (Genesis 3:15).

The promises of God were always given with a SIGN and a SEAL and they were from God and not from their recipients because the signs of the covenant and its promises are GOD'S INITIATIVE that are FULFILLED AND COMPLETED BY GOD HIMSELF AND NOT BY THOSE WHO RECEIVE THEM.

The sign and seal of the covenant-promise to Adam and Eve was a SEED, A SON.

#### • THE NOAHIC COVENANT

The Noahic Covenant was an unconditional covenant between God and Noah (specifically) and humanity (generally).

After the flood, God promised humanity that He would never again destroy all life on earth with a Flood (Genesis 9).

God gave the RAINBOW as the sign of the covenant, a promise that the entire earth would never again flood and a reminder that God can and will judge sin (2 Peter 2:5).

### • THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

In this covenant, God promised many things to Abraham. He personally promised that .....

- He would make Abraham's name great (Genesis 12:2),
- Abraham would have numerous physical descendants (Genesis 13:16),
- He would be the father of a multitude of nations (Genesis 17:4-5).
- A nation called Israel would be formed from Abraham

 The geographical boundaries of the Abrahamic Covenant are laid out and be given to him

• The families of the world will be blessed through the physical line of Abraham (Genesis 12:3; 22:18). This is a reference to the Messiah, who would come from the line of Abraham

The sign and the seal of the covenant-promise to Abraham was CIRCUMCISION.

#### • THE PALESTINIAN COVENANT

The Palestinian Covenant (Deuteronomy 30:1-10) or Land Covenant, amplifies the land aspect that was detailed in the Abrahamic Covenant.

According to the terms of this covenant, if the people disobeyed, God would cause them to be scattered around the world (Deuteronomy 30:3-4), but He would eventually restore the nation (verse 5).

When the nation is restored, then they will obey Him perfectly (verse 8) and God will cause them to prosper (verse 9).

The sign and the seal of this covenant is the LAND OF ISRAEL.

#### • THE MOSAIC COVENANT

The Mosaic Covenant was a conditional covenant that either brought God's direct blessings for obedience or God's direct curses for disobedience upon the nation of Israel.

Part of the Mosaic Covenant was the Ten Commandment (Exodus 20) and the rest of the Law, which contained over 600 commands

The sign and the seal of the Mosaic Covenant was the SABBATH.

• THE DAVIDIC COVENANT The Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:8-16) amplifies the "seed" aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant.

God promised that David's lineage would last forever and that his kingdom would never pass away permanently (verse 16).

Obviously, the Davidic throne has not been in place at all times.

There will be a time, however, when someone from the line of David will again sit on the throne and rule as king.

This future king is Jesus (Luke 1:32-33).

The sign and the seal of the Davidic Covenant was an ETERNAL THRONE.

#### • THE NEW COVENANT

The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34) is a covenant made first with the nation of Israel and ultimately, with all mankind.

In the New Covenant, God promises to forgive sin and there will be a universal knowledge of the Lord.

Jesus Christ came to fulfill the Law of Moses (Matthew 5:17) and create a new covenant between God and His people.

Now that we are under the New Covenant, both Jews and Gentiles can be free from the penalty of the Law.

We are now given the opportunity to receive salvation as a free gift (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The signs and the seals of this New Covenant are the SACRAMENTS (ORDINANCES) OF WATER BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S TABLE OF PASSOVER (THE HOLY COMMUNION).

#### **4. NABRAHAM AND OUR COVENANT-MAKING AND KEEPING GOD**

Our God is not only a Covenant-making but also a Covenantkeeping God.

The best example to illustrate this about God is the example of Yahweh and Abraham in Genesis 15.

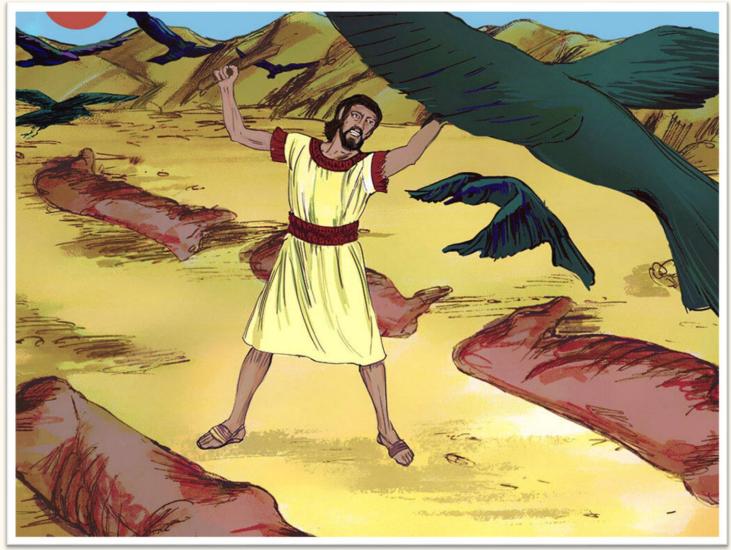
God promised Abraham a child.

After ten years of waiting for God's promises to come true, Abraham needed assurance. He had faith that God would do what He said He would do, but at 85 with no children, it was getting difficult to see how God would make his descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky.

In response to Abraham's questions, God had Abraham bring some animals and birds and Abraham cut the animals in half. In Abraham's day, a covenant was made based on a ceremony.

The two parties making a deal would cut animals like this and arrange them in two lines across from one another.

#### **Carcasses cut into half**



Then the two men would walk between the bloody carcass halves to symbolize that if either man broke the covenant, then what happened to the animals would happen to that man.

#### Walking between the bloody carcass halves



And look how gracious God is! He came down to Abraham's level, to what was familiar to him, to what Abraham knew happened when people made contracts.

But even more amazing, God didn't ask Abraham to walk between the animal parts. God alone passed through the pieces, while Abraham was just sitting tight, trying to keep the wild animals and the birds away from the sacrifice.

#### God passing through the halved carcasses



Not only did God come down to Abraham's level, but God assured Abraham that He is both a covenant-making and a covenant-keeping God.

God's promises did not depend on Abraham, but on God alone, so, God took on the curse Himself to secure the promised blessing.

#### THE GOOD NEWS

The good news is that God's promise to Abraham was met on the Cross where Jesus Christ secured our salvation. God's promises does not depend on our obedience, but on Christ's perfect sacrifice.

The name of every believer in Jesus Christ is written in the Book of Life and not in ink, but in the indelible blood of Christ Himself.

God's love is not dependent on whims and moods.

God's love is not limited to a moment of time.

God's love for us was always there before we were ever born, before we ever responded to His love.

And no matter what we do, His love and promise of love is everlasting.

"When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking pot and <u>a flaming torch passed between these</u> pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites." -Genesis 15:17-21

2000 years ago, the flaming torch of God's wrath passed between the body of Jesus that was crucified on the cross.

Jesus became the curse for us for all our broken partnership with God so that today anyone who is in Christ can enjoy this New Covenant, this new promise of not only salvation but a promise of "Land of Canaan" now and also the ultimate New Heaven and New Earth to come.

Jesus is the Covenantal climax.

The New Testament authors present Jesus as the offspring of Abraham who trusted Yahweh, even to the point of death, and became a blessing to all nations.

He is the Greater Moses, leading us out of bondage, and He is the Obedient Israelite who perfectly follows the laws of God.

He is the Royal Son of David, who inaugurated God's Kingdom in His life, death and resurrection and who now sits at God's right hand forever reigning as the One True King. Jesus perfectly succeeded at every point where humanity failed.

He is the Guarantor and Mediator of the new and better covenant (Hebrew 7:22; 9:15).

Now people from every nation, tribe and tongues who trust Jesus can become a part of God's covenant family.

In the New Covenant, we receive the forgiveness of sins and God's empowering Spirit to help us live lives full of self-giving love.

Because of Jesus, we can live righteously and PARTNER WITH HIM as He renews the world.

Application: Today God is calling you into a covenantal relationship with Him. He has many promises of blessings to give you through Jesus and your part of the covenant is just to believe/have faith in Him (like Abraham) and to be faithful to Him.

### 5. BLESSINGS FOR THOSE WHO KNOW THEIR COVENANTAL GOD

Andrew Murray says, "Blessed is the man who truly knows God as his Covenant God; who knows what the Covenant promises him."

What are the blessings?

• UNWAVERING CONFIDENCE OF EXPECTATION IN GOD The Covenant gives man a hold upon God as the Covenant-Keeping God.

It links him to God Himself IN EXPECTATION AND HOPE and to bring him to make God Himself alone the portion and the strength of his soul.

The full knowledge of what God wants to do for him; the assurance that it will be done by an Almighty Power; the being drawn to God himself in personal surrender and dependence and waiting to have it done —are what give us such a claim and hold on the Covenant-Keeping God.

# • SECURITY AND GUARANTEE

God's Covenant is always a **REVELATION OF HIS PURPOSE**, holding out, in definite promise, what God is willing to work in those with whom the Covenant is made.

It is a **DIVINE PATTERN** of the work God intends to do in their behalf that they might know what to desire and expect, that their faith might nourish itself with the very things, though, as yet unseen, which God is working out. So here, the Covenant is meant to be A SECURITY AND GUARANTEE – that the very things which God has promised would indeed be brought to pass and wrought out in those whom He has entered into covenant.

Amid all the delays and disappointments, the apparent failure of the divine promises, the Covenant is to be the ANCHOR OF THE SOUL, pledging the Divine veracity (credibility and authenticity) and faithfulness and unchangeableness for the certain performance of what has been promised. E.g. Luke 10:29-31 – "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold NOW in this time, houses, and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and <u>LANDS WITH PERSECUTION</u>, and in the age to come eternal life."

# OWNERSHIP AND POSSESSION

When we trust the Covenant-keeping God, we are actually taking hold of His Covenant and invoking Him to remember the Covenant.

The Covenant is like the title-deeds of our inheritance and the riches we are to possess even here on earth.

When we look into the terms of the Covenant and think of the certainty of their fulfilment, more sure than the foundations of the everlasting mountains; when we turn to the God who has engaged to do all for us, who keeps covenant forever, our life will become different from what it has been; it can, and will be, all that God would make it.

# • STEADFAST LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

Our 3 key texts are God's words calling us to know and worship and trust our Covenant-keeping God.

In our text Moses says:

Deuteronomy 7:9 (ESV) – Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations...

Hear what God says in Isaiah:

Isaiah 54:10 (ESV) – For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but <u>my steadfast love shall not depart from</u> you, and <u>my covenant of peace shall not be removed</u>," says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

More sure than any mountain is the fulfilment of every Covenant promise. Of the New Covenant, in Jeremiah, God speaks: Jeremiah 32:40 (ESV) – I will make with them <u>an everlasting</u> <u>covenant</u>, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.

The Covenant secures alike that God will not turn from us, nor we depart from Him. He undertakes both for Himself and us.

Simply put, God's steadfast love (loyal love) and faithfulness will not be removed from us and He will preserve us and keep us in Him by His steadfast love and faithfulness, which are the two main characteristics of our Covenant-Keeping God.

E.g. "I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge - so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by who you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:4-9)

### • FULLNESS OF GOD

In entering into covenant with us, God's one object is to draw us to Himself, to render us entirely **DEPENDENT UPON HIMSELF.** This isto bring us into the right position in which He can fill us with Himself, His love and His blessedness.

Application: Do you have all these blessings now in your life? If you do not have, could it because....

- You neglect the Covenant?
- You have not worshipped or trusted the Covenant-keeping God?
- You have not taken hold of His Covenant and invoke upon Him to remember the Covenant?
- You do not have a living relationship with Him and therefore there is no transaction or partnership with Him- no promises from God and no faithfulness from us.

• You have unbelief which is the root of disobedience and every sin? Nothing dishonors and grieves Him so much as unbelief. It makes it impossible for God to do His work. The first great work of God with man was to get him to BELIEVE.

This work cost God more care and time and patience than we can easily conceive.

All the dealings with individual men and with the people of Israel had just this object – to teach men to trust Him.

Where He found faith, He could do anything.

The one thing God sought to waken in men by promise and threatening, by mercy and judgment, was FAITH.

Repent of our unbelief and faithlessness.

Rely on Christ's faithfulness to be faithful to God again.

# **CONCLUSION**

Exodus 2:23-25 – "During those many days the King of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God <u>heard</u> their groaning and God <u>remembered his covenant</u> with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God <u>saw</u> the people of Israel – and God <u>knew</u>."

The ESV footnotes comment: "*These verses …… frame the* opening section with the reminder that the offspring of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob <u>will not be defined by their years of</u> <u>slavery, but by their covenant relationship with God</u> who has <u>heard</u> their cries and who <u>saw</u> and <u>knew</u> their affliction and <u>remembered his promises."</u>

Here God works by way of a covenantal relationship with us.

Today, you may be groaning because you are under a heavy burden and you are crying out to God.

God hears your cry and God remembers you NOT because of you but because of His Son Jesus Christ – the New Covenant He has secured for you on the cross so that today in any hardship and pain you are bearing, God hears, God sees, God knows, God remembers His covenant with us through Jesus and God delivers.

Today, you may have forgotten all the promises God has given you but God never forgets.

He is a covenant-making and covenant -keeping God. Jesus has already taken the curse for us by letting the torch of God's fire go through His broken body so that today we have direct access to the storehouse of God's rich promises.

Christ has been the FAITHFUL ONE to ensure that all of God's promises find their AMEN in him.

But our part is to be faithful to Him. That's all He asks of us.

We can be faithful in the degree we see how Jesus was faithful to us on the cross by becoming that halved carcass and letting the curse of God pass through him so that today we can own and possess God's blessings and be a partner with Him to restore the broken world.

Let's trust and worship this Covenant-Making and Covenant-Keeping God.

#### My Testimony

Genesis 12:1-3- Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless <u>those</u> who bless you, and <u>him</u> who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves." Isaiah54:9-10 (ESV) –This is like the days of Noah to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that <u>I will not be angry with you, and will not rebuke you</u>. For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but <u>my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,"</u> says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

"You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again. You will increase my greatness and comfort me again" (Psalm 71:20-21).

# ALL THE PATHS OF THE LORD ARE STEADFAST LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS, FOR THOSE WHO KEEP HIS COVENANT AND HIS TESTIMONIES. (Psalm 25:10)