

God's Commitment to His Covenant

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33).

Scripture: Jeremiah 31:27–34

Song: “Step by Step”

As a friend to several teachers, I've learned about the efforts that go into helping kids who struggle with classroom behavior. At times, a behavioral plan is implemented to help the child improve. However, if this initial plan isn't effective, it can be changed to find a better way to provide the right support.

God spoke to His people through the prophet Jeremiah, letting them know that the existing covenant through the Law of Moses would one day be supplemented by a new covenant, one made through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. This new covenant would have the power to restore relationships with God and transform peoples' hearts, something the old covenant could not accomplish. In this way, God's merciful love would continue to reach out to them, despite their failure to obey Him.

God extends this same mercy and love to us as His children. Even when we stumble spiritually, God is committed to His covenant with us, and we can trust that He will be quick to embrace us when we turn to Him.

Father, thank You for being committed to Your covenant and for Your unending love for me. In Jesus' name, amen.

May 19–25. **Jenifer Regennitter** lives in Illinois. She is an author and lover of antiques and classic film.

A Truly Free Gift

It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Scripture: Ephesians 2:1–10

Song: “Wonderful Grace of Jesus”

If you’re like me, you get bombarded with free offers. They come from seemingly everywhere: the mail, social media, email. If you read the fine print, though, usually *free* only applies after you’ve purchased something. In other words, that so-called freebie is not really free.

By contrast, God offers us the free gift of salvation simply because of His great grace. Paul makes it clear in today’s passage that nothing we do (or don’t do) can earn salvation. Otherwise, people could brag about what they did to get themselves saved. However, God alone has the power to provide salvation, and He offers it to us only through faith in Jesus. It is a completely free gift; God alone is responsible for making us free to obey Him.

How great God’s love must be for us, to give us this free gift at the cost of Jesus’ life! If we really rested in this truth, it would profoundly impact every area of our lives: how we see God, others, and ourselves. Spend some time thinking about people around you who need the peace that comes with resting in this same truth. How might you invite them to receive God’s free gift?

Father, thank You for reminding me that Your salvation is a gift. Help me to learn to trust and rest in Your great love for me and to extend that love to others. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Just as He Said

[Jesus said,] “He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished. Make preparations there.” They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover (Luke 22:12–13).

Scripture: Luke 22:7–20

Song: “My Redeemer Is Faithful and True”

Several years ago when I travelled out of town, I was able to use a friend’s home for the weekend. Since no one would be there when I arrived, I was told where to find the spare key to let myself in. When I got there, the key was exactly where my friend said it would be.

In today’s passage, Jesus told the disciples to look for a man carrying water. This man would tell them where they could prepare the Passover meal. In that culture, it was not typical for men to carry water, so this man likely would have stood out in the crowd. As the disciples obeyed Jesus’ instructions, they found that everything happened just as Jesus said it would.

Similarly, God tells us what we can expect as His children. He promises to never leave or forsake us, to work all things for our good, and to give wisdom to those who seek it (Romans 8:28; Hebrews 13:5; James 1:5). He encourages us to observe and recognize His faithfulness in His many promises. We can trust that whatever His Word tells us, it will happen just as He said.

Father, I know I can stand on Your Word and trust that You will do just as You have said. Thank You for Your faithfulness in all things. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Celebrate God's Goodness

Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10).

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:1–3, 5–6, 8–12

Song: “Trading My Sorrows”

Important occasions like graduations or weddings can often stir mixed emotions. There is joy at the new beginning, certainly. But there can also be sorrow because an era is ending or a loved one is moving away to their new life elsewhere.

In today's passage, the reading of the Law of Moses was a celebration, since God had returned the residents of Judah to their homes after years of exile. However, as the Jews heard from God's Law, they wept from sorrow as they recognized how they had transgressed and strayed from His ways. But God was establishing this occasion as a celebration—a time of joy, not a time for grieving.

Similarly, when God speaks to us through His Word about things He wants to change in us, it's not to condemn us but to draw us near, as He works in our hearts to bring about spiritual growth and maturity (see Romans 8:1). His goal is that we might be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus (Romans 8:29). And as we walk in the joy of our salvation and in the sanctifying work of His Holy Spirit, we will know His strength and celebrate His goodness to us.

Father, thank You for Your perfect leading that helps me become more like Jesus. Lead me into Your joy that is my strength. In Jesus' name, amen.

Remember God's Works

[The Levites said,] “In their hunger you gave them bread from heaven and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock; you told them to go in and take possession of the land you had sworn with uplifted hand to give them” (Nehemiah 9:15).

Scripture: Nehemiah 9:2–3, 6–17, 32

Song: “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”

In the fable of Hansel and Gretel, two children are abandoned by their parents because the family is so poor. When the two venture out to get food, the boy drops stones or breadcrumbs so they will not get lost on their way home.

The Levites in this passage were speaking a prayer that recounted many of the wonderful things God had done for their people. God was responsible for saving the people from slavery in Egypt. He had repeatedly provided for their needs and performed miracles, despite their continued disobedience. The memories of these events were like the stones that Hansel dropped, marking the path of faith through stories which God's people were prone to forget.

Remembering what God has done for us in the past is a great way to praise Him, but it's also a means of stirring up our own faith. It can be a good practice to record times when we've seen God at work, intervening in our lives. When times are hard, we can go back and reflect on all He has done and know He will be faithful to get us through, once again.

Father, as I remember Your faithful acts in my life, I want to praise You and keep to Your path of righteousness. In Jesus' name, amen.

Qualified Through Christ

The ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises (Hebrews 8:6).

Scripture: Hebrews 8

Song: “I Will Praise Him”

In the musical *The Lion King*, a lion cub named Simba runs away from his family and friends after his uncle convinces him that he (Simba) is at fault for his own father’s death. Even after growing to adulthood, Simba cannot accept that he is worthy to be king of the pride. He believes his mistakes have disqualified him from that position.

The writer of Hebrews explains that God has made a new covenant with His people (a fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:31–34). In the past, God’s people had struggled to keep their covenant obligations and to reflect their holy status as God’s people. But God made a new covenant for us, one which is guaranteed to be effective through faith in His Son, Jesus. God provided a solution to the problem of sin, once and for all, so that His people might reflect their true identity as children of God.

Whenever we are tempted, like Simba, to think that our mistakes have disqualified us from serving in God’s kingdom, we can remember that Jesus’ sacrifice is what makes us righteous before God. As we confess our sin to Him, we know that Jesus’ sacrifice makes us worthy and cleanses us from our sin.

Father, thank You for loving me so much that You sacrificed Jesus so I can freely receive His righteousness. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Sharing the Load

“We—the priests, the Levites and the people—have cast lots to determine when each of our families is to bring to the house of our God at set times each year a contribution of wood to burn on the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the Law” (Nehemiah 10:34).

Scripture: Nehemiah 10:28–39

Song: “Here I Am, Lord”

Years ago I was part of a church that rented a space to meet on Sundays. It meant that all the chairs, microphones, instruments, etc., had to be set up and torn down each week. Almost everyone in attendance helped, enabling us to complete the work quickly.

In today’s Scripture, God’s people are listing ways they will care for God’s house. Each family would take turns bringing wood to burn on the altar, and anyone with crops would bring their first fruits each year to contribute. In such ways, the work of caring for God’s house was evenly distributed.

God may guide us to a certain church to receive spiritual blessings, but He also places us where we can make a contribution. We might have a gift of hospitality, maintenance skills, musical talent, a passion for teaching, a knack for finances, or some other ability. Whatever our gift it is, the body of Christ is blessed and enriched as we serve willingly to help carry on the work of God’s kingdom.

Father, lead me to where You would have me contribute in Your church, and strengthen me to do the work You place in my hands. In Jesus’ name, amen.