

## BRANCHGRAM MESSAGE MARCH

### A COVENANT COMMUNITY

During the subsequent months, I would like to walk through the newly ratified church covenant in order to analyze and reiterate what we as a church have agreed upon as the binding rules for membership. I hope this will be informative as well as fruitful as we, in essence, ‘renew our vows’ together. For this first installment, my desire is to better understand what is meant by “Church Covenant.”

As we read through the Scriptures, we do not get far until we meet this seemingly archaic word “covenant.” In Genesis 6:18, and then in chapter 9, we read of a covenant that the Lord made with Noah, the sign of which was the rainbow, whereby God covenanted that he would not destroy the earth by water again. Then, in Genesis 17, the Lord again enacts a covenant, this time with Abraham, in which God promises him that he would be the father of many nations as well as inherit the land of Canaan. Hundreds of years later, as we are studying on Sunday mornings, we see that God made a covenant with the nation of Israel at Horeb/Sinai. As we have seen, the Lord demands obedience, for which there would be blessing, but for disobedience there would be curses. Unfortunately, time and space do not permit me to dig deeper into the significance and importance of some of the other covenants we find in the Bible, such as the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7), the covenant with Phinehas (Numbers 25:12, 13), the new covenant spoken of by Jeremiah (31:31-34) and Ezekiel (36:25-27), the character of God’s covenant (Psalm 111:9), and the new covenant instituted by the body and blood of our Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 11:22-26).

It should be plain to see that God is a God of covenanting. He makes promises and keeps them. As His children, we are to reflect the character of our Father by doing the same. Whether it is in regard to our marriage or mortgage, our faith or fellowship, we are to be covenantally loyal and faithful.

Covenants have to do with promises and agreements and, in a nutshell, the church covenant is made up of those promises and agreements that we, as a body of believers, have promised to God and each other to keep. So what is a church covenant and what do we mean by it? It is the fence that erects a distinguishing line between our church and the world. It is the skeletal structure upon which this body of Christ, that we call Vine Street Baptist Church, is built. With Jesus as our head, we are united around these common bones and sinews that hold us together. So now our task will be to examine each of the bones (promises) that make up our skeleton (covenant).