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Topic : God's Expectations from members in covenant relationship
Key Passage : Exodus 19-20
Key Verses : Exodus 19:5

Now if you **obey me fully and keep my covenant**, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession

Key Words : God seeks covenant keepers

Introduction

Three months had passed since their departure from Egypt; the Israelites arrived at the desert of Sinai – the place for covenant making. During those three months, the Israelites were tested and failed, tested again and again in their trust of God's provision, protection, and obedience to the Lord. Despite facing numerous challenges, they were given repeated opportunities to choose faith and trust in God. Through this discipline, God was equipping them for making a covenant with Him.

Why Covenant making is crucial to our journey of faith?

- The covenant relationship in which God has offered to us, where both parties are expected to remain steadfastly faithful to the terms set by God.
- With regards to God, He values us in a special relationship, considering us as '*His treasured possession*'.
- God offers to help us by promising protection and blessings.

What Does God Expect from us as a covenant Keeper?

- 2 areas: (1) Obey the Lord (2) Keep His covenant

1. Fully Obey the Lord's Commandments *Exodus 19:5*

"Lordship "

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery Exodus 20:2

- Lordship acknowledges God as the Creator of heaven and the earth, Sovereign ruler of the universe with the highest authority and power.
- Lordship requires the Israelites and every human person to give their allegiance to Him *Exodus 20:2*.
- Lordship involves submitting to God's authority.

"**Fully obey**" is wholeheartedly follow all of God's commandments and instructions by:

- Submitting to God's authority.
- Willing to fully align our actions and behaviour with His commandments.
- To keep the covenant the Israelites must fully obey the Lord's Commandments
*Now if you **obey me fully and keep my covenant**, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession ... you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation Exodus 19:5,6.*

2. Keep His Covenant

i) Make A Covenant:

And the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow Exodus 19:14

- In response to God's Lordship, the Israelites were called to **make a Covenant** with the Lord
- Covenant keeping takes place only after covenant making.

- The Lord instructed the people to **consecrate themselves** before entering into the Covenant
 - Making the covenant is a matter of utmost seriousness and importance to God.
 - Consecration is a preparation and purification process for the Israelites before entering into a covenant relationship with God.
 - It is an outward expression of an inner commitment to God, acknowledging God as their Lord.
 - By consecrating themselves, they were declaring their willingness to dedicate their lives to the Lord, and faithfully keep the covenant's terms in obedience to God's commandments.

ii) Keep the Covenant

- God specifies the things He wants us to obey, which include:
 - Faithfulness to the terms and conditions of the covenant.
It goes beyond mere obedience to specific commands and entails a long-term commitment to the covenantal agreement.

The Ten Commandments:

The Commandments outline the terms and expectations of the Covenant. They are the central cardinal principles of morality of the covenant. They provide essential ethical guidance for the Israelites to follow and maintain a right relationship with God and with one another.

- There are 2 components to the Commandments:
 - Covenant with God
 - Covenant with Men

a) Keep Covenant with God (covenant on relationship with God)

First 4 Commandments:

The first four commandments focus on relationship with God (*vertical relationship*).

The commandments establish the basis for worship of God and emphasise His sovereignty and holiness. By following these commandments, the Israelites acknowledge God's supreme authority over their lives and commit themselves to serving Him alone.

1. You shall have no other gods before me

- There is only one true God – the God of creation, 'Yahweh'
- Worshipping any other gods is idolatry, including ancestor worship
- Practising Syncretism – blending or mixing different religions and beliefs.

2. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them

- Images are physical representations used as objects of worship:
 - Idols, statues, animals, paintings, pictures or symbols, mythological figures
 - Objects - crucifixes, prayer beads
 - Images of gods and goddesses
 - Celebrity worship, Idolizing material possessions, wealth, fame and pleasure.

3. You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name.

- **Blasphemy**: Using profanity that disrespects the name of God or Jesus by mixing vulgarity.
- **Casual cursing**: Using God's name as a mere exclamation or curse word, using expressions like 'Oh my God' or 'Jesus Christ' in everyday conversations without genuine reverence.
- **Online communication**: Online discussions, comments, social media posts, individuals use profanity that includes the name of God or Jesus as a means of expressing frustration, anger or shock.
- **Making false promises** or swearing falsely in court using God's name.

4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God..... For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. **Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.**

- The Lord sanctified the Sabbath as a holy day, distinct from ordinary working days, to be devoted to Him. It serves as a time set apart to focus on God, find rest from labor, seek His presence, engage in worship, do acts of kindness, and experience renewal and revitalization.
- The Sabbath was bestowed upon the Israelites as a communal observance, emphasizing the importance of gathering together of God's people to worship Him.
- The Sabbath is to be celebrated for the generations to come as a lasting covenant *Exodus 31:16.*

(Those who are required to work on Sunday or whose job nature necessitates Sunday work will find an alternative day of the week to observe their Sabbath).

b) Keep Covenant with Men (covenant on relationships with men)

Next 6 Commandments:

The next six commandments focus on relationships with men (*horizontal relationship*).

The Commandments set ethical and moral standards for our relationships with one another.

5. Honor your father and your mother...

- Respect for Parents – treat them with honor, respect and gratitude
 - Caring for aging parents, giving financial allowance and contribution to parents
 - Seek their wisdom, input and advice on important matters in decision-making
 - Offering help and assisting with household chores; manner of speech.

6. You shall not murder

- Sanctity of life – emphasizes sacredness and worth of every human life, calling for their protection from unjust harm and a respect for the value of life.
- Anger, bitter root, unforgiveness.

- Abortion – involves the intentional deprivation of innocent human life is a violation of the 6th commandment.
- Infanticide: The intentional killing of innocent lives - newborn infants or very young children because of cultural practices, extreme poverty or personal circumstances.

7. You shall not commit adultery – violation of the commitment to faithfulness and loyalty within the marriage covenant.

- Fidelity in marriage – sanctity and exclusivity of marriage, prohibits engaging in sexual relationships or acts outside the bonds of a marital union.
- Fornication, pre-marital sex, extramarital affair (*'mistress' or 'lover'*).
- Emotional affairs: Developing a strong emotional bond, sharing personal and intimate thoughts, and seeking emotional fulfillment with someone outside of the marriage, often without physical involvement.
- Online affairs: Engaging in intimate or sexual conversations, exchanges of explicit content, or developing emotional connections through online platforms with someone other than your spouse.

8. You shall not steal

- Shoplifting, robbery, burglary, identity theft, taking company's property
- Embezzlement of funds and property entrusted to one's care for personal gain
- Deceiving others to obtain money or services through deceitful means
- Intellectual property and copyright.

9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor

- Lying or distorting the truth to deceive and manipulate others.
- False accusations – spreading untrue rumors about someone with the intent to harm their reputation
- Slander (*tarnish other's character*); gossip (*spreading false rumor*).
- Social media – sharing or spreading false information or fabricated stories about individuals or events; promoting product with dishonest information.

10. You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour

- Envy and feeling jealous of your neighbour's success, status, job, position, influence or social circle.
 - your neighbour's luxurious sports car, beautifully furnished house, designer clothing, latest high end electronic gadgets.

Applications:

- 1) How can you demonstrate gratitude and honor to parents, and authority figures?
- 2) How have you intentionally set aside time for worship in God's house on the Lord's day?