

12. Covenant Faith (2Q 2021—The Promise: God’s Everlasting Covenant)

Biblical Material: Gal. 6:14; Rom. 6:23; I John 5:11, 13; Rom. 4:1-7; Lev. 7:18; Lev. 17:1-4; Rom. 5:1; Gal. 3:11.

Quotes

- The Jews pacified Jehovah with the blood of animals, and according to the Christian system, the blood of Jesus softened the heart of God a little, and rendered possible the salvation of a fortunate few. It is hard to conceive how the human mind can give assent to such terrible ideas, or how any sane man can read the Bible and still believe in the doctrine of inspiration. *Robert Ingersoll*
- Propitiation presupposes the wrath of God and displeasure of God, and the purpose of propitiation is the removal of this displeasure. Very simply stated the doctrine of propitiation means that Christ propitiated the wrath of God and rendered God propitious to his people... *John Murray*
- When introverts go to church, we crave sanctuary in every sense of the word, as we flee from the disorienting distractions of twenty-first-century life. We desire to escape from superficial relationships, trivial communications and the constant noise that pervade our world, and find rest in the probing depths of God’s love. *Adam S. McHugh*
- The problem facing the human family and the core issue in cosmic conflict theology center on the character of God. *Sigve Tonstad*
- Rabe’a al-Adiwiyah, a great woman saint of Sufism, was seen running through the streets of her hometown, Basra, carrying a torch in one hand and a bucket of water in the other. When someone asked her what she was doing, she answered, “I am going to take this bucket of water and pour it on the flames of hell, and then I am going to use this torch to burn down the gates of paradise so that people will not love God for want of heaven or fear of hell, but because He is God.” *John Green*

Questions

What does “covenant faith” mean? How exactly do we have such faith—what is it based on? Do we need to have a covenant with God in order to trust in him? What are the dangers in stressing a dependence on some kind of formal agreement? How do we avoid bringing legal ideas into our relationship with God? How does God bring issues of trust to a conclusion?

Bible summary

Paul’s boast was solely in the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:14). “The wage sin pays is death, but God’s free gift is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom. 6:23 FBV. God’s promise is to give us eternal life (I John 5:11, 13). Abraham was considered right because he trusted God (Rom. 4:1-7). God rejects offerings that are not done correctly Lev. 7:18;17:1-4. “Now that we have been made right by God by trusting in him, we have peace with him through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Rom. 5:1 FBV. Those who are made right by God live by trusting him (Gal. 3:11).

Comment

“Covenant faith” is an academic way of talking about trusting God. For most people such a term is an obscure term that doesn’t relate to their everyday experience of God, of holding onto his promises with confidence. So let’s talk about trusting in God and his promises.

The simple truth is that by trusting God, and all that such trust means, then God can and will make us right. Let's use simple words that describe God's saving, healing actions in and for us. This is his "free and gracious gift," one that we can't claim to deserve, but which is centered in the love of God for his lost, dying children. Why can't we take him at his word, and simply believe it? We are so conditioned to want to work that we're reluctant to accept free gifts—we tell God we'd rather pay!

What must that feel like for God? He knows that without his help, his healing intervention, we will all die, and die eternally. Yet we so often turn away, believing in a "do-it-yourself" religion. We talk about "cheap grace," suggesting that to simply trust in God is insufficient. That we have to be doing right. That we have to already be acceptable to God. That we can't be saved unless we deserve it.

For us to trust someone we have to know them well. Before we lend someone money we like to know that we'll get our money back! We want to know something about that person so that we can have confidence in them. And how do we develop that trust? By getting to know them, spending time with them, watching how they behave.

This is what we have to do with God. He wants to win back our trust, and so all the Bible is a record of how he acts and behaves; details of the reasons why we can confidently trust him. Above all else, Jesus, the God who came to us, is the demonstration that we can have complete and total trust in him. By his life and death he illustrates the truth, laying bare the Devil's lie; and shows us that the God of the still small voice is right, and we can believe in him.

We are called to relate to God as our Father like a child relates to his or her parents. We must trust. Or to use a religious word, we must have faith. Faith in God is reasonable, and based on evidence. That's what God wants—not some blind unthinking faith that can lead us to some completely mistaken ideas about himself.

Our childlike trust in God is based on the *evidence* of God as a completely trustworthy person. That's what the Bible is for—to show us what God is like in his dealings with humanity. That's what Jesus came to demonstrate personally—that God can be trusted: completely and fully. There is no doubt! And that's what we have to discover in our own experience: that we can place ourselves in God's hands without any doubts at all. It's all *a question of trust*.

God says to us, "trust me, and you will be made right. You will see the results in your life. Not because of your own rightness, but because I am making you right." There will be evidence of a changed life to be sure, but they are results, not causes of being right. May God always "right" us!

Ellen White comments

God has revealed His character in the goodness, the mercy, compassion, and love manifested to save a race of guilty rebels. What could be done that has not been done in the provisions of the plan of salvation? If the sinner remains indifferent to the manifestation of the goodness of God, if he neglects so great a salvation, . . . what can be done to touch his hard heart? {HP 37}

Christ came to manifest the love of God to the world, to draw the hearts of all men to Himself. . . . The first step toward salvation is to respond to the drawing of the love of Christ. . . . It is that men may understand the joy of forgiveness, the peace of God, that Christ draws them through the manifestation of His love. If they respond to His drawing, yielding their hearts to His grace, He will lead them on step by step, to a full knowledge of Himself, and this is life eternal. {AG 99}