

“What it Means to be Reformed”; Session # 68, Solus Christus - “The Covenant of Redemption”, Prepared by Pastor Paul Rendall for the Adult Sunday School Class on February 21st, 2016.

Read 2nd Timothy 1: 8-10 – “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

In our study of Solus Christus, that our salvation is all of Christ, we need to see that this grace that we have been given, was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. In the verses that I just read to you it says that believers have been saved and called with a holy called, not according to their works, but according to God’s own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. This is the link with our study on Solus Christus. God’s grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. This will be the focus of our study this morning; the Covenant of Redemption. In these verses we are told that we have nothing to be ashamed of, as regards “the testimony of our Lord”. He has done everything necessary to purchase our salvation, and He will do everything necessary in the application of grace, to our hearts and lives, in order to see to it that we will be given the wisdom and power to live righteously and to be able, if necessary, to suffer for His glory. And, furthermore, He will bring us to His eternal kingdom after our time on earth is done. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as the 2nd Person of the Divine Trinity, agreed with the Father, the 1st Person of the Divine Trinity, to fulfill the plan and purpose of God, to undertake in time and space, the outworking of our salvation. The plans and purposes agreed upon, and agreed to, took place in this wonderful council of the Father and the Son before the world began. The center piece of these counsel (this interaction between the Father and the Son) is what theologians rightly call – The Covenant of Redemption.

Thomas Brooks, the Puritan, says this of the Covenant of Redemption:

“The covenant of redemption is that federal transaction or mutual stipulation that was betwixt God and Christ from everlasting, for the accomplishment of the work of our redemption, by the mediation of Jesus Christ to the eternal honor and unspeakable praise, of the glorious grace of God.” “Or, if you please, take it in another form of words, thus: - It is a compact, bargain, and agreement between God the Father and God the Son, designed mediator, concerning the conversion, sanctification, and salvation of the elect, through the death, satisfaction, and obedience of Jesus Christ which in due time was to be given to the Father.”

It is called – The Pactum Salutis by theologians. “In Reformed federalism, the pretemporal, intratrinitarian agreement of the Father and the Son concerning the covenant of grace and its ramifications in and through the work of the Son incarnate.” (Richard A. Muller, Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985, Second printing, September 1986), p. 217

The Testimony of our Confession:

In Chapter 7 of our 1689 Confession, “Of God’s Covenant”, Paragraph 3 it says this:

“This covenant is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament; and it is founded in that eternal covenant transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect; and it is alone by the grace of this covenant that all the posterity of fallen Adam that ever were saved did obtain life and blessed immortality, man being now utterly incapable of acceptance with God upon those terms on which Adam stood in his state of innocency.”

Notice how it says that this covenant is revealed. It already existed before, in the counsels of eternity, but men did not know of it until it was revealed to them. It was revealed, our confession says, “in the gospel”; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord, who was the seed of the woman (the virgin Mary), and then afterwards this Covenant was revealed by further steps, until the full discovery of it thereof was completed in the New Testament in Christ; when by His Person He worked out a perfect righteousness on behalf of sinners, fulfilling all the plans and purposes of God the Father in relation to His coming to have a people for His own possession. So, let us understand that the Covenant of Grace, which is what this covenant is called in relation to God’s covenant dealings with men in time, and it is to be understood as the very same Covenant as the Covenant of Redemption; even as we would understand a building resting itself on a foundation. They are one and same building; they are parts of the same building. But these distinctions are helpful and they do need to be maintained. It is the building of Christ’s Church which we are speaking of, and the foundation of that building, which is found only in Jesus Christ. The Covenant of Grace which was revealed in stages and which was fulfilled by Christ alone, on the basis of His work alone, is the Covenant of Redemption in its outworking and fulfillment in time. The Covenant of Redemption refers to the plans formed long ago, before the foundation of the world, by the Father and the Son, in relation to what the Son would do for all of God’s elect people when He became a man and undertook our salvation in time. He would abolish death, and He would bring light and life to light through the gospel. The Covenant of grace is “founded in that eternal covenant transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect”, our Confession states. The gospel, therefore, would be the good news of what Christ had come to do, what He accomplished in His righteous life and sacrificial death, and the promise of the great grace which He would purchase and apply to each of God’s elect in their being called with this holy calling.

Thomas Brooks in his treatise on the Covenant of Redemption, Vol. 5, page 351 says this:

“The covenant of redemption betwixt God and Christ secures the covenant of grace betwixt God and believers; for what God promises to us, He did, before the foundation of the world, promise to Jesus Christ, Titus 1 2 ; and therefore, if God the Father should not make good His promises to his saints, He would not make good his promises to his dearest Son, which for any to imagine would be high blasphemy. God will be sure to keep touch with Jesus Christ; and therefore we may rest fully assured that he will not fail to keep touch with us. The covenant of redemption is the very basis or bottom of the covenant of grace. God made a covenant with Christ, the spiritual David, that he might make a covenant with all his elect in him. He made this agreement with Christ, as the head, and on this is reared up the whole frame of precious promises comprised in the covenant of grace, as a goodly building upon a sure foundation.”

Psalm 89: 1-4 – “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations.” “For I have said, ‘Mercy shall be built up forever; Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens.’ “I have made a covenant with My chosen, I

have sworn to My servant David: Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations.”

Psalm 89: 25 – “Also I will set his hand over the sea, and his right hand over the rivers.” “He shall cry to Me, ‘You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.’” “Also I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.” “My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall stand firm with him” ‘His seed also I will make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven.”

Zechariah 9: 11 and 12 – “As for you also, because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.” “Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope.” “Even today I declare that I will restore double to you.”

John Gill on the Covenant of Redemption:

It is by some divines called, “the covenant of redemption”; and very truly, because the redemption of God’s elect is a principal article in it: the Father proposed to the Son, that he should raise up, restore, redeem Israel, His chosen ones; the Son agreed to it, and hence He was declared and promised, and expected as the Redeemer, long before He came into this world to do this service; Job knew Him as his living Redeemer, and all the Old Testament saints waited for Him as such, having had a promise of it, which was founded on this covenant agreement; for as it was proposed to Him, and He agreed to it, to be the Redeemer, so it was promised him, that upon the condition of giving Himself, the redemption and ransom price for the elect, they should be delivered from all their sins, and the effects of them, and out of the hands of all their enemies; Isaiah 49: 5, 59: 20, and Job 33: 24.

Gill goes on to say: “This covenant is the same with the covenant of grace; some divines, indeed, make them distinct covenants; the covenant of redemption, they say, was made with Christ in eternity; the covenant of grace with the elect, or with believers, in time: but this is very wrongly said; there is but one covenant of grace, and not two, in which the Head and Members, the Redeemer and the persons to be redeemed, Christ and the elect, are concerned; in which He is the Head and Representative of them, acts for them, and on their behalf. What is called a covenant of redemption, is a covenant of grace, arising from the grace of the Father, who proposed to his Son to be the Redeemer, and from the grace of the Son, who agreed to be so; and even the honors proposed to the Son in this covenant, redounded to the advantage of the elect; and the sum and substance of the everlasting covenant made with Christ, is the salvation and eternal happiness of the chosen ones; all the blessings and grants of grace to them, are secured in that eternal compact; for they were blessed with all spiritual blessings in him, and had grace given them in him before the world was; wherefore there can be no foundation for such a distinction between a covenant of redemption in eternity, and a covenant of grace in time.” (that is – there can be no foundation for such a distinction making the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace two separate covenants.) (End of quote)

I, myself, in some respects disagree with Gill’s last statement in what I read to you. I think that there certainly is a foundation for such a distinction between a Covenant of Redemption in eternity past and a Covenant of Grace in time, even though I do not believe that they are two different covenants. There are rather separate considerations of the same Covenant. What is called the Covenant of Redemption is outworked in time and space as the same Covenant in the Covenant of grace in time. I would say that the Covenant of Redemption is the basis of the Covenant of Grace, and that the counsel in eternity between the Father and the Son, along with

the Spirit, was the pre-determined plan and foreknowledge of God which led to the Covenant of Grace which took place in its outworking, in time and space beginning in the garden with the promise given to Eve. This plan and purpose of the Triune God was then worked out in time, beginning in the garden, and continued by successive steps. It was in full accord with the Covenant of Redemption that the Covenant of Grace was revealed; the latter flowing from the former, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament, as our Confession says, in Christ. I think that the old distinction put forth by Thomas Brooks between the Covenant of Redemption and the Covenant of Grace is a good one provided that they are seen as one Covenant and not two separate covenants. In the outworking of this one Covenant of Grace you will also see various covenants made with men in time, (Abraham, Noah, David) that make up these steps and stages of the History of Redemption.