

THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION Chapter 9 Its Arrangement-Concluded

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Transcript

THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

Chapter 9

Its Arrangement-Concluded

Consider now Christ's relation to the covenant. 1. He is the very substance of it. "I will give Him for a covenant of the people" (Isa. 49:8): as He is our "propitiation" (1 John 2:1) and "peace" (Eph. 2:14) so He is our covenant. 2. He is the Witness of the covenant (Isa. 55:3,4) for He saw, heard and testified it all, and therefore is He termed "the faithful and true Witness" (Rev. 3:14). 3. He is "the Prince of the covenant" (Dan. 11:22), called "Messiah The Prince" (Dan. 9:25), because He is given the royal right to administer it. 4. He is "the Messenger of the Covenant" (Dan. 9:25), because He is given the royal right to administer it. 4. He is "the Messenger of the covenant" (Mal. 3:1), acting as God's "Apostle" to us (Heb. 3:1) and our Representative before God. 5. He is the "Surety of the covenant" —"testament" is the same Greek word (Heb. 7:26)—because He engaged Himself to discharge the obligations of His people, its coventees. 6. He is "the Mediator of the covenant" (Heb. 8:6) because He stands between and serves both parties—God and His people. 7. He is the Testator of the covenant (Heb. 9:16, 17) because He has sealed it with His blood. Consider its various and descriptive designations. 1. It is an "everlasting covenant" (Heb. 13:20) because it was entered into before all worlds and because its blessings shall be administered and enjoyed in perpetuity. 2. It is a "covenant of salt" (Num. 18:19; 2 Chron. 13:5) because it is incorruptible, inviolable, perpetual; because its provisions season us and makes all our services savory to God. 3. It is a "covenant of peace" (Isa. 54:10) for therein Christ engaged to pacify the Divine Judge, remove the enmity of His people, and effect a mutual reconciliation. 4. It is a "new covenant" (Jer. 31:31) for it secures for His people a new standing before God, makes them new creatures in Christ and puts a new song in their mouths. 5. It is a "covenant of life" (Mal. 2:5) for by its terms life is promised, restored and given more abundantly. 6. It is a "holy covenant" (Luke 1:72) manifesting the ineffable purity of God in all its arrangements. 7. It is a covenant "of promise" (Eph. 2:12) both to Christ and His seed. In view of what has just been pointed out well may we adopt the language of O. Winslow and say, "This covenant must be rich in its provisions of mercy, seeing it is made by Jehovah Himself, the Fountain of all holiness, goodness, mercy and truth whose very essence is 'Love.' It must be glorious, because the second Person in the blessed Trinity became its Surety. It must be stable, because it is eternal. It must meet all the circumstances of a necessitous Church, because it is 'ordered in all things.' ' It must be sure, seeing its

administration is in the hands of an infinitely glorious Mediator, who died to secure it, rose again to confirm it, and ever lives to dispense its blessings as the circumstances of the saints require." To which might be added, it must be inviolable, since the eternal God is its Author, and the precious blood of Christ has sealed it. And therefore it should be "all my salvation and all my desire" (2 Sam. 23:5), for what more could I ask or wish! Returning now to the covenant promises which the Father made unto the Mediator. In addition to those considered in our last, Christ was assured of a "seed." "When You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed" (Isa. 53:10). In the previous verses we are shown what was required from Christ in the discharge of His covenant engagements; here we have revealed the reward which the Father bestowed upon Him because of His fidelity. In the last three verses of this wonderful chapter we also behold the prophet replying to the Jews, who regarded the cross as a "stumblingblock," being scandalized at the idea of their Messiah suffering such an ignominious death. But it is here pointed out that Christ's crucifixion is not to be accounted an infamy to Him because it was the very means, ordained by God, whereby He propagated unto Himself a spiritual seed. He had Himself pointed out, "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone; but if it die, it brings forth much fruit" (John 12:24). Observe well that in Isaiah 53:10 it was promised Him "He shall see His seed" which, coming immediately after "when You shall make His soul an offering for sin," clearly implied His resurrection; accordingly this is more explicitly stated in what at once follows: "He shall prolong His days." The figure is used again in the next verse. "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." "A woman when she is in travail has sorrow because her hour is come. But as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more her travail, for joy that a man is born into the world" (John 16:21), considering her sufferings to be more than recompensed by the happy issue of them. So the Redeemer deems Himself richly rewarded for all His pains by the children which are His as the result of His dying travail. He is "satisfied" and "rejoices" (Luke 15:7) as each one of them is brought forth. "This seed" which was promised Christ occupies a prominent place in the great Covenant Psalm—the 89th. There we hear the Father saying, "I have made a covenant with My Chosen, I have sworn unto David My Servant, Your seed will I establish forever" (vv. 3, 4). And again, "I will make Him My Firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for Him for evermore and My covenant shall stand fast with Him. His seed will I make to endure forever" (vv. 27-29). In the verses that follow His "seed" are termed "His children," and assurance is given that though they be wayward and the rod be visited upon their transgressions, yet God's covenant faithfulness shall be seen in their preservation (vv. 31-36). In the Cross Psalm it was declared "A seed shall serve Him, it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation" (22:30). It was to be a perpetual seed. "His name shall be continued as long as the sun" (Ps. 72:17). Christ then was assured by the Father from the beginning of the success of His undertaking and promised a seed which should bear His image, serve Him, and show forth His praises. "I will bring Your seed from the east and gather You from the west. I will say to the north to give up, and to the south keep not back; bring My sons from far and My daughters from the ends of the earth" (Isa. 43:5,6). Though they are born into this world in a state of unregeneracy, God promised they should be born again and savingly drawn to embrace Christ as their Lord and Savior. "Your people (said the Father to the Mediator—see v. 1) shall be willing in the day of Your power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning You have the dew of Your youth" (Ps. 110:3). Yet again, Christ is represented as saying "Behold I and the children whom the Lord has given Me" (quoted by the apostle of Christ in Heb. 2:13) are for signs and for wonders in Israel, for the Lord of hosts which dwells in mount Zion (Isa. 8:18). As there are two parts of the covenant so the elect were given to Christ in a twofold manner. As He was to fulfill the terms of the covenant they were entrusted to Him as a charge, but in fulfillment of it the Father promised to Christ to bestow them upon Him as a reward. The elect are to be regarded, first, as those who were beloved of the Father before time began.

They are designated "God's own elect" (Greek of Luke 18:9), which signifies both His delight with and singular propriety in them. He chose them before all others: He preferred them above all others, and set His heart upon them. As such the Father gave them to Christ as God-man Mediator—"set up" in the Divine councils and therefore having a real subsistence—as a choice expression of His love for Him. Second, they are to be regarded as God fore-viewed them under their defection in Adam, and as such God gave them as a charge to Christ to be raised up from all the ruins of the fall, and also as a reward for His work on their behalf. The twofoldness of Truth needs ever to be borne in mind. Viewed as fallen the elect were given to Christ as a charge for whose salvation He was held responsible. They were committed to Him as "prisoners" (Isa. 49:9), whose lawful discharge He must obtain. They were committed to Him as desperate patients, whom He must bind up and heal (Isa. 61:1). They were committed to Him as straying and lost sheep (Isa. 53:6), whom He must seek out and bring into the fold (John 10:16). God placed His elect in the hands of the Mediator and made them His care. How graciously and tenderly He discharged His trust appears in that touching word "He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd, He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isa. 40:10,11). It appears again in that wonderful word "And when He has found it, He lays it on His shoulders rejoicing" (Luke 15:5). Finally, it was evidenced at the moment of His arrest. "If therefore you seek Me, let those go their way, that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, Of them which You gave Me have I lost none" (John 18:8, 9). On the fulfillment of His covenant engagement that people were given to Christ as His reward, as the fruit of His travail, as the trophies of His glorious victory over sin, Satan and death, as His crown of rejoicing in the day when all the inhabitants of the universe shall be assembled together, as His beloved and glorious Bride when the marriage of the Lamb is come. In contemplation of this God made certain promises to the Surety concerning them. He promised to bestow upon them the gift of eternal life. "Paul a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledging of the Truth which is after godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:1, 2). As the elect then had no actual existence, that promise must have been made in their name to the Surety. That particular promise virtually included all the benefits which Christ procured for His people, for as "eternal death" contains the essence of all evils, so "eternal life" contains the essence of all blessings. "The Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Ps. 133:3). "This is the promise that He has promised us, even eternal life" (1 John 2:25)—how perfect is the harmony between the Two Testaments! If we break up that promise into its component parts we may say that, first, God promised to regenerate His people or bestow upon them a spiritual nature which delights in His Law: "I will put My laws into their minds, and write them upon their hearts" (Heb. 8:10). Second, He promised to justify them, the negative part of which is to remit their transgressions. "For I will be merciful to their righteousness and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 8:12). Third, He promised to sanctify them. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean. From all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you" (Ezek. 36:25). Fourth, He promised to preserve them. "I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put My fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from Me" (Jer. 32:40). Fifth, He promised to glorify them. "They shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35:10). Finally, God made promise of the Holy Spirit to Christ. What we are now to contemplate is admittedly one of the deep things of God and therefore requires to be handled with prayerful concern and godly caution. But if on the one hand we are certain to err should we deviate one iota from the Scriptures, on the other hand it is to the glory of God and His Christ and to the needful instruction of our souls that faith humbly receives all that is revealed to us in Holy Writ. Now Scripture teaches not only that the Spirit of the Lord rested upon Christ (Isa. 11:1, 2) during the days of His earthly ministry, that God put His Spirit upon Him to furnish Him for His great work (Isa. 42:10), that He was

anointed with the Spirit in order to preach the Gospel (Isa. 61:1) and work miracles (Acts 10:38; Matthew 12:28), but the oracles of Truth make it very clear after Christ received the Spirit in another manner and for a different purpose after His ascension to heaven, namely, that to the God-man Mediator has been given the administration of the Spirit's activities and operations; and this both in the sphere of grace Churchward, and in the sphere of providence worldward. In John 7:39 we read that "the Holy Spirit was not yet (given) because Jesus was not yet glorified," but He was both promised to Christ (Ps. 45:7) and by Christ. Let us seek to attentively consider some of His statements concerning the Holy Spirit's relation upon Himself. "But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name" (John 14:26), the force of which is intimated in "whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name He will give it you" (John 16:23). Again, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father" (John 15:26) — which is parallel with Christ's being "sent" by Him (John 3:17). And again, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you" (John 16:7). Such repetition argues both the importance of this truth and our slowness to receive it. To the writer three things are clear concerning the above passages. First, each was spoken by the God-man Mediator, for they were the utterances of the Word made flesh. Second, from John 8:39 and 16:7 it is apparent that the advent of the Spirit was dependent upon the ascension of Christ, Third, from His repeated "whom I will send unto you" we learn that in this present era the activities of the Spirit are regulated by the will of the Lord Christ. That the Spirit is at the economical disposal of the Redeemer was evidenced after His resurrection and before His ascension, for to the apostles He said, "Peace be unto you. As My Father has sent Me, even so send I you," and then we are told "when He had said this He breathed on them and said unto them, Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22; Gen. 2:7). And as He was on the point of leaving them the Savior said "Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you" (Luke 24:49), which was duly accomplished ten days later. In Acts 2, when Peter explained the supernatural phenomena of the day of Pentecost he said, "This Jesus has God raised up, of which we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has shed forth this which you now see and hear" (vv. 32,33)—the glorified Savior has poured forth this effusion of the Spirit's gifts. On which the Puritan Thos. Goodwin, after quoting Psalm 45:7 and explaining it by Acts 2:36 and said on verse 33 "which receiving is not to be only understood of His bare and single receiving the promise of the Holy Spirit for us, by having power given Him to shed Him down upon them, as God has promised, though this is a true meaning of it; but further, that He had received Him first as poured forth on Himself, and so shed Him forth on them, according to that rule that whatever God does unto us by Christ, He first does it unto Christ" (Vol. 4, pg. 121). It was the Savior's outpouring of the Spirit's gifts which demonstrated He had been "made both Lord and Christ" (v. 36). From the passages quoted above it seems plain that upon the completion of His covenant work the Father bestowed the Spirit on Christ to administer from His mediatorial throne. In full accord with that we hear the Lord Jesus saying from heaven, "These things says He that has the seven Spirits of God" (Rev. 3:1), that is, has to administer the Holy Spirit in the plenitude of His power and the diversity of His manifestations—compare the seven-branched candlestick in Exodus 25:30, 31 and the sevenfold gift of the Holy Spirit to Christ in the days of His flesh (Isa. 11:1, 2). On the words "He that has the seven Spirits of God" (Rev. 3:1) Thos. Scott says, "that is, the Divine Savior, through whom the Holy Spirit, in the variety and abundance of His precious gifts and graces was communicated to all the churches." So again, in Revelation 5:6 we read "I beheld and in the midst . . . stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (Compare Matthew 28:18). Here it is Christ exercising His governmental power and administering the Spirit toward the world—as in 3:1 it was toward the Church. Thus, if on the one hand none other ever suffered such

ignominy as did the Mediator, on the other hand none other ever has received or ever will such marks of honor as He has.

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