



MOUNT MERRION FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
(BELFAST NORTHERN IRELAND).



Pulpit Ministry of Mount Merrion Free Presbyterian Church

Lord's Day Morning 30th December 2008.

Series 'God's Covenant Heritage'

No.3. "The Trustee and Legacy of The Covenant."

Scripture Reading 1Peter Ch 1:1-12; Eph Ch1:3

By. Rev. Paul Thompson.

One of the pivotal points of Covenant Theology is Christ's Covenant Headship (*the representational nature of Christ*), that Christ and His people are one. All of the apostles recognised that in that truth alone there exists an unchangeable Covenant bond between Christ and His Church, sealed by the "*Blood of the Everlasting Covenant*" [Heb Ch13:20]. All that we are and have is because of Christ, we receive nothing by way of spiritual benefit except by way of Christ! Our redemption is in Christ Jesus [Eph Ch1:7], our Justification is through His blood [Rom Ch5:9], our sanctification and righteousness is inextricably connected to Him [1 Cor Ch1:30]. Outside of Christ, without our covenant union to Him we are and have nothing. We cannot fully understand how close the tie is between Christ and His people, 1 John Ch4:17, "*As He is so are we in this world*" [loved and cared as Christ is loved]; John Ch17:21-23 [the oneness of Christ and His people]. Because of Christ's Covenant headship and the Covenant oneness between the Church and Christ all things that He has earned by His obedience [promised by the father] immediately pass down to us by means of Christ's representation.

The Covenant of Grace is a '*Covenant of Promise*' [Eph Ch2;12]. It includes many promises, promises that in their immediate application are made to Christ as the Covenant Head of His Elect, these include, [*A prepared Body Heb Ch10:5*]; [*Strength to overcome Satan Gen Ch3:15*]; [*A promised seed, the Church Ps 22:27*]; [*Rule over all things Ps 110:1*]; [*Exaltation John Ch17;24, Phil Ch2:8-11*]. However, there are other promises that are directly related to the elect themselves, those who are God's Heritage, [*the Church*] these promises form a legacy which will be bequeathed upon those with Christ in the Covenant of Grace, as a result of Christ's obedience. The legacy that Adam passed upon mankind as a result of his disobedience was death, yet under the new Covenant Christ has secured a bountiful legacy for His Church. Some of the initial promises are [*Faith and repentance Eph Ch1:7 Ch2:8*]; [*Forgiveness Heb Ch8:12*]; [*Holy Spirit Ezek Ch36:26-27*]; [*Heaven Rev Ch21:3*]. Though there be a diversity of promises, in the words of John Brown of Haddington the Covenant of Grace "*is one continued promise, or cluster, or constellation of promises*" to the elect of God. Such is the oneness between Christ and His Church, all those promises which are made specifically to Christ are made to the advantage of His people, likewise every promise that is made to the elect "*terminates in His glory and joy.*" [Ps 22:27-31; Isa 53:10-12; Isa 42:1-6; Isa 49:1-12].

Turn to John Ch15 [the vine and the branches]. The life of the branch is fully dependent upon the vine, from the vine all life, vitality and sustenance is drawn... "*without me ye can do nothing*" [spiritually]. Without Christ the vine, we are dead and dry. Covenant Grace has placed me in Christ, and it is covenant grace that keeps me there. '*I live, yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me!*' We cannot be blessed or be a blessing except through Christ! Paul recognised this in Eph Ch1:3, that the Father "*hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ.*"

Paul's language in Eph Ch1:3 signifies his acknowledgment that it is God the Father who has initiated the Covenant of Grace, but He has also made Christ the '*Trustee of the Covenant*', that Christ alone has the power to dispense all spiritual blessings on God's Covenant Heritage.

1) The Trustee of the Covenant.

Turn to Heb Ch9:15, "*And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament.*" The word '*Testament*' is '*Covenant.*' the purpose of the covenant was the redemption of those under the first testament or covenant, i.e. the '*covenant of works*' and that they being redeemed "*might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*" Paul informs us that where there is a '*testament*' or '*will*', the release of the promised legacy requires the death of the testator v16. A man's will and last testament is of no effect while he is alive, [*no benefit to those who are the legatees*] only when the testator is dead do the trustees of the Covenant have the right to administer the promised legacy. Christ is the testator of the New Covenant, He is the legal guardian of the promised inheritance of the saints, but by His death He has released the legacy of the Covenant, and by His resurrection He has the right to be the trustee who bequeaths and administers the legacy of the Covenant on the beneficiaries of the Covenant, i.e. those who are His Church. Christ is both testator and trustee, that is why Peter using similar language to Paul states in 1 Pet Ch1:3-4, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...which hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...*" Peter acknowledged that God was the initiator of the Covenant and that Christ was the trustee who bequeaths the benefits of the Covenant of Grace on His people! The necessity of Christ's death, by His death Christ has

*"Grace is nothing but an introduction of the virtues of God into the soul."
...Thomas Manton...*

opened up a fountainhead of blessings! What does that legacy include?

2) The Legacy of The Covenant.

Isa 49:1-12. The Covenant Legacy that Christ bequeaths to His children includes many promises, some of which are:

a) The gathering in of His People.

V8 Isaiah Ch49:8 is referring to Christ's being sent to the Gentiles to gather out of them His people. He speaks of them as being "*The desolate heritages.*" He knows that in the purpose of God there are those of the Gentile nations who are His, and He must gather them. The gathering in of Christ's people is something that is made sure by both the Father's will and Christ's death! (i) God's Purpose - [Eph Ch1:10], "*He might gather together in one all things in Christ both which are in heaven and on earth*" [see also Gen Ch49:10, "*Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.*"]. The Father's promise to gather His people is made both to and in Christ. (ii) Christ's Death - [John Ch11:51-52], "*Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only but that He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.*"

1 Peter Ch1:20, "Christ foreknown before the world, His people foreknown also, us with Christ and Christ with us! Even before they were born, Christ had His eye upon the unborn Covenant seed, He came to seek and save them! His eye continued to be upon them in their pre-conversion state, many have testified that, '*there were times when I should have been taken away but something preserved me, and here I am now saved.*'" Christ preserving His people! The body and soul will both be redeemed, they are guarded. Christ has purchased them (*the redemption of the body Rom Ch8:23; 1 Thess Ch4:14; 1 Cor Ch6:15-20*). Application to the suffering saint - the Body purchased with the soul will one day be freed from its diseases! - As the unseen guardian of His people it was His intention to gather you.

b) The Sanctification of His People.

1 Cor Ch1:30, Christ has bought sanctification for His people, He is renewing us after His own image. Even though sin abides in every part, '*perpetual lustings of the flesh, temptations.*' yet because of the unchanging covenant promise to sanctify His Church we do not and cannot finally fall away from Grace, but are preserved by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

c) The Security of His People. V14-16, "*Yet will I not forget thee.*"

A recurring theme of the Covenant. v14 because of His love cannot forget them! Zion [an emblematic term used of the Church] believes God to have forsaken it. Isaiah uses the strongest possible comparison derived from human instincts to display the constant, perpetual, undying love for Zion. "*I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands [dual usage - not out of view], thy walls are continually before me.*" The imprints on Christ's hands cry out "My People, My Church!" Thy walls [thy safety] are my continual care!

d) The Sustenance of His People. V9-10, "*They shall feed in the ways...They shall not hunger nor thirst...neither shall the heat nor sun smite them*"

The imagery of sheep [the flock of God 1Pet Ch5:3]. "*They shall not hunger nor thirst...*" Parallel passage Rev Ch 7:16-17. A careful attentive shepherd, supplies that which is necessary, even when earthly resources fail [Elisha 1Kings Ch17:16; The 5000 men fed Matt Ch14 etc]. Particularly seen with Israel [*a type of the Church*], the provision of manna and water, the pillar of Cloud by day shielding them from the scorching Sun! This is yours Child of God by Covenant promise! Knowing this believer you can do as Peter says, "*Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you!*"

e) The Guidance of His People. v11&17

Ch48:17, "*I am the Lord thy God...which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.*" Ch49:11, "*And I will make all my mountains a way.*" - All obstacles removed en-route to obtaining our legated inheritance.

f) The Glorification of His People. v10

For God's people to be in a place where they are free from oppression (*the heat of the day*), but are guided to refreshing pools of water they must be with Him in Glory. John Ch17:24, '*My will is that they be with me.*' Rev Ch7:16-17, the pastor made redundant in heaven. In Rom Ch8:17 Paul spoke of glorification as something in the present tense yet it is a future occurrence, so sure was he of the promise of God made to

*"We must believe in the Grace of Sovereignty as well as the sovereignty of Grace."
...Augustus Strong...*

Christ, [again the effects of the covenant promise are seen to terminate on the people of God, i.e. ‘a guaranteed glorification’].

Application - As a beneficiary you have the right to claim all that Christ has dispensed in His Testament. When you hear the word of God preached and read you are hearing the testament and will of Christ! He has died for it, He has sealed it with His blood and He wants you as His children to enjoy the benefits of all that He has secured! The blood of Christ is *the Validating authority* for you to possess this incorruptible inheritance which Christ has purchased for you. The words of the teenage Covenanter girl stopped by English Red Coats ¹“*My elder brother has died and I am going to hear his last will and testament being read and claim my part in the inheritance*” [referring to the preaching of the word]. A strong judgement on preaching, all preaching must be Christological, it must set before believers Christ’s testament and apply it to them and have them see that this is theirs to possess! Its earthly administration is by Pastors, I will give thee Pastors which shall feed thee with knowledge and understanding, an understanding of the Covenant Legacy which I bequeath to you my beloved!
Further Study.

- Larger Catechism Questions 31-36, 77; Shorter Catechism Q20; Westminster Confession Ch7 God’s Covenant with Man; Spiritual Union and Communion by A.W. Pink.

By. Paul Thompson.

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.”

Hebrews 10:16

¹ The Power of The Blood Covenant By Malcolm Smith pp.172