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## COVENANT: GOD PURSUES

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### Part 1 of Doctrine

Pastor Mark Driscoll | May 04, 2008

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Number six, now looking at sin and how we responded to God, we're gonna look at covenant and how God enables us to have a relationship with him. And so covenant is the language that the Bible uses to explain how God pursues us. Now, here's the big idea, in sin, we made ourselves God's enemies, by nature, children of wrath. How God responds is covenant.

*Covenant* is a beautiful word. It is the Bible's language for intimate relationship. There are human covenants and divine covenants. It's a very common word. But a covenant is language for relationship. There are terms for the covenant. Some covenants are unconditional. It doesn't matter what we do, God's gonna do his part. Some covenants are conditional. If you do this, then I'll do that. In every covenant, there's a head. The head of the covenant is the one who oversees the covenant, oversees the terms of the covenant, and provides blessing for those who obey the covenant and consequence for those who disobey the covenant.

The Bible speaks of a lot of covenants. I'll run through them quickly so that we can get to the New Covenant. Hosea 6 speaks of the fact that Adam was in covenant with God, he was in relationship with God. God gave him commands, terms of obedience in the covenant.

Move as well to Noah in Genesis 6, it speaks of the Noachic covenant, that Noah was in covenant with God. Let me say this quickly on the Noachic covenant in Genesis 6: everyone butchers the Noachic covenant. It just frustrates me. All my kids' Bibles on this page have whiteout and marker, right? We have to edit all the kids' Bibles because Genesis 6 is told this way: Everyone was bad except for Noah. He was a good guy, so God saved him. That's not what it says. The Bible says in Genesis 6, everyone was doing evil all the time, and Noah found favor—it's the Hebrew word for grace—in the eyes of God. And then it says Noah was a righteous man who walked with God. How was Noah saved? By grace, just like the rest of us. God looked at the earth and said, "They're all sinners. None of them deserves anything. I'll give grace to that guy." That made him a righteous man and enabled him to walk with God.

Everyone skips that and they tell the story, "Hey, you see Noah? He got a boat. You know why? He was a righteous man. You see the other guys swimming, at least for a little while, well, they weren't righteous, and that's what happens when you're not righteous, you gotta swim for it." That's not true. That's not the gospel. The gospel is that God takes not just undeserving, but ill-deserving people and gives some grace.

Don't just read, "Noah was a righteous man, he walked with God and got a boat. Be a righteous man, you get to walk with God and you get a boat, his name is Jesus." The truth is Noah should have died in the flood. He's a sinner just like everyone else, and he received grace or favor in the eyes of God, same thing God does with us. We should all die and go to hell, the proverbial flood, and God gives grace to some.

There is the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12 and 17 and 22. There was a race of people at the Tower of Babel. They were rebelling against God. They were gonna make their own Eden on earth. They were gonna make a kingdom without God as their king. God scattered them, confused their languages. The book of Acts says that the region that they were from is the same region that Abraham was from. He was probably one of these guys, and God chose him even though his father was an idolater and he probably was too. He chose to lift up Abraham and to make him the father of many, to make him the beginning of a new humanity. Again, Noah is the beginning of a new humanity. Abraham is the beginning of a new humanity. He was chosen by grace.

There's the Mosaic covenant in Exodus 3 and 6 and 19. Moses is a guy who's murdered someone and he's hiding from God and he's possibly worshiping false gods. God comes to him in the burning bush, calls him to follow God, to obey God, to serve God, to worship God. The Mosaic covenant includes the Ten Commandments given by God on Mount Sinai. Those are the terms of the covenant, that God goes with his people, pillar of fire at night and cloud during the day, that God goes with his people. It's covenant. God's there with his people, journeying with his people, speaking to his people, revealing himself to his people through Moses, their leader of the Mosaic covenant.

This leads up to the Davidic covenant. Second Samuel 7 talks about the Davidic covenant. This is a king and a kingdom through David. Ultimately Jesus will come as the king of kings and the descendant of David, all leads up to the New Covenant.

All the covenants are preparatory and anticipatory, leading up to the New Covenant. Here's what Jeremiah 31:31-33 says of the new covenant, listen to these words, "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah—" northern and southern kingdom, all of God's people—"not like the covenant that I made with their fathers—" the Adamic, Noachic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic covenants—"on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—" that's the Mosaic covenant in particular—"my covenant that they broke—" They didn't keep the terms, they committed idolatry, they worshiped the golden calf, they grumbled, they walked around for forty years. They didn't get to go to the Promised Land—"though I was their husband—" marriage language—"declares the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them—" here's the New Covenant—"and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people." The New Covenant is the Bible's language for salvation through Jesus in relationship with God.

If you want to know what's Mars Hill's theological position? We're New Covenant theologians. That's what we believe. We believe that it's all about the New Covenant. Who's the head of the New Covenant? Jesus. The Bible uses that word—in Colossians, Ephesians—of Jesus, he's the head.

Well, what are the blessings of the covenant? Salvation, forgiveness of sins, the regeneration of the Holy Spirit in our inner most being of our hearts. You get to be a new creation in Christ. You get to be born again. That old Adamic nature is replaced by a new nature, not a perfect nature, but a new nature. We call this the doctrine of regeneration. This is what Jesus is articulating when he's dialoguing with Nicodemus and he says, "You need to be born-again. You were born of Adam, you need to be born of the Spirit. You were born physically, you need to be spiritually. You just have your old nature, you need a new nature. You need to experience the new birth and the New Covenant."

See, Christianity's not about doing better and trying harder, it's about the New Covenant, that God the Holy Spirit takes out your heart of stone that is hard-hearted toward God, gives you a heart of flesh, a heart that loves God. He takes out your rebellion and he gives you a desire for obedience. He takes out your worship of self and he gives you a longing to be an image bearer who worships and honors God, that he writes his law, as Jeremiah says, on your heart, that through the Holy Spirit and your conscience and Scriptures, you know right from wrong, and when you sin you feel convicted, and when you honor and obey God, you feel joy. That's why sinful Christians are the most miserable people on earth.

And he says the essence of the New Covenant is this, "I'll be your God and you'll be my people, collectively." He's speaking here ultimately about the church, that God is our God, that he's given himself to ill-deserving enemies and he's chosen to be our God, and he has chosen us to be his people, together, collectively, his people. This is the New Covenant.

Well, the conditions of the New Covenant are that we need to repent of sin and trust in Jesus. Furthermore, the sign of the covenant, internally, is the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the children of God, that our body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity, the one who descended on Jesus at his baptism and empowered him for a life of obedience dwells in us, that is why the Bible says, "Greater is he who is in us—" the Holy Spirit— "than he who is in the world—" Satan, demons, our enemies.

The outward symbols of the covenant include baptism and communion, that's why we baptize people showing they were dead, buried, and raised in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Like water cleanses from stain of filth and dirt, so Jesus cleanses from stain of sin and folly. And communion is one of the signs of the New Covenant. When we partake of communion, we are saying Jesus' death was for me. Jesus' body was broken. Jesus' blood was shed for me so that I could be in the New Covenant, so that I could, like Jeremiah says, have God as my God and get to be one of his people, member of his church, that I would get to have his law written on my heart, that I would get to have a new nature, that I would get to have the Holy Spirit to serve me and help me to live a life like Jesus.

Now, what this reflects is not that we are wonderful, but that God is gracious. Again, I would ask you, how would you have treated humanity had you been God? Would you have responded with covenant? God responds to cosmic treason, rebellion, hatred, animosity, participating with Satan and demons, with covenant. This is unbelievable. When the Bible says God is holy, that word means different. God is different than we are. He is good, loving, gracious, merciful, compassionate, and kind. You know what? He's also holy and just and righteous, and he deals with sin through the cross of Jesus—we'll get there in a little bit—so that he can give us love, grace, mercy, compassion. That's what it means to be in New Covenant.

I'll close with this, summarizing all the covenants. Jesus is a better Adam, who did not sin and regained all that Adam lost. Jesus is a better Noah, who brings judgment of sin, salvation by grace, and a whole new world, and a new humanity. Jesus is a better Abraham, who is the blessing to the nations of the earth that was promised to Abraham, "through you Abraham and the Abrahamic covenant all nations on earth will be blessed." Some say "Oh, that's the Jews." Galatians says "No, that's Jesus." He's the blessing through Abraham to the nations of the earth. Jesus is a better Moses who conquered our Pharaoh of Satan, liberated us to worship God, and fulfills the law for us. And Jesus is a better David, he is King of kings, seated on a throne coming to establish his eternal, perfect, heavenly kingdom. He's our king. God responds to our sin with covenant through Christ.

*Note: This transcript has been edited for readability.*