

Covenant Renewal Service

From the Pamphlet Written by John Wesley and First Published in 1780

"Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant which will never be forgotten" (Jer. 50:5, RSV).

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love You, and worthily magnify Your holy name through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us now pray together the Lord's Prayer.

THE SCRIPTURE LESSON: John 15:1-8

My dear friends, fix these three principles in your hearts: (1) that things eternal are more enduring and real than things temporal; (2) that things not seen are as certain as the things that are seen; (3) that upon your present choice depends your eternal destiny. Choose Christ and His ways, and you are blessed forever; refuse Him, and you are undone forever.

And then, my friends, make your choice. Turn either to the right hand or to the left; Christ with His yoke, His cross, and His crown; or the devil with his wealth, his pleasure, and his curse. Then ask yourselves, "Self, you see what is before you; what will you do? Which will you have, either the crown or the curse? If you choose the crown, remember that the day you take this, you must be content to submit to the cross and yoke, the service and sufferings of Christ, which are linked to it. What do you say? Would you rather take the gains and pleasures of sin and risk the curse? Or will you yield yourself a servant to Christ and so make sure the crown?"

Do not delay the matter. If you are unresolved, you are resolved. If you remain undetermined for Christ, you are determined for the devil. Therefore, follow your hearts from day to day. Do not rest until the matter is settled once and for all. And see to it that you make a good choice.

Next, begin your journey with Christ. Adventure with Him. Cast yourselves upon His righteousness. You are exiles from the presence of God and fallen into a land of robbers and murderers. Your sins are robbers, your pleasures are robbers, your companions in sin are robbers and thieves. If you stay where you are, you perish. Christ offers, if you will venture with Him, to bring you to God. Will you say now to Him, "Lord Jesus, will You take me? Will You bring me to God and bring me into the land of promise? With You I will risk myself. I cast myself upon You, upon Your blood, upon Your righteousness." This is coming to Christ as your Priest. And by this you now renounce your own righteousness. Do you deeply sense your sins and misery without Christ? Whether we are already forgiven sinners, or still far from God, let us confess together our total dependence on Him.

CONFESSION

PEOPLE: We acknowledge a deep sense of sin and misery. We see ourselves as sinners in need of a Savior. The Spirit of God has awakened us; a kind of awakening, as it were, in hell. We cry, "Lord, what am I! What mean these legions round about me? These chains and fetters that are upon me? "Lord, where am I! Is there no hope of escaping out of this wretched state? I am but dead, if I continue as I am. What may I do to be saved?"

LEADER: Being made aware of his sin and his danger, a sinner will look for help and deliverance, but he will look everywhere else before he looks unto Christ. Nothing will bring a sinner to Christ but absolute necessity. He will try to forsake his sins. He will go to prayers, and sermons, and sacraments and search out if there is salvation in them. But all these, though they be useful in their places, are of no help. His duties cannot help him; these may be numbered among his sins. Ordinances cannot help; these are but empty Cisterns. They all tell him, "You knock at a wrong door; salvation is not in us."

Do you now utterly despair of your own goodness, or do you trust in anything but Christ?