Exodus 24:8 Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

It was the most important event in the history of Israel! The people of Israel had gathered at the foot of Mt. Sinai three months after the Exodus from Egypt. There at the mountain the Lord himself spoke to the people. The Lord verbally gave the Israelites the great summary of His Law: The Ten Commandments. After that the Lord through Moses gave the people of Israel the complete revelation of His Law and its purpose.

While all of these things mentioned thus far were important and awesome events, the most important is what is recorded for us in our text for today. Here in our text the people of Israel heard and confirmed the Book of the Covenant. Here they agreed to obey the Lord and His Laws. Here they became members of the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints.

I think now you can see why this is considered to be the most important event of the people of Israel. For that matter the careful reader of the Bible will notice that all events prior to this event all pointed to this event. He will also notice that all events after this have as their reference point this very event. Indeed it is this event the two parts of the Bible are named after. (I am right, you just have to think about it!!)

Let’s then look closer and see what makes this event so important. Our theme will be: **THE WILL OF GOD.**

Perhaps the first thing we should do is clear up the most common misconception ever perpetrated on the Christian Church. I don’t think this misconception was intentional yet its impact is still felt in the church today. The problem is with the word “covenant” or at least with its use in this particular context.

The word covenant is a word that implies a solemn agreement between two parties. With the use of the word “covenant” in this particular text the impression is given that what is happening here is that God and the people of Israel are making a contract together. In other word, the word covenant implies that two parties are at work here and yet nothing is further from the truth.

The truth is that this is not an agreement between two parties but rather the clear cut action of one party. The better word to use in this context would be the word for which two parts of the Bible are named. Still stumped on that one? Try the word “testament.”

The word testament is a word that speaks of promises. Properly speaking the word testament implies the promises of one that will be fulfilled with the death of the promise maker. Think of how the word is used commonly in our English language and you’ll see my point. When we speak of “a last will and testament” that is the proper use of the word and the force of the word used here.

What is happening in our text then is that the people of Israel are being presented with God’s testament. God is the author of what is happening. God is the cause and God is the promise giver. The promises of God that are presented to the people of Israel on this very day were very much one sided. These promises do not in any way depend upon Israel and what they do, rather these promises are strictly the merciful actions of God. I mean were the people there because of what they did? Did the people leave Egypt because of their power and strength? Did they bring about the plunder of Egypt or did they cause the Pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day? Did the people cause the water to split and the dry ground upon which to walk? Did the people will that Pharaoh’s army drown? Fact is, all of this was the work and wonder of God! And now here is God giving his will and testament. Please consider these words from Galatians 3:19-20. **“What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.”** As you contemplate those words two things stick out. That the law was given because of sin to point to the Seed to come, namely Jesus and, that the law though it had a Mediator, really only represented one party, namely God! There is no doubt that this is God’s old will and testament concerning the object of salvation.

To clearly see this look at what the text says. In verse 8 we read, **“Moses took the blood, sprinkled in on the people and said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with these words.’”** The key is understanding what **“all these words”** mean.

Two sections help in this understanding. The first is verses 3 and 4. **“When Moses went and told the people all the Lord’s words and laws, they responded with one voice, ‘Everything the Lord has said we will do.’ Moses then wrote down everything the Lord had said.”** What is clear in this section is that it is God’s words and laws that are referred to. Please note that here it is specifically mentioned that Moses wrote these words down, a reference to the verbal inspiration of the Bible.

The second section is verse 7 just before the words of our highlighted text. There we read, **“Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to all the people. They responded, ‘We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey.’”** The context tells us that the Book of the Covenant is the Lord’s words and laws which Moses had written down.

What the people of Israel are agreeing to do is to follow the Lord’s words and laws. This wasn’t just the Ten Commandments, rather this is a reference to the entire Law of God. Need I remind you of how the law of God is composed of three distinct types of law?

There was the Civil Law. These laws governed the people of Israel as a nation. These laws of God and their blessings were the only conditional part of the law. Israel would only remain and be blessed as a nation as long as they continued to obey the Lord and his civil laws.

There was the moral law. The moral law was that part of the Law which told men, all men, what God expects in their lives and hearts. The moral law forms the basis for the Ten Commandments. People are always surprised to learn that the Ten Commandments are only a summary of the Moral Law of God. This moral law of God shows mankind God’s dos and don’ts. This part of the law has never been stopped or ended but was even upheld by Jesus in his life. This part of the law mankind has also never been able to keep or even get close to keeping.

Then there were the ceremonial laws. The ceremonial laws governed the worship life of Israel. It told them how, when and where to worship. Most important, the ceremonial law was a constant testimony to God’s promises of a Savior, a promise that was the will, the testament of God. What is interesting is to note in our text how blood, pointing to a death, was the symbol of this covenant. The people and altars they built were all sprinkled with blood to symbolize that this covenant would be fulfilled and complete when the right death occurred and the right blood was shed. Consider the words we heard in this connection, **“This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you…”** Now fast forward and think of what was said as this covenant was fulfilled and the new one put in place. Jesus said on the night of Maundy Thursday and the institution of Holy Communion, **“Drink from it all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin” (**Mtt.26). As I said, everything here points to the Savior and his death for us!

Grasp what happened then. What these people agreed to was God’s testament or will, His promises of blessings and salvation that would be theirs just because He had chosen them. In truth, all they agreed to do was be the inheritors of God’s will!

That’s the part you probably hadn’t thought of. Remember that a testament is a promise of things to come when the person making the promise dies. How can this be a testament, God’s will? Is God going to die? Where is this dying that puts the will into effect? Go back to our Galatians passage: **“It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.”**

Actually the dying person is constantly pointed to and referred to throughout God’s Ceremonial laws. Those laws were filled with sacrifices: the grain offering, the fellowship offering, the burnt offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering. In any and every circumstance of sin God called for an offering in the form of a sacrifice. The most prevalent sacrifice involved the killing of a male lamb or young calf. This was not some gory blood bath. It was a carefully orchestrated ceremony done with solemn reverence. It was the constant reminder to these people of the very nature of the Testament they had among them. A testament that in order to come true necessitated the death of the one who made it.

By now you surely know the connection. Jesus, our Savior from sin. Jesus was God. Jesus died for the sins of all people. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for the whole world. Jesus brought about the fulfillment of the First Testament by his atoning sacrifice for all.

It was Jesus death that all the Old Testament sacrifices portrayed. It was Jesus death that would make the Old Testament fulfilled and come into force. It was Jesus death that in essence would end the Old Covenant and bring the New Covenant. The Old Testament is gone and the New Testament is in place. From testament to testament the plan of salvation rests firmly in the power and will of God. It is what God promises that counts. It is God’s accomplishments that bring salvation. It never has depended on man, this will and testament of God.

As a point of fact consider then the history of Israel after this event of our text. Did they keep God’s law? Did they obey God? Were they a perfect nation who never did wrong? For that matter can you even think of one thing that Israel did on its own that brought glory and honor to God?

Please note that despite Israel’s failures this testament of God still stood. That’s because the Israelites didn’t make the will, nor did they even have a hand in creating it. Their part was to simply hear God’s testament, recognize that they were the heirs’ apparent, and wait for God to bring it to fulfillment. All God demanded was belief in the promises of deliverance found in His Testament.

How nice that in this case the Israelites, a people directly filled with visible proof after visible proof that God was real and powerful, how nice that the Israelites offer to God their promises to obey and follow him. It was an act of faith on their part to promise God lives that would be filled with good works. What would you have done? You have just heard God give you eternal promises and earthly promises of blessings galore and you have seen his power. Of course as a human, you are going to promise to hear and obey. It is still the way it works today. We hear of God’s gracious promises fulfilled and renewed in Jesus and because of these things we out of love for God strive to live according to His Word. Christian lives are always the direct result of faith in God’s Will and Testament, the fact that we understand we are the recipients of his grace and love in Jesus. And then remember that God has given us a sacrament that is set up to remind us of this covenant, his gracious forgiveness and salvation in Jesus and his victory over sin, death and the devil.

May you understand this heart of the Christian faith. It is God’s promises that count, or as we might say today, It is God’s grace that counts. It was that way for the First or Old Testament people. It is still that way for God’s New Testament people too. Amen.