

Biblical Theology by Dr. Chuck Baynard

Lesson 14 (HCLD 16)¹

Preparation: Begin and end each study time with prayer. Pay particular attention to the background reading and pray over each passage asking God to reveal Himself to you.

Background Reading: Read all the Scripture verses in footnote # 1

Vocabulary: Grace, Mediator, Death

Question: How is the grace of God manifested in the second covenant?²

Answer: The grace of God is manifested in the second covenant, in that he freely provideth and offereth to sinners a Mediator,[a] and life and salvation by him;[b] and requiring faith as the condition to interest them in him, promiseth and giveth his Holy Spirit [c] to all his elect, to work in them that faith,[d] with all other saving graces;[e] and to enable them unto all holy obedience,[f] as the evidence of the truth of their faith [g] and thankfulness to God,[h] and as the way which he hath appointed them to salvation.[i]³

The doctors of the church have struggled to explain this question from the beginning of the Christian church. This is a continuation of covenant theology from lesson 13 of this series. The Westminster Assembly declared that the covenant was made with Christ on behalf of the elect in the eternal counsel of God. They are correct however it is not as simple as it sounds because men

¹ HC Lord's Day 16 – Q40: Why was it necessary for Christ to suffer "death"?

A40: Because the justice and truth [a] of God required that satisfaction for our sins could be made in no other way than by the death of the Son of God.[b]

- a. Gen. 2:17
- b. Heb. 2:9; Rom. 6:23

Q41: Why was He "buried"?

A41: To show thereby that He was really dead.[c]

- c. Matt. 27:59-60; John 19:38-42; Acts 13:29

Q42: Since, then, Christ died for us, why must we also die?

A42: Our death is not a satisfaction for our sin, but only a dying to sin and an entering into eternal life.[d]

- d. John 5:24; Phil. 1:23; Rom. 7:24-25

² Westminster Larger Catechism Q. 32

³ a. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 42:6; John 6:27

- b. I John 5:11-12
- c. John 1:12; 3:16
- d. Prov. 1:23
- e. II Cor. 4:13
- f. Gal. 5:22-23
- g. Ezek. 36:27
- h. James 2:18, 22
- i. II Cor. 5:14-15; Eph. 2:18

were not present in that counsel of God with Himself. If the covenant was with Christ from the start, why all the books about covenants with men? Because that is how God made the covenant manifest in history so man could understand it.

We do not think, reason, or have a mind like God. As men we are bound to time and history; God is not in time. The Bible explains it this way, a day with God is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day. This is complex and many pay it lip service at best and move on. This cannot be! What we do not understand we are indifferent toward or ignore altogether. Like all who have go before me, I will attempt to explain the covenant in a way all can understand. I ask for your patience and perseverance. If you stop short or skip to the end leaving out part of the explanation I promise you that you will end up more confused than when you began this lesson.

As men we know two covenants, the covenants of works and the covenant of grace. This is truth revealed and we should not deny either of these covenants. However there cannot be two covenants or God has changed His mind and that breaks a divine word and God is not God. A true God cannot make mistakes and be forced by circumstance to change His mind. The Bible says God is without shadow or turning for a good reason, anything less and He is not God. This is stickier than the Trinity in many ways.

God made a covenant with Christ and at the same time made a subordinate covenant with Adam (Subordinate only for lack of a better term to explain what happened). A covenant that God knew Adam would not, nay could not fulfill. The covenant was however sincere and God in no way interfered with the ability of Adam to have kept that covenant. With the foreknowledge of God Adam indeed did fail and sinned against God. Note that in the midst of the curse of the devil God reveals to man the hope man has in a promised Messiah (Gen. 3:15). The covenant with Adam was called a covenant of works because all Adam had to do was obey God. This is the first clue that something else is happening in the divine counsel of God. It is written that it was never the intention of God that the law was to justify one soul. This doesn't place sin at the feet of God, man had the ability not to sin and chose of his own volition to disobey God and break the covenant.

Let us understand that when a sovereign speaks that word is law. Thus the word of God to Adam, "do not eat," was law in the same respect that the Ten Commandments centuries later became the Moral Law for all generations afterwards. So Adam broke the law of God and sinned, thus Adam was a covenant breaker. All mankind since Adam are covenant breakers. God will make more covenants with chosen men in the history of the world. These covenants are subordinate or within the original covenant of grace made with Christ in behalf of the elect. These subsequent covenants are progressive in revealing God's plan of salvation of the elect. The covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David at no point set aside the original covenant with Christ or replace the broken covenant of Adam. All of these covenants reveal God's will concerning mankind and are sincere in what they promise if they are perfectly kept. Again, God knew man would not fulfill any of these covenants. Look at the sins and failures of the last covenant bearer among men, King David. In this final covenant with a man of the flesh God reveals His grace in promising this covenant will not pass away, not because David or another is faithful, but by the power and grace of God alone.

The divine covenant with Christ is made manifest in the covenant with David in that God promises the Messiah will be of the line of David and sit upon the throne of David forever. This covenant was fulfilled in Christ's incarnation as well as the legal requirement of the covenant of works. This helps us to understand why only a Mediator who was both fully man and fully God could keep the covenant and provide the atonement. Only God could pay the price of sin, death.

By death we mean both physical death and spiritual death. Yet only a man as the representative of all other mankind could pay the price for without the shedding of blood there is no remittance of sin. With the whole of Scripture open before us we can at this distance see that God did not change and all of the covenants were not independent, but of the one.

The covenant of works is not to be denied, however we can see that it was never the will of God for it to be the covenant through which the salvation of man would be made manifest. The Bible speaks of two covenants, the new and the old. So to say there are two covenants is correct. Yet, there is one covenant with Christ in behalf of the elect from the beginning. This isn't ducking the issue or some sort of weird double speak any more than to say God is one yet three. If we could see this graphically it would be like this: Draw an arch from one side of a sheet of paper to the other. Label the left end of this arch "Eternal Counsel of God" and the right end of the arch "Death of Christ." Now along the bottom edge connect the two ends of the arch with a line and insert a vertical division at the death of Christ. To the left of the vertical division write Covenant of Works and to the right of the vertical division write Covenant of Grace. Now, insert in sequence the covenants God made with the various patriarchs from Adam to David. The arch representing the covenant God made with Christ in behalf of the elect is made manifest in history at the death of Christ. Then it is easier to see all the other covenants with man were but the progressive revelation of God of the eternal covenant made with the Son. A New Testament because there was a death and a testator was created legally speaking at that death. Without the death of Christ there is no New Testament, no heirs. Were the intervening covenants insincere or without meaning? Absolutely not! God knew the result and that man would not, nay by nature could not keep any of the covenants. They reveal God and His grace all the more in the guilt as covenant breakers is made manifest in history by God. In due time Christ died for the "ungodly."

The resurrection of Christ gave visible proof of God's acceptance of the completed work of Christ as the atonement between God and man. The covenant was fulfilled in Christ. Now extend the bottom line into eternity future and you can perhaps visualize how all that we have is by grace as in faith (the gift of God) we out of love obey the commandments of our Lord. The administration changed and we do not have even the shadow of being able to be saved by a covenant of works, but depend entirely upon the grace of God in election. Paul argues that even in the Old Testament none were saved by anything other than faith in the promise of God, not the keeping of the law.

I am sure others will make other divisions and if charted it would look drastically different than what I have shared here. That be as it may, there are two covenants, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. We can rightly argue both were actually of grace since God was under no obligation to offer either to mankind. None were intended to be saved by the ceremonies and shadows of the Old just as none are saved by anything other than faith in the New. The sacraments of the church replace the ceremonies and sacrifices of the Old Testament, neither save the first person. Salvation is of the Lord and that by grace through faith.

Suggested Sermon Outline

Death

Why did Christ have to suffer DEATH?

Because the righteousness and truth of God are such that nothing else could make reparation for our sins except the death of the Son of God.

Why was He BURIED?

To confirm the fact that He was really dead.

Since, then, Christ died for us, why must we also die?

Our death is not a reparation for our sins, but only a dying to sin and an entering into eternal life.

I. Sin Produces Death

A. Death is the normal consequence of sin. *For the wages of sin is death*; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

B. The incarnation and crucifixion of Jesus were directly related to the need to deal with death. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the *angels for the suffering of death*, crowned with glory and honour; *that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.* (Hebrews 2:9)

C. The spoilage from sin invalidated any ordinary human attempt to set things right between God and man. For *what the law could not do, in that it was weak* through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.* (Romans 8:3-4)

II. The Death of Jesus Is Beyond Legitimate Dispute

A. The crucifixion and burial confirm the technical reality of Jesus' execution. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, *they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulcher.* (Acts 13:29)

B. The details of the burial are precise, appropriate to the times and conditions, and evidence that those engaged in the burial were convinced Jesus was genuinely dead. And *when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed.* (Matthew 27:59-60)

C. Picture the details in Luke's account. And, behold, there was a man named *Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just:* (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. *This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulcher that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. And that day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on.* And the *women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulcher, and how his body was laid.* (Luke 23:50-55)

D. John further confirms the other accounts. And after this *Joseph of Arimathaea,* being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also *Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they*

the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, **as the manner of the Jews is to bury**. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. **There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day**; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand. (John 19:38-42)

II. The Believer's Death Focuses on Transition

A. Our deaths do not settle accounts for sin. O wretched man that I am! **who shall deliver me from the body of this death?** (Romans 7:24)

1. Believers do not have in them what it takes to overcome sin and its consequences. A SONG OF DEGREES. **Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.** Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. **If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?** (Psalm 130:1-3)

2. Coming to terms with frailty and inadequacy are actually in the believer's best interest according to Jesus. Blessed are **they that mourn**: for they **shall be comforted**. Blessed are **the meek**: for they **shall inherit** the earth. Blessed are they which do **hunger and thirst after righteousness**; for they **shall be filled**. (Matthew 5: 4-6)

B. We do not have the capacity to ransom ourselves or secure life for ourselves. **None of them can by any means redeem** his brother, **nor give to God a ransom for him**: (Psalm 49:7)

C. The substitutionary death of Jesus reaches a more fundamental level than a simple physical status shift. For **God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation** by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, **whether we wake or sleep, we should live** together with him. (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10)

D. The believer's death identified a transition actually made through the service of Jesus. Verily, verily, I say unto you, **He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life**, and shall not come into condemnation; but **is passed from death unto life**. (John 5:24)

Heidelberg Catechism
Lord's Day 016
Questions 40-44
Dr. Edwin P. Elliott, Jr.