



MT. ROSE REFORMED
ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Renewed Covenant

Reverend Scott Johnson | September 27, 2026 | Exodus 34:10-28

Old Testament Reading

The Old Testament reading and our sermon text is Exodus chapter 34, verses 10 through 28. And this is the inerrant and infallible word of our God. Exodus 34, 10 through 28.

And he said, "Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people, I will do marvels such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the Lord, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you. Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim, for you shall worship no other God, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice. And you take of their daughters for your sons and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods. You shall not make for yourself any gods of cast metal.

You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread as I commanded you at the time appointed in the month Abib, for in the month Abib you came out from Egypt. All that open the womb are mine, all your male livestock, the firstborn of cow and sheep, the firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it, you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem, and none shall appear before me empty-handed.

Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest. In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest. You shall observe the Feast of Weeks, the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end. Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord your God, the God of Israel, for I will cast out nations before you and enlarge your borders. No one shall covet your land when you go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year.

You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened, or let the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover remain until the morning. The best of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the Lord your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk."

And the Lord said to Moses, "Write these words, for in accordance with these words, I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." So he was there with the Lord 40 days and 40 nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets, the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

New Testament Reading

And now let's turn to John chapter 14 for the New Testament reading, John 14, verses 15 through 17. John 14, 15 through 17.

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

Introduction: God's Covenant Renewed

You can turn back to Exodus 34. This is our passage this morning. And in this passage, Moses is on the top of Mount Sinai. We saw last week in the passage before this that while Moses was on the top of Mount Sinai, the Lord passed by him. He revealed something of his glory to Moses. A part of revealing that glory was proclaiming his name to Moses. And when Moses saw

God's glory, when he heard God declare his name, we read that he quickly bowed down to the ground and he worshiped.

And then after he worshiped, Moses did something that we have seen him do very frequently in the last several chapters or the last few chapters of Exodus, and that is Moses prayed. As the leader of the people of God, as the mediator between God and the people of Israel, Moses prayed for God's people. He interceded for them. He prayed that the Lord would forgive them, that He would forgive them for their sin of worshiping the golden calf, and that the Lord would take His people back to Himself, that He would fulfill His promises to bring them into the Promised Land.

And our passage this morning begins with the answer that the Lord gave to Moses to his prayer. He says in verse 10, God says to Moses, "Behold, I am making a covenant." This was the answer that Moses wanted to hear. This was what he longed to hear from God, that he was going to make a covenant or renew his covenant with the people of Israel. He would not, as he threatened, he would not leave his people to themselves. He would not disown his people. Although if God had chosen to do so, he would have been perfectly just and right to do so because the people had sinned against him so grievously. But He shows his mercy, he is going to renew his covenant and continue to bless them.

And this covenant needed to be made again because by their sin and their idolatry, Israel had broken it. But God in his mercy and grace will restore them and he will restore that covenant. And so when Moses heard the Lord say in verse 10, "Behold, I am making a covenant," this must have thrilled his heart, because the word covenant points to the very foundation of God's gracious dealings with his people Israel.

The very reason why God delivered his people from Egypt, the very reason why he protected them and provided for them throughout the wilderness was because of his covenant promises to Israel, specifically his covenant promises to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their descendants. The very reason why God determined to lead His people through the wilderness and to bring them into the Promised Land was because of His covenant, because He had pledged Himself to the people of Israel that He would do so.

And so God's covenant is His gracious act in which the Lord takes a people for Himself to be His people, and He in turn devotes Himself to them as their God. And at the heart of God's

covenant is his promise, a promise that we hear again and again in scripture, the promise that "I will be your God and you shall be my people."

And so in the covenant, God demands from his people their faithfulness, their obedience, their fidelity. But He promises His people that He will be faithful to them, that He will provide for them, that He will protect them, that He will guide them in this life. And ultimately, the covenants that God made with His people in Scripture, the ultimate promise of those covenants is eternal life in the world to come.

And the covenant was not just something between the Lord and Israel in the Old Testament, but as Christians, God has made a covenant with you and me in Jesus Christ. God has taken us to himself so that we are his people and he is our God forever and ever. And although the circumstances, the details of the covenant that God made with Israel back in the Old Testament are different from the covenant that God makes with us in Christ, nevertheless, in many, many ways, they are very much the same. And so for that reason, this passage that speaks about God's covenant with the people of Israel has much to teach us about the nature of God's dealings with us as we are in covenant with Him today. And so as we look at this passage this morning, we'll consider a few of those lessons together.

God Magnifies His Grace Towards Us

And the first lesson we learn is this, that in His covenant, God magnifies His grace towards us. In this covenant, God magnifies His grace towards us. When we consider the people of Israel and God's gracious dealings with them, we can only truly appreciate the magnitude, the greatness of the grace of God towards His people Israel when we remember the greatness and the magnitude of the sin and the evil that they committed against Him.

You'll remember, and we saw this the last few weeks, but you'll remember that at the very same time that Moses was on the top of Mount Sinai, as he was receiving the Ten Commandments from the Lord, the people of Israel down at the bottom, at the foot of the mountain, they were busying themselves breaking those very commandments. They broke the first commandment and the second commandment when they made a golden calf and worshiped it. And no doubt, when they rose up to play in their revelry, they broke many of the other commandments as well.

And this was a very grievous sin. It wasn't the case that the Israelites sinned in some relatively minor fashion, a sin that could easily be atoned for by offering the appropriate sacrifice. But their

sin was much more than that. It was much more basic, more fundamental. In a very radical way, by their idolatry, they destroyed the very foundation of God's covenant with them. And so their sin was not merely a transgression of the terms of the covenant, but in fact, in worshiping the golden calf, the people of Israel, they basically rejected the covenant altogether. It was a total repudiation of that covenant that God had made with them.

And that's why when Moses, when he came down the mountain, he had the two tablets in his hands containing the Ten Commandments, and his holy anger and righteous indignation, he dashed the tablets to the ground. They shattered in pieces. That was showing the people of Israel what they had done. By their idolatry, they had not just sinned against God, but they had shattered the covenant that God had made with them into pieces.

And so for God here now to say to Moses in response to his prayer, "Behold, I am making a covenant," this is a demonstration of God's grace, manifestation of his mercy. This is amazing grace. This is the kind of grace that the apostle Paul speaks about in Romans when he says where sin increased, grace abounded all the more. God met the horrible sin of the people of Israel with incredible grace, grace abounded all the more.

And here God was demonstrating the truth of what he had just declared to Moses on the mountain, that is, he is a God who is gracious. He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. This is God's character. He shows grace even when his people sin against them.

And for the Israelites, after they heard the good news, after Moses would come down from the mountain, that God was still going to be their God, that he was going to restore his covenant with them, perhaps some of the Israelites wondered to themselves, how can God do this? How is it that God can forgive our sins? We have broken His covenant. We deserve death. We deserve condemnation for what we have done.

And if any Israelite asked himself that question, that was a very good question indeed. How can a holy God, a God who just declared to Moses that He will by no means clear the guilty, how can He then go on and do that very thing? Clear the guilty, restore His people back to Himself after they had sinned so wickedly against Him?

Well, the answer to that question of how God can show such wonderful grace to His people Israel in the face of their sin, the answer to that question lies in the truth that standing behind

God's grace in this passage, standing behind the grace of God to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, was that great work of salvation that God would one day carry out through His Son, Jesus Christ. God would send his very own son into the world. And God would send his son into the world in order to lay upon his son all the guilt, all the sins, all the transgressions of his people that his people had committed from all ages, from the time he had a people until today.

Jesus Christ came to bear the sins of the people of God both before and after His coming. And so God could forgive the sins of the Israelites here, even the sin of idolatry, even the sin of breaking His covenant, because of what Christ would do at the cross. It was Jesus who bore the guilt of their sin. It was Jesus who received in Himself that judgment, that destruction, that death that the people of Israel all deserved because of their sin. It is because of the gospel that God could show such amazing grace to the people of Israel here.

And it is this saving work of Jesus that is really the greatest marvel among all the wondrous things that the Lord said that he would do for his people of Israel. Look at verse 10. In verse 10, the Lord tells Moses that he is going to do amazing things for Israel. He says, "Before all your people, I will do marvels such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation, and all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the Lord, for it is an awesome thing that I will do."

Now here God was speaking in the immediate context, God was speaking about the marvelous things that He would do in leading the Israelites into the Promised Land. And as we read on in the Old Testament, we read about some of these marvels that God did for His people. He caused the flowing waters of Jericho, or the Jordan River rather, He caused those waters to come to a stop so the people of Israel could cross on the dry land into the Promised Land. He caused the walls of Jericho to fall down before the people of Israel so Israel could take the city. At one point, He caused the sun to stand still in the sky when Joshua was battling the Amorites so that the Israelites could defeat their enemies. And so, God did marvelous things as He said that He would do.

But of all the awesome things and wonderful things that God did for His people, nothing compares to what God had planned to do and has done with the coming of Jesus Christ to the world. Because when Jesus came into the world, it was God himself coming to us in the person of his son. And there is no greater miracle than this. There is no more wonderful thing that God has ever done. There is no greater work that God has done than this, that God, God who is

uncreated, God who is spirit, God who is infinite and eternal, that he should forever unite himself to our human nature, that He should take on human flesh, that He should become one of us, a man.

And not only did He become man in the incarnation, but He did so for us, so that as man, He could atone for our sins by bearing them on the cursed cross. And this is the greatest marvel that God has done for us. He has accomplished our salvation through the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, his son.

If God magnified his grace toward the Israelites and that he brought them back to himself here in our passage, then God has also magnified his grace to you and me in the gospel. Because our sin is also grievous in the eyes of God. We too have broken God's covenants. We too have sinned wickedly against him. In our sin, our idolatry, our rebellion, we have transgressed God's commandments.

Yet despite the greatness of our sin and guilt, God has shown us mercy. He has shown us grace in his son, Jesus Christ. The blood of Jesus Christ is sufficient to cover all your sins and my sins. And so God has magnified His grace and mercy towards us by making us His people, by keeping us as His people in this covenant that He has made with us in His Son, Jesus Christ. So that's the first lesson.

God Demands Our Loyalty to Him

The second lesson that we can take from this passage is that in His covenant, God demands our loyalty to Him. After the Lord promises Moses that he will renew his covenant with the people of Israel, he then warns Moses that the people of Israel must not make a covenant with any other nation. Once they go into the promised land, they are not to start making treaties with the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and so on. He says in verse 12, "Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go."

And the Israelites must not make a covenant with the nations of Canaan because if they do, the Lord says in verse 12, "it will become a snare in your midst." And how was it that making a covenant with the people of the land would become a snare to the people of Israel? It was because by making a covenant with those pagan people, they would be opening themselves up to start worshiping their gods. And so, God's concern here was with idolatry.

And of course, God was justly concerned, especially given the fact that the Israelites had just committed that gross idolatry in worshiping the golden calf. The people of Israel, if they so easily fell into idolatry with no other help from another nation, when they worshiped the golden calf, then how much more easily would they be tempted to idolatry if they made a covenant with these pagan nations.

And because of the great danger of even the presence of idols in the land, the Lord commanded Moses that the Israelites must commit to what we could call a scorched earth policy when it came to the idols and their idol-worshiping sites in the land of Canaan. The Lord says in verse 13, "You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim." And so when the Israelites went through the land of Canaan, as the Lord drove out the people before them, when they came across these pagan idols and the altars and the Asherim poles, they weren't supposed to put them into a storage unit or put them in a museum. They were supposed to destroy them completely. They were to obliterate any trace of idolatry.

And of course, this scorched earth policy towards idols, this is what the Lord calls us to as Christians today as well. Now, this doesn't mean that we go out into the world and start destroying all the idols that we might see in our world today. But what it does mean is that we are to completely destroy the idols of our hearts. We are to spare no room in our hearts for an idol, a false god.

And it's not hard to identify what might be an idol for us, whatever it may be that you are tempted to look to, to give you a sense of ultimate satisfaction or security or life or meaning, that thing is an idol. And the primary way that you destroy the idols of your heart is to fill your heart with Christ, that is, to come to Christ by faith and to seek in Him that which only He can give you. Only Jesus Christ, the Son of God, can fill our hearts with what they desire. Only Christ can give us true life, true contentment, true significance, true joy and peace. And as you seek and find that in Christ, then the idols that tempt you will lose their power over you, and that's the way in which you go about destroying the idols of your hearts. If you don't, if you leave room for a foothold for an idol, it will become a snare to you, to use the language that the Lord used for the people of Israel.

Now, after the Lord tells Moses that the Israelites must destroy the idols remaining in the land, he goes on to elaborate on the reason for that commandment and for this warning against idolatry. And here, in the words that God speaks to Moses, we find the introduction in the

Scriptures of a theme that we will see throughout the Scriptures, and that is the truth that the covenant relationship that exists between God and His people is a relationship that is like the relationship between a husband and a wife. The Lord is the husband of his people, and his people are the bride or the wife of the Lord.

You see that at least implied in verse 14. In verse 14, the Lord says, "for you shall worship no other God, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." Now, when we hear the word jealous, we immediately have negative thoughts in our mind. We think of jealousy only, usually we think of it only in the wrong or the bad sense, that is a kind of envy of other people wanting something that someone else has in a sinful kind of way. This is the kind of jealousy that we are familiar with, but that is not what God is talking about here when he says his name is jealous. But here, jealousy refers to God's holy zeal to have the complete devotion, the affection, and the love of his people. God wants his people for himself. He does not want them to go after idols.

And it is for our good that God is jealous over us. One author called God's jealousy his passionate and protective love for his people. And here you see the analogy with a human marriage. God's jealousy is like the righteous jealousy of a husband who, not out of self-centeredness, but out of a true love for his wife, is zealous for her devotion and affection and love for him.

And you see this idea that the Lord's covenant with his people is a marriage bond in what God goes on to say to Moses. He says in verse 16, that the sons of the Israelites, that if they take the daughters of the Canaanites to be their wives, that their pagan wives will surely lead them into idolatry. And notice that the language that God uses is quite shocking. He calls this false worship whoring after other gods. Other English versions use the term prostituting, which may be not quite as harsh sounding to our ears, but the meaning is no different.

According to God, to worship an idol, to go after a false god is nothing less than spiritual adultery. And that is every bit as true for us today as it was for the Israelites then. We too are a people who are in a covenant relationship with God that is like a husband and a wife. Paul makes that very clear in Ephesians chapter five. He compares a marriage between a man and his wife, he compares that to the union that exists between Christ and his people, his bride. And so because we are the bride of Christ, whenever we give our devotion or affection or service to an idol rather than to Jesus, we are guilty of spiritual adultery. We are being unfaithful to our husband, Jesus.

And this way of looking at sin is very important because this is how God sees our sin. But this is not how we often see our sin. So often we consider sin only in terms of breaking a law that God has made, but we think of it in terms of how we might think if we break a law that a government has made. For example, if I break the law of the state of Nevada by driving too fast on I-80, just hypothetically speaking, of course, I don't feel, if I do that, I don't feel as though I've offended anybody in particular. I've broken a law, it's a number on a sign, there's some statute written in a book somewhere, but I don't feel like I have offended anybody in particular. It's all very impersonal.

And that's how we think about breaking the laws of the government, but that's not how we ought to think about breaking the law of God. Because when it comes to sinning against God, we can never abstract God's law from his person. We can never separate the law from the lawgiver. God's law for us is His will for us as His people whom He has loved and taken to Himself, and with whom He desires this covenant communion, the relationship. And so anytime I sin against God, I am offending Him personally. I am dishonoring or disgracing the Father who loved me. I am dishonoring and sinning against and offending the Son who is my bridegroom and who has made me his by his death on the cross.

So let me ask you, would it make you more careful to keep God's commandments if you always looked at sin in this way? Instead of considering God's commandments as a list of rules that you must keep that is somehow abstract and detached from the Lord, instead of doing that, think about the fact that God's laws are His will for you, and to break His commandments is to sin against Him personally. And so, the second lesson is that in the covenant, God demands our loyalty to Him.

God Calls Us to Comprehensive Obedience

The third lesson is this. In His covenant, God calls us to obedience to His commandments. When we come to the second half of our passage, verses 17 through 26, you'll notice that there are many laws that are given here that we have already seen in the book of Exodus. The Lord has already given most of these laws to Moses to give to the people of Israel. And it's not clear why they are repeated. Some of these laws have to do with worship. Others have to do with sacred festivals and others with the Sabbath. But it does beg the question, why did God give these laws again to Moses and why these particular laws and not other laws?

Well, one reason why God gave these laws again is because the Israelites needed to hear them more than once, especially in light of the fact that they had just committed this gross idolatry. That certainly explains verse 17. Verse 17 says, "You shall not make for yourself any gods of cast metal." It's impossible to think that the Israelites would not think of their sin with the golden calf when they heard Moses repeat that law to the people. And so God was saying, O Israel, you certainly need to hear this law again. Don't make yourself a god of cast metal. Don't do what you did with the golden calf. You need to hear it again.

And this is a reminder to us that as the people of God at that time and as we today, we have always struggled with spiritual amnesia. And so we have to be reminded again and again of God's will for us in the scriptures. We have to be reminded also again and again of God's promises to us, his love for us, his grace to us. We are a forgetful people, and so it's not surprising that many laws and promises are repeated in the Scriptures.

I mean, essentially, what I do as a preacher is to remind you of things that you have already heard. I think 90% of my preaching is probably telling you things that you have already learned, already heard, but you need to hear again. I need to hear again.

With some of these other laws, it's not clear why God chose them specifically for repetition here, but there is at least one theme that we can discern that emerges from these laws, and that is obedience to God's commandments encompasses the entirety of our lives. God does not just want obedience in one part of our lives, but our entire lives are to be submitted to his will, conformed. In other words, in His covenant, God is here demanding of the people of Israel nothing less than a life completely consecrated to serving and worshiping Him. Their lives were to be radically oriented around all that the Lord required of them as His people.

And this was the only way in which the people of Israel would enjoy the blessings of the covenant. It was only through their comprehensive obedience to all that God commanded that they would truly enjoy the fullness of that communion that they were blessed to have with the Lord.

And so, for example, the Lord here repeats for Moses the fourth commandment. He says in verse 21, "Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest. In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest." And so the Lord is saying, the commandment to keep the Sabbath is not just when you have the leisure time to do so, when it's convenient, but even in plowing, even in harvesting times, when you are most busy, when it is most tempting to stay out in the fields and

do your work, even then you keep my Sabbaths. And so God is demanding of his people a comprehensive obedience.

Likewise, all the males in Israel would have to go up to what would be the city of Jerusalem three times a year for the annual sacred feasts. Again, to keep this commandment, the Israelites would have to orient their lives around them. They would have to plan and schedule their time accordingly. They would also have to orient their entire lives around these other commandments as well. And so they were not God's covenant people on a part-time basis, but their whole lives were to be conformed to His will.

And again, it is the same with you and me as those who belong to Jesus Christ. Jesus demands nothing less than that of us. He demands that we are to give ourselves to Him entirely, wholly, to be His. 24 hours a day, our entire lives are to be consecrated to His service and worship and obedience.

Delighting in the God of the Commandments

But here's the thing to keep in mind. For the Israelites then, who truly knew the Lord by faith, for the Israelites who truly entrusted themselves to God and found in God their heart's delight and treasure and joy, for them, in His covenant with them, they did not find His covenant demands to be an oppressive burden. Rather, they rejoiced in serving and worshiping God.

We see this in the Old Testament. We read responsibly from Psalm 119. And in that Psalm, the psalmist says, "Oh, how I love your law!" How many times a day do you just burst out saying, "Oh, how I love your law"? Probably not very often. But why does the psalmist say that? He says it because he loves the Lord who gave him the law. Because he loves God, he loves his law.

And in the very same way, Jesus says in the New Testament passage that we heard, John 14:15, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." First John 5:3 says something similar: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome."

If you, by faith, have come to Christ, and you have come to know Him as your Savior, you have tasted and you have seen that the Lord is good, you have, by faith in Christ, experienced that love that He has for you, then the obedience that He calls you to—an obedience that

encompasses the entirety of your lives—that obedience is not burdensome, but it is a delight. It should be a delight.

This is the ideal. We know that ideally the commandments of God should not be burdensome to us. But the reality isn't always matching the ideal. We all struggle at times to truly rejoice in the Lord. We struggle at times to desire to keep his commandments. We don't wake up every morning with the first thoughts in our head saying, "I can't wait to keep God's commandments today." Sometimes God's commandments, what he wills for us does feel burdensome, but that's not where our hearts should be. Our hearts should be in a place where we want to serve, we want to please the Lord, where we even delight in His commandments.

But how do we get to that place? Well, we get there by remembering the grace of God, His mercy. What is the foundation of this covenant that is made with us in which He has brought us to Himself? It is His love, His mercy, His grace. He has freely forgiven you of all your sins. He has given you new life. He has raised you from death to life.

Another way to put this is this: You should never see only the commandment of God, but you should see your Savior who is standing behind the commandment—your Savior who loved you and brought you into that communion with Him. And the more that you delight in Christ, the more you delight in his love and his grace to you, the more ready you will be to walk in that wholehearted obedience that he calls you to as your covenant Lord and Savior.

Let's pray.