

Sermon – 20/08/2006 pm

Covenant Renewal – Response

Study Text: Deuteronomy 30:11-20

Imagine a man on a yacht out at sea. In a big storm his boat is damaged and starts to sink. The captain on a passing ship notices his plight and sends a dinghy across to rescue him. ‘Come on board and we will take you to safety’ the sailors cry out. But the man is reluctant to leave his yacht. It was his father’s boat, and his father’s before that. They sailed in it year after year and it never sank on them. They said it would never sink. Besides it was a very expensive yacht. It was difficult to abandon such an investment. What was the man to do? What would he choose? Would he stay on his sinking yacht, or would he choose to be rescued and live?

Are you clinging to what is sinking? Whatever you have of this world’s treasures will one day be gone – or you may be gone beforehand. One thing is sure, what you have in this world will be of no use in the next. What will you choose when salvation is offered to you?

As Moses came to the end of this covenant renewal ceremony with the people of God he said *See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil* (30:15). Moses explained the terms of the covenant the Lord their God was making with them. It was a non-negotiable agreement – how could any man improve upon an agreement drawn up by the God who loved them and brought them out of bondage! The covenant was presented to them for a simple response – yes or no. Accept the Lord and his covenant and live, or reject the Lord and his covenant and perish.

Close to You

This commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious/ difficult for you, nor is it far off/beyond your reach (30:11). What Moses was presenting to them was not too difficult for them to understand or something that belonged to another realm. It did not belong to heaven as something of no importance to life in this world. It was not something they had to go searching for all over the earth. *The word is near you, it is in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it* (30:14).

The Lord has revealed all that we need to know in order for us to know him, to trust in him and live, as we saw back in Deuteronomy 29:29. Jesus likewise told his disciples *all things that I heard from my Father I have made known to you* (John 15:15). Jesus was sent by his Father, he came from the presence of his Father in heaven, into this world. And he shared all that men needed to know and could comprehend.

Moses declared all this divine revelation unto them in language they could understand. Most of them had heard the law from their youth, or should have. It was part of their education. ‘The law could be in the mouth of every man as he repeated it over and allowed it thus to enter his heart and flow out into his life’. These were the chosen people of God who were told to teach their children the word of God.

When you share the gospel with some people they act as if you are from another planet. Of course, if you are speaking in a language they do not understand they have every right to think

like this. But when the gospel is presented in a person's own mother tongue, they can understand. It is comprehensible and achievable to any and every human being.

The gospel is fundamentally simple. Head hunters in Indo-China, nomadic herdsmen in Africa, Wall Street brokers, and even academics and politicians can understand it. Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and people from all religions, have heard the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ and believed in him.

How wonderful it was to witness illiterate Hindu people hear the gospel and believe. Believing in Jesus they would throw out all their idols and worship only Jesus. *Let the little children to come unto me* said Jesus *for of such is the kingdom of God* (Matthew 10:14).

Through Moses and the prophets, God made the law clear to every Israelite – old and young, men and women, slave and stranger. Through Paul and the apostles God made the gospel of grace clear to all human beings. Paul used the very words of Moses to make this claim regarding the *righteousness of faith, the word of faith we preach* (Romans 10). He wrote of the gospel which he preached as the *revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations* (Romans 16:25, 26).

And as Moses concluded with the words *that you may do it*, so Paul concluded *if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved* (Romans 10:9). That is it! That is all you have to do – believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. The message is clear and the response simple and easy. But the decision will totally and permanently change your life.

Choose

Therefore choose life that both you and your descendants may live (30:19). The final part of this covenant renewal was a call for heaven and earth to witness that the blessings and the curses had been set before the people; then Moses appealed to them to choose life. When signing a treaty or covenant there must be witnesses. This covenant between God and man was witnessed by all creation.

There was a cosmic witness to this divine covenant. Let no man think that he can go to some place and claim the covenant is not valid because there were no witnesses. Both heaven and earth are witnesses to this covenant declared by God. Every human being on this planet has to choose between life and death, according to the word of God. They have to choose during this lifetime, for there is no provision for choosing after they die.

What does it mean to choose life? It means to choose good rather than evil. It means to choose God rather than Satan. It means to love the Lord your God and walk in his ways. It means being blessed by the Lord with fruitfulness and long life. It means having an inheritance. Israel inherited the land of Canaan. In Jesus Christ we inherit a home in heaven, and eternal life in him.

Joshua heard Moses call for this commitment and he chose life. Many years later he made the same call to the people as he renewed the covenant with them at Shechem. Joshua called upon the people to put away all other gods and serve the Lord their God alone. *Choose for*

yourselves this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord (Joshua 24:15).

At Pentecost Peter preached Christ and Him crucified. *God made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36).* The people responded – *what shall we do.* Peter told them what to do. He said *repent and be baptised.* He told them they must be converted. They must turn from being enemies of Christ to believing in him if they were to live. For those who choose Christ, blessings await them. They receive the Holy Spirit and *every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3).*

Cling to Him

That you may cling to him, for he is your life and length of days (30:20). This is the final appeal of Moses in this address. Cling to the Lord for he is your life. If they held fast to the Lord and to the terms this covenant he made with them, if they obeyed his voice and walked in his ways, they would enjoy long life in the land which the Lord swore to their fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Cling to the Lord! What beautiful words these are. David knew what it meant to cling to the Lord. He sang – *My soul clings to you, your right hand upholds me (Psalm 63:8).* And Paul walked close to the Lord and clung to him through great trials and tribulation. He wrote to the Christians at Rome *hate what is evil, cling to what is good (Romans 12:9).*

Jesus spoke to his disciples about abiding in him, and his love. Those who abide in Jesus enjoy long life, even eternal life in the presence of the Lord and his glory, for Jesus is our life. *Do you also want to go away Jesus said to the twelve (John 6:67).* Peter clung to him saying *Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*

What are you clinging to? Are you still clinging to the things of this world, to the things that are passing away, to the ship that is sinking fast? Or, having chosen to follow Jesus, are you clinging to him? Jesus of course promises never to leave or forsake you who believe, but he also calls upon you to cling to him all the time, and all the way to heavenly glory.

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