



October 10, 2021

The Backbone of the Bible

Free Grace Presbyterian Church

SOME THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION:

The Bible is a covenantal book, and the Bible's theology is a covenantal theology.

Guy Prentiss Waters
Presbyterian pastor and NT scholar

The doctrine of the Covenant lies at the root of all true theology.

Charles Spurgeon
19th century British Baptist pastor
known as "The Prince of Preachers"

I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.

Leviticus 26:11–12

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jeremiah 31:33

Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

Colossians 2:16–17

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."

Revelation 21:1–3

Biblical doctrine, first to last, has to do with covenantal relationships between God and man; biblical ethics has to do with expressing God's covenantal relationship to us in covenantal relationships between ourselves and others; and Christian religion has the nature of covenant life, in which God is the direct object of our faith, hope, love, worship, and service, all animated by gratitude for grace.

J.I Packer
British Reformed Anglican theologian

The backbone of the Bible... is the unfolding in space and time of God's unchanging intention of having a people on earth to whom he would relate covenantally for his and their joy.

J.I. Packer
British Reformed Anglican theologian

GOD SUMMONS US BY HIS GRACE

Leader: Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

People: **The LORD has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.**

Psalms 98

Leader: Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!

People: **Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth.**

We break forth into joyous song and sing praises to our God

"God, My King, Thy Might Confessing"



1. God, my King, thy might con-fess - ing, ev - er will I bless thy name;
2. They shall talk of all thy glo - ry, on thy might and great - ness dwell,
3. Full of kind - ness and com-pass - ion, slow to an - ger, vast in love,



5 day by day thy throne ad - dress - ing, still will I thy praise pro - claim.
speak of thy great acts the sto - ry, and thy deeds of won - der tell.
God is good to all cre - a - tion; all his works his good - ness prove.



9 Hon - or great our God be - fit - teth; who his ma - jes - ty can reach?
Nor shall fail from mem - 'ry's trea - sure works by love and mer - cy wrought:
All thy works, O Lord, shall bless thee; thee shall all thy saints a - dore.



13 Age to age his works trans - mit - teth; age to age his pow'r shall teach.
works of love sur - pass - ing mea - sure, works of mer - cy pass - ing thought.
King su - preme shall they con - fess thee, and pro - claim thy sov - 'reign pow'r.

As the church gathers in worship of our God, we get a foretaste, a glimpse, of the eternal reality of our worship. Our worship now blends with the songs and hallelujahs of those surrounding the throne of God in heaven.

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

Revelation 5

"Heavenly Hosts in Ceaseless Worship"

1. Heaven-ly hosts in cease-less wor-ship, "Ho-ly, ho-ly, ho-ly!" cry;
2. All cre-a-tion, all re-demp-tion join to sing the Sa-vior's worth;

5 "He who is, who was, and will be, God Al-migh-ty, Lord Most High.
Lamb of God whose blood has bought us, kings and priests to reign on Earth.

9 Praise and ho-nor, power and glo-ry be to him who reigns a-lone."
Wealth and wis-dom, power and glo-ry, ho-nor, might, do-min-ion, praise

13 We, with all his hands have fa-shioned fall be-fore the Fa-ther's throne.
now be his from all his crea-tures and to e-ver-last-ing days!

The musical score is written on four staves in G major (one sharp) and common time. The melody is simple and repetitive, with lyrics placed below the notes. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second staff begins with a measure rest marked '5'. The third staff begins with a measure rest marked '9'. The fourth staff begins with a measure rest marked '13'. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

GOD SANCTIFIES US BY HIS GRACE

God calls us to see our failure to worship him and live as he calls us

"You did not call upon me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of me, O Israel! You have not brought me your sheep for burnt offerings, or honored me with your sacrifices... You have not bought me sweet cane with money, or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins; you have wearied me with your iniquities."

Isaiah 43

"Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.

Joel 2

We return to God with hearts broken by our sin to rest in his steadfast love

We use this time in God's presence to confess our sins and our need for God's grace, silently, personally before him alone. We invite you to join us in sorrow over your sin and joy in his grace and mercy in Jesus Christ.

The wonder of the gospel is that though we rejected God turning to our own way instead, he came to us in the person of Jesus Christ to bring us back to himself. Our confession is an admission of both our rejection of him and his pursuing of us.

God declares the greatness of his covenant mercy

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1 Peter 1-2

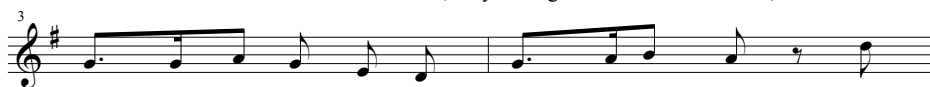
We sing of the steadfast mercy of the Lord forever

"Thy Mercy, My God"

I will sing of the
steadfast love
[mercy] of the
LORD, forever;
with my mouth I
will make known
your faithfulness to
all generations.
Psalm 89



1. Thy mer - cy, my God, is the theme of my song, the
2. With - out thy sweet mer - cy I could not live here;
3. Thy mer - cy is more than a match for my heart, which
4. Great Fath - er of mer - cies, thy good - ness I own, and the



joy of my heart, and the boast of my tongue; thy
sin would re - duce me to ut - ter des - pair, but
won - ders to feel its own hard - ness de - part; dis -
cov - e - nant love of thy cru - ci - fied Son; all



free grace a - lone from the first to the last hath
through thy free good - ness my spir - its re - vive and
solved by thy good - ness, I fall to the ground and
praise to the Spi - rit, whose whis - per di - vine seals



won my af - fec - tions and bound my soul
he that first made me still keeps me a -
weep for the praise of the mer - cy I've
mer - cy and par - don and right - eous - ness



fast.
live.
found. mine; all praise to the Spi - rit, whose



whis - per di - vine seals mer - cy and par - don and right - eous - ness mine!

GOD SPEAKS WITH US BY HIS GRACE

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...

John 1:1-5, 9-18

⁹The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") ¹⁶For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Sermon

Rev. Per Almquist

The Backbone of the Bible

The Grand Design

The first step in Christian preaching is to tell men and women that they and all their problems must always be considered in connection with God. That is the whole message of the Bible.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

We rejoice in the wonder of God's covenant love

"Father, Long Before Creation"



1. Fa - ther, long be - fore cre - a - tion thou hast cho - sen us ___ in love; ___
 2. Though the world may change its ___ fash - ion, yet our God is e'er ___ the same; ___
 3. God's com - pas - sion is my sto - ry, ___ is my boast - ing all ___ the day; ___
 4. Lov - ing Fa - ther, now be - fore thee we will ev - er praise thy love; ___



and that love so ___ deep, so ___ mov - ing, ___
 his com - pas - sion ___ and his ___ cov - 'nant ___
 mer - cy free and ___ nev - er ___ fail - ing ___
 and our songs will ___ sound un - ceas - ing ___



draws us close to Christ a - bove. ___ Still it keeps us,
 through all a - ges will ___ re - main. ___ God's own chil - dren,
 moves my will, di - rects ___ my way. ___ God so loved us,
 'til we reach our home ___ a - bove. ___ Giv - ing glo - ry,



still it keeps us ___ firm - ly fixed in Christ a - lone. ___
 God's own chil - dren must for - ev - er praise his name. ___
 God so loved us ___ that his on - ly Son ___ he gave. ___
 giv - ing glo - ry ___ to our God and to ___ the Lamb; ___



Giv - ing glo - ry, giv - ing glo - ry ___ to our God and to ___ the Lamb.

In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.
 Ephesians 1

GOD STRENGTHENS US BY HIS GRACE

We celebrate the Lord's Supper and proclaim the substance of the covenant: that he is our God and we are his people through the death of Jesus Christ

We invite to the Lord's Table all those who are baptized followers of Jesus Christ, under the authority of Christ and his body, the Church. By eating the bread and drinking the cup, you proclaim that you are in covenant relationship with God, that you are a sinner, without hope except in the sovereign mercy of God, and that you are trusting in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation. If you have any doubts about your participation, please speak to one of the elders after the service. Wine and bread are the elements of the supper as instituted by Jesus Christ and so we follow his example.

Jeremiah 31

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

When we partake of the cup in faith it is the Lord's own certification to us that all that the new covenant in his blood involves is ours. It is the seal of his grace and faithfulness.

John Murray

We receive Christ, believe in his name, and live as his covenant people as we give our tithes and our offerings to him

Leader: What does it mean to believe in his name? What is faith in Jesus Christ?

People: Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.

Leader: How is he offered to us in the gospel?

People: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life... Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God... For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

Westminster Shorter
Catechism 86

John 3

Romans 5

We rest in our God and pray to live as his people

“Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us”

D A A⁷ D

1. Sav - ior, like a shep-herd lead us, much we need thy ten - der care;
 2. We are thine; do thou be - friend us, be the guard - ian of our way;
 3. Thou hast prom - ised to re - ceive us, poor and sin - ful though we be;
 4. Ear - ly let us seek thy fa - vor; ear - ly let us do thy will;

A A⁷ D

in thy pleas - ant pas - tures feed us, for our use thy folds pre - pare;
 keep thy flock, from sin de - fend us, seek us when we go a - stray;
 thou hast mer - cy to re - lieve us, grace to cleanse, and pow'r to free:
 bless - ed Lord and on - ly Sav - ior, with thy love our bo - soms fill:

F G D A⁷ D

bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, thou hast bought us, thine we are;
 bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, hear, O hear us when we pray;
 bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, let us ear - ly turn to thee;
 bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, thou hast loved us, love us still;

G D A⁷ D 7

bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, thou hast bought us, thine we are.
 bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, hear, O hear us when we pray.
 bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, let us ear - ly turn to thee.
 bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, thou hast loved us, love us still.

He will tend his
 flock like a
 shepherd; he will
 gather the lambs in
 his arms; he will
 carry them in his
 bosom, and gently
 lead those that are
 with young.
 Isaiah 40

GOD SENDS US WITH HIS GRACE

We go out in the promise that he is our covenant God and we are his people

"I am the Lord"



1. When you pass through the wa-ters I will be with you and the waves will
 2. When you walk through the fire you'll not be burned, and the flames will



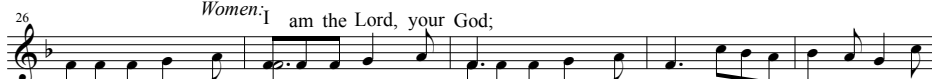
not o-ver-come you Do not fear, for I have re-deemed you. I have
 not con-sume you Do not fear, for I have re-deemed you. I have



called you by name, you are mine. *Men:* For I am the Lord, your God;
 called you by name, you are mine.



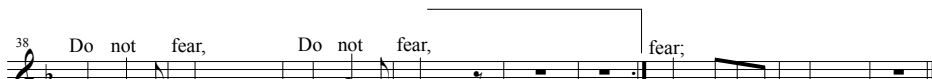
Men: I am the Lord your God; *Unison:* I am the Ho-ly One of Is-ra-el, your Sa- vior. *Men:* For



Women: I am the Lord, your God; *Men:* I am the Lord, your God; *Unison:* I am the Ho-ly One of



Is-ra-el, your Sa- vior. *Men:* I am the Lord, I am the Lord, I am the



Lord, I am the Lord, I am the Lord, I am the Lord.

God promises his covenant at work

Leader: Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

People: Amen

Please stay and join us for a time of enjoying each other's company. This is a time to share in life together as the gospel calls us as we reconnect with those we know and as we meet someone new.

But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. Isaiah 43

Hebrews 13



Welcome to Free Grace

We are a broken church full of broken people. We know we need God's free grace. Some of us have accepted this grace, some are exploring what it's all about. All of us are still trying to understand it. We are a church that seeks to proclaim this free grace of God with both our words and our lives. Not satisfied with simply talking about it, we want to live it out. We invite you to come, explore, and live God's free grace with us.

Our Connections



Free Grace is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), a family of churches that seeks to be faithful to the Scriptures, true to the Reformed faith, and obedient to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

Our Leadership

Free Grace is lead by her elders, men called by God and set apart by the church to care and lead her as individual members, families, and as a whole. Our elders are:

Rev. Per Almquist (pastor)
Brian Cosgrove
Paul Martin
Ken Morris
Ben Van Dyke



Credits

Cover artwork: image from <https://www.touereiffel.paris/en/the-monument>

Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*, copyright ©2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. All songs are used by permission. All rights are reserved by the copyright holders. All are used according to CCLI license #11100390.

Connor Crawford, *voice*; Dan Crawford, *voice*; Joanne Crosby, *flute*; Jacob Paris, *guitar*

"God, My King, Thy Might Confessing" public domain. Words: from Psalm 145, Richard Mant, 1824; alt. 1990. Music: Rowland Hugh Pritchard, 1855.

"Heavenly Hosts in Ceaseless Worship" ©1975 Hope Publishing Co. Words: based on Revelation 4-5, Timothy Dudley-Smith, 1972. Music: Ludwig van Beethoven, 1824.

"Thy Mercy, My God" ©2001 Same Old Dress Music. Words: John Stocker, 1776. Music: Sandra McCracken, 2001.

"Father, Long Before Creation" ©2005 The Velvet Eagle Sings (ASCAP) admin. by the Loving Company. Words: from a Chinese Hymn. Translated: Francis Johnson, 1953. Music: Andrew Osenga, 2005.


"Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us" Public Domain. Words: attributed to Dorothy Ann Thrupp, 1836, alt. Music: William B. Bradbury, 1859.

"I am the Lord" ©1984 Meadowgreen Music Company. Words: Billy Sprague based on Isaiah 43. Music: Billy Sprague, 1984.

God's covenant of grace in Scripture is one of those things that are too big to be easily seen, particularly when one's mind is programmed to look at something smaller. If you are hunting on a map of the Pacific for a particular Polynesian island, your eye will catch dozens of island names, however small they are printed, but the chances are you will never notice the large letters spelling PACIFIC OCEAN that straddle the map completely. Similarly, we may, and I think often do, study such realities as God's promises; faith: the plan of salvation; Jesus Christ the God-man, our prophet, priest and king; the church in both testaments, along with circumcision, passover, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the intricacies of Old Testament worship and the simplicities of its New Testament counterpart; the work of the Holy Spirit in believers; the nature and standards of Christian obedience in holiness and neighbour-love; prayer and communion with God: and many more such themes, without noticing that these relational realities are all covenantal in their very essence. As each Polynesian island is anchored in the Pacific, so each of the matters just mentioned is anchored in God's resolve to relate to his human creatures, and have us relate to him, in covenant — which means, in the final analysis, a way for man to relate to God that reflects facets of the fellowship of the Son and the Spirit with the Father in the unity of the Godhead. From this, perhaps, we can begin to see how big and significant a thing the covenantal category is both in biblical teaching and in real life.

J.I. Packer

British Reformed Anglican theologian



broken people
bound together in Christ
for God's glory