

Mount Zion, March, 2015

Jeremiah 31:31-34

This time of the year can bring a lot of worry to Green Bay Packer fans. We worry about our Packers being coveted by others when they become free agents. It can be sad for fans to see their favorite players sign contracts with rival teams. How would you feel if Davante Adams signed a contract with the Chicago Bears? That would be horrible!

Let's think about our relationship with God. The Bible speaks in terms of us having a contract with God; in fact, it mentions two contracts. The first contract signed at Mt. Sinai was fair, but because we didn't keep our part of the contract, it didn't work out well for us. But in His grace, God made a new contract with us, better than any contract ever proposed. May God bless our faith as we look at

OUR NEW CONTRACT.

Let's consider the Old Contract. It was made at Mt. Sinai. On that mountain, God had Moses take a message to Israel: You have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to Me. Now if you obey Me fully and keep My covenant, then out of all nations you will be My treasured possession. This covenant was a two-way contract which relied on the cooperation of sinners. Israel had to obey God and if they didn't, Israel would be cursed. If you read these curses you will feel a cold chill run down your spine. The prophet Jeremiah wrote these words hundreds of years before Jesus: The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke My covenant...

Every time we see the word **covenant**, we can substitute the word **contract**. On Mt. Sinai, God reminded Israel how much He loved them, like a husband loves his wife. Because God loved Israel, the Savior would be come from His people. Because of love, God's people were to be different from all others.

God gave His people laws to live by, laws that would bring happiness to them. God's people were to love God and love their fellow human beings. God's love for them was summed up in the 10 Commandments.

God promised blessings to His people if they obeyed Him. He would protect them and provide for them; He would make them the greatest nation on earth – if they were faithful and obeyed Him.

On the other hand, if they disobeyed God, they would experience famine, disease, defeat at the hands of their enemies, and eventually – destruction. The people said, We will do everything the Lord has said. Notice, it was a two-way contract. God said, "If you do this, I will do that."

But there was a problem! The problem was not the contract. The problem was the people. God's people didn't obey the laws. They broke the contract. Not once. Not twice. Billions of times! Like an unfaithful spouse, Israel wandered away from God. When Jeremiah spoke these words some 800 years later, he saw idolatry everywhere he went.

How do we compare with Old Testament Israel? Do we act differently? We may not bow down to golden calves like Israel did, but we sin by worrying and complaining against God. We sin by trusting in our financial planning more than God's promises. We take care of ourselves but forget the poor and needy. We wouldn't have kept the contract either! Because of our sins we should be sent to hell. The wages of sin is death. We need a new contract!

Even though we were obligated to keep the old contract, God gave us a new contract. Our text announces: I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

The new contract will not be like the old contract. The old contract was two-sided: if the people did this, God would do that. The new covenant was one-sided. God promised to do everything! I will make...I will put...I will be...I will forgive. God did it all when He sent Jesus to be our Savior. We couldn't keep the terms of the first contract. We were supposed to love God perfectly. We didn't! We were supposed to love all human beings perfectly. We don't! Because of sin, we are supposed to go to hell. We won't! Jesus suffered hell for us on the cross.

Because Jesus fulfilled the terms of the old contract, God gave us a new one, with different terms. The new contract reads, I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more!

This new contract was given to us at our baptism. When the water was poured over our heads in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God entered into a lifelong contract with us: "I will forgive your sins and I will never remember them again."

This new contract is renewed every time we stand before this altar. Every time we receive His Supper, the Lord gives us His body and blood and says that He forgives us and will never remember our sins again!

With His one-sided contract, God assures us that He is our God and we are His children. He promises that when we stand before Him one day, we do not have to worry about our sins. Jesus paid for them! When God forgives, He forgets! Our sins are gone forever!

The cost of our sin was more than we can pay. The gift of our God is more that we can imagine.

Friends, rejoice in your new contract with God. It makes you God's child, fully forgiven, and an heir of eternal life. We didn't negotiate that contract. In His amazing grace, God offered it to us! This contract is valid for all eternity and has been signed by the blood of Jesus who kept the old contract perfectly for us.

Heaven is guaranteed!