

Covenant Faithfulness

The Covenant and God's Faithfulness

Is there a message of the Cross we might consider universally "reasonable?" The story to tell is the story of a Covenant God and His creation—how it all began and how it will end.

E. P. Sanders argues that the covenant is [there] even when the word hardly occurs.

We are investigating two phrases of significance even though written only once each:

- Leviticus 26:25 "I will ... execute the vengeance of the covenant."
- Gramma's birdcage

Defining righteousness

The Righteousness of the Lord or God's Righteousness or God's Justice is better translated His "**Covenant Faithfulness.**"

- **Covenant is a bond**, a contractual union. "A covenant between God and man implies no more, if also no less, than the formal concept of a rightly ordered relationship."
 - It is **signed** in salt, Leviticus 2:13; Numbers 18:19 (eg. meal with Burnt or Peace Offering)
 - **enforceable** [Genesis 2:17; Deuteronomy 29:12-13, 18-21]
- **Faithfulness**
 - **Trustworthiness** - 1 Corinthians 4:2, 17 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. "faithful in the Lord."
 - **Faith** - John 14:1 "Believe in me". Romans 4:12, 18-20 "walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, Who against hope believed in hope being not weak in faith, He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;"
 - **Creed**. - Acts 14:22 "exhorting them [Lystra, Derbe, Antioch]]to continue in the faith." Ephesians 4:5 "one faith". Philippians 1:27 "the faith fo the Gospel."

N.T. Wright: *"Exegesis [interpreting Scripture] needs the concordance [an alphabetical list of Bible words and the Scriptures they are used in], but it cannot be ruled by it. ... We have to learn to recognize still more important things, such as ... large biblical themes. Just because we cannot so easily look them up in a reference book does not make them irrelevant."*

The Covenant and Adam

- N. T. Wright *"The Creator God is the Covenant God and vice versa."*
- *"First,"* Wright begins, *"the covenant is there to solve the problems within creation."*
- Then, secondly, Wright contends, *"creation is invoked to solve the problems within the covenant."*
- It is easy, now, to see why a Creator who keeps covenant *"must eventually engage in a final showdown with the forces of evil"* This is sometimes clothed in the narrative of the Exodus and other times "like a great court scene, a trial in which the powers of evil are judged, condemned, and overthrown."

Marriage Contract

- Between Christ and His Church—Ephesians 5:32]
- Two people agree to accept each other in a life long bond of growing intimacy and love. What might happen when one breaks trust? That's what Adam did to God and Paul says we were "in Adam" at the time [Romans 5:14].

N.T. Wright concluded, *"When God fulfills the covenant through the death and resurrection of Jesus and the gifts of the Spirit, thereby revealing his faithful covenant justice and his ultimate purpose of new creation, this has the effect both of fulfilling the original covenant purpose (thus dealing with sin and procuring forgiveness) and of enabling Abraham's family to be the worldwide Jew-plus-Gentile people it was always intended to be."* He goes on to answer, then, *"...the much larger question of how the Creator God can be true to creation, how the Covenant God can be true to the covenant, and how those things are not two but one. And that is what the phrase "righteousness of God" is all about."*

Jesus is the only Savior of sinners,

- **Acts 4:12** "There is salvation in none other nor is there another named being, anywhere introduced to humanity, in whom is the necessary means to save us."
- **John 14:6** Jesus said to him [Thomas], "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

The Covenant of Grace:

1. It was first decreed in eternity,
 - 1 Peter 1:18-21 "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you 21 who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."
2. It was secondly revealed to man after the fall of Adam and Eve,
 - Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."
3. It was executed and confirmed by Christ in his death and resurrection,
 - Hebrews 8:6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was **established** on better promises.
4. It becomes effective for its members when they are joined to Christ through faith.
 - Romans 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are **not** under **law** but under **grace**.
 - Romans 10:9-10 if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and **believe in your heart** that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Christianity is unique having a faith- a creed-an orthodoxy [a doctrine] and not an orthopraxy [correct conduct: liturgical, as opposed to faith or grace]. Forgiveness is a big word in Christianity.

The Torah - Law: Old Covenant.

No one was ever saved by virtue of the Old Covenant. **Hebrews 8:6-10**

6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

A New Covenant

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. 8 Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— 9 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

The Covenant of Grace was PROMISED in the Old Testament and

Fulfilled [covenant ratified] by Jesus Crucified and Raised. The Old is the New concealed, the New is the Old revealed

The Old is the New promised, the New is the Old fulfilled [ratified]/

Promised Galatians 3:17-18

17 And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. 18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Ratified Hebrews 9:11-12

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

On this the other covenant was disannulled and **removed**; and not only the covenant itself, but all that system of sacred worship in accordance with which it was administered.

Colossians 2:14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

The New Covenant Requires Faithfulness

We accept this new covenant by faith which carries a dual significance [Romans 10:9]. One, we believe and trust God in this matter of His eternal love toward us, that He indeed did die in our place, took upon Himself the punishment [Romans 3:25]. Secondly, that we want to honor the covenant by being faithful to Him [Hebrews 10:38].

The Implications

The implications for our theology in this approach to understanding Calvary are demanding. Relationships always need maintenance because they must be nurtured, else they are allowed to die.

- ⁴ A relationship with God does not survive without prayer, because prayer is dialogue with Him
 1. Rev. 5:8 "golden vials full of sweet smelling fragrance, which are the prayers of saints".
 2. Davey Wilkerson on Christians not knowing how to pray. [Hebrews 11:6].
- ⁴ A relationship is built on trust, which **requires** that "we be found faithful" [1 Corinthians 4:2].
- ⁴ A relationship is not legislated because it represents the unique union of two governed by a loving awareness of each other [Rom. 6:14; Gal. 5:23].
- ⁴ A relationship with God and with His saints are bound together, as the one requires the other [1 John 1:7 "we have fellowship one with another,"; Hebrews. 10:25].

SUMMARY CHART

	Presbyterian View	Particular Baptist View
Abrahamic Covenant	The covenant of grace with both physical and spiritual elements made to Abraham and his seed, and by which Abraham was saved.	The covenant of circumcision made with Abraham promising his physical offspring the land of Canaan. Furthermore, by promising that the Messiah would come from him to bless all nations, the new covenant was revealed by which Abraham and his spiritual offspring are saved.
Mosaic Covenant	The covenant of grace prior to Christ, which was differently administered using various typical ordinances.	A covenant of works distinct from, subservient to, and typical of the covenant of grace.
Old Covenant Israel	The church underage.	Abraham's carnal offspring in earthly covenant with God. A type of the church. The elect remnant within Israel were part of the church by virtue of the new covenant.
New Covenant	The administration of the covenant of grace under Christ.	The covenant of grace by which is given salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone; different in substance from the old covenant.
New Covenant Church	The invisible church consists of all the regenerate, while the visible church is composed of both regenerate and unregenerate persons, just as the old covenant was. The visible church includes all those who profess true religion together with their children.	The invisible/visible distinction refers not to two different groups, but to two different perspectives of one group: God's perspective and man's. The visible church consists of only those whom believers have reason to believe are part of the invisible church (the new covenant). Thus the visible church consists of those who profess saving faith.