



Covenant  
Trusting in God's promises

Welcome to all

Opening Scripture **Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you my Saviour and my God.** Psalms 43:3-5 alt

Hymn MP 666 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases

Scripture Jeremiah 31:31-37 (page 793)

Prayer

Children's talk Noah's flood rainbow 

Chorus MP 932 standing on the promises of God (v1 & v5)

Notices Bible study after the service,  
Fellowship picnic, eat in if wet.  
Take Coffee morning leaflets,  
Wednesday Bible study and Prayer.

Communion Matthew 26:26-29 (page 996)

Reading Genesis 9:1-17 (page 10), Gen 15:1-18a (page 15),  
Ex 24:6-8 (page 82)

Hymn MP 770 will your anchor hold

Sermon Covenant - Trusting in God's promises

Hymn MP 243 How firm a foundation

Closing Prayer:

Close \_\_\_\_\_

### Prayer & Exordium

- Last year a tanker ran aground on rocks because it lost the moorings which anchored it to safety. That's bad news for a ship.

In life to lose an anchor is much more serious. God has given us an anchor to be attached to, to lose it, to lose our mooring - is to be adrift - it is just a matter of time before your life runs aground on the rocks.

The last events we looked at in Genesis was the flood. God destroyed the world in a global flood and started again through the family of Noah. The account is in Genesis chap 6-8. In Gen 9 God makes a covenant with Noah.


**These covenants, these promises are like anchors, anchors we can rely on.**

In this new start after the waters have receded and the ark has landed God blesses and reaffirms his charge to Noah - Gen 9:1 saying: **"Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth."** It is repeated in v 7. It sounds the same as that given to Adam and Eve 1500 years earlier except, - because of sin - they are no longer to rule over the earth.

Gen 9:2,3 Then we have a passage saying that unlike before from now on we can eat meat.

Then 9:4-6 they are told about shedding blood and the serious consequences of taking a human life.

Then from 8 onwards we read about this covenant God is going to make with Noah and his descendants – that means you and I here this morning.

Of course, this passage is well known because of the rainbow.  The rainbow is the sign of the covenant or promise God has made.

God makes a number of covenants or promises, how do they fit in the big canvas of God's plans for the world? - and particularly His people in it?

There is this covenant here, we had one earlier with communion when Jesus said those familiar words **"this is the new covenant in my blood"**

So this morning we will look at these two - plus two more, which together constitute the main covenants that God makes with man. Let us see what they mean – for we are all included – and see how they fit together.

1. This one here at the time of Noah
2. The covenant with Abraham
3. The covenant with Moses
4. The covenant with Jesus

Firstly I realise the word covenant these days is a turn off. It is not used in modern language. We could use the word agreement or the word promise, we all understand that. It is a contract or agreement between two parties.

- If I say to you "I will see you at six pm" I have made an arrangement, an agreement, a promise. But there are no conditions applied. It is something I have said I will do.
- If I said "I will see you at six if you let me know you will be there" This is a conditional arrangement or promise. I will do this - if you do that.

So here essentially are the two types of promises, one unconditional and one conditional. Or as we hear in world politics 'unilateral' or 'multi-lateral'

Who are these promises to? There are God's promise to every person in this world - and there are God's promises to some people in particular.

- Just as you can make a statement on social media for everyone - or for just some people, people you have chosen.

When say "I will see you at 6pm" that is really a promise, something I will do. That is why words are so important because by them we say what we will do - and we must then do what we say.

One of the signs of ungodliness is that people do not so what they say they will do. This is something God hates - and will judge all who do it.

There are many examples of agreements between man... we have peace treaties where both parties sit down and sign a book and sometimes attach a seal. An agreement is made by taking an oath, by the giving of presents, by eating or feasting together, putting up a monument, or by offering a sacrifice  
So let us consider each of these four...

### *This one here at the time of Noah*

**8 Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: 9 "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you 10 and with every living creature that was with you ...v11 I establish my covenant with you:**

**In the middle v15 the covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind again v16, - and v17 "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.""** 9 times in all - so take note!

God's promise to Noah and all his descendants, i.e. us all **11 Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth."** **15 Never again** x2 **will the waters become a flood to destroy all life.** 'Never again' is repeated 3 times – have you got the message

2a

This is a statement, made unilaterally that God will do something – or not do something – and in this case said to reassure us all. **Will you trust him?**  
The flood was such a great calamity that without this sign the whole world would continue to live in fear...

Every time it rained, "Oh no run to the boats" "the end has come"

The world already lives in fear that it will be brought to an end.

- It used to be nuclear "mutually assured destruction". Then the aids epidemic would wipe away us all, - now it is global warming.

We do not need to fear. I have a book and film showing the reasons why the scientists unfairly draw the conclusions they do. We can all see the narrative taking shape, will there be a law against anyone questioning it? I wonder.

✚ **God is reassuring you that - He started it, - He will finish it – His way!**

That is Jesus will return in the clouds in glory and those who love him he will gathered to Himself. Graves will be opened and everyone else will be reformed and summoned before God for Judgment and then banished from God's presence to everlasting punishment. The world will end and be destroyed not by water but by fire, it will be purged and made anew to be inhabited by God and his perfected people in a new perfect world with no sin, suffering or death. **Will you be there? You hope so, do you know so?**

God is true to his word, just as we see the rainbow. The Lord God said <sup>16</sup> **"Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth."** The visible sign of this covenant. **You can stand on his promise**

Let's move on the next covenant - the key one made with Abraham and his descendants.

### *The covenant with Abraham*

Turn to Gen 15, page 15      Read Gen 15:9-18a      Page 15

In the OT the Hebrew word 'berith' is derived from a root which means "to cut," and hence a covenant is a "cutting," with reference to the cutting or dividing of animals into two parts, and the contracting parties passing between them, in making a covenant. Sounds strange to us doesn't it?

But note here only one party passes through, - not Abraham - but God in the form of the fire.

This is the basis of the agreement that God has with Abraham. It is one sided, God's side, he does everything – Abraham only receives.

2b

Through belief alone x2 comes the gift of righteousness. Salvation is a gift.

The message of the law is 'do' – the message of the gospel is 'here is a gift', - the giving of righteousness, that is being clean or perfect in God's sight.

**The righteous shall live by faith** – the promises of God: If you believe, as Abraham believed - you too can be given peace with God and everlasting life. Given. **Have you turned to Christ for it?**

Because of Jesus Christ's finished work on the cross - God can now give forgiveness of sins and everlasting life to any man or woman boy or girl who will come to His son Jesus Christ. This is God's Grace. **Trust & receive**

✚ **This promise to Abraham is the promise that is made to you and I today**

Abraham was the great example of faith. He was given circumcision as a sign of being included in this promise.

A bit like baptism is today, - The outward sign that Jesus has made you new.

There were some who later took God for granted, they cheapened this grace, and in effect insulted God, they made a mockery of God's mercy, those who invoke the name of God, but it's in a superstitious way.

-We see this in Jer 34 where God calls this covenant to mind: **"The men who have violated my covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before me, I will treat like the calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces. The leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the court officials, the priests and all the people of the land who walked between the pieces of the calf, I will hand over to their enemies who seek their lives. They will die. 18-20**

**Then there is the covenant with Moses**

With Moses and the people with him in the desert. It is seen in Exodus 24 at Mount Sinai **Read Exodus 24:3-8 Page 82**

This covenant with the children of Israel at Sinai was conditional x2: if they were obedient and kept the law they would be blessed; but if disobedient they would be cursed. We understand this ways of thinking, cause and effect

**Then he took the Book of the Covenant** – that is the word of God that Moses had just received from God and written down - **and read it to the people.** The people were told the Law so they would know what to keep.

**They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey."** x2

**Here is the essence of it - if they would observe the foregoing precepts, God would perform the foregoing promises. Simple "Obey, and be happy."**

3a

Did they keep it? No. There was nothing wrong with the law, God's laws are always good. But they didn't keep them. God kept his side - but they didn't keep their side. It sounds quite mechanical.

■ Like a doctor, you have an appointment to see him, you don't turn up, that's it - it is off. He doesn't pursue you.

Yet there is more to it than that, because of His love God wants to help them

■ More like a child who doesn't turn up for evening meal, does the parent say that's it?! No, he or she goes up to find out what is wrong and tries to help.

**8 Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."**

Why the blood? - The agreement was sealed by blood. There can be no ongoing fellowship till there be first friendship - and that requires atonement by sacrifice. Since man has sinned, and forfeited his Creator's favour we must first be put into God's favour through a substitute. Psalms 50:5 **"Gather to me my consecrated ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice."**

Now the favour has been bought - would they live in obedience? Would they keep their side? - No they didn't. No-one who has ever lived has kept the law - No-one - except Jesus. Rom 3:20

Therefore – despite God's loving appeal and efforts - it is a failed covenant. Hebrews 8 gives us a summary: **For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant .... it will not be like the covenant I made when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will make ... after that time. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." By calling this covenant "new", he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and ageing will soon disappear."** Heb 8:1-13

Why then did God give them the law – and call them to obey it – when he knew they wouldn't? God's word says: **the man that does these things will**

3b

**live by them.** Ro 10:5, Gal 3:11 – the problem is - the man who fails to do them - will die by them! – The reason is this.....

The Law perfectly reflects God's pure moral character. He lifts it up to you and I like a mirror - to show me my sin. It shows my failure, it shows my inability to be how I was made to be, it shows how far from God I really am in both my conduct and character - and it shows that I am under God's wrath and heading to hell. Rom 4:15, 7:7f **That is the truth of the matter!**

*Like a doctor who gives you a close look and then sighs, 'this is serious'*

This good law - in showing me my failure - makes me long for something better, something that works! It is there that I should recognize the true physician, Jesus Christ the Righteous One. And in my need - to throw me onto Him, the Saviour – when he came. This legal covenant of law at Sinai was temporary, and once it had done its work in bringing my great need into clear view - is now eclipsed as it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

So we come to .....

### *The covenant with Jesus*

Jesus who **became the guarantee of a better covenant** x2 Heb 7:22

Jesus brings us the answer, obedience x2, His perfect obedience to everything God desired. They had failed, you and I fail, Jesus never failed.

Earlier we read that Jesus **took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.** Matthew 26:26-29

Thus our Lord Jesus is the Mediator of the new and better covenant. Having offered up himself as a sacrifice on the cross. His blood of the covenant once sprinkled on the altar, is now sprinkled on his church - by his Spirit, by whom we are sealed. Heb 9:12,19-20.

**"It is finished"** was his final cry, He has done it, all of it, the resurrection proves it.

- *I remember when very little being at a fair and trying to get the rings over those square blocks on which stood the prize. I never could. It is much harder than it looks. My father with his long arms reached across and just plonked them on. He did it for me it. He gained the prize for me.*

So salvation is harder than it looks – by a long way, but Jesus can and has done it so we can gain the prize.

The Latin for covenant is 'foedus' hence the word 'federal'. One could say there was a covenant with Adam. and God made a covenant with him a covenant of works - He failed. Adam is the 'federal' head of the human race which means we all share in the consequences of His failure with all the misery of pride selfishness suffering and death that is here, it is obvious! But in Christ the covenant was remade through his perfect obedience. He is also the federal head for His people – If you have him you share in his victory - He becomes the means of salvation for all those he represents.

✚ **We, you and I and everyone are all in Adam – Are you now 'in Christ'?**

### *Let's sum up*

The covenant of the law with Moses found its fulfillment in Christ, for He fulfilled it all for us - that He might be "**the Lord our righteousness,**" the end of the law to give righteousness to everyone who believes in Him." Jer 23:6 1Co 1:30 Ro 10:4 Mt 3:15 5:17 Isa 42:21 45:24-25

So too the promise made to Abraham is fulfilled in his promised descendant - Jesus Christ. If you have turned to Christ, **if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.** Gal 3:29

Stand on the promises of God and you will find peace with God through **"the righteous that comes by faith"** Hab 2:4 **Jesus Christ is faithful. x2**

*Remember the marriage vows? : I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my wedded wife/husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until death do us part. This is my solemn vow.*

That is Jesus's solemn vow - That is how faithful Jesus Christ is to his Church His bride.

*Not only while I have feelings of love – when that evaporates – I'm off*

God does not change, (Mal 3:6, James 1:17, Heb 13:8). It is God's unchanging faithfulness - and dependability - in his relation to his people that the whole idea of covenant is based on. **God's perfection - is the anchor.**

The covenant is based on God's unchanging love as he enters into relationship with men. From Abraham to Christ the Hebrew word for Grace is a covenant term which implies: loyal love, faithful love, steadfast love.

✚ **Trust Christ, stand on His promises and he will give you the power to live in obedience, to live fully with the deep Joy he alone brings.**