



# THE COVENANT OF GRACE

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# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TRUTH OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE

- The covenant is the goal and purpose of all God's work of salvation in us. When God saves us, He brings us into His covenant.
- The covenant defines your relationship to God as a believer – friendship and fellowship.
- The covenant is the basis for Reformed churches and believers to baptize their infant children.
- (The covenant is a significant part of the history of the Protestant Reformed Churches – 1950s)

# OVERVIEW

1. What Is The Covenant of Grace (its Nature)
2. What Are The Characteristics Of The Covenant
3. Whom Does God Include In His Covenant

# 1. WHAT IS THE COVENANT OF GRACE?

- *The covenant is the gracious relationship of living fellowship and friendship between God and His people in Christ, wherein He is their God and they are His people.*
- *Ang tipan ay isang buhay na relasyong batay sa biyaya sa pagitan ng Diyos at sa Kanyang mga hinirang kay Cristo, kung saan Siya ang kanilang Diyos at sila naman ang Kanyang bayan.*

# IS THERE BIBLICAL PROOF THAT THE COVENANT IS FRIENDSHIP?

1. God and His people are “FRIENDS.”
  - *Isaiah 41:8, James 2:23.*
2. God and His people “WALK” together.
  - *Genesis 5:24, Genesis 6:9.*
3. God and His people share “SECRETS.”
  - *Genesis 18:17, Psalm 25:14.*
4. God and His people are “WITH” each other and God and His people “DWELL” (live) together.
  - *Matthew 1:23, Revelation 21:3.*

# DOES THE BIBLE INDICATE IN ANY OTHER WAYS THAT THE COVENANT IS FRIENDSHIP?

1. The picture of the Tabernacle/Temple in the O.T.
  - God and His people living together under one roof, living together in the same building.
2. The picture of a Home/Family
  - The Triune God is our Father. We are His children, adopted by grace into His family.
3. The picture of Marriage
  - The Triune God is our husband. We, the church are the bride of God in Christ.

# WHAT IS THE REASON FOR GOD'S COVENANT OF FRIENDSHIP?

## ■ Answer: THE TRINITY

- God is Triune. As three Persons, God lives a covenant life of friendship and fellowship in Himself.
- Because of this, God could and did conceive (think of) having a covenant relationship with others.
- God created the world and mankind in order to have fellowship and friendship with His creatures.

## ■ God's Covenant Relationship with His people is patterned after the covenant life of God.

- God shares His covenant life with us (the elect).
- He takes us into His covenant – into His family.
- Ezekiel 16:1-14, Ephesians 3:14-15, Heb. 2:11-12.

**EZEKIEL 16:1-4** describes God's gracious work of saving and then marrying the church.

**EPHESIANS 3:14-15** - *"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,"*

**HEBREWS 2:11-12** - *"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."*



# WHAT IS THE BASIS FOR GOD'S COVENANT OF FRIENDSHIP?

- How is God able to fellowship with creatures of dust, and with creatures who are sinners?
- God cannot fellowship with sinners as sinners
  - Isaiah 59:2 – our sins separate us from God.
  - We are unworthy of God. We can merit nothing.
  - Basis is not in man – not in anything we are, or do.
- Only BASIS is CHRIST and His work on the cross.
  - He reconciled us to God by putting away our sins.
  - He thus restored us to God's favor and fellowship.
  - Jeremiah 31:33, Romans 5:1, 9-10, Galatians 3:29.

***Jeremiah 31:33 – “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”***

***Romans 5:1 – “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:”***

***Romans 5:9-10 - “Much more then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”***

***Galatians 3:29 – “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”***

# “THE NATURE OF THE COVENANT”

Rev. R. Hanko, *Doctrine According To Godliness*

- *What is the covenant? Scripture speaks of it often, and it is necessary, therefore, to know what Scripture is talking about.*
- *Most would define a covenant by speaking of a contract or an agreement. They say that God’s covenant with man is of the same sort as a human covenant, such as that between Abraham and Abimelech (Genesis 21:27–32), with various duties, promises, and penalties.*
- *Such a covenant is made by two parties or sides, depends to some extent on each, and can be broken by either. Adam, so it is said, was the original covenant-making party with God, but now that Adam has fallen, Christ has replaced him.*

- *But God's covenant with men is not that kind of covenant. Man can never be a party with the living God in making such a covenant. Because God is God and man is a creature, owing his very existence to God, there are no duties man can assume by way of a special agreement besides those duties that he is already obliged to perform. The creature cannot make a contract with the Creator.*
- *Nor can man ever merit anything with God in such a covenant by his own works or by fulfilling certain conditions. When he has done all that is required of him, he is still an unprofitable servant (Luke 17:10). Certainly man could not merit eternal life in the covenant, as some teach. Eternal life comes only through Him who is the Lord from heaven, our Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15:47-48).*
- *Scripture teaches that the covenant is not an agreement, but a sovereignly established bond or relationship between God and His people in Christ.*

- *This is clear from the often-repeated words of Scripture through which God reveals His covenant: “I will be thy God, and ye shall be My people” (Genesis 17:8; Exodus 6:7; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Revelation 21:3). These words, found in slightly different forms, become a kind of covenant formula throughout Scripture. They show us that a particular passage is speaking of the covenant.*
- *Other passages actually describe such a relationship between God and His people. Genesis 5:22–24, Genesis 6:9, Genesis 18:17–19, Psalm 25:14, John 17:23, James 2:23, and 1 John 1:3 are a few such passages. All of them show that God’s covenant is the blessed relationship of fellowship and friendship that He establishes with them by grace alone and through the saving work of Jesus Christ.*
- *This relationship is sovereignly established by God: He makes and guarantees the relationship. In no sense does the covenant depend on man as a second party, but it is wholly the work of God and all of grace, that is, of undeserved favor. The covenant is always a covenant of grace.*

# OVERVIEW

1. What Is The Covenant of Grace (its Nature)
2. What Are The Characteristics Of The Covenant
3. Whom Does God Include In His Covenant

## 2. WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE?

God's  
Covenant  
of Grace  
is:

- i. UNILATERAL
- ii. UNCONDITIONAL
- iii. PARTICULAR

# i. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT THE COVENANT IS: UNILATERAL?

- It is one-sided. It is not two-sided.
  - It is not bilateral. It is not an agreement.
  - But it is in one direction – from God to us.
- UNILATERAL means God is SOVEREIGN in the covenant.
  - God planned it – He did not consult man.
  - God establishes it – man is passive in this.
  - God maintains it – no cooperation with man.
- Scriptures:
  - Genesis 15:9-18 – Abram was in a deep sleep (passive).
  - Genesis 17:7 – *“And I will establish my covenant ...”*
  - Ps. 89:3 – *“I have made a covenant with my chosen ...”*
  - Ps. 89:34 – *“My covenant will I not break, ...”*



# GENESIS 15:9-18

*<sup>9</sup> And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. <sup>10</sup> And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. ... <sup>12</sup> And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. ... <sup>17</sup> And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. <sup>18</sup> In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:”*

## ii. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT THE COVENANT IS UNCONDITIONAL?

- PRCA History in 1953. Two statements:
  1. *“God promises every one of you that if you believe you will be saved.”*
  2. *“Our act of conversion is a prerequisite for entering the kingdom of God.”*
- UNCONDITIONAL
  - Man does not do something to get into the covenant.
  - Man does not do something to stay in the covenant.
  - NB: Man’s faith is not a condition – Ephesians 2:8.
- That’s why it is called a Covenant OF GRACE.
  - “Grace” means the undeserved favor of God.
  - “Grace” means “no works.” Romans 11:6.

# DOES MAN DO SOMETHING IN THE COVENANT? – Answer by Prof. H. Hanko

*In the new covenant, we do not have to do anything – either to enter that covenant or to remain in it. We cannot do anything and we need not do anything. Bold and crass is the man who thinks that he must and can fulfil conditions to be a part of God's covenant. How thankful we must be and are when we realize that Christ has done it all. By grace we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is all the gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9). Does that mean that we never do anything at all? No, of course not. Part of that covenant is that the law, which we can never keep, is written upon our hearts by the Spirit. Since the law is written upon our hearts, we do keep it. We must! We can! And we do! But it is not of us; it is the work of the Spirit who works in us to will to keep those commands and to keep them (Phil. 2:13). And if we sin, our sins are remembered no more and our iniquities are pardoned.*

### iii. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT THE COVENANT IS PARTICULAR?

- With whom is the covenant established?
- Not with all men.
  - Not even with all who are in the church.
  - Not even with all who are baptized.
- Only with the ELECT. The truth of election governs the covenant of grace.
- Scriptures:
  - 1 Peter 2:9 – those who are “chosen.”
  - John 17:9 – those given to Jesus Christ.
  - Romans 2:29 – the spiritual children of Abraham.

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# 3. WHOM DOES GOD INCLUDE IN HIS COVENANT?

## ■ The ELECT

- God does not establish His covenant with all men – not even with all church members. (Note: Psalm 5:5, Psalm 11:5, Romans 9:13)
- God establishes His covenant only with His elect.
  - Only the elect are friends of God.
  - God's covenant is PARTICULAR.

## ■ Proofs:

- Re Abraham: Gen. 17:7, Exod. 3:6, James 2:23.
- Re the Elect: Rom. 9:7-8, Gal. 3:16, Gal. 3:29.

- Gal. 3 teaches the Covenant is established with Christ, and thus with all Who are His – and only with them.

**Romans 9:7-8 – *Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.***

**Galatians 3:16 – *“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”***

**Galatians 3:29 – *“And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”***

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT CHILDREN IN GOD'S COVENANT?

- Remember, the covenant means that God Himself (as the Triune God) is a family God.
- God reflects this when He establishes His covenant with mankind (with the elect).
  - He establishes His covenant with families – with believers and their seed/children.
  - God promises to save and be the Friend of believers and also of their seed/children.
- GEN. 17:7, GEN. 6:18, ACTS 2:39, MK. 10:13-16.



**GENESIS 17:7** – *“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.”*

**GENESIS 6:18** – *“But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.”*

**ACTS 2:39** – *“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”*

**MARK 10:13-16** – *“And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.”*

# WHAT DOES THIS IMPLY REGARDING BAPTISM?

- **Baptism is a sign of cleansing from sin.**
  - Through sin being removed the way is open for friendship & fellowship with God. Isa. 59:2.
  - Baptism is therefore a sign that points to the fact that we are included in God's covenant.
- **Reformed churches believe all who are in God's covenant (both adults and children) should receive Baptism (sign of cleansing from sin).**
  - It is intended for all who are in the covenant.
  - It should be applied to all who in the covenant.

# WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

## 1. ADULT BELIEVERS

- When they confess their sins and their faith in Christ.
- Only if they are not already baptized. (Don't re-baptize.)
- Scriptures: Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38.

## 2. CHILDREN OF BELIEVERS – WHY?

- 1) God's covenant includes children – Gen. 17:7, Acts 2:39
- 2) Circumcision was replaced by Baptism – Col. 2:11-13
- 3) Christ blessed little children (infants) – Mark 10:13-16
- 4) Children of believers are usually saved as children – Psalm 22:10, Luke 1:15, Matthew 21:15
- 5) Household baptisms were done in the New Testament – Acts 10:2, 47-48, Acts 16:15, Acts 16:32-34, Acts 18:8

**MARK 16:16 – “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”**

**ACTS 2:38 – “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”**

**GENESIS 17:7** – *“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.”*

**ACTS 2:39** – *“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”*

**COLOSSIANS 2:11-13 – “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;”**

**MARK 10:13-16** – *“And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.”*



**PSALM 22:10** – *“I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.”*

**LUKE 1:15** – *“For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.”*

**MATTHEW 21:15** – *“And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased,”*

**ACTS 10:2, 47-48** – *“A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. ... Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.”*

**ACTS 16:15** – *“And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”*

**ACTS 16:32-34** - *“And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”*

**ACTS 18:8** - *“And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.”*

# LORD'S DAY 27 OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

- Question 74. Are infants also to be baptized?
- Answer: Yes: for since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the Christian church; and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant.

# ARTICLE 34 OF THE BELGIC CONFESSION OF FAITH

*“... the infants of believers, whom we believe ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as the children in Israel formerly were circumcised, upon the same promises which are made to our children. And indeed Christ shed His blood no less for the washing of the children of the faithful, than for the adult persons; and therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of that which Christ has done for them. ... Moreover, what circumcision was to the Jews, that baptism is to our children. And for this reason Paul calls baptism the circumcision of Christ.”*

# A REFORMED PRACTICE

- Infant Baptism is one of the ways a church shows itself to be a Reformed church.
  - We baptize the infants of believers because we believe God includes them in His covenant, and saves them, as infants.
  - The fact that they are saved as infants shows their salvation is not because of anything they do – obviously unable to do anything.
  - Their salvation is all because of God's grace.
- That's what it means to be Reformed – to confess Salvation by Grace Alone.

Rev. R. Hanks in *Doctrine According to Godliness*:  
*“In every baptized infant we have a picture of how any and every one of us has been saved – not by his willing or effort, but by the almighty power of sovereign grace, which came to him when he was neither looking or seeking for it.”*

## CONCLUSION

- The Covenant is a warm and comforting truth.
  - For us personally as adult believers.
  - For us with regard to our children.