

Bible Passage

Genesis 1:26-31, 2:15-17

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him,⁹ “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you,¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth.¹¹ I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”¹² And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations:¹³ I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds,¹⁵ I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”¹⁷ God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

Outline

1. The Establishment of an Everlasting Covenant

- a. Setting the stage: The world of Noah
 - i. The pre-Jesus relationship with God.
 - ii. Evolution of God's interaction with humanity.
- b. The backdrop to the Noetic Covenant
 - i. Humanity's descent into wickedness.
 - ii. God's act of cleansing with a flood.
 - iii. Choosing Noah out of grace.
- c. Genesis 9:15-16: The promise
 - i. God's pledge never to destroy with a flood.
 - ii. A one-sided divine guarantee.
- d. The trajectory of God's relationship with humanity
 - i. From mere creation to potential deeper relationship.
 - ii. The continued journey of upgrades.

2. The Universality of God's Promise

- a. The evolving relationship: Creation, subjects, and family.
 - i. Our status despite repeated failures.
 - ii. God's extended grace at every step.
- b. A closer look at humanity's covenants

- i. Adam & Eve's covenant and their fall.
- ii. Noah and the aftermath of the flood.
- c. Baptism: A parallel to the flood
 - i. Symbolism of washing away the old.
 - ii. Rising to a new life and God's grace.
- d. Jesus: The ultimate symbol of God's grace
 - i. The New Testament and Jesus' sacrifice.
 - ii. Jesus shouldering humanity's sins.

3. The Timeless Symbol of the Rainbow

- a. The contemporary significance of the rainbow
 - i. The LGBTQ+ community's symbol of pride.
 - ii. Echoing God's original promise of inclusion.
- b. The rainbow as God's timeless symbol
 - i. Assurance against God's wrath.
 - ii. The embodiment of God's mercy and grace.
- c. Judgment Day: A matter of choice, not wrath
 - i. Accepting Jesus as Savior.
 - ii. The consequences of rejecting Him.
- d. The Church's mission
 - i. Uplifting and embracing.
 - ii. Guiding souls to God's transformative grace.
 - iii. Being a beacon of love in a flawed world.

Notes

One of the misconceptions that I feel we often fall into is considering God primarily as a friend or a father. While it's true that the New Testament frequently frames God in these terms, it is vital to remember that these are just facets of a more complex relationship. This isn't to say that considering God as a friend is 'wrong'. In fact, Jesus himself called his disciples friends. However, it's only part of the story. The Old Testament introduces the concept of God's covenant with humanity from a Creator-to-created standpoint. While the loving, fatherly attributes of God are eternal and undeniable, the relationship is first established with God as the Creator and us as the created. The New Testament builds upon this foundation but doesn't replace it.

Understanding covenants gives us a multi-dimensional view of our relationship with God. In the Bible, a covenant serves as an agreement, a divine promise where God lays out His terms and conditions for how He wishes to interact with us. It's a sacred bond that we, as humanity, have often broken. But the beauty is, even when we falter, God chooses grace. He doesn't abandon us or delete our existence; He aims to restore and renew the covenant relationship. So why does this matter? Well, when you only consider God as a friend or father, you're missing the majestic, awe-inspiring aspect of God the Creator. It puts distance and reverence into our

relationship with God, reminding us that while God is near, He's also the all-powerful Creator of the universe.

Understanding our covenant relationship with God also provides clarity about our purpose in life. According to Genesis, mankind was made in the image of God and given dominion over the Earth. We were created to be stewards of creation and to fill the Earth with God's glory. This is a specific role, a divine vocation, that separates us from the rest of creation. So, as we dig deeper into understanding the covenants God has made with humanity, it enriches our comprehension of His character and our relationship with Him. Knowing God as the Creator doesn't diminish Him as our Father; it amplifies our understanding of His majesty, authority, and eternal love.

Contrary to popular belief, the sin of Adam and Eve wasn't just eating a forbidden fruit. It was about saying, "God, we don't need you for wisdom or anything else." This rebellion against God was an attempt to become self-sufficient, to gain knowledge without divine guidance. In essence, sin is saying, "I don't need God." Many of us misunderstand what the fall did to human work. The older generation often tells us, "Work hard, and you'll find purpose." But the Biblical view is not that simple. Due to the Fall, work is now a curse; it has become toil. It's not about just finding purpose in working hard; it's about understanding that work, in its current state, is fundamentally flawed and broken.

Interestingly, God initially offered Adam and Eve freedom with limitations: "You may eat of any tree, but one." Eve, however, misunderstood God's command. She saw it as restrictive, but God had actually started with freedom, followed by a singular restriction. This also points to another misunderstanding we often have—that being a Christian is about a long list of don'ts. That couldn't be further from the truth.

The Tree of Knowledge gave Adam and Eve the ability to judge what's good and evil, a capacity they weren't created to have. Judgment was reserved for God alone. We're not inherently qualified to sit in the seat of judgment because our judgments are imperfect, flawed by the nature of sin itself. Despite the brokenness of our toil, we still experience moments of joy in work, a mere shadow of what God intended for us. Imagine an eternity where work is not a curse but a blessing, something we're excited to do! This understanding also changes our view of heaven. Heaven is not just about leisure but about meaningful work, aligned with God's original intent for mankind.

There's this idea that walking closely with God means you're shackled, restricted from enjoying life. But it's quite the opposite! Being close to God and worshipping Him should set you free. Some people are so concerned about whether attending a party is sinful or not, they miss the point entirely. The question isn't so much about the action itself, but rather the motivation behind it. Are you going to the party to drink yourself into

oblivion, or are you going to connect and fellowship with people?

Now, onto sin. Sin isn't merely about doing wrong things; it's about breaking a covenant, a relationship with God. If you make a mistake in your marriage or with your kids, you don't automatically assume the relationship is over, right? In the same way, making mistakes or sinning doesn't sever our relationship with God if we repent and refocus on Him. Sin is turning away from God, ignoring His covenant, and saying, "I don't want you in my life." Throughout history, God has established various covenants with His creation. Some are conditional, requiring both God and people to do their part, like the original covenant with Adam and Eve. Yet, every conditional covenant is founded on God's unconditional love. God is forever willing to renew and restore broken covenants, reminding us of His endless love.

Many are bogged down by the curse of work, believing that if they achieve enough, they'll find purpose and satisfaction. But work becomes truly meaningful when it's led by the Spirit. It's not about you; it's about glorifying God. The question isn't, "What can I do?" but rather, "What does God want me to do?" If you're wrestling with decisions, covenants, or even the meaning of work, remember this: let the Spirit guide you. Submit to God's will, recognize His unconditional love, and you'll find that even the toils of work can be redeemed.