

Chapter 7: Of God's Covenant

The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of life but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant. (Luke 17:10; Job 35:7,8)

2. Moreover, man having brought himself under the curse of the law by his fall, it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace, wherein he freely offered unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe. (Genesis 2:17; Galatians 3:10; Romans 3:20, 21; Romans 8:3; Mark 16:15, 16; John 3:16; Ezekiel 36:26, 27; John 6:44, 45; Psalms 110:3)*

** Faith is not a condition of salvation required of the sinner. Faith is a gift of grace resulting from the work of regeneration which precedes it. "Requiring of them faith" in no way means that faith is a work each man must in himself render. This, of course, would mean that justification depends not upon God, but upon the relative capacity of the individual.)*

3. This covenant is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament; and it is founded in that eternal covenant transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect; and it is alone by the grace of this covenant that all the posterity of fallen Adam that ever were saved did obtain life and blessed immortality, man being now utterly incapable of acceptance with God upon those terms on which Adam stood in his state of innocency. (Genesis 3:15; Hebrews 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 11:6, 13; Romans 4:1, 2, &c.; Acts 4:12; John 8:56)*

**(The term "covenant" as used in chapter 7 expresses the formal relationship between God and the beings created by Him. We are not free to act however we wish, but are under formal obligation to relate to God in the way he has stipulated. So if mankind has a covenantal relationship with God, it is a formal relationship where there are stipulations and sanctions. If it helps, when we speak of the federal headship of Adam in representing the human race, it is essentially the same as saying the covenantal headship of Adam (federal from the Latin foidos meaning covenantal). It is describing a certain kind of relationship. Paragraph 2 of section 7 speaks of "a covenant of grace" made by God which is common theological shorthand describing the saving purposes of God described throughout Scripture following Genesis 3:15. The "covenant of grace" broadly captures the saving work of God in history where Christ is the mediator between God and the elect (cf. Ephesians 2:12 where we learn of covenants of promise).)*

God's Covenanting with Man

“The immediate and direct end therefore, of God's entering into covenant with man at any time (so far as concerns man himself) is the advancing and bettering of his state; God did never make a covenant with man, wherein his goodness to him was not abundantly manifest; yea such is his infinite bounty, that he has proposed no lower end to his covenant-transactions with men, than to bring into a blessed state in the eternal fruition of himself.” – Nehemiah Coxe

What Is A Covenant?

A covenant is a divinely sanctioned commitment. The commitment is often summed up in an “I will, you will” statement.

The classic treatments of covenant theology often reduced covenants to “stipulation,” or what God proposed/imposes, and “restipulation,” man's response to God. In other words, to “swear” and “answer”. The answer is to swear back.

1. The Need for Sanctions

A commitment, however, is not the same as a covenant. There must be sanctions of threats applied to the commitment to guarantee the fulfillment of the parties' commitments. The sanctions insure the actions will be fulfilled by the committed parties.

- In Ancient Near East, when a covenant was ratified, selected animals would be cut in two, symbolizing the consequences of infidelity towards the covenant's terms.
- In Biblical terms, though covenants were inaugurated in various ways, sanctions were a standard feature among them.

2. The Need for Death

- Hebrews 9:16-17

God's Covenants With Man

1. Types of Covenants

There are two types of covenantal commitments: Precepts and Promises. A covenant that suspends the enjoyment of its blessings on obedience to precept is of a different character than a covenant that freely distributes its blessings.

- A covenant based materially on a commitment of obedience to a command is a covenant of works.
- A covenant based materially on a commitment of promises is a covenant of grace.

2. Covenants are Acts of Grace

Covenants are not a natural feature of the Creator-creature relationship. God did not owe us any covenant. Instead, all covenants are the result of God's own free initiative to carry out His purposes and to do good for mankind. Regardless if the covenant contains precepts or promises, it's an act of grace from God that he determined to covenant with us.

- “yet this language of non-negotiability and imposition should not prevent us from seeing covenants as a gracious and kind condescension. Every covenant provides blessing and benefits for man that would otherwise be unavailable by nature. Covenants advance man's communion and enjoyment of God beyond our created nature.” – Samuel Renihan
- “although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of life but by some voluntary condescension on God's part” – Paragraph 1
- Job 35:1-8 – Our presence, good or evil, has no effect on God.

Two Covenants

1. Covenant of Works

“The covenant of works refers to the covenant that God made with Adam and Eve in their pristine purity before the fall, in which God promised them blessedness contingent upon their obedience to His command... This is seen most importantly in the work of Jesus as the new Adam. Again and again the New Testament makes the distinction and contrast between the failure and calamities wrought upon humanity through the disobedience of the original Adam and the benefits that flow through the work of the obedience of Jesus, who is the new Adam. Though there is a clear distinction between the new Adam and the old Adam, the point of continuity between them is that both were called to submit to perfect obedience to God.” – R.C. Sproul

- The “I will, you will” nature of the covenant of works is as follows:
 - God = I will give you the reward of living for eternity in my presence in complete joy
 - Man = You will obey all my commandments perfectly

2. Covenant of Grace

“The covenant of grace indicates God's promise to save us even when we fail to keep the obligations imposed in creation.” – R. C. Sproul

- The “I will, you will” nature of the covenant of grace is as follows
 - God = I will declare you righteous based upon Christ’s works
 - Man = You will receive the promised inheritance because of Christ’s works

“wherein he freely offered unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life” – Paragraph 2

The transaction for the covenant of grace is between the Father and the Son.

- “It is founded in that eternal covenant transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect;” – Paragraph 3

Does the covenant of grace have any requirements (precepts / stipulations) from God to man?

- “requiring of them faith in him” – Paragraph 3
- “Faith is not a condition of salvation required of the sinner. Faith is a gift of grace resulting from the work of regeneration which precedes it. “Requiring of them faith” in no way means that faith is a work each man must in himself render. This, of course, would mean that justification depends not upon God, but upon the relative capacity of the individual.) “ – CBC’s not for this paragraph

Is faith a requirement for salvation?

- This question really comes down to the order of salvation (how a person is saved)
- If faith comes before our regeneration and justification, then yes: faith is a requirement for man to have in order to be saved.
- If faith is the resulting action from our regeneration and justification, then no, faith is a consequence of the Lord’s regenerating work in our lives.