

God's Covenant of Love

Written by David Wise

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“Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine.” (Ezekiel 16:8)

When God saw his chosen people in a dead, stillborn condition (Ezek. 16:1-7), God's reaction was not apathy but love. God willingly chose to show love, but he chose to further obligate himself with a covenant of love with his people. God entered into the marital covenant where Christ would eventually come into this world to redeem his bride from death.

The people of God are depicted in this chapter as a dead, stillborn child, who was left out by herself with no hope of recovery. *“None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion on thee...”* (Ezek. 16:5) No one was willing to get their hands dirty to help this child and certainly, no one could give life to this dead child. In that ruined and helpless condition, no one else had any desire to help God's people. In contrast to the apathy displayed by others, God not only chooses to get involved and give life to this child, but he chooses to enter into a binding covenant of love.

God's obligation to his bride depicted in this passage, is presented here (as well as everywhere else in scripture) as a “covenant”, rather than a “contract”. A contract is based on fear, but a covenant is based on love. A contract attempts to force your corresponding party to fulfill his part of the agreement. A contract is based on a fear that the other party will not fulfill his obligations, and thus I want to have our agreement in writing so I can hold the other party legally accountable and enforceable, to have legal recourse if they do not fulfill the obligations they agreed to. In contrast, a covenant is not to obligate a possibly untrustworthy party to me, but a covenant is my voluntary desire to obligate myself to that other party. While a contract is based on fear of failure, a covenant is based on a voluntary desire to obligate yourself to another in

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love. God did not choose to try to hold us accountable to meet the obligations of salvation, but he voluntarily chose to obligate himself in a covenant of love.

Marriage is the ultimate “covenant”, not a contract. That’s why it’s patently unscriptural to have a “pre-nuptial agreement” as a condition to marriage. When a man and woman are married, they become one flesh before God and man for their lifetime, till death do them part. If there are fears about how the assets might be divided up in the possibility of a divorce, then those parties should never be married. That “pre-nup contract” is based on a fear that the other party might leave me high and dry. However, the biblical marriage covenant between a man and a woman testifies that I am willing to voluntarily obligate myself to my spouse for my entire lifetime because of my love for that party. There should be no fear in that loving relationship – “perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). Again, contracts are to legally obligate another party but a marriage covenant of love is you willingly choosing to obligate yourself to your spouse.

God’s choice of his bride was voluntary, not obligatory. There’s nothing about that pitiful stillborn child that would warrant or merit God’s choice to obligate himself to his future bride. Some might object to God’s election and choice of a bride to salvation, but yet they don’t persecute a husband for choosing to obligate himself to a bride whom he loves. Men are not ridiculed for not choosing to love everyone to marry, but a husband’s discriminating and voluntary choice to love “one woman for one lifetime” is extolled. God has the right as a husband to choose to marry whom he loves, and that’s what God did. Christ as our husband chose to obligate himself to come and die to redeem the bride that he loved. That is the ultimate love story this world has ever seen: that an immaculate husband voluntarily chose to love and covenant to save a bride who has absolutely no inherent value or beauty. That is the mystery and glorious gospel of salvation.

When we see God’s love for us, we should be able to clearly see that Christ will never default on his covenant of love to his bride. The marriage vow here in this life may end at the death of

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one party, but we are covenanted in marriage to an eternal husband who shall never die. Just as Christ is eternal, his love for his bride has been and shall ever be everlasting and eternal. That's why we can have peace of eternal security in Christ, knowing that Christ shall certainly remain faithful to his covenant of love towards his bride, the church.