

UNDERSTANDING COVENANT THEOLOGY

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The Covenant of Redemption

An Eternal Covenant

- *“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant...” (Heb. 13:20).*
- *Is there biblical evidence of an eternal pact between God the Father and God the Son, with reference to our salvation? Yes.*

“Father,... I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do” (John 17:4).

“Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work’ (John 4:34).

“All that the Father gives me will come to me... And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me” (John 6:37, 39).

“I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness” (Isaiah 42:6-7).

The “lamb without blemish and without spot... foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:19-20).

“It is finished” (John 19:30).

The Covenant of Redemption

The Son agreed:

- To take up human flesh, being born of a woman under the law (Gal. 4:4-5);
- To fulfill the whole law of God on behalf of his elect, achieving for them a full righteousness where Adam had failed (Mt. 5:17-18, Isa. 42:21);
- To receive in their place the punishment his people had deserved by their sins, shedding His own blood for them on the cross (Isa. 53, 2 Cor. 5:21, Gal. 3:13).

The Father promised:

- The salvation of all the elect as Christ's brothers adopted into Him and as His bride given to Him.
- Glorious dominion over all things through His resurrection from the grave.

The eternal covenant established:

- Who would be saved
- What the Son must do to save them
- How their personal salvation would be accomplished
- All the blessings involved in their salvation
- All the rewards which Christ would gain by their salvation.

A Recap of the Bible's Major Covenants

Covenant of Redemption

Between God the Father and God the Son in their eternal council, the Son promising to redeem sinners in His blood, the Father promising to the Son a kingdom, glory, and people.

Covenant of Works

Between God and man, requiring perfect, personal obedience, threatening death, offering life.

Covenant of Grace

Between God and the elect, requiring faith, offering forgiveness and eternal life, secured by God's oath.

The Covenant of Redemption & the Gospel

- Christ's obedience to the Covenant of Redemption redeems us from Adam's disobedience to the Covenant of Works.

The covenant-breaking of the First Man is covered by the covenant-keeping of the Last Man, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Donald Macleod, *A Faith to Live By*, 127).

- The Three Covenants and Salvation:

- Man fell into sin and condemnation by Adam's disobedience to the Covenant of Works
- In the Covenant of Grace, God offers us Christ, to fulfill our obligations and receive our punishment under the Covenant of Works, received by faith alone
- According to the stipulations of the eternal counsel in the Covenant of Redemption

- The eternal heart of God laid bare:

- The Father: “My Son, here is a company of poor miserable souls, that have utterly undone themselves, and now lie open to my justice! Justice demands satisfaction for them, or will satisfy itself in the eternal ruin of them: What shall be done for these souls?”
- The Son: “O my Father, such is my love to, and pity for them, that rather than they shall perish eternally, I will be responsible for them as their Surety; bring in all thy bills, that I may see what they owe thee; Lord, bring them all in, that there may be no after-reckonings with them; at my hand shalt thou require it. I will rather choose to suffer thy wrath than that they should suffer it: upon me, my Father, upon me be all their debt.”
- The Father: “But my Son,” says God, “if thou undertake for them, thou must reckon to pay the last mite, expect no abatements; if I spare them, I will not spare thee.”
- The Son: “Content, Father, let it be so; charge it all upon me, I am able to discharge it: and though it prove a kind of undoing to me, though it impoverish all my riches, empty all my treasures... yet I am content to undertake it.”

from John Flavel, *The Works of John Flavel*, 6 vols. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1968), 1:61

Implications of the Covenant of Redemption

- Our salvation is rooted in the purpose of God from eternity past.
- Our redemption is secured by a covenant that endures eternally.
- The gospel is not an afterthought, but the outworking of God's eternal, Triune counsel.
- Our salvation is *from the Father and in the Son*.
- Our salvation is an accomplished work by the Son, which the Father is bound to fulfill in covenant with Him.
- Christ is our 1) Head; 2) substitute; 3) elder brother; 4) bride groom
- An instigation for our love to God:
Can we fail to love, with gratitude, one so pure who bore our stain, one so rich who took our poverty, one so innocent who paid the penalty for our guilt because of His love? Can we complain to Him of our trials in this world and God's call for us to obey? Flavel: "O, if you knew the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in his wonderful compassion for you, you could not do it."