

Covenant: I will be your God, and you will be my people

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- [0 : 0 0] Lord, thank you so much for how good and kind you are. Lord, thank you so much for an opportunity this summer to go through the various ways, the benefits, the things that were accomplished with Christ on the cross, his death and resurrection.
- So Lord, open our eyes to your truth. Open our hearts to receive. Lord, help us to not have a posture of pride, but a posture of humility. We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.
- You may be seated. This might be one of the worst ways I've ever opened up a sermon, but I'm going to go for it. These are my Crocs, okay?
- These things I've had since I was 18. I'm now 34. I got these when Crocs first came out. These are Crocs 1.0 right here, okay? They were supposed to be my dad's, but they're too big for him.
- I've taken these around the world. They've been melted. Many a campfire. Zero tread. The little strap things, which are useless on Crocs, in my opinion.
- [1 : 0 8] They fell off a long time ago. They're relegated to slippers around the house. I will never get rid of these. Ever. I might be buried in them. I don't know.
- But I really... These are my Crocs. It's like a Linus blanket. Christine hates them. She hates them so much. They're brown. They're ugly. I've had them for too long. She wants me to get rid of them.
- My grandmother even bought me a new pair a few Christmases ago. I didn't let on. I said, oh, thank you so much. They're wonderful. Oh, I'm going to wear these so often. I haven't worn them at all. I don't know if we still have them.
- I won't get rid of them because my wonderful grandmother gave them to me. But anyways, that silly illustration... By the way, yeah, that silly illustration, I'm going to totally try to say something a bit more deeper from it.
- But sometimes, sometimes when we have something that feels right but that is in desperate need of replacing, we often don't do it because it feels comfortable to us.
- [2 : 1 5] This actually shows something very... This croc situation shows something very interesting about human nature. Namely, that when we're comfortable, when even there's a false sense of comfort, we have a complete...
- We can have a complete unwillingness to change. By the way, these are amoral. Whether I keep the crocs or not, it's completely amoral. But oftentimes, we have things that we aren't willing to let go that are completely immoral.
- Sometimes the things that we are comfortable with not dealing with are actually pretty destructive for ourselves and for others. You can see where the crocs analogy totally breaks down.

But if you consider the immoral things that we hold on to... And I'm not talking about big, grandiose types of sins. I'm talking about hidden things. How sometimes we can hide how we manipulate people.

We apply soft pressure in certain ways. And it's a form of manipulation. It's not good. But we rationalize or maybe we cheat. We fudge numbers here and there.

[3 : 32] Whether it be taxes or otherwise. Maybe we are just constantly worrying. Or maybe there's a hidden habitual sin around looking at inappropriate images.

Maybe it's functional alcoholism. They call it functional because you can hide it. You can still function. There's a whole lot of sins that are somewhat easy to hide. I mean, you can insert something else if I didn't cover it with that short list.

That list is by no means exhaustive. Exhaustive. But why do we hide such things? Even though they're destructive to ourselves, to others. And more importantly, they're an affront to God.

Why do we do these things? Being confronted with change is really difficult. Change means we need to confront something within ourselves.

A behavior, whatever it may be. And if we do it, we run risk of people finding out who we truly are. We run risk of breaking relationship with people.

[4 : 38] We run risk of being embarrassed, deeply hurt. So we hide things because it's more comfortable to hide things. It's less difficult to endure the pain of having our issues exposed.

So what do we do to hide them? Continue. We rationalize. It's really not that bad. It's not really a sin. Everybody does it.

Or we say, what I do isn't as bad as this person or that person. You know, the whole blowing out somebody's candle to make yours shine brighter. We have all these different ways of downplaying our brokenness.

Even when dealing with it would actually, in the long run, bring great joy and health. But there is this fear of broken relationship and embarrassment.

So we're continuing on in our summer series. It's called The Crucified Messiah. Last week, George looked at 1 Corinthians 15 and explained how Jesus is our substitute.

[5 : 46] This week, we'll look at two texts. The text in Luke 22 and also the text in 1 Peter 1. And we'll see through the crucifixion of Jesus how he, Jesus, inaugurates a new covenant.

A new covenant. And this is the thing. To truly understand the grander story arc of the entire Bible. And to truly understand the deep significance of what Christ accomplished on the cross.

We must first understand this idea of covenant. What it is. Why God makes the covenant.

And by the way, this covenant that we'll look into. It seems like it might be a bit foreign to us. That it worked for those people back then and not for us here and now.

But like I mentioned, to understand the Bible. And especially to understand God in his goodness and how he relates to mankind. We must understand this idea of covenant.

[6 : 55] So, very simply, we're going to look at a few different things. What is a covenant? I don't want to assume that everybody knows. What is a covenant? What was the old covenant?

Remember Jesus in Luke 22. He says that this was the new covenant that he was inaugurating. Well, if it's a new covenant, that means there must have been an old covenant. What is the old covenant?

And of course, what is this new covenant? And the fourth thing, why is blood the pinnacle of it all? In both of our texts, blood was mentioned.

Why is blood the pinnacle of it all? Okay. What is a covenant? Covenant. So, the biblical understanding of covenants are on one hand like a legal binding agreement.

We had to see our lawyer for our house purchase. We just moved. And we had a covenant with the bank. Sounds really great.

[8 : 00] But we had to make a covenant with the bank. It's this language used. It's a legally binding agreement. But the biblical definition is more than our understanding of a legally binding agreement.

It is a legally binding agreement, but it is deeply intimate and personal. It speaks of love and mutual enjoyment. And it's no wonder that time and time again in the Bible, when God is referring to his covenant relationship with his people, he speaks of it in the language of marriage.

I tried to piece together a bit more of an explanation, but actually, Tim Keller has a fantastic explanation of this in his book, *Meaning of Marriage*, where he describes a covenant. And he says this, I'm quoting, What then is a covenant?

It is a relationship far more intimate and personal than a merely legal business relationship. Yet, at the same time, it is far more durable, binding, and unconditional than one based on mere feeling and affection.

A covenant relationship is a stunning blend of law and love. Love needs a framework of binding obligation to make it fully what it should be.

[9 : 21] A covenant relationship is not just intimate despite being legal. It is a relationship that is more intimate because it is legal. This blending of law and love.

The biblical understanding of a covenant. And there have been many covenants in the Old Testament, in the Bible, There's the one God made with Abraham, the one God made with Noah, also with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai after the Exodus.

However, a better way to understand covenant, because if there's multiple ones, which one is Jesus referring to? A better way to understand the biblical understanding of a covenant is from Exodus 6, where God declares to his covenant people, I will be your God and you will be my people.

I will be your God and you will be my people. Whenever this declaration is made by God to his covenant people, it comes after God delivers his people from some type of calamity or evil or some foreign thing.

So if Noah, he saves him from the flood. For Abraham, he brings him out of a foreign land. For the people of Israel, he brings him out of Egyptian slavery.

[10 : 45] And God, he declares, I will be your God and you will be my people. So what then is this old covenant? So if that's an understanding of covenant, what is the old covenant then?

Because again, like I mentioned, many different covenants are made with different people or different people groups. Both of our texts have in mind the specific covenant that God made with his people, Israel, when he rescued them out of Egyptian slavery.

So Luke 22, Jesus, celebrating the Passover feast, which commemorates God rescuing Israel from Egyptian slavery, takes the cup after the meal.

Traditionally, the cup that is the cup of remembrance that signifies the slaying of the lamb without blemish, that its blood was smeared on the doorpost.

You can read about this in the Exodus story, whereby the 10th plague was supposed to kill the firstborn, but when death saw the blood smeared on the doorpost, it passed over the inhabitants of that house.

[11 : 56] That's how we get the term Passover. So Jesus here has this in mind when he takes the cup and he says, this is my blood, this is the inauguration of the new covenant, this is what Jesus has in mind.

Likewise, in 1 Peter 1, Peter talks about the precious blood of Christ like that of a lamb without blemish or spot, which is the exact language used to describe the lamb that was to be slain in the Exodus story.

In both cases, this new covenant is looking back at the Exodus. Nothing was wrong with the old covenant.

This is really important because sometimes as Christians or the Christian church, we've looked back at the Old Testament or the old covenant and said, it's no good or we've moved on, but the old covenant is actually very good.

It's very good. The Exodus was a very wonderful and glorious thing. The thing though, it's that it was not God's end game. It saved Israel, but not the whole world.

[13 : 11] It rescued Israel from earthly slavery and death, but didn't solve the problem of eternal slavery and death. It seemed that the Exodus, as wonderful as it was, and it was wonderful.

If you've ever had a chance to participate in a Passover Seder, the dinner is called the Seder. It is a very, very, it's a wonderful thing. And it is indeed wonderful, but it points to something bigger and more comprehensive.

So here's a bit of a good analogy. I think it's a good analogy. So if you picture yourself at the Bible house, those of you that know the Bible house, if you don't, it's okay.

Across the street, there's a big open pit, like an undeveloped plot. And it has wood paneled, like, I don't know, it's like a wood paneling to keep people out.

But also, it's acted as a bit of a mural for the last few years. There's beautiful murals that go on it. Anyways, this last week, there's a new mural being put up.

[14 : 18] And I didn't get to see the finished product. It looked really good. There were four or five artists there. And I noticed that all of them were painting specific panels, looking at a postcard of what the panel would look like after it was done.

The design, the colors, everything. And from that small postcard, they were painting this big panel. Now, the postcard itself, I'm sure it was beautiful.

Not all the colors. It would look like a miniature version of what the real thing was. But the postcard wasn't the end in itself. It was the lesser thing that pointed to the greater thing.

And this is this idea of the old covenant, of the exodus. It is something that is wonderful and glorious. But again, we understand it as pointing to something greater, eternal.

Something that will last forever, stand the test of time, will satisfy everything. The lesser points to the greater. We actually see this principle throughout the Bible.

[15 : 23] It's actually helpful when we read the Bible. There's aspects in the Old Testament that are these lesser things. Again, not bad or not in some kind of way broken.

But the purpose of them was always to point to something bigger and greater. And this is what exactly what we see the exodus from.

Or what the exodus is. That it is this rescue from danger and death for a specific group. But it is pointing to that time when God will rescue not just Israel, but all people.

So what is this New Testament? Or this New Covenant, rather? So Jesus, obviously, we talked about it. He inaugurates the New Covenant. We've established what a covenant is. What the Old Covenant was.

But what is this New Covenant? In the Old Testament, there are lots of implicit mentions of what this New Covenant will be like.

[16 : 28] But from all the stuff that I've read, there's only one instance where it's in the Old Testament. There's an explicit mention of the New Covenant. And it's in Jeremiah 31, 31 to 34.

I'm going to read it. If you want to turn there, great. But I'm just going to read it off the page here. It says this. Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

Not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. Interesting. The New Covenant tied to the land of Egypt.

The exodus. My covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. Again, marital imagery. Verse 33.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my law within them and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God and they shall be my people.

[17 : 34] It's a wonderful refrain that we see with covenantal language. I will be their God and they will be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, Know the Lord.

For they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sins no more.

At the heart of the new covenant is a relationship with the living God. That beautiful relationship that is this blend of law and love.

Commitment and deep, deep, deep friendship. But notice in verse 34, God says, For they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord.

And he doesn't stop there. Because this relationship, this covenantal relationship with God, it's coupled with what? For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sins no more.

[18 : 48] Being in relationship with God is only possible when our sins are forgiven. When our iniquities are taken away. The new covenant will never fade.

It will never get old. It will never become obsolete. Why? Because unlike the first covenant, the old covenant, where death passed over the Israelites because of the blood of a lamb that was slain and had its blood smeared on the horizontal and vertical doorpost beams, this new covenant has a lamb of God who was slain.

His blood was smeared on the cross at Calvary. Beams that were both vertical and horizontal. And it was a sacrifice once and for all to take away all the sins of all people.

So this new covenant will never be obsolete. And what does it result in? People from afar, not the Israelites only, but people from afar, from all over the earth, from all time going forth from that time, would be in covenantal relationship with God because he took away their sins.

Because the Passover lamb, the true, the greater Passover lamb, was slain for you and for me. This is what Jesus is saying when he hoists the cup at the Last Supper.

[20 : 23] The richness of what we're seeing, it's wonderful. But I said, why is blood at the center of all this? We, for me, it seems a bit barbaric if I'm going to, blood, why blood?

Why does there have to be the spilling of blood? If you've been going to church your whole life and this doesn't kind of, I don't know, make you feel uneasy, that's totally okay. But if you're to put yourself in secular shoes and maybe you are more secular than you think, the reality is all of us are fish swimming in a secular sea.

We are people walking around breathing secular air. Blood. Both texts talk of blood. In Leviticus 17, God is talking about atonement and he talks about the only way that atonement will happen is if there's the shedding of blood.

And it's this image of justice being accomplished or justice being realized. And God in his purity and holiness cannot be in relationship with impure and unholy things, us included.

No matter how hard we deny it or mask it, we have failed and sinned against God. And the thing is, even though we know the doctrine of the Bible, if you call yourself a Christian, you're familiar with it, I bet you almost everybody here struggles with the idea that they're not, you know, deep down just a really good person.

[22 : 03] I think of myself like I'm a good person. And to be honest, I probably flatter myself a bit too much. And maybe you flatter yourself a bit too much.

But the reality is, the scriptures say that we are bent. That we have a propensity to hide our sins. And going back to what I originally talked about, we all too often don't want to deal with the issues that come up in our life because it's too uncomfortable, because we run the risk of breaking relationship with others.

Or people looking down their nose at us. Or feeling that we might be embarrassed. And I would say simply that I think that speaks actually to us being made to enjoy a covenantal relationship with God.

That the very idea of being ostracized, it makes our skin crawl because we were never meant to be ostracized.

Not from God or people. And yet we are because of sin. So what do we do? We don't deal with the root problem. We put a band-aid on a festering wound and say there's no festering wound. I don't know.

[23 : 19] Do you see a festering wound? Meanwhile, gangrene is going up, you know, the leg. I think the way we treat sin. So God in his justice requires that justice is realized.

But if we had to pay the penalty for our own sin, we would be decimated. So God provides a lamb and he provides a whole sacrificial system that was never supposed to fix the problem but only point to the lamb of God because God, for us to be in relationship with him, we'd have to have our sins counted against us no more.

So what does he do? He makes a means for us to have our sins taken away because our sins were laid on Jesus. He pays the penalty for our sins.

He is the Passover lamb so that death passes over us. Not just one instance or two instances but forever, for all time. God desires and has made us and desires made us for a covenantal relationship and desires this covenantal relationship with us but then provides the means by which we can enter into this covenantal relationship with him.

And this is the new covenant. It will never grow obsolete. It is a wonderful, beautiful thing. And listen, my friends, if you don't know what this new covenant is, I would encourage you, today is a wonderful time to, a wonderful day to put your faith and hope and trust in Christ.

[25 : 00] Remember what it says in Jeremiah. This is what it says, for they all shall know me from the least to the greatest.

It does not matter what you have done if you are the least. And by the way, it doesn't matter what you have done if you are the greatest. Because the offer is extended to all. Whether your sins are mighty or they are not, you are bent and broken and God has made a way for you to enter into this covenant relationship with him.

So today is a wonderful day to enter into that through Jesus Christ. Lastly, I will just simply say that it is not simply that we enter into this covenant relationship with God and that's kind of it.

We enjoy all the benefits. There is responsibility too. We can be sure that if we are saved, we are truly saved and that God will provide the way, the means and the strength to endure.

But know that we are now in relationship with God and we are to live in a way that is befitting of being in a relationship with God.

[26 : 16] It doesn't mean being perfect but it means confessing our sins when they come up. Being real about our sins. Not hiding them. We say something Sunday after Sunday that we, when we pray to God that we should not dissemble nor cloak our sins before Almighty God as if we could.

but we grow in Him and that's why we do this together as people. We confess our sins to one another and pray why? That we may be healed, that we may grow.

So I will just say to you if you are in a covenant relationship with God know that it comes with responsibilities to walk in His ways, to confess your sins and to receive those sweet words from Christ that your sins are counted against you no more.

this is what is promised to us by Jesus Himself in the new covenant. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for your goodness and kindness to us.

Thank you that your perfect justice and your perfect mercy have met in the cross, at the cross. That Jesus is our Passover Lamb. That you have made a way for us to live the way you created us to be in covenant, relationship with you.

[27 : 37] Lord, help those who might not be in that relationship with you that you would draw them to yourself this morning and for us that have confessed our faith, that trust in you, that we will walk in a way that's befitting of this relationship with you.

That we will confess our sins, that we will love you, that we will love our neighbor, and that we will grow. Not to be perfect, but that we will grow by the power of your Holy Spirit.

Lord, bless us today. Bless us as we go into our week. Be with us. Strengthen us. We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.