

God: The Ultimate Humanitarian

Chapter 4: A Humanitarian by Making a Wonderful Covenant

After a natural disaster, the humanitarians sweep in and saves the day. People come from miles away to help rescue people who are in danger. Trucks of food are purchased and sent. People come to distribute food and other necessities. Still others send money to help. When disaster strikes, humanitarians want to help.

When disaster struck and man sinned, God was not absent. He came and forgave Adam and Eve and promised them a Savior. When the next wave of trouble came and man turned their backs on God in unbelief, he would not allow this great sin to continue and infect the world, he gave them a living call to repentance for 120 years as the ark was being built.

God was never far away, he continued to be close to them with his promises of love. In this chapter we see God repeat his promise of a savior first to Abraham and also for all nations. God would help his people. He would save his people from their sins.

1. What did you learn from chapter 4?

2. In Genesis 15, God establishes a unilateral covenant with Abraham. In Leviticus 26 (see especially verses 3-17), we have an example of a bilateral covenant. What is the principal difference between a unilateral and a bilateral covenant?

✦ Genesis 15. ⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” ⁵ He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

⁷ He also said to him, “I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.”

⁸ But Abram said, “O Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

⁹ So the LORD said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.”

¹⁰ Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half.

¹⁷ When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram.

✦ Leviticus 26: 3-17 ³ “ ‘If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, ⁴ I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees of the field their fruit. ⁵ Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting, and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land.

¹² I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people. ¹³ I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt so that you would no longer be slaves to the Egyptians; I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high.

¹⁴ “But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, ¹⁵ and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, ¹⁶ then I will do this to you: I will bring upon you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life. You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it. ¹⁷ I will set my face against you so that you will be defeated by your enemies; those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee even when no one is pursuing you.

Unilateral is one where God does all the work. Notice here God does not say if. He does not tell Abraham what he has to do. The covenant is what God will do for Abraham and for all people and he sealed the covenant at the end with the torch and the sacrifice.

Bilateral has two parts is conditional. If you do this.... I will do this. All man-made religions are conditional in some way. If you do this.... God will hold up his end of the bargain.

3. Why is it so easy for us to understand a bilateral covenant?

We have them all the time from buying a house or a car to the deal we make with our kids

4. What would prompt God to make a unilateral covenant?

Only his love. We were not in such a good position to barter with God. We were not in such a good place that he had to. In fact, we were in such a bad place because of sin that God didn't even have to bother with us. But he did and he made the greatest one-sided promise ever to save us.

5. In Jeremiah 31:31-34, God makes his unilateral covenant clear. This covenant is clear that God will give what he promises: the forgiveness of sins.

³¹ “The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

³²It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.

³³ “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

³⁴No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD.

“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

➤ Count all the times that the LORD says I. What is the mark of a unilateral covenant? **8 times God says I. No conditions. This is what I am going to do for you. No strings attached.**

6. What is the most important sentence in this section?

For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

7. Why is it so significant and comforting that the promise of forgiveness is a unilateral covenant?

God says. No strings attached I will forgive you. If there are strings attached we would have to wonder if God was forgiving us. If we played a part in forgiveness we would wonder if we had played our part well-enough. What if we do not play that part well enough? What if the boss is unhappy with us?

8. According to Hebrews 10:11-18, the writer to the Hebrews brings the unilateral covenant of Jeremiah together with the revelation of the Savior. Jesus is the one who has fulfilled God's promise and has made the forgiveness of God promised through Jeremiah possible. What special blessings of Jesus' work are mentioned in verses 14 and 18?

¹¹ Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. ¹³ Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, ¹⁴ because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

¹⁵ The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says:

¹⁶ “This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.”

¹⁷ Then he adds:

“Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.”

¹⁸ And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

Jesus is the one who is over all people. All his enemies are below his. In his eternal rule, he has washed away the sins of the world and made holy all those who through the Holy Spirit have faith in him. He has done this completely, once for all. There is no more work to be done, no more pieces to the puzzle.

9. According to Romans 4:1-5, how did the righteousness, or perfection, earned by Jesus become Abraham's possession?

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? ² If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. ³ What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

⁴ Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.
⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Abraham believed in the promises of God and this belief – this faith --- was credited as righteousness

10. According to Psalm 31:14, what is faith?

¹⁴ But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, “You are my God.”

Faith is trust in the Lord as our God

11. On what did Abraham's faith, or confidence, rest?

He believed in the promises of God.

Assignment: Please read Chapter 5 of *God-The Ultimate Humanitarian*