

In this section, we're going to discuss the meaning of covenant, find out what God says about it in His word, as well as begin to unpack how it applies to us today.

What is a covenant? It is a formal, solemn, and binding agreement or promise between two or more parties. There is typically a concrete reminder as a "sign" and an action that "seals" it. In modern times, a clear example is portrayed in the marriage covenant, with the sign being the wedding rings and the seal is the consummation. Now what does covenant have to do with God, the Bible, and all other areas of our lives?

It is vital to understand that covenant making and therefore covenant keeping are part of God's character. The triune God is relational, as we see the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit existing together through all of eternity past in perfect agreement on a singular goal: to redeem a people for Himself so that He might receive the honor and glory of which He is worthy. Would someone please read aloud the passage below?

Ephesians 1:4-7 [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 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.

Did you hear that? He chose us before the foundation of the world. He predestined us for adoption, according to the purpose of his will. That means He did it because He desired it. He loved and desired us and had a plan to adopt us - to adopt you and you and me - long before we confessed Him as Lord. Before you drew your first breath. Before Moses penned "In the beginning God." Before God said "Let there be light," He had already chosen to adopt you forever.

And we see His covenant making pattern repeated throughout Scripture, starting with Adam in the Garden. After the Fall, God makes a covenant that sets the stage to redeem His chosen people at the proper time. Will someone please read the verse below?

Genesis 3:15 [15] I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.

Eve had no children yet. Who was the offspring that would be at such odds with Satan himself? In hindsight, we know this to be Jesus who would come thousands of years later. He would be the one to crush the head of the serpent at the cost of his own life in order to pay the debt of sin that began when Eve and Adam took from the tree and to cover all of the sins of His chosen people for all time. The covenant that God made in this moment has a sign and seal, as well. Listen for the item and the action. Someone please read the verse below.

Genesis 3:21 [21] And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

What was the item or sign that God gave to them as a symbol of His redemption covenant? Garments of skins. Most scholars agree that these skins would have been made from sheep skin. So that's our clue as we move on to our other question: what was the action God took to seal this covenant of redemption? He took the life of an innocent, shedding its blood, to clothe sinners. But why did He do that? Weren't Adam and Eve supposed to die that day? Why didn't God just strike them dead, along with Satan, and start over again? Because that would not have been according to the purpose of His will. This is how we know that the Fall didn't force God's hand. It didn't cause Him to scramble for a Plan B. God's plan all along was to save sinners by His grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

God continues to repeat this covenant and even highlights it for us when calls it His "everlasting covenant" throughout the Old Testament with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. One writer called it "the scarlet thread" woven into the history of God's people and leading all the way to Jesus. New Testament writers referred to it as they pointed the first century church and new converts all over the world back to Him.

So how does this affect you and me today? Does it matter to us that God is a covenant making, covenant keeping God? Absolutely! For starters, it is our grounds for assurance of our own salvation. Could someone please read the verses below?

John 17:9-10,12 [9] I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. [10] All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them... [12] While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

God predestined us for adoption and put us in the trustworthy hands of Jesus. He keeps us and not one has been lost! What a gracious and faithful God we serve, and what a great reason to rejoice - that He keeps us in His family and will not lose any that belong to Him.

There's so many areas of life where this seed of thankfulness should take root. How about when we are tempted to despair as we glance at the news and hear about another natural disaster that claimed lives? Perhaps you have a loved one who is not living in a way that honors God and you grow weary of praying for their salvation. In my own life, I have wrestled with this very issue, as my grandmother loved and served the Lord for decades, boldly evangelizing everyone she came in contact with, but in her last years struggled with dementia. She couldn't remember Bible verses anymore, couldn't remember where she was, and on some days she asked how we could know if God and His Word were real. It was hard to know that her mind was deteriorating and that she was losing her memory and her ability to process information, but we had seen the fruit in her life. We were able to take hope in knowing she had been radically changed and greatly used by the Holy Spirit during her lifetime, and we knew we could trust

Jesus to hold her in those last years as He walked her into her eternal home with Him. There, she would see His face and remember once again with perfect clarity the One who gave Himself for her and had called her by name.

It's the great hope I have for my grandmother and it's the great hope I have for myself. God made a covenant to redeem a people for Himself, and that we would live forever with Him. As His covenant children, if we can trust Him with our eternal destination, then surely we can learn to trust Him during this short lifetime. One day at a time, trusting more than yesterday in His Word and His covenant to build His church.