

“Introduction to Covenant Theology”
2 Samuel 7:8-17
(Preached at Trinity, February 17, 2019)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 7** is one of the most important chapters in **2 Samuel**. It records God's covenant with David of an everlasting kingdom, a kingdom fulfilled through the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ. It reminds us of God's covenantal framework throughout Scripture. He is building His Kingdom and redeeming His people. This has been on display throughout history and has been revealed throughout Scripture expressed progressively through a series of covenants, each finding their ultimate fulfillment in the unveiling of Jesus Christ. This chapter is an important piece of the covenantal puzzle.
2. Covenant Theology is that system of theology that describes God's single purpose of redemption running throughout Scripture—that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. It is intimately connected to what we call Reformed Theology. Understanding Covenant Theology is important to our understanding God's redemptive purpose. It is important to understanding the Gospel.
Charles Spurgeon wrote: “The doctrine of the Covenant lies at the root of all true theology. It has been said that he who well understands the distinction between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace is a master of divinity. I am persuaded that most of the mistakes which men make concerning the doctrines of Scriptures are based upon fundamental errors with regard to the covenants of law and the covenants of grace.”¹
3. Covenant Theology finds its foundation in eternity in the council of the Godhead—the Covenant of Redemption in which God the Father chose a multitude from the ranks of fallen humanity and gave them to His Beloved Son who would come to redeem them by His incarnate blood and righteous life.
4. This eternal covenant is expressed by a series of historic covenants that God made with His covenant people. Each of these covenants are foreshadows pointing to the ultimate fulfillment in Christ in the New Covenant.
God's covenants are unilateral. God institutes His covenants, dictates the terms and sets the parameters. God doesn't bargain with us. There is no negotiation, no compromising of terms.
5. Although God's covenants are unilateral, they are also mutual. They are a true agreement and God sets true conditions to be filled by the parties.
 - A. God's covenants demand a response.
Genesis 17:1-2 NAU - "Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. ² "I will establish My covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly."
Genesis 15:6 NAU - "Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness."

¹ Charles Spurgeon, "Sermon XL, the Covenant" in "The Sermons of the Rev. C.H. Spurgeon of London, 9th Series," p. 172.

- B. Our obedience is not prerequisite to God's establishing the covenant—which maintains God's sovereignty in it. The covenant is not the *result* of our obedience. Our obedience or lack of does not make God's covenant uncertain nor does it call into question the fulfillment of God's covenants.
God is a covenant keeping God.
- C. And there is no merit in our response.
The beauty of grace is that God fulfills the conditions. This is the promise of the New Covenant and the fulfillment of the Covenant of Grace.
God makes the contract and then satisfies the demands of the contract.
God commands faith and then enables us to believe.
6. Covenant Theology displays the unity of God's purpose to save His people. God has but one plan of redemption and has always had but one way of salvation.
Covenant Theology falls under the framework of three covenants:
The Covenant of Redemption, Covenant of Works, and the Covenant of Grace
- I. Let me briefly review for you God's covenants with man.
- A. The Adamic Covenant or the Covenant of Works
1. Adam was placed in the Garden in a probationary period. In this God entered into a covenant with Adam who stood as our representative. We refer to him as our federal head. The word "federal" simply refers to covenant.
 2. God's covenant demanded obedience to His Law written upon the heart of Adam, but in particular, the positive law of not eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God promised life upon obedience and death upon disobedience.
It was not a promise of salvation but a promise of life.
 3. Adam did not obey God's covenant. By his sin he lost communion with God, and fell from his original righteousness, his mind was darkened, his will bound by sin. He died spiritually and became mortal.
 4. As our representative, Adam's sin became our sin by way of imputation.
Romans 5:12 NAU - "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--"
Romans 5:19 NAU - "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous."
- B. The second covenant was the Covenant of Grace – Genesis 3:15
1. The Covenant of Grace is the outworking of the Covenant of Redemption. It is worked out progressively in time through a series of subordinate covenants.
 2. This Covenant of Grace run progressively throughout the Old Covenant and reaching the ultimate expression in the New Covenant and enjoyed in its fullness in heaven.
All men are either under the Covenant of Works or the Covenant of Grace.

- II. The other historical covenants display God's progressive revelation of the Covenant of Grace.
- A. The Noahic Covenant – the world continued to grow worse and worse but God's redemptive purpose remained firm.
1. God instructed Noah to build an ark in order to save his family and a select number of creatures. God covenantally promised to preserve all who were in the ark. All of the creatures of the earth were destroyed.
 2. Following the great flood God made a covenant with Noah. God had not forgotten His promise of Genesis 3:15. The Covenant of grace was still being displayed. God promised to sustain the world so that His work of redemption might proceed. The rainbow was put in the sky as a sign.
- B. The Abrahamic Covenant
- This too was a covenant of promise flowing forth from the previous covenants. It was a continuing unfolding of the Covenant of Grace. God was further revealing His promise of a Savior which He promised to Adam in the Garden.
1. God promised Abraham four things:
 - a. A posterity - an innumerable multitude that found its fulfillment in the nation Israel but a spiritual fulfillment of a redeemed people in Christ, the true Israel, the people of God
 - b. A land - The land involved Canaan but ultimately it refers to a heavenly promise.
 - c. A particular seed. The seed had an earthly fulfillment through Isaac. The spiritual fulfillment was Christ, the true seed of Abraham. From his seed would all the nations of the earth be blessed.
Galatians 3:16 NAU - "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ."
 - d. That He would be their God – God promised Abraham and his seed that He would be their God.
 2. The sign of this covenant was circumcision. It is important to understand that each covenant is defined by the particular revelation of the content of the covenant. In this way we understand there are some elements particular to each covenant.
 3. This is the error of paedobaptists that insist that the outward elements of the Abrahamic Covenant are still in force today by way of inference. Thus, the children of covenant members are covenant members.
 4. Who are Abraham's covenant children today? Not those born of the flesh but those who are of the faith of Abraham whose hearts have been circumcised.
- C. The Mosaic Covenant – the giving of the Law through Moses at Mt. Sinai.
1. The Law given at Mt. Sinai was not a new Law but the one and same Law written upon the hearts of man at creation. It was merely codified and written upon stone at Sinai. It was not a covenant of works. The Law was not a substitute for grace but a means of administering God's covenant to a redeemed community.

2. The redeemed community of Israel (from Egypt) were being instructed how to live before a holy God.
The Law still instructs God's redeemed community (in Christ) how to love before a holy God.
3. The Mosaic Covenant was conditional but only in the sense of remaining in the Land of Promise - "that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you."
But it was NOT a republication of the Covenant of Works.
The Covenant of Works was only for man in his unfallen condition. Fallen man still stands condemned under the Covenant God made with Adam.
The demands of the Law have not changed but fallen man cannot keep the Law and stands condemned by it.
4. The Law stood as God's gracious proclamation of needed righteousness.
The Law also showed them their need for the substitute of an atoning sacrifice, ultimately pointing to Abraham's true Seed which was promised in Genesis 3:15.
It was a proclamation of the Law and the Gospel.
5. Under the Mosaic Law individuals were still being saved by the Abrahamic faith in the promises of God. They were being saved through the Covenant of Grace—a prefiguring of the New Covenant.

III. Then we come here to **2 Samuel 7** - The Davidic Covenant

- A. David had demonstrated faithfulness to God
 1. One of the first acts of David as the lawful king of Israel was to move the Ark of the Covenant from the house of Abinadab into Jerusalem.
His first effort ended in disaster because God was not properly revered.
But after David repented the Ark was brought into Jerusalem with great praise and celebration.
 2. David knew that his kingship could never be firmly established unless God was among them.
 3. David knew that although he was the lawful king, he wasn't the supreme King. David wanted to build a permanent house for God – a Holy Temple.
It was not God's purpose for David to build the Temple.
- B. It was in this context that God made an unconditional covenant with David.
2 Samuel 7:16 NAU - "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever."
 1. It is affirmed in **Psalm 89**
Psalm 89:3-4 NAU - "I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant, ⁴ I will establish your seed forever And build up your throne to all generations."
Psalm 89:35-36 NAU - "Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. ³⁶ "His descendants shall endure forever And his throne as the sun before Me."

2. Many earthly kings in the Davidic line were ungodly kings and in time David's earthly line of kings ceased. Nevertheless, God's covenant promise continued and was accomplished through Jesus Christ.
Romans 1:1-4 NAU - "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, ⁴ who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,"
3. The title, "Son of David" is used over 15 times in the Gospels.
Matthew 1:1 NAU - "The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David"
4. Peter at Pentecost preached it clearly
Acts 2:29-31 NAS - "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ "And so, because he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat *one* of his descendants upon his throne, ³¹ he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay."

Conclusion:

1. Of course, all these covenants were insufficient.
Hebrews 8 declares that in the New Covenant Jesus has a better ministry; that He was a better Mediator of a better covenant enacted upon better promises. And in Hebrews 9-10, we find He offered a better sacrifice, resulting in the better hope described in Hebrews 7.
Hebrews 8:7-13 NAS - "For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. ⁸ For finding fault with them, He says, "Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, When I will effect a new covenant With the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; ⁹ Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers On the day when I took them by the hand To lead them out of the land of Egypt; For they did not continue in My covenant, And I did not care for them, says the Lord. ¹⁰ "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, And I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be their God, And they shall be My people. ¹¹ "And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, And everyone his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' For all shall know Me, From the least to the greatest of them. ¹² "For I will be merciful to their iniquities, And I will remember their sins no more." ¹³ When He said, "A new *covenant*," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear."

- A. Hebrews 8 is referring to the weakness of the Old Covenant.
1. The knowledge of the work of Christ was not clear and full
 2. The OT sacrifices did not have the power to save
 3. The Holy Spirit was not given in His fullness.
 4. The gift of salvation was confined primarily to the nation of Israel that displayed physically many of the spiritual realities of the New Covenant. Only a remnant was true Israel.
 5. The worship of God was focused upon ceremony and ritual in the Temple. God's presence was manifested physically in one place, in the visible pillar of cloud and fire.
 6. The Old Covenant was only a shadow, yet there was a progressive revelation of God's redemptive purpose revealed by way of covenant.
- B. The New Covenant is the final revelation of the Covenant of Grace foretold in **Jeremiah 33:31-34**
2. The New Covenant is the fulfillment of the Covenant of Grace. Jesus Christ has accomplished God's eternal plan of redemption. We can see continuity in the historical covenants. The New Covenant did not abolish the Old Covenant. It fulfilled it. There is typological unity in the Old Covenant that is now fully revealed in the New Covenant. Jesus is the promised seed revealed in Genesis 3:15. Jesus Christ is the heir promised to Abraham. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law given to Moses. Jesus is the establishment of God's promise to David, Jesus Christ is now seated upon His throne and is bringing about the full establishing of His everlasting Kingdom.
- Psalms 110:1 NAU** - "The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."
3. Jesus Christ met the demands of the Law and has removed its curse. No longer are we condemned under the Covenant of Works. Jesus Christ is our everlasting King and we are forever a part of His everlasting Kingdom.
4. The supreme question for all of us must remain, are we in the New Covenant. It can only be entered by faith in our Covenant Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you trusted in Him alone? Do you know Him? Is He your Lord and King? Thomas Boston—"What remains for sinners, that they may be personally and savingly in covenant with God, is not, as parties contractors and undertakers, to make a covenant with Him for life and salvation; but only, to take hold of God's covenant already made from eternity, between the Father and Christ the second Adam, and revealed and offered to us in the gospel."