

Claiming the Faith

Lesson #22

What is a Covenant?

****Resources Needed****

Covenant Theology

0:00 Welcoming Prayer: from John Calvin's *Catechism of the Church in Geneva*

My good God, Father, and Savior, grant me aid by your Holy Spirit to now work fruitfully in my vocation, which is from you, all in order to love you and the people around me rather than for my own gain and glory. Give me wisdom, judgment and prudence, and freedom from my besetting sins. Bring me under the rule of true humility. Let me accept with patience whatever amount of fruitfulness or difficulty in my work that you give me this day. And in all I do, help me to rest always in my Lord Jesus Christ and in his grace alone for my salvation and life Hear me, merciful Father, by our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

0:05 Key Concepts

Covenant

0:10 Key Scriptures

Genesis 17

1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, I am God Almighty[a]; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. 2 Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."

3 Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, 4 As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. 5 No longer will you be called Abram[b]; your name will be Abraham,[c] for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8 The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."

9 Then God said to Abraham, As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. 10 This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. 12 For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. 13 Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. 14 Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

Claiming the Faith

15 God also said to Abraham, As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. 16 I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."

17 Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" 18 And Abraham said to God, If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!"

19 Then God said, Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac.[d] I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. 20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. 21 But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year." 22 When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

23 On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him. 24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, 25 and his son Ishmael was thirteen; 26 Abraham and his son Ishmael were both circumcised on that very day. 27 And every male in Abraham's household, including those born in his household or bought from a foreigner, was circumcised with him.

0:15 Exposition

0:30 Discussion and Reflection

1. How would you describe the difference between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace to a friend?
2. What are the 'works that save us'? Who is responsible for these works?
3. What is the best part of living in a covenant relationship with God?

0:45 Concluding Remarks

Through God's own acts of grace, covenants have been established and renewed throughout the generations of the people of God. Beginning with Noah, through Abraham and Moses, until finally Jesus establishes the New Covenant in his blood, God offers the work of salvation for his people in return for their devotion and praise. The most basic way to think about our faith is this: a deal was made long ago to protect and save you; you only have to accept the terms of that deal for yourself, which turns out to be blessing upon blessing. Reformed Christians follow this covenant theology, as it is in keeping with biblical standards throughout the history of our faith.

0:50 Sending Prayer: from John Calvin's *Catechism of the Church in Geneva*

Claiming the Faith

Lord God, I give you thanks for all the benefits and gifts you constantly shower on me. Thank you for sustaining my physical life through food and shelter; for giving me new life through the gospel; and for the certainty of the best and perfect life, which is yet to come. In light of all these blessings, I now ask that you would not allow my affections to be tangled in inordinate desires for the things of this world, but let me always set my heart on things above, where Christ, who is my life, is seated at your right hand. Hear me, merciful Father, by our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Notes