

## The Covenantal Backbone

### Understanding the Nature of Our Relationships

1. What is a covenant?
  - a. ***"A relationship*** of oaths and bonds and involves mutual, though not necessarily equal, commitments" (Horton, emphasis mine).
  - b. There are both unilateral and jointly initiated covenants.
  - c. There are both conditional and unconditional covenants.
2. Key differences between contracts and covenants:
  - Contracts generally involve the exchange of goods or services and are negotiated.
    - *Covenants involve the exchange of the individuals themselves and are initiated.*
  - Contracts bind legally (the law holds the parties together).
    - *Covenants bind relationally (love and loyalty hold the parties together).*
  - Contracts include obligations that when broken free the other party from the agreement.
    - *Covenants include obligations that when broken do not sever the relationship but lay out what is needed for reconciliation (which may include restitution).*
  - Compliance with the terms of a contract is guaranteed by threat of penalty (damages).
    - *Compliance with the terms of a covenant is guaranteed by personal integrity.*  
*[The covenant is kept, not because there will be a penalty, but because of sincerity.]*
  - Contracts are established upon legalities.  
["I will enter this contract with you because I know the law will uphold it."]
    - *Covenants are established upon fidelity (faithfulness).*  
*["I will enter this covenant with you because I am committed to you, and I am counting on your fidelity/faithfulness to me."]*
3. The imagery and language of covenant:
  - a. Family:
    - i. Genesis 2:23 "bone of bone" (cf. 2 Samuel 5:1; 19:13)
    - ii. Isaiah 1:2 "Sons"
    - iii. John 11:51-52 "children of God"
  - b. Union:
    - i. Genesis 2:24 "one flesh"
    - ii. Judges 20:11 "one man"
  - c. Belonging:
    - i. Genesis 17:7-8; Exodus 6:7 "a people"
    - ii. Exodus 19:5 "a nation"
  - d. Commitment:
    - i. Genesis 2:24 "leaving" (cf. Deut. 31:16)
    - ii. Genesis 2:24 "cleaving" (cf. Deut. 11:22)

4. Our vertical covenant: the nature of our relationship with God:
  - a. God has always related to His people through covenant.
    - i. Genesis 6:18; 9:9
    - ii. Genesis 17:1-5
    - iii. Jeremiah 31:31-34
  - b. God continues to relate to us through covenant.
    - i. Luke 22:20
    - ii. Language and imagery: Family, union, belonging, people, body, temple, house, etc. (cf. John 1:12; 1 Peter 2:9-10)
5. Our horizontal covenants: the nature of our relationships with others:
  - a. Marriage: Genesis 2:24 and Matthew 19:5-6
  - b. Parent/child: Genesis 2:24 and Ephesians 6:1-3
  - c. Church/member: Hebrews 13:17 (cf. "brother", household, family, etc.)
  - d. Government/citizen: Romans 13:1; Titus 3:1

6. The Covenant of Redemption

- a. As found in church history (background):

"It pleased God in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus his only begotten Son, **according to the Covenant made between them both**, to be the Mediator between God and Man; the Prophet, Priest and King; Head and Saviour of his Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom he did from all Eternity give a people to be his seed, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified" (1689 London Baptist Confession).

- b. As seen in purchase language: Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 6:20, etc.
- c. As seen in Christ's titles: Mediator, Advocate, Propitiator, etc.
- d. As seen in Christ's language and other biblical analogy or terminology:
  - i. Sent by the Father: John 3:16; 5:37; 8:18, etc.
  - ii. A people given to the Son by the Father: John 6:37; 10:29 (cf. Luke 22:29)
  - iii. Given work to do by the Father (especially in redeeming the people): 5:36; 10:25; 17:4 and 17:2; 6:39-40 (note esp. the Father's "will")
  - iv. A commandment or word given by the Father: 12:49; 14:24
  - v. The mutual love between Father and Son: John 3:35; 5:20; 14:31
  - vi. The choosing of the Son as appointed One: Isaiah 42:1-3 with Matthew 12:18-21, (cf. Acts 2:23), etc.
  - vii. The Groom/Bride language: Ephesians 5:23f; Revelation 19:7; 21:2
  - viii. Cf. also Psalm 2, esp. v 7.