

THE KING OF KINGS

DANIEL 9:1-19

OUR KING COVENANTS WITH US



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

DAVID MURRAY
APRIL 18, 2021 (PM)

INTRODUCTION

Covenant is confusing but it should be clarifying. It's a big word in the Bible but it's a small word in our lives.

If I was to ask, "What is a covenant?" we would probably get as many different answers as hearers. If I was to ask, "What is God's covenant?" I think we'd get more furrowed brows than full answers. If I was to ask, "What role does God's covenant have in your life?" probably most of us would say "Not a lot!" or "Very little." How can we understand and use God's covenant better? **How can we improve the clarity and practicality of God's covenant?** Daniel has some answers for us in Daniel 1:1-19.

BACKGROUND

As we're going to be looking at God's covenant with his people, it's important that we understand what God's covenant is. There are many different kinds of human covenants. Marriage, for example, is a covenant of lifetime commitment between two equal parties. We must not import human ideas of covenant into God's covenant with his people. **God's covenant is a blood-bought relationship, initiated and imposed by a superior with life or death consequences.**

- **It's a relationship with God:** It's not a cold business transaction or legal agreement. God wants a warm personal relationship with us. He begins with a formal external covenant but only with a view to invite us to a warmer personal relationship.
- **It's bought with blood approved by God:** Sacrifice is the basis for a covenant relationship with God. It begins with death and produces life.
- **It's initiated by God:** We didn't propose it and start it, God did. We would never have even thought of it never mind asked for it. That's why we call it a covenant of grace.
- **It's imposed by God:** We didn't haggle or negotiate until we struck a bargain. God simply said, "These are the terms of this arrangement. You either reject it or accept it."
- **It has consequences from God:** God loves his covenant with his people so much that he gives laws to keep this relationship holy, healthy, and happy, with rewards for covenant keeping and punishment for covenant breaking.

God initially covenanted with individuals and their families: for example, Adam (Genesis 3:14-15), Noah (Genesis 8-9), and Abraham (Genesis 12-17). In Exodus 19-20, God expanded his covenant to the whole nation of Israel. The rest of the Old Testament is a record of God's covenant keeping and Israel's covenant breaking. It also promises a covenant renewal which would be even more effective than the original personal and national covenants (Jeremiah 31:31-34), a promise kept by Christ through his blood (Luke 22:20).



What does Daniel teach us about how to understand and use God's covenant?



1. GOD'S COVENANT CALLS US TO CONFESS (1-15)

It's about 540 BC. Daniel and God's people have been in Babylonian exile for about 68 years. Nebuchadnezzar has gone. Belshazzar has gone. Darius is on the throne of Babylon, probably ruling under the authority of Cyrus, King of Persia, the new world superpower. Much has changed during those seven decades. Daniel himself has changed from a 14-year-old boy to an 82-year-old senior. But one thing has remained the same: Daniel is still reading his Bible and praying (9:1-2). Specifically, he's reading the prophet Jeremiah, when his attention is drawn to Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10. Both passages promise Israel they will suffer 70 years of foreign exile for their sins of idolatry.

Realizing that the 70 years is almost up, Daniel puts his feet up and waits for the next two years to pass to get his freedom. He says, "Whatever will be, will be, and there's nothing I can do about it. Nope! Having done his spiritual math, Daniel goes straight to fervent prayer.

Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments" (3-4)

For Daniel, God's sovereign purposes and promises were not an excuse for spiritual laziness, but an invitation to deepen relationship with God. Instead of saying, "God is sovereign, so why pray?" he says, "God is sovereign, so let's pray." That's how to use God's covenant promises.

What kind of prayer does Daniel pray? He tells us, it's a prayer of confession (4). He's not going to complain about God's actions but confess Israel's actions. His confession is therefore preceded by worship of God as **great and awesome, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments** (4). He wants to make clear right up front, that God is a covenant keeper and it's God's people who are the covenant breakers. Read through verses 5-15 for a model prayer of covenant confession. Outward signs of confession are accompanied by a broken spirit and a contrite heart, sacrifices that are immensely pleasing to God (Psalm 51:16-17).

CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

"God, we are covenant breakers. We are sinners, we are wicked, we are rebels, we are deaf, we are shamed, we are treacherous, we are disobedient" (3-11).

"God, you are a covenant keeper: We are suffering justly, just as you promised. We have no complaints because you have kept your covenant promises to the letter" (12-15).

COVENANT BREAKERS
WILL BE BROKEN



Is there any hope for covenant breakers
Yes, there's hope in the Covenant Keeper



2. GOD'S COVENANT CALLS US TO CHRIST (16-19)

"Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience" (Shorter Catechism, 87).

Q 88. *What is involved in genuine repentance or conversion?*

A. *Two things: the dying-away of the old self, and the rising-to-life of the new.*

Q.89. *What is the dying-away of the old self?*

A. *To be genuinely sorry for sin and more and more to hate and run away from it.*

Q. 90. *What is the rising-to-life of the new self?*

A. *Wholehearted joy in God through Christ and a love and delight to live according to the will of God by doing every kind of good work (Heidelberg Catechism).*

Both Catechisms insist that true repentance, saving repentance, always includes "an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ," meaning, "whole-hearted joy in God through Christ." These are essential parts of real repentance. We will see that even more clearly next week when God reveals the crucified Christ to Daniel. But even in this prayer of confession, Daniel's repentance involves grasping God's mercy and love in his covenant.

We see hints of this in the early more confessional part of the prayer. He sought God "**with pleas for mercy**" (3). He prayed to the God who "**keeps covenant and steadfast love**" (4). To God "**belong mercy and forgiveness**" (9). Then, as his confession continues, his grasp of the mercy of God grows into confident prayer for God's mercy to replace his judgment. "**Let your anger and wrath turn away**" (16). "**Listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy**" (17). "**Make your face to shine upon your sanctuary**" (17). "**We do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy**" (18). "**O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act**" (19).

At no point does Daniel plead his own righteousness, even though he was in no way to blame for Israel's suffering. Neither does he plead that Israel's suffered enough. Instead he pleads God's name, God's reputation, is suffering because of his people's suffering.

CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

Plead God's covenant mercy. Confession drives us to Christ and Christ drives us to confession. If you want more Christ, try more confession. If you want more confession, try more Christ.

Plead God's covenant name. God loves to hear prayers that are driven by concern for his glory. That's what we mean when we sign off every prayer with "in Jesus name" or "for Jesus sake."

COVENANT CONFESSION CALLS
TO THE COVENANT CHRIST



Hear God's Story > Change your Story > Tell the Story



CONCLUSION



PRAYER: Covenanter, we confess our covenant breaking has brought your just discipline, upon us, but we come to Christ the Covenant Keeper for covenant mercy. Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did your view of God's covenant change with this sermon?
2. How does the definition of covenant help you avoid legalism?
3. Why is confession of sin so hard for us?
4. How can we improve the frequency and fruitfulness of our confession?
5. Write out a prayer that reflects the definitions of repentance in the two catechisms.
6. What do you mean when you say at the end of a prayer "For Jesus sake" or "In Jesus name"?

First Byron Christian Reformed Church
8541 Byron Center Ave SW, Byron Center, MI 49315
Phone: (616) 878-9768
www.firstbyroncrc.org

Pastor David Murray
www.HeadHeartHand.org
www.livingthebible.net