

Our Covenant God Is...
(Week 2)
...All About Grace and Responsibility

SMALL TALK

1. What is the most compelling responsibility of your life? Are you compelled by a sense of duty, pressure, love, or other?

VIEWPOINT

2. In week one we learned that *“Covenant is a particular kind of relationship by a formal agreement specifying the covenant parties, its terms, and promises”*. What are the terms of the New Covenant as described by **2 Corinthians 5:14-15**?
3. **Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21**. In what way do we no longer live for ourselves? What new responsibilities do we now have? (see 2 Corinthians 5:16, 18-20)
4. How is this in keeping with VVCC’s 5 core statements: 1) Love God Wholeheartedly, 2) Do First Things First, 3) Don’t Do Life Alone, 4) Saved People Serve People, and 5) Followers say, “Follow Me”?

GETTING PERSONAL

5. Is loving like Jesus and sharing His story your new life motivation? Why or why not?

PRACTICE!

6. Which of our 5 Life Practices needs your prompt attention to help you love more like Jesus: 1) Devote Daily, 2) Pursue Relationally, 3) Guide Biblically, 4) Live Authentically, and 5) Live Missionally?

June 6, 2021

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I wanted to start today with something that only rather loosely fits our topic...but here goes...

NOTES in the Hospital Charts:

(probably written by some sleepy intern or frazzled nurse):

- The patient refused autopsy.
- Note: Patient recovering from forehead cut. Patient became very angry when given an enema by mistake.
- Patient has chest pain if she lies on her left side for over a year.
- On the second day, the knee was better, and on the third day it disappeared.
- The patient has been depressed since she began seeing me in 1993.
- She is numb from her toes down.
- The skin was moist and dry.
- Occasional, constant, infrequent headaches.
- Patient was alert and unresponsive.
- Rectal examination revealed a normal size thyroid.
- She stated that she had been constipated for most of her life, until she got a divorce.
- I saw your patient today, who is still under our car for physical therapy.
- Skin: Somewhat pale but present.
- Patient has two teenage children, but no other abnormalities.

Some people think of the Old Covenant as a covenant of “Works” and the New Covenant as a covenant of “Grace” but all the Covenants God gave us are covenants of grace & responsibility.

DEFINED

GRACE is receiving undeserved favor. RESPONSIBILITY is the expected response ability from someone who has received such undeserved grace.

- There is a difference between “works” as in earning God’s approval and “responsibility” as gratitude based “response ability”.
- Today we dive into the **MYSTERY** of how **God’s Sovereignty** and **Human Free Will** work together IN COVENANT.
- Not even the Old Covenant was set up as a merit based system.

I. Be strong in the **GRACE**

2 Timothy 2:1 (CSB) You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

- **OPPOSITE OF:** Timothy do the best you can in your own strength.
- **NOT:** “Try harder”.
- **BUT:** Rely on the grace that is in Christ Jesus. **THAT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY**
- **OXIMORON:** dependent responsibility
- **PATH OF STRENGTH:** (John 15 assignment a couple Sundays ago)

INCORRECT ATTITUDE # 1: The Lord saved me by his grace, and now **the rest is up to me.** (*TOO INDEPENDENTLY ACTIVE*) (*His part: forgiving, My Part: living, NO, you have a part in responding to his offer (faith/trust) and living (faith/ trust)*)

INCORRECT ATTITUDE # 2: **The Lord does it all.** I just need to sit back, relax, let go, and let God, because it's all about grace anyway, isn't it? (*TOO DEPENDENTLY PASSIVE*)

Both of these are unbiblical.

- God’s grace expects a response.
- What God requires, he supplies.
- Pray and work hard. These go hand in hand.
- *Grace is opposed to earning, but not opposed to effort.*

Philippians 2:12-13 speaks of you “*working out*” what God “*is working in you*”.

- Depending on God and serving God go hand in hand.

This is what it means to be strong in the grace of Jesus Christ

II. All of God’s Covenants are covenants of GRACE

Even giving the Law was BASED on GRACE.

OLD COVENANT: What did God say just before he gave the 10 Commandments?

Exodus 20:1–2 (CSB) Then God spoke all these words: ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery.’

- The old covenant law was not a merit based system. The law served as a tutor teaching about God’s Holiness, and our need for GRACE.
- The whole temple system was God teaching about the cost of Grace.
- Merit based legalism was a misapplication of the law. Jesus frequently confronted the Pharisees over this.
- The Old Covenant was preparatory and provisional, nevertheless best understood as a good and gracious system before a Holy God.

NEW COVENANT: A far more AMAZING GRACE: Grace from “The Helper” / counselor / advocate, HOLY SPIRIT and yet...

III. All of God’s Covenants expect Human RESPONSIBILITY

Even though he gives us the HOLY SPIRIT as an amazing grace “Helper” he does not do everything for us, there is a covenant responsibility and cooperation.

- Human responsibility is always implied by every covenant.
- But there is a dramatic change from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant!!

***Romans 8:3–4 (CSB)** For what the law could not do since it was weakened by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering, ⁴ in order that the law’s requirement would be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

We were married to Mr. Law. He was a good man, in his way, but he did not understand our weakness. He came home every evening and asked, "So, how was your day? Did you do what I told you to? Did you make the kids behave? Did you waste any time? Did you complete everything I put on your To Do list?" So many demands and expectations. And hard as we tried, we couldn't be perfect. We could never satisfy him. We forgot things that were important to him. We let the children misbehave. We failed in other ways. It was a miserable marriage, because Mr. Law always pointed out our failings. And the worst of it was, he was always right! But his remedy was always the same: Do better tomorrow. We didn't, because we couldn't.

Then Mr. Law died. And we remarried, this time to Mr. Grace. Our new husband, Jesus, comes home every evening and the house is a mess, the children are being naughty, dinner is burning on the stove, and we have even had other men in the house during the day. Still, he sweeps us into his arms and says, "I love you, I chose you, I died for you, I will never leave you nor forsake you." And our hearts melt. We don't understand such love. We expect him to despise us and reject us and humiliate us, but he treats us so well. We are so glad to belong to

him now and forever, and we long to be "fully pleasing to him" ([Col. 1:10](#))!

Being married to Mr. Law never changed us. But being married to Mr. Grace is changing us deep within, and it shows.

Ray Ortlund, "Who are you married to?" The Gospel Coalition blog - Ray Ortlund (2-15-15)

Responsibility is RESPONSE ABILITY empowered by the Spirit given to us because of Jesus' victorious crucifixion and resurrection. Spirit empowered responsibility is our response to God's Amazing grace! Here is just one among countless expressions of grace given, and the expected response.

*Colossians 1:4-8 (CSB) for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have You have already heard about this hope in the word of truth, the gospel ⁶ that has come to you. It is bearing fruit and growing all over the world, just as it has among you since the day you heard it and came to truly appreciate God's grace. ⁷You learned this from Epaphrus...⁸and he has told us about **your love in the Spirit.***

What God offered to us is amazing grace, and we are asked to offer amazing grace to others. Give as he gave, forgive as he forgave, and bless as he blessed. This is grace and responsibility!

- The gospel blesses us to be a blessing!
- Do you see it? Our covenant God is all about grace and responsibility.
- But we cannot carry out our responsibility without him.
- Be strong in the grace of Jesus Christ!

Our church is here to help you take steps from wherever you are to where God wants you to be.

STEPS are always:

- GRACE steps (not **earning** steps) AND

- **RESPONSIBILITY** steps (in cooperation with **GRACE**) that take **effort!** Dependent effort.