

COVENANT PRINCIPLE

One definition of testament is covenant. The two parts of the bible are considered to be the old and new covenant. The mediator of the first covenant, that of the law, is Moses (Galatians 3:19-22). It is imperfect only because man cannot fulfill the law, for if he breaks even the least commandment, he is guilty of all (James 2:10). Its worth to us is to lead us to the understanding that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The law was established to show us that we are forever lost without a savior (Romans 8:1-4). The mediator of the new covenant is Jesus Christ who is uniquely capable of fulfilling the old covenant on our behalf. He alone is able to meet the demands of the law and the justice of God. He is the savior that we so desperately need.

There have been many classes on the steps of the ancient rites of covenant that apply to the Hebrews. I recommend one very helpful and insightful book on the subject, Miracle of the Scarlet Thread by Richard Booker. The same individual rites of the ancient covenant can be seen in the account of David and Jonathan. The exchange of robes, garments, and weapons was an outward show of an inward commitment of faithfulness that would last the lifetimes of these two men and extended to their families.

Read the account of David, Jonathan, and Mephibosheth in I Samuel 18:1-4; 20:8 and in II Samuel 4:1-4; 9:1-13; 16:1-4; 19:24-30.

The covenant relationship between David and Jonathan is a type and shadow for God and His Son. David and Jonathan entered into covenant because their souls were knit together, that is they were of one heart and mind. They loved each other more dearly than brothers. Their relationship was unchanged by the circumstances around them. Jonathan's father, King Saul, hated and feared David. He knew that God had withdrawn His blessing and support of him as king and given it to David. This did not alter Jonathan's love for David. The covenant David and Jonathan entered into is foreign to the thinking of today's Christian. But it is a type for the covenant relationship we have with God through Christ. We can see ourselves in the life of Mephibosheth as he is offered a place in the covenant of his father that he does not deserve and cannot earn.

In I Samuel 18:1-4 and 20:8, the covenant between David and Jonathan is recorded. This covenant reached beyond the lifetime of these two men and extended into the lives of their children. As children, the offspring of David and Jonathan were automatically under the covenant of their fathers. When they reached the age of accountability, they were offered the opportunity to accept or reject inclusion in this original covenant. Before the

age of accountability, all of us are covered by the sacrifice of Jesus (Moroni 8:5-28). But then there comes a time of choice when we must choose whether we will remain in the covenant of the Father and the Son or stand on our own merits. If we come into this, we are also agreeing to abide by the conditions of the covenant.

When King Saul and his sons died, David did not automatically become king. Those of the tribe of Judah readily accepted him. It took several years for David to become accepted by the other tribes. There were many battles fought and much turmoil in the settling of his right to reign. After seven years, David was able to enter Jerusalem and reign as king there. There was still much to be done to stabilize his country.

It was common practice for a new king to destroy the family of the previous ruler. This cut down the chances of rebellion against his leadership and served as warning that no threat to his kingdom would be allowed. After Saul's death, David had to solidify his power and set up his government. He brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. Then he turned to other matters. He began inquiring about Jonathan's children. This caused great concern on the behalf of some for the safety of these children. If David had not been a man of God, this could have lead to their death. David was eventually told where Jonathan's son could be found. Mephibosheth was in Lo-debar east of the Jordan River. Much like Adam in the Garden of Eden, this son of a king was hiding in fear. At the time of Jonathan and Saul's death, Mephibosheth, who was five years old, was rushed into hiding to protect him from David. In her haste and fear, his servant dropped the boy and he became lame in both his feet. Years later, David sent his chariots to bring Mephibosheth to the king's court.

Mephibosheth - Heir to the Covenant

When Mephibosheth arrives at King David's court, he falls at the king's feet and pleaded for mercy. Much to his surprise, Mephibosheth is given all the lands and property that had originally been his grandfather Saul's. He is given a man called Ziba and his fifteen sons and twenty servants to serve him and oversee all this property (Ziba and his family had been servants of King Saul). Best of all, Mephibosheth is given a place in David's palace and he is to eat at the same table as the king. Mephibosheth is overwhelmed for he had done nothing to deserve these wonderful blessings and he tells David that he knows this is so, "What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?" David gives the reason for his actions in II Samuel 9:7, "Fear not; for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake..." It is because of the covenant between David and Jonathan that Mephibosheth is protected and blessed. He did not earn the right to come into this covenant but now he must choose. He could go back to Lo-debar and live in poverty, bitterness, and hate. It seems like a poor choice but how many people refuse to sit at the King's table and partake of His goodness? We are also offered entrance into the covenant of Christ and His Father, but it is our choice.

The story of Mephibosheth and David does not end at this point. Later King David must flee Jerusalem because his beloved son, Absalom, raises a rebellion against him and tries to take the kingdom by force. When David leaves Jerusalem, many follow him into exile. Some, who have hated David, rejoice and even curse him as he leaves. Who should meet David on the road but Ziba who comes with supplies and wants to go with David. When David asks why Mephibosheth has not joined him, Ziba says that his master is glad that David is going into exile and that Mephibosheth hopes to become king. In response to Ziba's willingness to follow him, David gives to Ziba all the land and property that he had first given to Mephibosheth. Eventually, Absalom is killed and the rebellion is over. On his return into Jerusalem, David is met by several people who try to "mend fences." Their very lives are in danger and they plead for forgiveness. Mephibosheth is also there to meet David. During the time of David's absence, Mephibosheth has "neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace" (II Samuel 19:24). These are clear signs of mourning. David asks him why he did not go with him. Mephibosheth explains that while he was preparing to go, Ziba took his mount and supplies and left him. Since he was lame, he could not make the journey alone. This puts David in a very awkward position for Ziba has served him faithfully while in exile and he has already promised him all of Mephibosheth's possessions. Ziba is the accuser and deceiver. David is just a man and weary from the strife. He decides to let Ziba and Mephibosheth decide how to divide the land. This is where we find that Mephibosheth truly understands the meaning of covenant. He shows his love for David as he willingly gives up all his possessions to Ziba. "Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house" (II Samuel 19:30). Mephibosheth's love for David is not based on the gifts he has received from his hands but on the relationship he has with his lord. He was willing to give up everything in order to be in fellowship with David (Matthew 13:47).

David long remembered those who cursed him at his departure from Jerusalem. Although he promised not to retaliate during his life time (I Kings 2:5-9), he instructed his son, Solomon, to punish these men when he died. It is interesting to note that Mephibosheth is not mentioned as one of those whom David considered his enemies.

How often is our faith challenged when adversity comes into our lives. Do we question God's love when we cannot see His blessings? We are a people who many times thank God for our obvious blessings but we do not know how to worship Him for who He is. Although we cannot always see His hand, we can trust that He does not vary in His love and care for us. We must learn to worship and praise God whether we see His blessing or not. Unlike King David, God sees and provides for us. We can trust Him regardless of the appearance of our circumstances. There is always a place at His table for us if we seek Him while He may be found (Isaiah 55:6-7) and remain in His covenant.

Can you see yourself in this covenant relationship?

Who can enter into Covenant with God? (Genesis 4:9, 6:57-65; Job 36:5-12; Isaiah 56:1-8; Romans 10:12-16)

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What is our responsibility in this covenant? (Genesis 6:51-53; I Samuel 13:14-15; Isaiah 1:16-20)

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Can we leave the covenant? (Deuteronomy 31:16-18; II Chronicles 29:6; Joshua 24:14-25 -- Judges 2:11-13)

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What is the consequence of leaving this covenant? (Joshua 24:20; Judges 2:14-17; II Chronicles 15:2; Isaiah 1:28-31)

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What is the consequence of remaining faithful to this covenant? (II Chronicles 4:14; Exodus 23:22; Deuteronomy 31:6; Matthew 11:29-30; Isaiah 54:17, 40:28-31; 49:13-26)

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As we study the scriptures, let us keep our eyes on Jesus. If we seek, we will find. If we knock, the door will be opened unto us and He will come in and fellowship with us (Matthew 7:12-13).

“Therefore seek ye to bring forth the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:33-34).

The Worthy Lamb

During biblical times, shepherds used an unusual teaching tool on rebellious lambs. It was imperative that the lamb stay close to the shepherd. The fields were filled with danger - steep cliffs, wolves and other predators, thieves - any of which would be the death of the creature. The sheep were to stay within the sound of the shepherd's voice and range of his sight. If the shepherd had a lamb that consistently wandered off, he would be forced to take drastic action. He would take his rod and strike the lamb's leg thereby breaking it. Then he would tenderly bind up the break and give this lamb his special attention. Since the lamb could no longer walk to the pastures, the shepherd would carry him on his shoulders. He would place him where the grass was easy to reach and was plentiful. He would carry the lamb to quiet water where he could drink without fear. He would place the lamb close to him at night that no harm would come to it. He would meet every need of the lamb and all the while he would be talking to the lamb in soothing tones. As the lamb healed, he learned to trust the shepherd because of his faithful care. He learned the shepherd's voice and knew that all his needs were met in his master and that there was no need to wander away from his care.

Because of his years as a shepherd to his father's sheep, King David knew this practice well. He could easily see how God allowed affliction to come into the lives of His people so that they would be humbled and learn to trust in the Lord as their Master. Therefore in Psalm 51:8, David says to the Lord, "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." David speaks prophetically of Jesus as he writes, "He keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken" (Psalm 34:20). Because Jesus was never rebellious, God would not allow one bone to be broken. This speaks clearly of the Son's perfect obedience to the Father. It also shows us how all things can "work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). May we learn "in everything (to) give thanks" (I Thessalonians 5:18) and to acknowledge God's guiding hand in all areas of our lives (D&C 59:5b) that we may be faithful and obedient partakers of God's eternal covenant.

"And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon....And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain...And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood ... " (Revelations 5:3-10).

Please read:

Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 31:10-11; Ezekiel 34:12-16, 23-31