

Reformed Doctrine, Chapter VII Of God's Covenant with Man

I.

All reasonable creatures owe to God complete obedience as their Creator. Nonetheless, the distance between God and man in all ways is so great that man could never experience any of God's blessings or rewards. God of His own will was pleased to condescend to man and make covenants with man.¹

II.

The First covenant of God with man was the covenant of works.² God promised Adam life and through him to his posterity in this covenant.³ The condition of this covenant was perfect obedience of God.⁴

III.

Man made himself incapable of life by that covenant in the fall. The Lord was graceful and made a second covenant⁵ with Man known as the covenant of grace. In the covenant of grace God promised all those He elected salvation in Jesus Christ. The condition of this covenant was faith in Jesus Christ.⁶ God in this covenant promised to give His Holy Spirit to make them willing and able to believe.⁷

IV.

The covenant of grace is also called a testament in reference to the death of Jesus Christ as the Testator with an everlasting inheritance along with all things belonging to this testament.⁸

V.

The Covenant of Grace is one covenant but has two different administrations. It is administered differently in the New Testament⁹. Under the Old Testament it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the sacrificial lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foretelling and pointing to Christ yet to come;¹⁰ The Holy Spirit worked in and through these as means to build up the elect and bring faith in Jesus Christ, their Messiah.¹¹ The people under the Old Testament administration were as truly saved by faith as those to come later under

¹ Isa. 40:13-17; Job 9:32-33; 22:2-3; 35:7-8; Psa. 113:5-6; Luke 17:10; Acts 17:24-25

² Gen. 2:16-17; Hosea 6:7; Gal. 3:12

³ Gen. 3:22; Rom. 5:12-20; 10:5

⁴ Gen 2:17; Gal. 3:10

⁵ Gal. 3:21; Rom. 3:20-21; 8:3; Gen. 3:15; see Isa. 42:6

⁶ John 3:16; Rom. 10:6, 9; Rev. 22:17

⁷ Acts 13:48; Ezek. 36:26-27; John 6:37, 44-45; I Cor. 12:3

⁸ Heb. 9:15-17

⁹ II Cor. 3:6-9

¹⁰ Heb. 8-10; Rom. 4:11; Col. 2:11-12; I Cor. 5:7

¹¹ I Cor. 10:1-4; Heb. 11:13; John 8:56

the New Testament.¹² God is consistent and has always saved all men by the same thing, faith.

VI.

Under the Gospel (New Testament) the real substance¹³ of salvation was made visible in the flesh. The covenant is now administered by the preaching of the Word and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's table¹⁴, which are less in number than before but more fully manifest Christ to all nations¹⁵ not just the Jews as effectively and savingly as before¹⁶ this is the New Testament administration¹⁷. There is one covenant of Grace under two¹⁸ dispensations.¹⁹

Questions

1. How were the saints in the Old Testament saved?
2. Both the ceremonies of the Old Testament and the preaching and sacraments of the New Testament must have what to be effective?
3. How many covenants of grace are there in the Bible?
4. Why is it called a covenant of grace?
5. How does this differ from the covenant of works God made with Adam?
6. What is the application of the ceremonies of the Old Testament today?
7. May a person choose to live under the Old Testament administration and be saved by that law?
8. How does the covenant of grace accomplish what the covenant of works did not?
9. Why do we use the word testament to refer to the different administrations?

¹² Gal. 3:7-9, 14; Psa. 32:1-2, 5

¹³ Col 2:17

¹⁴ I Cor. 1:21; 11:23-25; Matt. 28:19-20

¹⁵ Luke 2:32; Acts 10:34; Eph. 2:15-19

¹⁶ Heb. 12:22-24; II Cor. 3:9-11; Jer. 31:33-34

¹⁷ Luke 22:20

¹⁸ Gen. 15:6; Psa. 32:1-2; I Cor. 10:3-4

¹⁹ Gal. 3:8-9, 14, 16; Rom. 3:21-22, 30; 4:3, 6-8, 16-17, 23-24; 10:6-10; Heb. 4:2