

Monday, July 20, 2009

At Calvary Church we are honored to have many dear friends who this year have surpassed milestones of lengthy marriages, even some like the Bevers and Smiths who have been married more than 60 years! Clearly they understand well a “covenant”!!

This week the “Anchor for the Soul” is that you can be part of a “Covenant People” with God. The “proto-type” was the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whom God freed from Egyptian slavery and brought to Himself at Mount Sinai. There He proclaimed “out of all the nations you will be My treasured possession”. Centuries later the Apostle Peter, led by the Holy Spirit, writing to Christians (both Gentiles and Jews) throughout the Roman Empire, wrote: “*You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God...*” (1 Peter 2:9,10) Christians are a covenant people!

The concept of a people living in a “covenant relationship” with God began with Noah in Genesis 9:12. God promised to never again destroy life on earth with a flood, and the “sign of this covenant” is the rainbow.

God’s covenant with Abraham involved both a special land (Genesis 15:18) and a miracle son in his old age who would enable him to be the father of a nation of people, (Genesis 15:1-5; 17:1-8) and the “sign” for this covenant was circumcision (Gen. 17:9-14).

God’s covenant with David involved the kingship over His people Israel. While anointed by Samuel in 1 Samuel 16:13 when David was a young boy, it was many years later (2 Samuel 5) when finally David became king after the death of Saul. In 2 Samuel 7, God explains His love for David and His plan that David’s son would build the Temple of worship, and in 1 Chronicles 28 David re-affirms God’s covenant love to his son Solomon. What do these three examples help you understand about God’s covenant relationship with us, His people?

Tuesday, July 21, 2009

Some say there is no stronger bond than “love”. Jesus said “no greater love has a man than this: that he lay down his life for a friend.” (John 15:13) The next day, Jesus died on the cross for the human race, making it possible for us to be set free from our sin which condemns us to death (Romans 3:23 & 6:23). God wants us to understand that the foundation of His covenant relationship with His people is UNCONDITIONAL LOVE! His love for us is not predicated upon our love for Him, our behavior, our obedience or rebellion, our attitudes or even our worship or refusal to worship. God simply chooses to love us, the human race He creates in His image. We may ignore God’s love, refuse to believe He loves us, refuse to accept His love...but we cannot stop God from loving us! Consider John 3:16; 1 John 3:1,16; 4:9,10; Romans 8:34-39 as expressions of God’s covenant love for us His people.

Yesterday you read Exodus 27 and today is Ex. 28 if you’re following our summer Scripture reading. One reason the lamps were lit all night was a reminder that the LOVE of God was continually with His people, day and night, and that He was present with them, available to them and watching over them as His Covenant people, non stop! A similar imagery is found in Ex. 28 with the Ephod and Breastplate, bearing the names of the tribes of Israel, continually visible before the LORD again as a reminder of God’s never-wavering love for His Covenant people.

Remember this first generation of slaves coming out of Egypt knew nothing of love. For generations they knew only the whip of the slavemaster and the cruelty of slavery. The same is true for us, slaves to sin (Romans 6), yet God wants us to see the cross as the ultimate expression of His love for us. When in the storms of life, look up to the cross as God’s never-ending, arms wide open reach in love to you! Remember Hebrews 12:1,2...it’s powerful for you today!

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

Today our soldiers are fighting the fearful, torturous hold of the Taliban over people in Afghanistan. When freedom comes to a people who have lived in terror, it’s a wonderful thing! The Exodus story of the Hebrew slaves fleeing Egypt after the plagues, is a powerful picture of God’s Covenant Freedom deliverance which is ours as we trust Jesus Christ for our Salvation and are “rescued” from slavery to sin and Satan. “*For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin.*” (Col. 1:13,14) Do you see God Himself has rescued us from Satan’s domination? Celebrate that when you feel overwhelmed in the storms of guilt, shame, fear, temptation etc.

“*It is for FREEDOM that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery (to sin or the law).* (Galatians 5:1) “*Live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit...*” (Gal. 5:16,17) As Paul writes to the Christians in the province of Galatia, many were reverting back to a reliance on trying to keep the Old Testament laws in order to earn God’s love and acceptance. The over-riding message he sends them is that God’s love covenant with His people is unwavering and proved by Christ’s atonement death and victorious resurrection. Once we are delivered from sin’s condemnation by Jesus Christ’s cross/tomb accomplishment, we should not defile Him by trying to once again earn our salvation or acceptance by God. The slaves were free by God’s power, and any desire to return to such slavery was a mockery of all God had accomplished for them. Also, if they lived as slaves, even though free, it was a refusal to OWN their freedom and live in the full benefits of that freedom.

How often do we live as though sin/Satan still have ownership over us? Consider Romans 6!! Live free friends!!

Thursday, July 23, 2009

I wonder if, as you've been reading Exodus 27-30 in these days, you've found yourself "bored" with it? Remember, this is God communicating to Moses, during their first 40 day "camp out" on the mountain top, (Exodus 24:15-18) regarding the relationship He wants with His covenant people. No other people on earth had heard from God or worshipped Him as the Hebrews were being instructed. As you read through it, do you see the detail with which God instructed Moses? Why?

Consider please the intentionality with which God does everything He does! Creation is a perfect example, whether you look at creation through a telescope or a microscope, or even with your naked eye, you see God's handiwork is exact in detail to the extreme, right? Remember that the next time you're in a storm of life!

Notice two phrases today that should give you hope as a Covenant People, if Jesus Christ is your Savior. "You will be for Me" (Exodus 19:6) was a powerful statement God made to the people in His "welcome to Mount Sinai and freedom" speech. Link it with "Holy to the LORD" which was to be engraved on the gold plate tied around Aaron's head as High Priest as a reminder that Aaron and the people were treasured as a Holy People!

Notice a second important phrase..."I am the LORD... who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them." (Ex. 29:45,46) Notice God had begun His explanation of the Tabernacle worship place with that same phrase (Exodus 25:8). Yes, God greatly desires to be close with His covenant people...not distant. Why do we keep pushing God away? Isn't Jesus coming here the ultimate expression of that closeness, "Immanuel" God with us? Remember Jesus promised He would send the Holy Spirit to be with His 'covenant people' forever (John 14:17,18). Next time you're in a storm, celebrate God's presence with you ... are you confident of that?

Friday, July 24, 2009

Today you're reading Exodus 31, the final portion of God's 40 day conversation with Moses on the mountain. The Sabbath is the "sign of this covenant relationship" with God, Exodus 31:12-17! Pastor Chuck will unpack this Sabbath concept this weekend for us. Over this weekend, you'll read the sad story of the people's impatience and their fabrication of a golden calf god, and their demand to return to Egypt! Amazing that God tolerates such rebellion from His covenant people...do you see Him tolerating it in us today?

Notice in Exodus 32:30,31 Moses goes back up to intercede with God for the wicked rebellion of the people. Read Deuteronomy 9 to gain Moses' reflection on this 'golden calf' mess, many years later. Do you conclude Moses went back up and prayed for the people for 40 days and nights?!

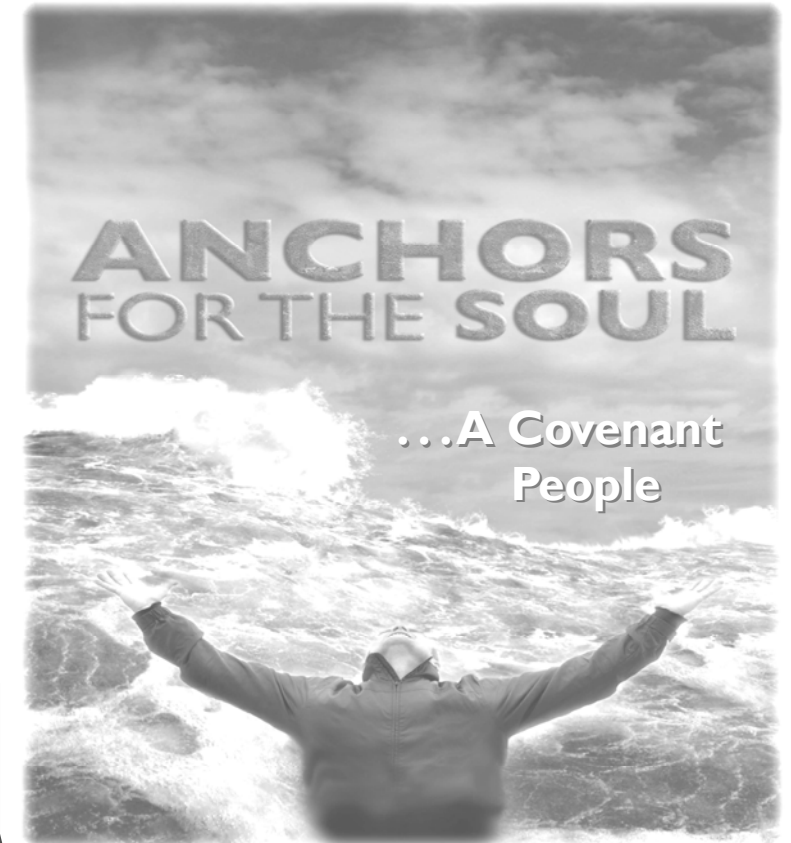
Please read Exodus 33 very carefully this weekend. "The tent of meeting" is constructed as a place where anyone could "inquire of the LORD", yet only Moses and Joshua seem to regularly take advantage of that availability. Notice please the exchange between Moses and God in Ex. 33:12-17. What distinguishes God's people from all others today? What distinguishes you and me, Calvary people, from all others in Walworth County? "My Presence will be with you"! Is that true of us in a powerful way at Calvary??

Finally...Exodus 34, oh my! Moses once again spends 40 days with God, and this time upon his return his face is radiant. Read this very carefully...and look deep within yourself. Do you find a desire to know God at the depth of intimacy that Moses did? What would change in your life if you pursued a powerful, pure relationship with God like he did? How would it affect your family, your career, our church? When God invites us to be His "covenant people" what does it mean to you? What does 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 say about being Ambassadors for Christ, as Covenant people?



Pastor Doug Anderson

July 20 - 24, 2009



Verse of the Week

*"...I am the LORD, who makes you holy." (Ex. 31:13)
"Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God" (1 Peter 2:10)*



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