

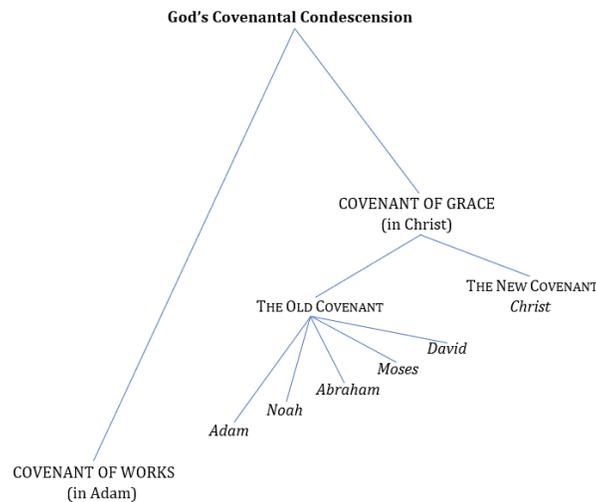
Covenant: How the Bible Hangs Together

Resurrection OPC | Spring 2020

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Week 2: The Covenant of Works, Part 1

- Review: What Is a Covenant?
 - “A relationship of ‘oaths and bonds’” involving “mutual, though not necessarily equal, commitments.”¹
 - “An enduring agreement which defines a relationship between two parties involving a solemn, binding obligation(s) specified on the part of at least one of the parties toward the other, made by oath under threat of divine curse, and ratified by a visual ritual.”²
 - “A relationship that God establishes with us and guarantees by His word.”³
 - “A stunning blend of both law and love.... A relationship much more intimate and loving than a mere legal contract could create, yet one more enduring and binding than personal affection alone could make. It is a bond of love made more intimate and solid because it is legal.”⁴
 - “A bond in blood sovereignly administered”⁵
 - “Bond” = binding relationship
 - Binding oaths
 - Symbolic actions (various: gifts, memorials, meals, sprinkling blood, sacrifices, passing under a rod, dividing animals)
 - “In blood” = “life-and-death bond”
 - “Cutting” covenants: Jeremiah 34:18-20
 - Blood sacrifice
 - “Sovereignly administered” = initiated and/or enforced by God
- God Relates to His People *Covenantally*
 - Westminster Confession of Faith 7.1: *The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.*
 - Lane Tipton: “In his covenantal kingdom, God seeks to commune with a holy people in a holy realm, advancing them beyond probation through the obedience of a federal head.”⁶



¹ Michael Horton, *Introducing Covenant Theology*, 10.

² Paraphrase of definition by Daniel C. Lane, “The Meaning and Use of the Old Testament Term for ‘Covenant,’” in Gentry & Wellum, 132.

³ The First Catechism, Q. 24, Great Commission Publications

⁴ Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, 104.

⁵ O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 4ff.

⁶ This version of Tipton’s statement quoted from the OPC’s “Report of the Committee to Study Republication,” Glossary, <https://opc.org/GA/republication.html>.

- Covenantal Aspects of Creation
 - Aspects of “A bond in blood sovereignly administered”? (Robertson)
 - A Relationship
Genesis 1:26-27—The image of God
 - A Sovereignly Administered Relationship
Genesis 1:28—“And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion.’ (Imperatives!)
 - A Binding Relationship
 - Binding Promise
Genesis 1:29-30—“And God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’ And it was so.”
 - Binding Command
Genesis 2:16-17a—“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.”
 - A Life-and-death Relationship
 - Death: *Genesis 2:17b—“for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*
 - Life: *Genesis 2:9b—“The tree of life was in the midst of the garden.”*
 - Sacramental signs/tokens—The two trees
 - “General and focal aspects”⁷
 - General aspects
 - “Sabbath” (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:11)
 - “Marriage” (Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:4-6)
 - “Labor” (Genesis 1:28; 2:5, 15)
 - Focal aspect
 - The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil
 - Man’s “probation”/“testing”
 - Aspects of God’s “covenantal kingdom” (Tipton)
 - A holy people in a holy realm
Genesis 1:31-2:3—A holy day (Sabbath)
Genesis 2:8, 15—A holy place (Eden) and a holy person (Adam)
 - Probation, and the prospect beyond
Genesis 3:22b-24—“Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—’ therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.”
 - Required obedience of a “federal head”
Romans 5:15b, 18a, 19a—“Many died through one man’s trespass.... One trespass led to condemnation for all men By the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners....”
 - Eden imagery in the New Heavens and the New Earth (*Revelation 2:7b; 22:2b, 14*)

⁷ Robertson, 67ff. Also all subpoints.

- “The Covenant of Works”
 - Other names: Covenant of Creation; Covenant of Life (Shorter Catechism—see supplement page)
 - An Ancient Doctrine
 - Augustine, *City of God*: “For the first covenant, which was made with the first man, is just this: “In the day ye eat thereof, ye shall surely die.” All “have all broken God’s covenant in that one in whom all have sinned.”⁸
 - A Biblical Doctrine
 - Romans 5:18-19: “Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”
 - A Reformation Doctrine
 - WSC Q. 12. What special act of providence did God exercise toward man in the estate wherein he was created? A. When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death.
 - Q. 13. Did our first parents continue in the estate wherein they were created? A. Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God.
 - Q. 16. Did all mankind fall in Adam’s first transgression? A. The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.
 - WCF 7.2: The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.
 - 3. Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein he freely offereth 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.
 - Christ Fulfilled the Covenant of Works
 - Is the Covenant of Works Still in Effect?

⁸ Augustine, *City of God*, 16.27, quoted in Michael Horton, *Introducing Covenant Theology*, 85.

The Westminster Standards on the Covenant of Works

Westminster Shorter Catechism Q. 12-20

Q. 12. *What special act of providence did God exercise toward man in the estate wherein he was created?*

A. When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death.

Q. 13. *Did our first parents continue in the estate wherein they were created?*

A. Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God.

Q. 14. *What is sin?*

A. Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.

Q. 15. *What was the sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created?*

A. The sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created was their eating the forbidden fruit.

Q. 16. *Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?*

A. The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.

Q. 17. *Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?*

A. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

Q. 18. *Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?*

A. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

Q. 19. *What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?*

A. All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

Q. 20. *Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?*

A. God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a redeemer.

Westminster Confession of Faith 7.1-3

Of God's Covenant with Man

1. The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.
2. The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.
3. Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein he freely offereth 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.

Westminster Confession of Faith 19.1-2, 6

Of the Law of God

1. God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which he bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience, promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it.
2. This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables: the first four commandments containing our duty towards God; and the other six, our duty to man.

6. Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives; so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin, together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of his obedience. It is likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin: and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve; and what afflictions, in this life, they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law. The promises of it, in like manner, show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof: although not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works. So as, a man's doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourageth to the one, and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law; and, not under grace.

Westminster Larger Catechism Q. 20-23, 25-27, 30

Q. 20. What was the providence of God toward man in the estate in which he was created?

A. The providence of God toward man in the estate in which he was created, was the placing him in paradise, appointing him to dress it, giving him liberty to eat of the fruit of the earth; putting the creatures under his dominion, and ordaining marriage for his help; affording him communion with himself; instituting the Sabbath; entering into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience, of which the tree of life was a pledge; and forbidding to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death.

Q. 21. Did man continue in that estate wherein God at first created him?

A. Our first parents being left to the freedom of their own will, through the temptation of Satan, transgressed the commandment of God in eating the forbidden fruit; and thereby fell from the estate of innocency wherein they were created.

Q. 22. Did all mankind fall in that first transgression?

A. The covenant being made with Adam as a public person, not for himself only, but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in that first transgression.

Q. 23. Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?

A. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

Q. 25. Wherein consisteth the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?

A. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consisteth in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually; which is commonly called original sin, and from which do proceed all actual transgressions.

Q. 26. How is original sin conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity?

A. Original sin is conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity by natural generation, so as all that proceed from them in that way are conceived and born in sin.

Q. 27. What misery did the fall bring upon mankind?

A. The fall brought upon mankind the loss of communion with God, his displeasure and curse; so as we are by nature children of wrath, bond slaves to Satan, and justly liable to all punishments in this world, and that which is to come.

Q. 30. Doth God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?

A. God doth not leave all men to perish in the estate of sin and misery, into which they fell by the breach of the first covenant, commonly called the covenant of works; but of his mere love and mercy delivereth his elect out of it, and bringeth them into an estate of salvation by the second covenant, commonly called the covenant of grace.