

".... mindful of his covenant" - Week 89

After years of hassle with the Philistines, the day finally came when the ark of God was returned to "the city of David", where King David placed it in a specially-pitched tent (I Chronicles 16.1).

Great was the rejoicing, led by the king, the Levites and the priests - trumpets, singing, shouts of praise - a wonderful hullabaloo of worship and gratitude to the Lord, at this visible sign of His presence now dwelling once more in the midst of His people.

David's own psalm of praise contained a vital reminder to all who were present - ".... be ye mindful always of his covenant" (16.15, AV). At this moment of relief and joyful thanksgiving, the king was very conscious of the particular relationship that God had formed between Himself and His chosen people, the children of Israel.

It was a covenant of tremendous privilege for the people, and also of tremendous responsibility, which worked very simply. For His part, God would bless, guide, protect and "tabernacle" in the midst of His chosen people, seeing them as "the apple of His eye" (eg, Deuteronomy 32.10). The ark of the covenant represented this faithful presence of the Lord.

For their part, the people were to acknowledge the Lord God, and obey Him - it was as simple as that. In so doing, the people would be blessed, other peoples around them would be given a visual aid of how life should be lived in covenant with the one, true living God, and God Himself would be known and glorified, as is His due.

It all depended on the obedience of the people of Israel. What is now for us the Old Testament is a record of how this covenant was played out over the centuries. We see in those pages how the Lord God was ever-consistent, and His people were ever-INconsistent!

The Lord warned, and warned, and warned through His prophets. Time and again, His warnings were dismissed, and the bad old ways of covenant-breaking continued. His chosen people, the "apple of his eye", regularly turned aside from their Lord, cosyng up to the surrounding, idolatrous nations. No wonder the Lord's judgements finally fell, leading to the defeat and exile of Israel to the Assyrians

and of Judah to the Babylonians. Even then, the Lord made known His promise of reconciliation and return for His wayward people, which would culminate in the coming of their Messiah.

None of these disasters needed to have happened, if the people had only heeded all those warnings, summed up in those words sung by David that day - "be ye mindful always of his covenant".

Today, it is the people of the Church who are the Lord's covenant people. By God's grace it is a new covenant, freely offered by God the Father, and based solely on faith in the Person, work and shed blood of Jesus Christ. Our membership of this wonderful covenant has absolutely nothing to do with any merit on our part, and absolutely everything to do with loving mercy on God's part.

So it is we, the Church, who possess the beautiful covenant privileges - the blessings, the guidance, the protection of the Lord. And equally it is we, the Church, who carry the same covenant responsibilities.

We are now "the visual aid" in an increasingly chaotic world, as to what it means to live in covenant relationship with the living God, by faith in His Son Jesus Christ, and by obedience to the Lord and His covenant ways. We are the ones entrusted with carrying "the baton" of the Christian Gospel - the simple and glorious message of salvation by faith alone, in Christ alone.

The key remains obedience: faithful obedience to the Lord of the covenant. In our own lives, and in our local Christian fellowships, the Lord is far less concerned over whether our worship styles happen to be trendy or traditional - as long as we, His covenant people, are seeking to be *faithful*, faithful to Him and to His covenant.

For as we keep in mind just what the covenant is, and how and why we are members of it, good things happen! The Church retains its cutting-edge of effectiveness, people are blessed, people are saved, and above all else, the living God, graciously revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is known and served, worshipped and glorified.

Isn't that what we all want? Isn't that what the Lord Himself wants? May we indeed be always "mindful of His covenant"!

