

Covenant Scriptures Teaching

Turn to the Scripture handout please. We're looking at 24 different Scriptures today, so looking them all up in the Bible would not work for you, and you not having the Scripture in front of you did not work for me. So I put all the Scriptures on two sides of one page.

Our covenant has four sections, and today we'll look at the Scriptures behind the second and third parts. The first part is the Apostles' Creed. That's a short confession of what Christians believe that's been around for hundreds of years, and is used by many Christians. It ties us to our history, and to other believers. We'll not talk about that today.

The fourth part is the covenant between the elders of this church and the congregation. It is based on Scriptures like the rest, and we will also that next week. But we're not going over those Scriptures today. The second and third parts are the most important.

The second and third parts of our covenant are our pledge to Jesus the Lord, and our covenant with each other for the next year. These two are what we'll talk about today.

Our Pledge to Jesus the Lord

The Gift of salvation For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:3)

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit, guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Redemption. Here's how that works. I bought a piece of furniture at the Steinbach Thrift store. I paid for it, but could not pick it then. They taped a yellow sticker on my table, it said "Sold to Ed Neufeld." I've paid for it, and I'll come get it when I'm ready.

That's us. When we believed, we became God's. He paid for us with his Son. Jesus came to give his life as a ransom. When God is ready, he'll come get us. That's *the redemption of those who are God's possession*. And the yellow sticker, that's the Holy Spirit.

That's God marking us. *When you believed, you marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit*. The Spirit is God's label on us. God says, "I paid for this person, this person is mine, I'll come get them when I'm ready." This summarizes what God has given us.

The Lord's Call to us As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John

in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. (Mark 1:16-20)

Jesus says, “**You** follow **me**, and **I** will make **you** what you should be. **You** follow **me**, and **I’ll** take it from there. **You** attach yourself to **me**, **you** leave what **you** need to leave, to bind yourself to **me**, and **I** will teach **you**, and make you what you should be.”

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. (Rm 12:1)

“Sacrifice” no longer means what it meant in the Bible. In the Bible it meant a gift to God, a present, an offering. Now in English, “sacrifice” means what we give up, what we lose. “I sacrificed that” means it’s gone. That’s fine, English can do what it wants with words.

But in the Bible sacrifice means gift, offering, present. Think Christmas present for God. Imagine a gift with nice wrapping. Give God a living present, a living gift, let’s give him our life in this body as our present to God. THAT is the ultimate worship, true and proper worship, the only worship that makes sense, since God has done so much for us.

I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. (Philippians 1:20) We can give Christ honour by **living** faithfully, and we can give Christ honour by **dying** faithfully. He died for us. Let’s bring honour to him.

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

“Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions. (Mark 12:28-34)

The teacher asked for one command, and Jesus knew which one command answered his question. But Jesus wanted to answer another question. Jesus wanted to answer, “which are the two greatest commands.” Not one, not three, but two great commands rise to the top.

The NT letters quote “Love your neighbour as yourself” three times (Rm 13, Gal 5, Jam 2). Every time the writer applies that to other people in the church, our brothers and sisters. And that is the overwhelming emphasis of the all the NT letters. And that emphasis is why our covenant of membership says so much about how we treat each other.

The Lord's Help *The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. (1 Thess 5:24)*

God is committed to helping us follow his Son. He gives all kinds of help. He calls us, but that's not all. *The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. You follow me, and I will send the Spirit and teach you, I will make you what you should be.*

For it is God who works in you to will and to act for his good purpose. [I give thanks for you,] being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:13; 1:6)

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. (Jude 24-25)

And God forgives our many sins. *Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. So let us approach God's throne of grace with boldness, so we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (1 Corinthians 15:3; Hebrews 4:16)*

Our Annual Covenant with Each Other

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

And let us consider, let's think about these things. How we may spur one another on. Let's think about each other, how we can get each other going a certain way. To love and good deeds. Let's think about how we can prompt each other to love and good deeds. This Scripture us urging every believer.

Not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing. My brothers and sisters, in the Christian faith, meeting together and shaping each other is not an add-on to following the Lord. It is how we follow the Lord. Not meeting together has been a problem for a long time. Encouraging one another. Again, Scripture urging every one of us.

All the more as you see the Day approaching. This was written 2,000 years ago. The writer said that as we get closer to the End, the volume gets louder. We're a lot closer now.

When Jesus says, *you follow me and I will make you what you should be*, this is it. He will make us into this, by teaching us and by sending us the Holy Spirit to help us.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matthew 6:33)

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very

truly I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. (John 13:14-17) Not blessed if we know these things, blessed if we do them.

Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (James 2:15-17)

If any one of you has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in you? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. (1Jn 3:17)

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph 4:3, 29-30)

The Spirit makes us one. He's done that. We make every effort to live that out, so we pursue peace with each other.

Unwholesome talk is not okay if we only say it to one other person we trust. The talk itself is poison. Why would we poison someone we trust? The Holy Spirit of God is in us. Imagine him wincing, and groaning, at what we say. *Oh no*, he says, *don't say that, don't spread bitterness like that, that's awful.*

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (Col 3:12-13)

We are going to hurt each other. It happens in this church, sometimes on purpose, sometimes not on purpose. We have real grievances. Remember that the Lord forgave us a huge debt. *Bear with each other, and forgive one another, as the Lord forgave you.*

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. (Romans 12:15)

What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. (Ephesians 6:18)

This is why we pray for each other Sunday mornings, and Wednesday evenings. This is why we have paired prayer household. *Always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*

And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. (1 Thess 5:14-15)

Warn the disruptive. If the same people are always at the center of church tensions, they should be warned. Their actions violate the unity the Spirit has created and supports. *Be patient with everyone.* And in this church we will wrong each other. Sadly, is a given. *Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other. And, for everyone else.* For those not among God's people. Don't pay back wrong there, either, but do what is good for them. Even for our enemies.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. (Philippians 2:3-4)

Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income. (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)

The collection is for the Lord's people. Every single collection in the NT is for the Lord's people. And here's what Paul told all his churches to do: *on the first day of the week, bring a sum of money.* Paul recommended giving based on worship timing, not income timing.

How much to we give? *In keeping with your income.*

I want to read you another Scripture. *Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. ⁴² But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. ⁴³ Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. ⁴⁴ They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on." Mk 12.*

I heard someone say of this text, "It doesn't matter how much we give, it's what's in our heart that counts." Truly, it is not how much we give that counts. But Jesus says nothing about the widow's heart. Here's a better way to say it: **"It's not how much we give, a small gift from a poor person is huge in the kingdom."** This is for all of us that feel stretched about money, and don't think we have enough to give at all.

Therefore, *On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money, in keeping with your income. Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)*

Well, there you have it, about ten sermons rolled into one. Jesus said, “you follow me and I will make you what you should be. You attach yourself to me, and I will teach you, and send the Holy Spirit to help you, and I will make you what you should be.”

And we remind ourselves: *It is God who works in us, to will, and to act, for his good purpose. He who **began** a good work in us, will carry it on to **completion**, until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:13; 1:6)*

And so, to him who is able to keep us from stumbling and to present us before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now, and forevermore! Amen.