

# UNDERSTANDING COVENANT THEOLOGY

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The Covenant of Grace

# What Is the Covenant of Grace?

- *God's Way of Reconciling Sinners to Himself*

- *As Promised to Satan:*

“I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15).

- *As Symbolized to Adam and Eve:*

“And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.” (Gen. 3:21).

- *As Inaugurated in God's Covenant with Abraham:*

“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:2-3).

- *As Fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ:*

“This cup that is our for you is the new covenant in my blood” (Lk. 22:20).



# Westminster Confession, VII.3.

Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second [covenant], commonly called the covenant of grace.

- Covenant of Grace remedies man's breaking of the Covenant of Works; God's provision for the salvation of sinners
- "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe" (Rom. 3:20-22).
- "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin" (Rom. 8:3).
- Wherein He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ;
  - "Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water'... whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (Jn. 4:10, 14).
  - "Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by faith'" (Gal. 3:11).



# Westminster Confession, VII.3.

- Requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved.
  - “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mk. 16:15-16).
  - “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life... Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him” (Jn. 3:16, 36).
- And promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.
  - “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us... so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:13-14).
  - “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:13-14).
  - “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8-9)



# The Covenant of Grace Administered

- *God's Covenant with Abraham*

“Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘God from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed’ (Gen. 12:1-3).

- *From Abraham to Jacob*

“May he give the blessing of Abraham to you and to your offspring with you, that you may take possession of the land of your sojournings that God gave to Abraham” (Isaac to Jacob, Gen. 28:4).

“I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring” (The Lord to Jacob, Gen. 28:13)

- *From the Patriarchs to Moses*

“I am the God of your Father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob... Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, ‘I have observed you in Egypt, and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites... a land flowing with milk and honey’” (God to Moses, Ex. 3:6, 16-17).

- *From Moses to Christ*

“He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever” (from Mary’s Song, Lk. 1:54-55).

- *The Covenant of Grace as the Eternal Covenant for Salvation*

“He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant” (Ps. 105:8-11).



# New Testament Teaching on Abraham & the Covenant of Grace: Romans 4

- *Abraham justified by faith, apart from works*

“If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted as righteousness’” (Rom. 4:2-3).

- *Abraham received an imputed righteousness he did not merit*

“Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness” (Rom. 4:4-5).

- *Abraham justified by faith, prior to circumcision & the law*

“We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness... Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised... For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith” (Rom. 4:9-10, 13).

- *Abraham made the father of all who believe*

“The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them all... who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had” (Rom. 4:11-12).



# New Testament Teaching on Abraham & the Covenant of Grace: Romans 4

- *Abraham saved through faith so that it might be by grace*

“That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring – not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham... [in] the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist” (Rom. 4:16-17).

- *Notice: while faith is the condition of salvation, faith is the gift of God.*

- *Abraham’s faith: in God and His promise*

“He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb... [being] fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised” (Rom. 4:19-21).

- *Abraham’s faith strengthened as he gave glory to God.*

“He grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God” (Rom. 4:20).

- *We are blessed with Abraham by believing in Jesus’ death & resurrection*

“The words ‘it was counted to him’ were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Rom. 4:24-25).



# The Covenant of Grace & the Gospel

- *God's promise of salvation to sinners*
- *A promise received through faith alone*
- *A promise and a faith given by grace alone*
- *A covenant that is sealed by God's bond and oath*

*"So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie... We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain" (Heb. 6:17-19).*

- *A salvation that provides eternal life: land/offspring to city/church*

*"And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from god, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2).*

- *A salvation made possible by God bearing our sin, fulfilling our righteousness, and dying the death we deserved*

*"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin" (Ps. 32:1-2; Rom. 4:7-8).*

- *A faith that walks with God, trusts in God, glorifies God, and looks forward to the final salvation God will provide in Christ.*

*"Abraham was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10).*