

TIMES AND SEASONS. WEEK THREE: WEATHER THE WINTER

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: John 15:1-8, Jeremiah 5:24-25, Isaiah 60:18-22, Psalm 23:1-6

DURING THE WINTER SEASON, GOD WANTS TO...

1. PREPARE YOU FOR SOMETHING (SO RECEIVE IT)

- Pastor Steven quoted a poem, 'O wind, if winter comes, can spring be far behind...' In other words, the winter season always prepares the way for the spring. The same applies in the way that God uses our 'winters' to prepare us for something.
- 'Keep showing up in the cold. Keep doing the last thing He told you to do. He's preparing you for something.'

2. PRUNE YOU FOR SOMETHING (SO REMAIN IN IT)

- Pastor Steven preached, 'Belonging to God doesn't mean that there won't be cold seasons, but it just means that we have Him with us when we do.'

3. PROVE SOMETHING THROUGH YOU (SO ALLOW HIM TO REVEAL GOD'S GLORY)

- We often think that our growth takes place when we're on top of the mountain. Instead, it's in the greatest valley where the growth of our soul happens. It's always greenest in the valley. We must change our perspective and 'give your grief a job to do.'
- Believe that the season is to my Father's glory...that you bear much fruit, that you reveal the glory of our God in how He is proving something through you, just as John 15:8 explains.

Refresher from last time:



Our mindset
Our very nature



The real you - Life in the Spirit

- Force of righteousness despite the pull to other places
- Filled with the Holy Spirit and you have had a heart transplant, You desire what God desires.
- Gal 5: The fruit of the spirit is Love, Joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, and self control.
- The step to freedom after years in captivity

OR

The illusion - The SARX State:

- Hard to translate – the sinful nature of man. Literally = the flesh.
- The lust of the flesh
- We are God instead submitting to God.
- The state of despair.
- Desire for pleasure > desire for God.
- The habits and customs of your prior self.

The Christmas Challenge

Romans 8:

14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to son-ship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Small Group Discussion:

- 1. What do you think is “A Covenant Relationship” means?**
- 2. What is a covenant relationship vs. a non-covenant relationship.**

Deuteronomy 29:

2 Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them:

9 Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do. 10 All of you are standing today in the presence of the Lord your God—your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, 11 together with your children and your wives, and the foreigners living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water. 12 You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the Lord your God, a covenant the Lord is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, 13 to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. 14 I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you 15 who are standing here with us today in the presence of the Lord our God but also with those who are not here today.

16 You yourselves know how we lived in Egypt and how we passed through the countries on the way here. 17 You saw among them their detestable images and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold. 18 Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the Lord our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison.

There are only Two Types of Relationships

Consumer Relationships

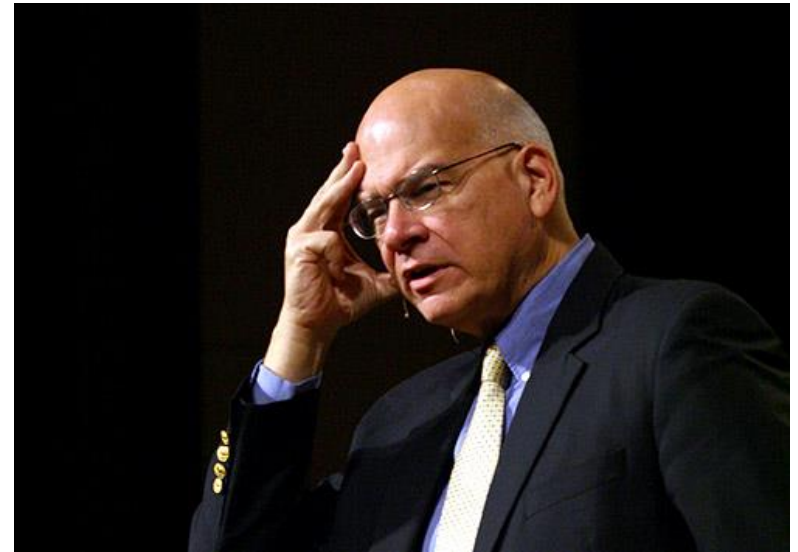
- I am in this thing as long as you are meeting my needs.
- Everything is ordered around the experiencing individual self.
- Everything is about the happiness and fulfilment of the individual self.
- Your fulfilment and happiness is an individual right and a means to an end vs. all other institutions and relationship.

Covenant Relationships

- One of the last things Moses says just before he dies in Deut: "you need to be in covenant relationship with God."
- The relationship is more important than my needs.
- "A relationship that is more loving than a merely legal relationship, yet more binding, enduring, and accountable than a merely personal relationship."
- "It is a stunning blend of law and love. It is stunning because it is personal relationship made more loving and intimate because it is legal."
- Through binding and mutual vows to be loving and faithful no matter the circumstances.
- Note profiled well in modern society.
- "The most profound, most joyful, most life changing, most deep, and glorious relationships are covenantal relationships".

The main point by Dr. Timothy Keller:

"If the most profound, most joyful, most life changing, and glorious relationships are covenantal relationships, then your relationship with God has to be through and through a covenantal relationship. However, modern people have trouble mixing law and love together. The modern person say: I am spiritual but I am not religious. This means that I am spiritual and want a relationship with God, however, I do not want a covenantal relationship with God. . . . However, the bible says that that is impossible since the only relationship God wants is a covenantal relationship. In his relationship with Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, etc., it is always a covenantal relationship."



This mixture of law and love - A source of perpetual tension in the bible:

The Conservative view (Just the law) (His Holiness)

- All covenantal relationships have terms and conditions. Rewards come in form of blessings. Penalties come in the form of curses.
- Penalties keep people honest and puts backbone in God's word.
- In every book in the bible, God says I can not bless a disobedient people. I am must not wink at Guilt, I am just judge. You must obey.
- Be like a Sadducee.

The liberal view (Just the love) (His Faithfulness)

- In every book in the bible, God also says I will never leave you, never give up on you, and I will never forsake you.
- Love is the reality and law and the law is secondary (extreme relativism).
- No worries because in the end, God loves us.

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- No worries because in the end God loves us.

So who's right?

Quote from Michael Wilcock: "It is almost as if God says I have sworn to bless you and I have also sworn to not bless a disobedient people. What is this you have done to me and but what fearful means am I to solve this situation. "

\$ question: Where in the bible does God provide the answer?

Or better stated, are the blessings of God conditional (focus on the law of God) or unconditional (focus on the love of God)

Gen: 15

The Lord’s Covenant With Abram

6 Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

7 He also said to him, “I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.”

8 But Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

9 So the Lord said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.”

10 Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other;

17 When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates— ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰ Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹ Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.”

The wisdom of Paul:

Roman 4:

4 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? 2 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. 3 What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

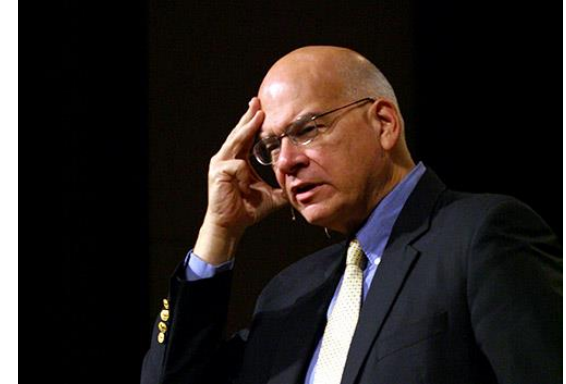
Gal 3:

26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Listen to podcast: 18 min to 2.2 min “the biblical balance and the curse of the covenant” by Dr. Keller.

The main point by Dr. Timothy Keller:

This is answer to riddle: "If you understand this finally: It will lead you into paradoxical obedience (until you grasp covenant theology concept where you no longer look at the law as conditional or unconditionally). Once you understand that Jesus fulfilled the covenant at radical and infinite cost to himself, you can be loved unconditionally. You need to understand the laws of the covenant because Jesus died for them. But, when I fail in following the laws of the covenant (and I will fail), **I know there is no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus.** My obedience is way to thank God but it is not my way into God. Once you understand that Jesus completely filled the terms of the covenant with his perfect life. With his death he filled the curse of the covenant. And this leaves the blessing for you and for me and for anyone that lifts the empty hands of faith and asks for it. Jesus fulfilled the terms of the covenant so that we could be received unconditionally."



Romans 8:1

**A more detailed look at scripture
from Romans 8, Romans 4, Judges 2,
Gen 15, Gal 3**

Deuteronomy 29:

2 Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them:

9 Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do. 10 All of you are standing today in the presence of the Lord your God—your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, 11 together with your children and your wives, and the foreigners living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water. 12 You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the Lord your God, a covenant the Lord is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, 13 to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. 14 I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you 15 who are standing here with us today in the presence of the Lord our God but also with those who are not here today.

16 You yourselves know how we lived in Egypt and how we passed through the countries on the way here. 17 You saw among them their detestable images and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold. 18 Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the Lord our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison.

Judges 2

New International Version (NIV)

The Angel of the Lord at Bokim

2 The angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land I swore to give to your ancestors. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you, 2 and you shall not make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars.' Yet you have disobeyed me. Why have you done this? 3 And I have also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; they will become traps for you, and their gods will become snares to you.'"

4 When the angel of the Lord had spoken these things to all the Israelites, the people wept aloud, 5 and they called that place Bokim. There they offered sacrifices to the Lord.

Disobedience and Defeat6 After Joshua had dismissed the Israelites, they went to take possession of the land, each to their own inheritance. 7 The people served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the Lord had done for Israel.

8 Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of a hundred and ten. 9 And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

10 After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. 11 Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals. 12 They forsook the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They aroused the Lord's anger 13 because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. 14 In his anger against Israel the Lord gave them into the hands of raiders who plundered them. He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. 15 Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the Lord was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. They were in great distress. 16 Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. 17 Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. They quickly turned from the ways of their ancestors, who had been obedient to the Lord's commands.

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10 Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other;

¹⁷ When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates— ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰ Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹ Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.”

Romans 4

New International Version (NIV)

Abraham Justified by Faith

4 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? 2 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. 3 What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

4 Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. 5 However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. 6 David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

7 “Blessed are those
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

8 Blessed is the one
whose sin the Lord will never count against them.”

18 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” 19 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. 22 This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” 23 The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, 24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Galatians 3 (New International Version (NIV))

Faith or Works of the Law

3 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. 2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? 4 Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain? 5 So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard? 6 So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

7 Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. 8 Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” 9 So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

10 For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” 11 Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.” 12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.” 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.” 14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Children of God

23 Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. 24 So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. 25 Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Detailed notes from Dr. Timothy Keller’s “A Covenant Relationship”

Romans 8

New International Version (NIV)

Life Through the Spirit

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 **The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.** 7 The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

9 You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. 11 **And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.**

12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to son-ship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Present Suffering and Future Glory

18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to son-ship, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

More Than Conquerors

31 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? 33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Detailed notes from Dr. Timothy Keller’s “A Covenant Relationship”

A Covenant Relationship by Dr. Timothy Keller

- See Deuteronomy 29:2-4 and 9-18.
- Deuteronomy is a series on sermons that Moses preached just before he died.
- One of the last thing Moses says in the later part of Deuteronomy is you need to be in covenant relationship with God.
- If Moses felt that this was so important, would be good for us to understand what Moses was saying.
- In this passage of Deuteronomy 29, there are three points that help us understand what is a covenant relationship with God.
 - The uniqueness of the covenant:
 - The mystery surrounding the covenant
 - The hero of the covenant.
- The uniqueness of the covenant: This term is not archaic. We think this term is archaic because modern society and culture does not even have a category for it anymore. If you want to understand Deut 29: 12 and beginning of vs. 13. Notice the language of love and intimacy. Ex: “We are his people.” “He is our God.” Also see the language of Law. Ex: “sealing with an oath.” So what is a covenant? A relationship that is more loving than a merely legal relationship, yet more binding, enduring, and accountable than a merely personal relationship. It is a stunning blend of law and love. It is stunning because it is personal relationship made more loving and intimate because it is legal. Through binding and mutual vows to be loving and faithful no matter the circumstances.
- There is not category like this in modern society. In modern society we see two things: a. Everything is ordered around the experiencing individual self. b. Everything is about the happiness and fulfillment of the individual self. c. Your fulfillment and happiness is an individual right and a means to an end vs. all other institutions and relationship.

A Covenant Relationship by Dr. Timothy Keller

- Relationships today in modern society: A consumer relationship. I will be the person I should be as long as and to the degree that you are what you should be. And if you are not, I am out.
- However, in covenant relationship: Two people look at each other and say: The relationship is more important than my needs. Both sides of a relationship say: I will be committed to your needs. I will be committed to the relationship even when my needs are not being met at the moment. I give you my independence and part of my freedom as a gift of love. I am after your needs and I am not after my needs. I will sacrifice for you.
- Most would agree that the covenant relationship is far more fulfilling, deep, life changing, and joyful.
- What is consumer relationship: I am in this thing as long as you are meeting my needs.
- Not all relationships ought not to be covenant relationships. We all need to have consumer relationships.
- The main point: If the most profound, most joyful, most life changing, most deep, and glorious relationships are covenantal relationships, then your relationship with God has to be through and through a covenantal relationship. It has to be.
- However, modern people have trouble mixing law and love together. The modern person says: I am spiritual but I am not religious. This means that I am spiritual and want a relationship with God, however, I do not want a covenantal relationship with God. I do not want to go to church, I do not want to listen to people that tell me what I have to believe. I do not want to give up my freedom in determining what is right or wrong for me.
- However, the bible says that that is impossible since the only relationship God wants is a covenantal relationship. In his relationship with Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, etc, it is always a covenantal relationship. A profound mixture of law and love that is the only way to relate to God.
- 2nd point: There is mystery surrounding this covenantal relationship.

A Covenant Relationship by Dr. Timothy Keller

- All covenantal relationships have terms and conditions. Rewards come in the form of blessings. If you violate the terms of the relationship, there are penalties or and the bible calls curses.
- See vs. 9 -
- See vs. 18 – make sure you follow the conditions
- Penalties keep people honest and puts backbone in your commitment.
- See 20: The Lord will never forgive him _____ . What good is a God where there are no penalties?
- This cuts into the very central heart of the bible.
- In every book in the bible, God says I can not bless a disobedient people. I am must not wink at Guilt, I am just judge. You must obey.
- In every book in the bible, God also say I will never leave you, never give up on you, and I will never forsake you.
- This is the perceivable irreconcilable tension, this irresolvable tension is the plot line of all the other plot lines in the bible. It is the thing that propels the narrative of the bible forward.
- When his people fail him again and again and again, one often asks, will God give into his people and accept what they do and therefore compromise the validity of his holiness or will God give up on his people and give up on his faithfulness.
- Are the blessings of God conditional or unconditional? This is the question.
- The problem is that bible gives contradictory answers. And on occasion comes across as irreconcilable. Most people follow the bible in either a. A liberal way – yes you need to obey and bed good – however in the end, God loves everybody and accepts everybody. b. The conservative side: yes, God is very loving, but in the end, you have to be good, or God will not love you.
- People tend to come down on one side or the other.

A Covenant Relationship by Dr. Timothy Keller

- Conservative view point: Law is the reality and love is secondary (extreme moralism).
- Liberal view point: Love is the reality and law and the law is secondary (extreme relativism).
- These two views result in our slide to moralism or relativism. To being a sadducee or pharisee. This result and us being guilt ridden and giving up or saying that no worries, just loves us in the end.
- The Bible tends to not resolve this in Old Testament scripture.
- Most people do not follow the biblical balance. We read the bible in either in a liberal way or a conservative way. Most default to be a sadducee or pharisee.
- See Judges 2:1 and 2:3. I will never give up on you. If you fail me, I will not bless you.
- See quote from Michael Wilcock: *"It is almost as if God says I have sworn to bless you and I have also sworn to not bless a disobedient people. What is this you have done to me and but what fearful means am I to solve this situation. "*
- See Judge 2:13. He may be your God as he promised you his Covenant to Abraham.
- See Gen 15. The very heart of what the bible is all about. How can I be sure.
- We are utterly confused by the process of cutting 3 yr old animals into two and arranging them in to rows. The custom here is important: Back in the day: When a great lord wanted to make a covenant with a servant, animals were slain and the servant walked through the rows if animals while expressing his commitment to his lord. Basically saying, If I do not keep my promise, may I be cut into pieces like this. When Abraham cut up the animals, he was expecting to walk through the rows of animals in order to confirm his loyalty to God. Then the darkness came down and God walked through the pieces. This is entirely unexpected.
- God is saying: I will bless you and I will die and be torn to pieces if I do not.
- The ceremony ended with the servant not even having to take the oath. Here God is talking the oath for both of them.

A Covenant Relationship by Dr. Timothy Keller

- God was talking the curse of the covenant for both of them. God was saying not only will I be torn to pieces if I do not keep my promise, I will be torn to pieces if you don't.
- God is saying: Oh World, I will bless you even if my immortality must become mortal, even if my glory must be drowned in darkness, even if I have to be literally torn to pieces. And He was since centuries later, darkness came down on Mount Calvary and in the mist of the darkness was Jesus Christ being literally torn to pieces.
- Why: Because Jesus was taking the covenant course as in Gen 15.
- See Paul: Romans 4: This is ultimate blend of law and love. Are the blessing of God conditional or unconditional? Answer: Yes. Because, when Jesus died on the cross, he absolutely satisfied the conditions of the law and extended his absolute unconditional love for us. Jesus filled the conditions of the covenant so that we could be received unconditionally.
- See Paul Gal 3:
- This is answer to riddle.
- If you understand this finally: It will lead you into paradoxical obedience (until you grasp covenant theology concept where you no longer look at the law as conditional or unconditionally). This leads to obedience and trust. Once you understand that Jesus fulfilled the covenant at radical and infinite cost to himself, you can be loved unconditionally. You need to understand the laws of the covenant because Jesus died for them. But, when I fail in following the laws of the covenant (and I will fail), **I know there is no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus.** My obedience is way to thank God but it is not my way into God.
- Once you understand that Jesus completely filled the terms of the covenant with his perfect life. With is death he filled the curse of the covenant. And this leaves the blessing for you and for me and for anyone that lifts the empty hands of faith and asks for it.
- Jesus fulfilled the terms of the covenant so that we could be received unconditionally.