

## The Covenant of Grace: The Triumph of Grace

### I. A future beyond exile

- If Israel has violated the covenant and brought the curses of the covenant on themselves, what future do they have?
  - In the exodus and conquest, God gave them what he promised to Abraham (land, seed, covenant relationship), and David (king and temple), but they rejected him and chose their sin. Is there any hope now?
- The prophets say yes: the very ones who declare God's judgment also declare that God will do a great future deliverance.
  - Isa 57:16: "For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry."
  - Jer 31:28: "And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring harm, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, declares the LORD."
  - There will be a new exodus (Jer 23:8), a new return to the land (Jer 30:3), a new abundance of offspring (Isa 54:3), a new covenant (Jer 31:33), a new son of David reigning (Ezek 37:24), and a new temple (Ezek 40-48).
  - Indeed, God promises to do *more* in the return from exile than he did the first time (Deut 30:5): he will write his law on their hearts (Jer 31:33), circumcise their hearts (Deut 30:6), and give them the Spirit (Joel 2:28).
  - This new kingdom of God will *never end* (Isa 51:6; Dan 2:44; Joel 2:27).

### II. The drive towards the future hope: God's steadfast love

- The same character trait of God that brought about the first exodus will also bring about the second and ultimate exodus: *his commitment to the covenant with Abraham* (Exod 2:24).
- The OT calls this loving covenant commitment God's *hesed* ("steadfast love" in ESV). Even after all his people's sin, God will still keep covenant with Abraham.
  - "Steadfast love" definition: God's gracious and persistent commitment to his covenant promises.
  - Deut 7:9 "Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love"
- We always knew that God was great in steadfast love, and that his steadfast love was the key to his forgiveness.
  - Exod 34:6-7: what other attributes is "steadfast love" joined to?
  - Echoes of Exod 34:6-7 at critical junctures (all having to do with their need for grace and forgiveness): Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2.
- But now we see how great is God's steadfast love. It is the turning point of history. Specifically, it is the reason for the end of exile:
  - Lev 26:40-45: when Israel repents in exile, God will remember Abraham.
  - Mic 7:18-20: God is not angry forever because he delights in steadfast love.
  - Isa 54:8: God's steadfast love causes him to have compassion.
  - Isa 54:10: God's steadfast love will never depart from them.
  - Ps 106:45: God relented from his wrath according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

- Lam 3:22, 32: what does the lamenter call to mind after judgment to give him hope?
- Individuals also claim God’s steadfast love as their only hope for God’s forgiveness:
  - Ps 6:4 “save me for the sake of your *steadfast love*.”
  - Ps 23:6 “Surely goodness and mercy [=steadfast love!] shall follow me all the days of my life...”
  - Ps 25:7 “Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your *steadfast love* remember me”
  - Ps 51:1 “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your *steadfast love*”
  - Ps 103:11 “For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his *steadfast love* toward those who fear him” and that’s why they are forgiven!
- God’s steadfast love is therefore the central OT confession of faith.
  - Ps 118:1–4: Let all Israel say, “his steadfast love endures forever.”
  - Ps 136: every verse ends with “his steadfast love endures forever.”
  - This functions much like “Jesus is Lord” for us in the new covenant.
- NOTE: “steadfast love” is just *one* of the great redemptive words of the OT. There’s also “compassion” and “graciousness” and “faithfulness.”

### III. The future hope realized in Christ

- If “steadfast love” is so important in the OT, where do we see it in the NT?
- The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) usually translated *hesed* as “mercy.” How do these NT passages read differently if we’re thinking about “mercy” as God’s steadfast covenant commitment?
  - Luke 1:72 God will save us “to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant.”
  - Tit 3:5 “he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy...”
  - 1 Pet 1:3 “According to [the Father’s] great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...”
- The NT is the triumph of God’s gracious “steadfast love” to Abraham and David. What Christ accomplishes in his death and resurrection is nothing less than the ultimate fulfillment of God’s ancient promises to Abraham and David.
  - Abraham: Luke 1:55, **73**; Acts 3:25; Rom **4:13**; Gal 3:8, **14, 29**
  - David: see handout from class #7.
  - Gal 3:18; Tit 3:5: The covenant comes about not by our works, but by God’s commitment to his promise.
- **Conclusion:** you and I are saved because God was graciously and lovingly faithful to the promise he made to Abraham long ago. *His covenant-keeping in the face of our covenant-breaking is our salvation.*
- Application: what implications does this have for...
  - How we pray for forgiveness?
  - Our sense of assurance of salvation?
    - 2 Tim 2:13: “if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.”
  - What we understand as driving God’s ordering of your life?
  - The Christian virtue of integrity?