

# Thus Saith God's Word

by Rev. Ted Brooks

## Covenant, Bond, Truthfulness

"And he took the book of the covenant and read in the audience of the people; and they said, all that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." (Exodus 24:7)

"And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." (Exodus 20:37)

"Because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord." (Hebrews 8:9)

We are going to be speaking to you this day a message about a covenant, a vow, agreement between us and God.

Look with me for a moment in the Book of Genesis in Chapter Twenty-Eight, Verses 11-29. A man called Jacob is alone in the wilderness. Notice the words, "he tarried all night because the sun was set." Jacob had left home. He had lied to his blind old father, had anger against his brother Esau and now he is left alone in a wilderness with nothing but stones for a pillow and a cold ground for a bed and a sky for cover. The sun was set and Ezekiel said where God said I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. It was here God said to Jacob. I am with thee and will keep thee in all places. It was here Jacob declared it to be the gates of heaven and a place he called Bethel (House of Bread). Jacob realized that he was not alone. Jacob set up stones and poured oil on them and he made a vow to God. "If God be with me and will keep me in this way and will give me bread to eat and let me come to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God and these pillows will stand as a witness, here in God's house and all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." (Genesis 28:11-22) God did not ask Jacob for this vow. Jacob voluntarily gave it. Jacob was alone and afraid, afraid because he had lied on God and to his father. (Genesis 27:31-46). Now we see Jacob being passed under the rod. Jacob now in the presence of God, he began to gather stones. He piled them up, poured oil on the stones. They may not have been much to use for sleep, but it is not sleep that Jacob needed. He needed a witness. The sun had set and it was getting late, the rod of chastisement was here. Jacob remembered how he had lied to his Dad, stole his brother Esau's blessing and above all, he had lied on God. Listen to these words, "Isaac said unto his son Jacob, how is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said the Lord, thy God, brought it to me." (Genesis 27:20)

I want to preach this week on how churches of today have fallen from truthfulness to evil influence. We are now at the door of God's rod of chastisement. The church has not done all that we vowed to do, neither have we been obedient. "The words of their mouth are iniquity and deceit. He hath left off to be wise and to do good." (Psalm 36:3)

My friend, one of the church's major problems today is her failure to live what she professed to believe. Worldliness has become a problem, a serious problem, even to the point of creating wars and division. Church folks are like Jacob, disobeying God's word, and the rod of chastisement is here and the church will be brought under the rod of God. The word of God has been read in our hearing and we confess "All that the Lord hath said we will do." Have you read your covenant lately? Most churches have them on the wall and then don't read or obey them. Better yet read your minutes of the church. See the standard you once held for the qualifications of the minister, Deacon. Have you forgotten the covenant made by man and God? Did you not open with prayer and scripture? Did you not agree that these things you will do? Can you not see how far persons have erred? Do not see how evil influences have crept into our midst? Do we not now see and hear how so-called ministers are fathering what is called "a love child?" Why is this? There is no fear of God before his eyes. (Psalm 36:1)

The reason a church sets by-laws, ordinances and statutes is that they are done so that good men obtain favor of God. Great care is to be done in the church. "A man of wicked devices will be condemned." (Proverbs 12:1-3)

There is a reason today why there is a lack of covenant keepers and there seems to be no concern and because of this lack, falsehood is no longer frowned upon. Falsehood, deceit now parade in our midst. The Holy Spirit who is to have empowered us for service and for life has been rejected. So the church has departed from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. (I Timothy 4:1)

My friend, when the churches are no longer empowered by the Holy Spirit they are not free from the law of sin and death. When a person has the Holy Spirit he is empowered for life and service. In Romans 8:2 it states "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

As we know, there are two natures in the believers, the flesh and the spirit. (Galatians 5:17) But while the believer is still in the flesh, he does not live after the flesh. (Romans 8:12-13) The Holy Spirit enables the believer to get constant and continual victory over sin.

My friend, you can stand folks before you and they will promise to abide by the rules of God's Holy Writ and in a few months or even in weeks, they can't do it. Why? Because the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath not been in their life. They have not been made free from the law of sin and death.

A simple act of sin a believer may commit. To live in a state of sin is impossible for him. For the Spirit which is within him gives him not a scriptural doctrine, sinful imperfection is certainly less scriptural.

The eighth chapter of Romans exhibits a victorious life for the believer; a life so different from that depicted in the seventh chapter. And the difference lies in the fact that the Holy Spirit is hardly, if at all mentioned, in the seventh chapter, while in the eighth He is mentioned over twelve times. The Spirit in the heart is the secret of victory over sin.

Oh my friend, one of the greatest needs in our churches today is "Spiritual maturity." Somebody said our churches are playpens for babies instead of a workshop for adults. Our main problem is that we have lost our sense of the absolute. We live in the day of relativism, a day which truth is subjective, personal and flexible.

Pilate ask the question, "What is truth?" (John 18:38) My friend, do you no longer desire the truth? Peter in Acts 2:40-47 said "Be saved from this perverse generation." For a moment let us view our world today. It has been said that there is only one cultural constant- namely, the process of change. In this regard, when we use the word culture, we are referring to the belief structure, the value system and the behavior mode of a given society. Thus as we face the future, the 21st Century will be a new kind of world. It is said that by the year 2020 there will be 70 million Islamic followers in America with one goal, to make an Islamic nation. By the year 2020 there will be 130 million Hispanics living

in America. By 2020 Native born Americans will be in the minority. By 2020 there will be more missionaries coming into the United States than are sent out of the United States. By 2020 we will be hard pressed to find enough qualified pastors to pastor Christian churches.

While you have been busy allowing falsehood, deceit and evil influences to parade in our churches, statisticians tell us that in the last 40 years in America there has been:

500 percent increase in violent crimes; 400 percent increase in illegitimate births; 420 percent increase of children of single parents; a 360 percent increase in child abuse; and in our inner cities, a child is murdered every 12 minutes.

Somewhat, my friend, in a world like this, we better recapture the dynamics of the early church. We need to receive the power that fell on the Day of Pentecost. We need to look at those who made it happen. It was with one accord, to continuing daily with one accord in the temple, breaking bread from house to house they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart. (Acts 2:4-6)

My friend, one accord, means unity, the state of being one; the combination or arrangement of all the parts into a whole.

My friend, I am not your enemy. Jesus said these words- "Am I now become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (St. John 8:40)

My friend, our only hope to save our Christian heritage is to stand together. I can truly say I have done no man wrong, if I am guilty of anything, it has been serving the Lord with all humility of mind and with many tears and temptations, saying as Paul, I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house. (Acts 20:19-20)

"Yea, doubtless and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I suffer loss of all things and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." All things-"That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering." (Philippians 3:8) "And those things gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." (Verse 7) The Point I am making is that we are to be on one accord in prayer. (Acts 1:14) One accord in the temple. (2:46) One accord proclaiming the word. (4:24) With one accord in signs and wonders. (5:12) One accord in obedience. (8:6) One accord in Christian practice. (15:25) One accord in worship. (Romans 15:6)

Listen, we don't have time for division, discord and cheap politics. We don't have time for wounding one another and finding fault. If you have something you want materialistic or if you envy it, take it and use it for the glory of God. The church of the living God has got to come alive and to be in one accord or we are never going to see what God wants to do in our midst.

The problem today is we have lost our sense of the absolute. As we said earlier we now live in the day of relativism, a day in which truth is subjective, personal and flexible. Have you not seen this in the White House? Did not you view it on the television set? It has even involved the very heart of our church.

Are you not concerned that we have a Supreme Court that does its work under the Ten Commandments in our public building? America is no longer

a Christian nation. As a nation we have ignored our Judeo-Christian heritage. We are now a nation which has ignored the first commandment. (You shall have no other gods before me.) We have experienced a loss of fear and respect for God with a subsequent disregard for authority in all phases of living.

We have ignored the second commandment (you shall not make for yourselves a carved image.) Do you not see the Pagan worship, practices? We ignored the third commandment (You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.) Our agreements have lost substance. Our language has become

base; four letter words are the order of the day. We are now at an all time high on the Fourth Commandment (Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.) We have robbed God of glory and made profit king with commerce as Sunday religion. As we have ignored the fifth commandment (honor your father and your mother) children have learned to disobey their parents with resulting loss of respect for teachers, law enforcement officers and general authority figures. Teenage crime is at an all time high and violence, riots, terrorism and anarchy plague the social order.

As we have ignored the Sixth Commandment (you shall not murder) our prisons, institutions are overflowing, human life has become cheap; murder is the prime theme of the media.

As we have ignored the Seventh Commandment (you shall not commit adultery) we now face over one million teenage pregnancies every year; venereal disease is rampant; Aids is at epidemic proportions; and the very fiber of the family has been weakened to the extent that only thirteen percent of households represent traditional family roles.

Let me ask you this question: do you wish for me to stop? There are those who are out there working, whispering, deceit wishes so and it is not because there is fire shut up in their bones. No my friend, truth is decaying in our midst and because of this we have a serious problem. We have lost our sense of the absolute.

We also have ignored the Eighth Commandment (you shall not steal) and burglary has increased 200 percent in the past ten years. We have been forced to learn the art of self defense. Personal property rights are constantly threatened and security business is a booming investment of the decade.

As we ignored the Ninth Commandment (Ye shall not bear false witness), contracts have lost validity, agreements are frequently ignored, and only in rare cases is a man's word his bond.

As we have ignored the Tenth Commandment (you shall not covet), greed has replaced responsibility, the big rip off is an accepted way of life, fraud and deceit are too often tolerated as a necessary part of the business scene.

Now let us go back to absolute, we need to remember Exodus 19:5 "Now therefore if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people; for all the earth is mine."

Next week: Little Preachers

## The Church at the Forks

by Erwin Jacobs

Today is a very special sunny blue sky, but a very windy day as I sit under my carport writing this report. The Dogwood trees are getting petals on them, getting ready for full blooms soon, the forsythias are a bright yellow, the plum trees have bloomed and I walked around the yard looking at other plants and trees coming to life. The mocking birds are serenading me as I write and letting me know it is good to be able to sit outside for a change and enjoy the fresh air stirring the tree tops.

On March 7th (Wednesday evening) 2001 the Board had its Quarterly meeting to discuss what was going on at West Robeson United Methodist Church at the Forks. A very few people showed up for this meeting. We have a large number of our members out sick and many others are unable to attend for various reasons. Lay Leader Mr. Terry Marshall who is the Chairperson for West Robeson called the meeting to order shortly after our Wednesday night Bible Study. Ms. Aggie Deese was asked to take minutes for the meeting.

On the agenda were several discussions about work needs to be performed like two new doors for the kitchen at the fellowship hall, UMC Women's Auction and inviting everyone to come help this worthy cause on April 6th at 6 p.m. Food and drinks will be sold at this fund raiser for the church's many needs.

Thanks to a generous donor who wishes to be anonymous who gave Mrs. Lucille Locklear a check for our church youth. You were an answer to Mrs. Lucille's prayers in this much appreciated kind act.

Rev. Marshall Locklear is conducting Bible Study with the prisoners on

Highway 711 west of Lumberton. This is a Disciple Program Thursday nights from 6 to 8 p.m. He reports the prisoners are very interested in his teachings. (We regard him as a great teacher every Wednesday night at our church also.)

I thank the United Methodist Women for the kind words in the article about my helping hand recognition, also the gift and Certificate presented to me. Many acts of kindness rendered by people in this fast moving world are never recognized. The church had an appreciation meal and it followed a great sermon by a great preacher, Mr. Jones from the Wakulla area for Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth and Wanda Lowry. They were voted and recognized as the Lay Persons of the year at our church. This event took place Sunday, March 18, 2001. The meal was catered by KFC for the occasion. The food was excellent and enjoyed by everyone in attendance.

If you do not attend a church, we invite you to come and worship with us at West Robeson United Methodist Church. We are in the area of Cabinet Shop Road, Baker Road at the Forks where Harpers Ferry Road and 74 join- south side of 74 highway. We have Sunday School at 9 a.m. and worship service begins at 10 a.m. Sundays. Prayer meeting Monday evenings and Bible Study Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. We visit Dial's Nursing Home each second Sunday at 2:30 p.m. and everyone is so happy to see us come through the doors at the three buildings. We receive a blessing as we minister and sing with those dear people. Come join us in all or any of the above services.

May God bless you at this Easter Season and remember we love you as God's children.

## Faith Community Targeting Syphilis

Provisional data for 2001 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that Robeson County reported the 17th highest number of Primary and Secondary syphilis cases of any county in the Country. The total number of new syphilis cases has increased to epidemic proportions totaling 150 cases by the end of 2000. With the incidence of cases Robeson County is 33 times higher than the national average.

March 16, 2001 a meeting was held at the Burnt Swamp Baptist Association in Pembroke with area faith leaders from different denominations throughout Robeson County. The purpose of this meeting was to bring awareness to the faith community and how ministers and laity of the church can begin addressing this issue in their churches and communities. The main goal that developed from this first meeting is that a training program will be initiated to train ministers and laity to go out in various communities in Robeson County to speak about the syphilis epidemic and other health issues.

If you are interested in participating in any way, please contact April Locklear Oxendine at the Robeson County Health Department at (910) 608-2271 or Rev. Robert Mangum at sandy Plains United Methodist Church at (910) 521-8600. The next meeting is March 29, 2001 at the Burnt Swamp Baptist Association at 3:00-5:00 p.m. Light refreshments will be served.

## Navy Blue Angels to highlight the 48th Annual Azalea Festival Air Show

Mark your calendars and tell your friends! The Blue's are back in town!

The United States Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron, the Blue Angels, will perform two spectacular aerial demonstrations at Naval Station Norfolk. April 28 and 29, during the 48th Annual International Azalea Festival Air Show. The Blue Angels are the world's renowned premier aerobatics precision team created at the end of World War II to Showcase naval aviation. April 2001 will mark the Blue Angels return to Naval Station Norfolk following a two-year absence.

This free, family oriented event will also showcase the Navy's parachute team, the Leap Frogs, in addition to many military tactical demonstrations. Many top civilian aerobatics performers, such as Sean D. Tucker and his Oracle Challenger, will also grace the skies over Naval Station Norfolk. On the ground, watch the amazing "wall of fire" pyrotechnic display

as well as the Hawaiian Fire Department jet truck. Expand your knowledge of aviation as you view up close, both vintage and new aircraft, from the many static displays that will be available at the show. There will be many hands-on events for the young aviation enthusiast and an impressive midway for the older enthusiast. The show will truly be an event for all to enjoy!

Each Spring for 47 years, the Navy and the City of Norfolk have worked together to produce the Azalea Festival and air show to demonstrate appreciation to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and its only U.S. based headquarters, Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic. This year's most honored nation is Spain.

For more information about the upcoming 48th Annual International Azalea Festival Air Show, log on to www.norfolkairshow.com, or call the Air Show Hotline at (757) 445-2844

## College students can make the world their classroom

**Pembroke, NC-** Don't let your teenagers spend another summer hanging around the house when they can earn college credit and explore exciting countries on a summer program from the American Institute For Foreign Study (AIFS).

AIFS, the premier study abroad organization for 37 years, offers more than 20 different summer programs in the Czech Republic, England, France, Italy, Poland, Russia, South Africa and Spain, as well as three multi-country traveling available in business, economics, communications, social sciences, language (Czech, French, Italian, Polish, Russian and Spanish), literature, art history, performing arts, studio art, music and history. Since its founding in 1964, more than one million students and teachers have participated in AIFS programs. Studying abroad often helps college students achieve academic and

career goals, including enhanced prospects for graduate school acceptance as well as employment. Students develop an understanding of global issues and knowledge of a specific culture. Study abroad not only expands the student's international awareness, but increases their maturity, adaptability, flexibility and sense of adventure. These summer programs are also open to interested adults who wish to broaden their horizons.

To receive the AIFS Summer 2001 catalog, contact David Greenberg at (800) 727-2437, ext. 5163, via e-mail, at [dgreenberg@aifs.com](mailto:dgreenberg@aifs.com) or write to Summer Catalog Request, AIFS, River Plaza, 9 West Broad Street, Stamford, CT 06902.

Interested Students can also get more information, as well as apply on-line, at [www.aifsabroad.com](http://www.aifsabroad.com). The application deadline is April 15, 2001.

## Easter Baskets: A Sweet Tradition

The tradition of the Easter basket is more than two hundred years old. The first baskets were actually nests made of leaves and twigs which would be left out the night before Easter with hopes that the Easter Bunny would fill these nests with colored boiled eggs. Candy filled baskets, as we know them today, did not become popular until the late 1800's, with American mass production of chocolate.

Today, Easter is the second largest candy holiday in the United States. More than fifty million chocolate bunnies are made for this holiday each year. Easter baskets filled with chocolate bunnies and eggs, marshmallow chicks, jelly beans and other sweeter treats are as much a part of the holiday as bonnets and the Easter Bunny himself. This year, surprise your loved ones with a homemade confection in their basket, like this no-fuss fudge recipe from GREATFOOD.COM:

3 cups semisweet chocolate chips  
1 cup chopped walnuts  
Coat a 9x9 square pan with wax paper  
Melt chocolate and milk together in a pot over low heat. When mixture appears blended and creamy, remove from heat and stir in marshmallows and walnuts.

Pour mixture into coated pan and put in a cool, dry place. Allow to cool until firm to touch. Cut fudge into small squares and serve. Visit [greatfood.com](http://greatfood.com) on the Web for delicious selection of Easter treats, such as our Easter Basket with Chocolate Eggs & Bunny, and for more recipes.

## J.J. Johnson Scholarship Committee Accepting Applications

The J. J. Johnson Scholarship Committee is now accepting applications from the graduating seniors of the Public Schools of Robeson County. The scholarship was established in December of 1996 to help deserving students in achieving their post high school educational goals. Applications can be obtained from First Baptist Church, Post office Box 1087, Fairmont, North Carolina 28340.

This scholarship was established in honor of Dr. Joy Joseph Johnson for his forty-five years of service to the First Baptist Church, the Fairmont Community, the county of Robeson, and the state of North Carolina. The scholarship's theme is Dr. Johnson's motto: "You Can Do It, If You Put God First".

The deadline for all applications is May 1, 2001. For more information, please call (910) 628-6844.

## Kindergarten Registration to be held at Union Chapel

Union Chapel School Kindergarten registration will be held April 6, 2001, between the hours of 9:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M. in the school gym. All children who will be 5 years of age on or before October 16, 2001 need to register. Please bring with you a certified birth certificate (not mother's copy), completed immunization record, social security card, Tribal Enrollment Card (if applicable), Insurance Card/Information and a physical form completed by a physician (forms may be obtained from school office). For further information contact the school at 521-4456.



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