

Amazing Grace: Intro to Reformed Theology

Week 9 – *Theology of Covenants*

Recap: TULIP

- Total Depravity
- Unconditional Election
- Limited Atonement
- Irresistible Grace
- Perseverance of the Saints

I. Reformed Theology is Covenant Theology

– “Covenants” is central to the storyline of the Bible and a singularly unifying theme for Reformed theology.

Defining Covenant: Covenants are contractual agreements between two parties. The covenants of the Bible are most like treaties between two nations and kingdoms – more precisely, we’re discussing a relationship between two people, like a **marriage covenant**

Representation is key in Scripture: All people are either represented by Adam in sin, or Christ in redemption.

II. Covenants Provide the Structure for the Entire Storyline of Scripture

1. The Covenant of Works
2. The Covenant of Grace
3. The Covenant of Redemption

The Covenant of Works

Westminster Confession of Faith 7.2 - The first covenant made with man was a **covenant of works**. In it life was promised to Adam and through him to his descendants, on the condition of perfect, personal obedience.

One condition: Gen. 2:17 - but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

Disobedience brings broken relationship with God, spiritual and physical death, expulsion from the Garden, cursed work, relationships, pain in childbirth, and a fallen sinful nature. And this is **not only for Adam, but all of his descendants**.

The Covenant of Grace

Westminster Confession of Faith 7.3 -

By his fall, man made himself incapable of life under [the covenant of works], and so the Lord made a second, the **covenant of grace**. In it he freely offers sinners life and salvation through Jesus Christ. In order to be saved he requires faith in Jesus and promises to give his Holy Spirit to all who are ordained to life so that they may be willing and able to believe.

— Gospel promise to Adam? (Gen. 3:15): This is the first promise of a savior: that there is a seed of the woman who would come to defeat the serpent.

Under the covenant of grace, all who trust in Christ by faith meet the necessary conditions of salvation, not because they have earned it by works, but because **Jesus has done everything necessary for us as a substitute**, and **he gives salvation to us as a gift through faith by the power of the Spirit.**

Kevin Deyoung - “**Faith** has been the condition (in the necessary sense) of covenant blessing from east of Eden to the new Jerusalem.”

When we understand this, we understand the entire storyline of the Bible is the progressive unveiling of this one, covenantal, grand narrative of God’s purpose to redeem all of his people, whether old or new testament, through Christ.

III. The Covenant of Grace throughout Scripture

Abraham (Gen. 17:4-8)

- This is the foundational promise in Scripture:
 - through Abraham all the nations of the earth would be blessed and through Abraham’s seed that God would bring about the salvation of the world.
 - Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness —
- Abraham is saved by faith alone.**

Moses (Ex. 2:24) — God is faithful in Moses’ time because he “remembered his covenant **with Abraham.**”

— When God gives the Law through Moses, this is a new covenant: if they had faith as Abraham did and remained obedient to God’s commandments and sacrifices, they would remain in the land that God would give them and he would dwell in their midst. If they were unfaithful, they would be removed from the land in judgment.

Under the Law, the nature of salvation did not change:

many have suggested that under the Law, salvation was according to obedience or by works. On the contrary, through the covenant of the Law, we are shown signs and shadows that point to Jesus all the more clearly.

- Passover: through the sacrifice of a spotless lamb, the angel of death passes over them.
- The Day of Atonement: a lamb is sacrificed for the sins of the people that year, pointing clearly to the Lamb of God who will take away their sins on the Cross

The Old Covenant all pointed to Christ: the sacrifices, the priests, the Temple, the prophets, and the kings — it all points to the saving work of God through Christ.

David (2 Sam. 7:12-14, 16)— This promise is a continuation of the covenant of grace and the promise to Abraham, now promising to establish an eternal kingdom by an eternal king who was a descendant of David.

— This points to the kingdom of God, which Christ came to establish (Phil. 2).

IV. What about us?

The Gospel of Jesus is the exact same promise that God made to Abraham (Gal. 3:5-8, 13-14, 16-18)

- “those of faith” are the “sons of Abraham”
- the Gospel was preached “beforehand to Abraham,” which is fulfilled in Gentiles being saved by faith.
- Christ “redeemed us from the curse of the law” so that “the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles”
- the promise to Abraham was “the promise of the Spirit through faith”
- Jesus is “the one seed” through whom all the promises are given

God fulfills all of the promises to Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, and David, all in Christ. The very same promises given to Abraham for eternal life is given to all of us in Christ.

The Covenant of Redemption

The first and ultimate covenant: The covenant God made with himself before the foundation of the world to glorify himself by redeeming fallen people, through God the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit, all according to grace.

– This eternal covenant secures every promise that follows it, which Paul discusses in Ephesians 1:3-14:

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known [to](#) us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Reflection Questions

1. David described the concept of covenant as being the unifying theme of Scripture and the unifying theme of Reformed theology. When you consider the idea of covenant as the plan of God for salvation from the beginning, how does that relate to the various aspects of TULIP that we have discussed the last few weeks?

2. How have you thought about covenants previously? Did you consider them to be a central idea to the scriptures, or were they secondary in your mind? How has your view of covenants changed after listening to the class?

3. Discuss the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. How are they different and similar? In what sense does Jesus fulfill the covenant of works for us?

4. The promise God makes to Abraham and his response in faith is perhaps the most important promise in all of Scripture. How does the promise God makes with Abraham drive the rest of the story?

How does salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, fulfill every part of the covenant promises?

5. The covenant of redemption, which was God's eternal agreement with himself to redeem us in Christ, is the foundation to everything else. How might this idea of an eternal plan to save you bring you confidence and change your life? How could this change the way you evangelize and serve others?