

God's Covenant Of Grace.

Text: Judges 2:1-12

1) What it is

Suggested Hymns:

2) What it requires of us

851, 71, 588, 293, 297

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Judges 2:1-12, ¹ *Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you. 'And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.'* But you have not obeyed My voice. *Why have you done this?*

³ *"Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.'"* ⁴ *So it was, when the Angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept. 'Then they called the name of that place Bochim; and they sacrificed there to the LORD. 'And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land.*

⁷ *So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel. 'Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died when he was one hundred and ten years old. 'And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash.*

¹⁰ *When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.*

¹¹ *Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; 'and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the*

gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

*“Come, for all things are now ready.”*¹ This invitation in the Gospel Lesson for today may be called the greatest invitation in the world. It invites sinners to enter into the kingdom of God. God is in earnest, He wants all people to be saved.²

But why don't all people receive this invitation with joy? Why is it rejected by so many people even in our day? Why are there so many excuses offered for declining it?

*“¹³ Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.”*³ The word “world” in this sentence from today's Epistle denotes the unbelievers. Why should the unbelievers hate us? We pray for them, warn them against dangers; we invite them to our churches.

Jesus commands us in Mark 16:15 to *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”* In the name of the Triune God we offer not what everybody wants, but what everybody needs. It is necessary that we ourselves hear this again and again. This strengthens us in our faith and increases our joy and activity in the *“work of the Lord.”*

We read in 1 Corinthians 15:58, *“⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

Our text explains this mystery as far as we need to know it here. It is therefore not only a necessary, but also a welcome word of God. It presents to us God's Covenant of Grace. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. God's Covenant Of Grace

What It Is.

“I will never break My covenant with you,” the Angel of the Lord, God Himself, said to the children of Israel when He appeared to them at Bochim. He refers to previous appearances, *“I said.”* God frequently speaks of His covenant

in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament. The word is used nearly three hundred times in the Bible. The Bible may be called God's covenant with the human race.

Covenant means a promise, an agreement. It is an agreement between two or more persons. In our text God speaks of the most important, the most necessary covenant that can be made, - God's covenant with man for time and for eternity.

To make this covenant with man, it is necessary that God reveal Himself, His promises, to man, to declare the purpose of this covenant, and what it is. The purpose is to save sinners.

The foremost questions of life are; Who is the true God? How can we be justified in His sight? How can we serve Him? These cannot be answered by all the accumulated wisdom and experience of the bygone centuries.

No progress has been made by man apart from divine revelation in regard to the answer to these questions. Nothing has ever been invented by man to improve the soul of man. The abuse of many of our inventions and discoveries has aggravated the problem of sin. The problem of sin, its essence, its treacherous work, its disastrous results, all this is the hopeless problem of the human race left to itself.

God in His mercy has provided a solution for the problem of sin, a plan of salvation, which He clearly reveals in the Bible, a covenant with the sinner.

We read in 2 Timothy 3:15-17, *from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* ¹⁶ *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,* ¹⁷ *that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

God's covenant is a covenant of grace, the promise of forgiveness of sin, the assurance that we, who are condemned by His holy Law, who are *"lost and condemned creatures,"* are justified not by our own works, but by grace, for Jesus' sake, through faith.

There is only one way of salvation, the way of grace for Jesus' sake, as we read in Acts 4:12, ¹² *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other*

name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Jesus is true God, the Son of God, who from eternity is the promised Saviour. The sins of the world were imputed to Him. He is man’s Substitute before God.

By fulfilling the Law of God, and by suffering the punishment of our sins as our Substitute, He finished the work of our salvation, He saved us. He obtained grace for all. Through faith in Him we receive forgiveness of our sins, are justified in the sight of God. The moment when we believe we are received into His covenant of grace, we are children of God and heirs of everlasting life.

How blessed, therefore, is the sinner who says: *“I believe in Jesus, I rejoice in God’s offer of grace!”* But how miserable is the sinner who says: *“I do not believe, I reject His covenant!”* Righteous and just before God is the believer who says, *“God be merciful to me, a sinner!”* But how wretched the unbeliever, who says: *“I need no mercy, I am ‘working out’ my own salvation, yes, ‘I thank You God, that I am not as other people are.’”*⁴

In regard to this covenant of grace, God says in our text, ***I will never break My covenant with you.*** What a wonderful assurance! What a comfort! We daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment. We pray, ***“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”*** The believer keeps God’s covenant with him, but the unbeliever breaks it. Man may break this covenant, but God never breaks it.

We read in 1 Corinthians 12:3 that ***no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.*** This means that no one by his own ability can accept the covenant, or keep this covenant, if God had not provided the means of grace, through which the Holy Spirit works.

We read in *Luther’s Small Catechism*, ***I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, and sanctified and kept me in the true faith.*** This has always been so.

In the Old Testament the means of grace were the Word of God,⁵ Circumcision,⁶ and the Passover.⁷ In the New Testament the means of grace are the Word of God,⁸ the Sacrament of Baptism,⁹ and the Sacrament of the Altar.¹⁰

The purpose of the Sacrament of Baptism, the purpose of preaching, teaching, memorising, reading, and hearing the Word of God is twofold, namely, to bring us to faith and to keep us in it. The purpose of the Sacrament of the Altar is to keep us in faith. Through faithful use of them God gives us grace and power to keep His covenant.

2. God's Covenant Of Grace What It Requires Of Us.

What does God's covenant require of us? God sets forth the requirements that are to be observed. We read in Micah 6:8, ***He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?***

Our text says, ***But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this?*** The Angel of the Lord, who appeared to the children of Israel asked them this searching question. It also reminded them of God's covenant with them, of His special promises to them for their life on earth, the land promised to their fathers, the leading of them from Egypt to Canaan, the Promised Land.

It further reminded them of God's command that they ***make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land***, the heathen, and that they ***shall tear down their altars***, as well as their acts of disobedience, and sins against God's command.

The children of Israel repented immediately, wept, brought sacrifices, called the name of the place "***Bochim***," which means weepers. The message of the angel of the Lord and the response of the children of Israel show how important and how necessary the requirements of God's covenant are, how faithfully they should be observed.

Why have you done this? This question God also directs to us. He reminds us of His covenant with us, of our faith in the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, of the Sacrament of Baptism, the Sacrament of the Altar, the preaching of His Word, the promises of His grace, of our confirmation vow, of living in daily repentance and faith.¹¹

Under the leadership of Satan the unbelievers of today wield their "***deep guile and great might***" against God and His covenant with the believers, seek to

entangle them in a league with them, to seduce them to commit idolatry with them.

Hatred, Opposition, Persecution.

Clearly, through modern inventions and discoveries the teeming millions of this world have been brought nearer to each other, and the danger to believers has increased. The danger is pointed out in Mark 13:22, ²² *“For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.*

God commands us who believe to go forth and preach the Gospel to every creature, to fear neither the devil nor the unbelievers, but to trust in God’s grace and power, to enter into no compromise with unbelief, never to surrender to it.

Many churches which formerly preached the Triune God have surrendered to unbelief and no longer proclaim God’s truth.

When we were confirmed we vowed to be “faithful to the Triune God,” to “suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it,” and to “conform all our lives to the rule of the divine Word.”

How many since then have become unbelievers, persecute believers, and wilfully transgress God’s holy Law. Why have they done this? What are we doing to rescue them, to prevent others from breaking God’s covenant? Who of us is innocent, without any sin, in regard to this deplorable situation? Who is without blame in regard to the sins of other people?

Certainly the question of the Lord *Why have you done this?* reminds us of the need of daily repentance and faith, of watching and praying, and carefully studying the requirements of God’s covenant with us. It should impress upon our hearts once and for always that through the means of grace God grants us new power for the requirements of His covenant.

Neglect of the means of grace is detrimental to your life. Our text says that *another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.*

¹¹ *Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals;* ¹² *and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the*

gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger.

How was it possible for another generation to arise *who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel*? How was it possible for them to serve the idols of the heathen? How is it possible today? How may it be prevented? This shows the failure of parents passing on the Christian faith to their children.

In addition Scripture says *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”*¹²

And in 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 we are warned, *“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?”*

The hymnist writes,¹³

*His oath, His cov’nant, and His blood,
Support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay:*

So use the means of grace to resist the encroachments of unbelief, false belief, and the unsound tendencies of the “New Age” world today. Use the weapon of God’s holy Word *“It is written”* to triumph over all your foes.¹⁴ Do not be alarmed over opposition and unbelief, or its claims of superior wisdom.

God’s promise remains as we read in Romans 3:3-4, *“For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? ⁴ Certainly not!”*

God’s covenant is made and kept and its requirements are observed the world over by many believers today. Recall in our text, regarding the children of Israel, *“So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.”*

In spite of inhabitants who were “thorns,” in spite of idols who were “snares” to them, they served the Lord for many years. In every generation and

under the most adverse circumstances God's covenant has been kept by His believers.

The hymnist writes,¹⁵

*Then here will I and mine today
A solemn cov'nant make, and say:
Though all the world forsake Thy Word,
I and my house will serve the Lord.*

Let us thank God for His covenant with us. Let us faithfully use the means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments. Keep it, learn its requirements, and live according to them from day to day, until we rejoice in heaven with all those who have been saved by this covenant of grace, God's one and only way of salvation.

Let us vow new devotion, homage, and loyalty to the Triune God and serve Him with gladness. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Luke 14:17

² 1 Timothy 2:4

³ 1 John 3:13

⁴ Luke 18:11

⁵ Gen. 3:15; Acts 10:43

⁶ Gen. 17:7

⁷ Exo. 12:21-24

⁸ Rom. 10:17; Matt. 28:18-20

⁹ Mark 16:16

¹⁰ Matt. 26:26-28; 1 Cor. 11:23-25

¹¹ Psa. 2:12; 1 John 1:8-10.

¹² Matt. 7:15; 1 John 4:1; Rom. 16:17

¹³ Hymn 331 v3

¹⁴ Matt. 4:1-11

¹⁵ Hymn 588 v5