

## Devotional Service.

By REV. T. J. PARR, M.A.

### MAY 14.—"GOD'S COVENANT AND OURS"

(A PLEDGE MEETING).

Ps. 119: 1-6.

#### HOME READINGS.

Mon., May 8. With Abram. *Gen.* 15: 1-21.  
Tues., May 9. With Moses. *Ex.* 6: 1-8.  
Wed., May 10. With David. *2 Sam.* 7: 1-29.  
Thurs., May 11. If ye will obey. *Ex.* 19: 1-8.  
Fri., May 12. It is able in us. *John* 15: 7-19.  
Sat., May 13. The eternal covenant.  
Heb. 8: 6-13: 13: 20-21.

A covenant implies two persons. It is a mutual agreement between at least two parties to do or refrain from doing some act or thing. This is in the legal definition. When we come into the realm of religion, the word covenant has a definite and specific meaning. It means the promises of God as revealed in the Scriptures, conditioned on certain terms on the part of man. Here we have the two persons, and the mutual agreement. God and man are the two persons, and the agreement is that God will do certain things on condition of man's repentance, faith, and obedience. It becomes mutual when man responds to God's appeals and fills his part of the covenant. God's part of the covenant never fails. If heavenly promises are not fulfilled, it is because earthly conditions are not observed. Hence we may say the topic resolves itself into this, "God's covenant and our obligation."

#### GOD'S COVENANT.

The topic Scripture brings into view the covenant of the Lord in the early stages of its fulfilment, viz., in relation to his chosen people. The way in which God regards his promises is the same now as then, and if we can determine God's ancient attitude towards his promises, we can know what that attitude will be in this modern day, for he changes not.

1. **THE COVENANT REMEMBERED.**—"He hath remembered his covenant forever." God cannot forget anything. All the things that he has promised he will surely perform, though long ages may intervene between the giving of the promise and its accomplishment. If God were to cease to remember his engagements, he would cease to be God. Should God forget for one moment, the universe would dissolve, rush out again from the realm of law and order into chaos and night. God's infinite intelligence, ever-lasting unchangeableness, and past dealings with the universe, afford ample guarantees to us now-a-days of his unflinching remembrance of his side of the covenant.

2. **THE COVENANT RETAINED.**—"The word which he commanded to a thousand generations." "A thousand generations" means innumerable generations, and covers humanity for all time. Each one of us comes in at some point in the procession. Every individual man, every epoch of history, every nation of the world, is included. On, on down the ages the promises are repeated and honored by the Giver, until the heavens are rolled up like a scroll, the sun is darkened, the earth melted, and man's probation ended. Promises of pardon, peace, purity, and paradise, all through the centuries to those who will repent, believe, and obey.

3. **THE COVENANT CONFIRMED.**—"He confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant." For the encouragement of mankind, God confirms his covenant again and again. In case men should suppose that the promises made to one generation do not apply to another, the Lord repeats them. Not only is

the covenant confirmed by repetition, but by experience. Every age as it passes leaves behind it an additional volume of evidence testifying most conclusively to the faithfulness of God. The story of the slowly moving conquest is illustrative of the confirmation of God's covenant with mankind.

4. **THE COVENANT FILLED.**—"The promises of the Almighty are accomplished certainly and exactly however great the improbability. When the ancient race was promised the land of Canaan for an inheritance, the fulfilment of the promise seemed utterly improbable, if not impossible. For at the time of the covenant, the people were few in number, strangers in the land, wanderers having no fixed place of abode, and determinedly opposed by clever and unscrupulous enemies—a poor look-out indeed for the conquest of the land flowing with milk and honey. But God, with the co-operation of his people, honored his covenant, and fulfilled his promise, and the impossible became the actual. What does this mean? That all God's promises are certain, and certain now. Whether we think of his promise in regard to the pardon of sin, or renewal of the nature, or construction of Christ's character, or the future triumphs of the Gospel, all is certain when conditions are met. "Behold I make all things new" seems impossible to many minds, but it is receiving illustration every day.

#### OUR OBLIGATION.

It is true that some of God's promises are unconditional; but the ones that concern us mortals most are conditional promises, that is, promises that require something on our part before they can be fulfilled. And what is required of us towards the accomplishment of God's covenant is *our obligation*. And what is it? It involves various things according to the promise under consideration.

1. Salvation is promised; but only to those who believe in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour from sin, who believe not only with the *assent* of the mind, but with the *consent* of the will, and the *trust* of the heart, who believe with a living, active, purifying faith that renews the soul, and binds the life in obedience to God. This is our obligation, if we desire the blessings of salvation.

2. Communion with God is promised; but only on condition that we live in harmony with his will as expressed in his Word. It is the *pure in heart* who see God; all others are excluded from the vision. It is the *Enochs* who walk with God—men of faith and faithfulness; all others must walk alone. Communion is conditioned on constancy in trust and service. Here is our obligation if we crave for divine communion—the highest function of the soul.

3. Christian character is promised; but only in response to our consecration to the divine service. True character is the effect of a cause. It is the operation of the law of causation in the spiritual world. In short, *be right and do right*, according to the Bible standard, is the cause, and the inevitable effect is *Christian character*. Again our obligation is apparent in required loyalty to the entire body of teaching of revealed truth. And now appears in its proper and logical place, the active member's pledge which includes part of *our obligation* as members of the church, and active members of the League—our side of the covenant, due not so much to the League of which we are members, but to God whose servants we are. Read that pledge in quiet before God, and learn how much of your obligation as a Christian and a Leaguer is included in it.

#### THE PLEDGE ANALYZED.

1. Christ is the example of all holy endeavor.  
2. The Holy Spirit is the source of help.  
3. Our endeavor includes two things; first, to learn our Heavenly Father's will; second, to do it. We aim to bring our practice up to the measure of our increasing knowledge of divine things.

4. We deliberately plan to study the Bible, and to have stated seasons of private prayer every day. This is our fixed rule at home and abroad.

5. We promise to be present at every meeting of the Christian Endeavor Department, and take some part in it. There is only one reason for absence acceptable, and that is, when we can conscientiously ask our Master to excuse us from our obligation.

6. We are members of the Church first, and as a consequence, an active member of the League, and we therefore promise to be true to all our duties as members of the church.

7. We aim to make our outward conduct consistent with our profession, and therefore agree to abstain from all amusements and habits of which we believe God would disapprove.

8. We bring our money up into our consecrated life, and promise to honor God with it, as he has prospered us.

9. Under such principles a bond of friendship is formed, and we believe in perpetuating it by kindly words and deeds.

10. We strive to be soul-winners, and we endeavor to bring those with whom we associate to a saving knowledge of Christ.

#### TIMELY REMARKS.

This is our pledge, our obligation, spread out plainly before us. It involves principles which every loyal follower of Christ should be willing to assume for his Master's sake. But to carry it out requires much grace, determination, and persistence. Cultivate what you have of these qualities, and ask God for more and you shall not ask in vain. A pledge of this kind is both *helpful* and *helpless*. Very helpful to the individual and to the society, if thoughtfully assumed, and faithfully performed; but utterly helpless, when it becomes a dead letter, without binding power upon the consciences of those concerned. For our own sake, our League's sake, our Church's sake, our Master's sake, the world's sake, let the Leagues of Canada be faithful to their covenant.

#### POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

This meeting is the one nearest to the date of the anniversary of the organization of the Epworth League. State this fact, enlarging somewhat upon it, and show the appropriateness of studying the pledge which contains the principles of the League's purpose and action. Invite your pastor to give a ten minutes address on "Our Anniversary," showing the growth, power, and present efficiency of the League, especially in Canada. After the consideration of the topic, have the active and associate members thoughtfully and solemnly renew their pledges. Request each member a week in advance to bring pledge. Hold a brief testimony to the subject, "What the League has done for me." Pray for the increased power and usefulness of the League for the new year.

### MAY 21.—"THE GIFT OF POWER."

Act. 1: 1-8.

#### HOME READINGS.

Mon., May 15. Promised by prophets.  
Isa. 44: 1-3; Joel 2: 28-32.  
Tues., May 16. Promised by Jesus.  
Luke 24: 49-53.  
Wed., May 17. The gift of the Spirit.  
The Acts of the Apostles.  
Thurs., May 18. The work of the Spirit.  
John 14: 26; 16: 7-15.  
Fri., May 19. Guided by the Spirit.  
Acts 8: 30-40.  
Sat., May 20. Quicken by the Spirit.  
Ezek. 37: 1-14.

It is a great matter to return to first principles, and realize afresh their power and importance. In the theological world, after years of speculation and vain philosophy, the call is heard, "back to Christ." And in individual Christian experience, as well as in the great work of the Church, wisely may the command be given, "back to Pentecost." Back to the first principles of our faith. The gift of power was the gift of the Holy Spirit—the central event of Pentecost, the central force of the Church in all