

Genesis | Covenant Keeping God

Pastor Ryan Keeney: September 6th, 2015

THE PARADOX CHURCH

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly. Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

(Genesis 17:1-14)

I asked a person recently if we were friends and it was an awkward conversation, more awkward than I thought it would be because she said yes, but we talked further and she said "but not for the past two years". And I thought "Oh, ok". So yes we were friends two years ago, yes we're friends now, but there's this gap in between where for two years we were not friends. It was a surprise and I was bummed by it and then I asked her why this was true and she said "You were just different, you weren't normal, you weren't fun, you didn't joke around like you did with me previously so it just seemed different". It made me think about my relationships and my relationship with her and the relationships and friendships that I've experienced over the years and that of course made me think about our church and I began to celebrate initially the deep Gospel friendships in this church that have taken root and people are laying down their lives and serving, caring, pursuing, helping one another and I love that. I love seeing that and being a part of that, but then I also thought "Ok, that's good.", but then I also see the many relationships that are broken, that in this moment are in conflict or strained, and I know

marriages that are on the brink and marriages that are currently separated. I know some of those friendships that feel unsure; that they don't know where they stand and unsure of their footing. And I know some of you that just won't enter into a friendship or relationship because of a fear of being known; you're afraid of what might happen if you enter into this friendship. And even in that there's a looming fear of dying alone. As I think about these relationships and the brokenness we experience, I grieve it. And as I thought about these relationships, I began to study Genesis 17 and by God's grace, began to understand how God enters into relationship with people: how we connect, how He relates, how He is friends with us, what it looks like for Him to enter into it and stay with it. And this is what we're going to see with Abram.

Thus far we've seen in the story of Abram, we learned about him walking in faith or fear and we saw his doubts and his choices; how we could choose the world and the world's blessings or God and God's blessings. We also learned last week that God sees and hears us in our affliction. And so we've been walking with Father Abram and he's shown us what this looks like, to relate to God but in Genesis 17, it hones in on this special relationship that God has with Abram. God has promised a son to Abram and he will have many descendants, so many descendants that will outnumber the stars in the sky and he will have a huge blessed family that will bless the world. This is true, it's a reality because God has entered into a covenant, an agreement with Abram. At the heart of this covenant, this agreement, this relationship between God and Abram is this: the idea that "I will be your God, and you will be my people." That's the crux of this passage and I know we just read this passage and and you're thinking "Ah, the second half of that passage, and I'm not sure what is going to happen there". Yes, but understand that the crux of the passage is "I will be your God and you will be my people". I'll say it a different way, I am yours, and you are mine, forever. That's the heart of this covenant relationship that God creates with Abram. My love for you is everlasting, my covenant that secures this love is forever, I will be your God and you will be my people. And for us in this moment, we know that this is a reality, it is a promise because of Jesus; if you put your faith and trust in Jesus, "I will be your God, you will be my people" is your reality. It is secure; we get caught up in this covenant as well for we are bound to God, united to God and it is secure, it will be forever, it is true and lasting. God is our God because of Jesus, we are His people, God binds himself to us.

And you may be thinking "I don't see that as the crux of the passage, I really got thrown off by the last portion". Let's walk through the text and I'll show you "I will be your God and you will be my people" throughout this text. Specifically in this way: that Jesus fulfills every aspect of this covenant to secure for you that "I am yours and you are mine". In every way, aspect, promise that we will see, condition that we see, every curse that we see, Jesus fulfills every aspect of it to secure for you that God would say "I am yours and you are mine".

So, verse 1 of chapter 17: *“When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly. Then Abram fell on his face.”* God shows up and He speaks when Abram is 99 years old, they point out the age of Abram because this is 13 years later from the time that he went around God’s promise and said, “No, I don’t think a son is going to come between me and Sarah, I’m going to try another way. Sarah recommended another way to join with her servant and so I can have a son with her servant and that’s how the promise will be fulfilled”. And his son’s name is Ishmael so this is 13 years after that and Abram still has no son with Sarai. And Abram is 99 years old, so it seems like this promise is only going to be fulfilled through Ishmael; it seems hopeless, like “what we did 13 years ago, that’s how it will work, God hasn’t provided the son between me and Sarai”. But this is not God’s plan, it’s not the path or family God promised. Abram will have a son with Sarai, it will happen and now follow me with this, her name means “princess”. From Princess Sarai will come a son and from that son will come the Son of Sons. And from the Princess Sarai will come kings and from those kings will come the King of Kings. And this King will set up an everlasting Kingdom and He will bind Himself to His people; He won’t keep them in bondage to slavery, He will bind them to Himself because of His love. This King is Jesus.

So from the barren Princess will come a son and a king; it will be the Son and the King of Kings, it will be Jesus, so my hope today is for us to respond in the same way as Abram did, to fall on our face in worship. Why? Because this is who God is. It’s been beautiful up to this point that the two responses I’ve seen from Abram are this: he has heard from God “I’m going to give you a son”, he responds “I believe you”. This faith from Abram to God “I believe you are going to give me a son, what you promise, what you say is going to come to pass”. And then now God shows up and says more and reveals Himself as God Almighty, as El Shaddai, and what does Abram do? He doesn’t say a word, he bows on his face and worships. So that’s my hope that you see who the King of Kings is, as we talk more about Jesus and as I beat into your head and hearts that “I am yours and you are mine” is true for you in Jesus. That you’d respond in worship and faith because of who God is and what He’s done and you respond in worship because God is present, He is with us. He shows up and He’s present with Abram and in God’s presence, Abram bows and worships

So God speaks, Abram responds in worship and God continues to speak. Look in verse four: *“Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant,”*. Hear this--hear the why: “to be God to

you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.” “I will be your God, and you will be my people”. This is the crux, this is what God’s covenant to Abram is all about. Now this covenant that God has made in Genesis 15 is elaborated more here in Genesis 17. Now a covenant is a contract, an agreement. I want to say it a different way, because my favorite definition of covenant is this: a bond in blood sovereignly administered. So I’ll just break it down, a bond is something that binds two people together. Now it’s a bond in blood which means that this bond has life and death consequences. God doesn’t enter into a casual or informal relationship with Abram, He doesn’t say “let’s just hang out, let’s just be pals”. No, He commits Himself to Abram to the extent that if this covenant is broken, someone will die; the only option is death. So the phrase to make a covenant, literally means “to cut a covenant”. So travel back with me to Genesis 15, how did God cut this covenant with Abram? There are animals that were cut in half and God walked between the middle of those animals in this covenant to say “If this covenant is broken, may I die, may I take upon myself what has happened to these animals”. If any person in the agreement breaks the covenant, they will be cut in half, cut asunder, cut in two. That’s an intense relationship, right? There’s no hanging out there--they are entering into this covenant where they bind themselves to each other. So a covenant is a bond in blood and this bond in blood is sovereignly administered meaning that the sovereign Lord over heaven and earth administers this covenant; He dictates the terms. There’s no bartering or bargaining or contracting, no, the Lord administers this covenant. He enters into the relationship with Abram and cut the covenant to regulate this relationships. So He says, “Ok, Abram, I’m going to enter into this relationship and this is what it’s going to look like: these are the promises I make to you, these are the conditions I ask from you, this is the curse if you break it. Some big ideas: God is clarifying, He’s defining the relationship.

Defining the relationship from what I’ve seen is two people coming to the table and you decide are we just hanging out or are we not? In this one, God shows up to the table and says I’m defining the relationship. Abram, don’t talk, just stay on your face in continued worship and let me tell you what this is going to be. Because remember, I promised to you in Genesis 15 that I was going to give you a son and then what did you do in Chapter 16? You said you got this and said you would make it happen, fulfilling God’s promise by having intercourse with my wife’s servant; that’s how to get a son. So God says, ok Abram, let’s come back to the table and let’s talk about this, let’s define this relationship that will have more personal and intimate terms. Now I find that interesting because the defining the relationship conversations that I hear about are that boyfriend or girlfriend that texts you or asks you are we just hanging out? And I think about that and I haven’t had a conversation like that in 15 years but that’s how you enter into a relationship? That’s how you pursue someone? Can we be more specific? Paradox single

men--please be more specific; not just "let's be in the same vicinity together". They are going to clarify and define the muddiness of the relationship. Is this a relationship where we are hanging out, just friends, or is this a relationship that is headed toward marriage? It is important, because are we just two people who like to eat burritos together on a weekly basis; and we like to eat said burritos at the same place at the same time. So we *are* in a relationship, but what binds us is our mutual love for barbacoa. "I don't really like you, but I like when we get together to eat barbacoa" and that's not a good relationship.

That's not how God rolls, and He enters into a relationship with Abram and He cuts a covenant to define the terms of the relationships and in this covenant there's going to be promises, conditions and curses that occur if the covenant is broken and this is what it's all about: God's not ambiguous, He is speaking on plain terms and He's very specific, and He's saying "I will be your God, you will be my people". This is the relationship; you're not going to wander around without a God, without identity, not knowing what you are, not knowing what to do with your life. "I will be your God and you will be my people".

So, I've mentioned this, the covenant has three parts. It talks about promises, conditions, and curses. I just want to begin with the three promises that are listed in this text and it begins in verse four, God promises to Abram: "*you shall be the father of a multitude of nations*". I will multiply you greatly. No longer will your name--I'm going to change your name--I'm going to define the relationship so much it is going to radically change you and every time someone calls you by your new name, it is going to remind you of this covenant; because you were Abram meaning "exalted father" but now, your name is Abraham meaning "father of a multitude of nations". Every time someone calls you, every time Sarah says "Abraham where are you?", you'll be reminded that you have a son Ishmael, but there's going to come a son and you will be a father of the multitude of nations. "*..And I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.*" This is God's promise to Abraham and now think about the fulfillment of this promise: through Jesus, the family of Abraham, the family of God multiplies; disciples are made and disciples make disciples and more people meet Jesus and churches are planted and regions and cultures are renewed, changed, transformed because the Gospel goes forward and more people are welcomed into the family of God as the Gospel is proclaimed. By faith in the Son, you have an exalted Father. By faith in the Son, you get to see the Father of all fathers, and He becomes your Father, meaning the Father says to you "I am yours and you are mine". And that's why we share the good news of Jesus; that's why we equip and encourage you to tell your friends, classmates, neighbors, and family about Jesus. So that they might meet and be changed by Jesus and come into the family of God and know the affections of the Father like we know and experience the love of our Father. We've tasted and seen and we want more people to taste and see that, so we tell them about it and this city, at the

heart of it, desperately needs Jesus. White lines on the roads in my neighborhood would be really nice so that I can know where I need to drive but what this city needs is Jesus and that's why we tell them about Him. That they be changed and transformed by Jesus.

So that's the first promise, let's look at the second promise in verse eight. God promises to Abraham "I will give you a land to dwell in". So He's going to give him a place, if we go back to Genesis 12 and God shows up on the scene and He says "Get up and go! Leave! I'm going to give you a new place". And this is what He promises here, I'm going to give you a land, that you'll no longer be a nomadic tribe that jumps around in their RV and then packs everything up and drives to the next site. You're going to have land; a land of your own that you can call home, that gives you identity, safety, security, a place that you love and that provides for you, and helps you and grows crops: this is what I'm going to give you to bless you. A place to live and thrive. Now, think, in the new covenant with Jesus, I am not in a strip of land in the Middle East, you know what I am in? I am in Jesus. That's the punch of Ephesians when Paul continues to say that you are "in Christ", he's connecting that you are in the land. But now, because of Jesus, what do we have? We are in Jesus. And in Jesus we have a refuge, security, identity, a family, joy and peace, we are in Him. In Jesus, God is our God and we are God's people. And if you and I are both in Jesus, we are God's people, we are brothers and sisters; we are family, He's made us a family. He's bound Himself to us, who have been captured in this covenant with Him and He's made us family, so we are brothers and sisters with the same Father. That's why I encourage you to engage in deep Gospel friendships in our church, because you have the same Dad. Because Jesus has made us His friend and we are friends together. So, the deepest connection, if you actually want to click with someone, what's more important than what kind of videogame you like to play, at the heart level, you have been saved and delivered by Jesus. So your commonality, your trajectory, is together, that you're going to see Him face to face, so we pursue and engage in deep Gospel friendships in this community because we've been made a family, we have the same big Brother, we have the same Father. So we don't withdraw when someone doesn't text us for two days like "oh, I'm going to wipe myself clean, they didn't respond to me". Or when someone changes their mind or sins against me, I don't withdraw, I don't run from it because we've been made a family; we're in this together and so I continue to pursue and lay down my life and love, serve, help, and bear with you. We bear with one another so we pursue these deep Gospel friendships. We serve, help, encourage one another, we are committed to one another because God has committed Himself to us. He has bound Himself to us. He is our God and we are His people which I said is the crux, the big idea, but it's also one of the promises in verse eight as well. And "*I will be their God*". So this is the promise of God to Abraham, that He will give nations, kings, multitudes; I'm going to give you land to possess; and "I am going to be your God and you will be my people".

This had been stated to Abraham previously but it is explicit here and this language is what the Bible weaves throughout the rest of the story. In Exodus 6:6 it says this, when God is going to rescue the Israelites out of slavery, He says this: *“I am the LORD and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgement”*. Why? *“I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.”* Through this covenant, God cuts Himself a people; He takes for Himself a people to love and bless and know that this is the purpose of the Exodus and this is going to be forever. This is what worship around the throne of God will look like forever. In Revelation 21: 3 God states from His heavenly throne: *“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. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”* This idea that *“I will be your God, you will be my people”* is wrapped up in God dwelling with man. He’s going to dwell with His people and now think, what did this look like for God to dwell with man in the Old Testament? It was in the temple, right? That’s where His manifest presence was made known was in the temple. But what happens when Jesus comes on the scene? He says *“I am the temple. You’ll destroy it in three days and I will raise it up”*. Hebrews then runs with it and takes it further and it says that Jesus is the true and better temple.

How do I know the presence of God? What does it look like for God to dwell with man? It’s in the God-man Jesus, that came from Heaven to earth and lived among us and speaks to us and dwelt among us. All securing, *“I am yours and you are mine”*, Jesus and His presence on this earth cuts for Himself a new people. A bride; a church; a people that are changed by Him, that love Him, that lay down their life for Him. A people not defined by their heritage, family, works, performance, deeds, but by their faith in Jesus. So they don’t boast in what they’ve done, in their resume, family, they boast in Christ crucified and this is the church. We’re bound together, covenant to one another. That’s why we talk about covenant partnership at The Paradox. We call our members partners because we covenant together because God has covenanted Himself and bound Himself to us. We are bound together. We are going to do this together, hell or high water, thick or thin, we’re in this together; to this place, to His people, to love and serve, lay down our lives for one another. And this is why it grieves us and I don’t know if you know this, but it grieves Pastor Jim and I when partners leave our church. I had a good friend that took a job, he was at the med school and then he took a job, the only job he could have in Texas and they moved three hours away. He didn’t break the covenant, they moved for a job, but it breaks my heart that they left. Why? Because we’ve bound ourselves to one another. I have deep affections for that man, I love and miss that man. Why? Because God has covenanted

to us and made us His and we are bound together, we've partnered together. So it hurts, it grieves us. Jesus is our God and we are His people. We are members of one another, we are bound together by His blood.

So, up to this point, we've seen that God cuts a covenant with Abraham to bind Himself to Abraham and his family. But then we get into what's next. God then creates a sign of this covenant to symbolize the permanence of this bond; it is a bond in blood and what is the symbol of this bond in blood? It is circumcision. This is how God works, it's how He's worked in the past and how He continues to work. If you think back to Noah, God cut a covenant with Noah: God said He was going to flood the earth but He rescued him and gave him the ark. Connect that all back to Jesus, to the "in Him" part, how are rescued and delivered? By being in Jesus. And then the waters subside and God cuts a covenant with Noah and says "I will never flood the earth again. And I'm going to create a sign of the covenant". Not in the text does it say "for you to see" but "for Me to see". God is going to hang the covenant in the clouds and there is going to be a sign that God would remember His covenant to never flood the earth again, and it's a rainbow. God remembers His covenant with Noah. And this is also something that we get to see, we get to partake and see the rainbow, and sometimes it's double and it's fantastic. Maybe it's double emphasis that He's not going to wipe us out. That's the promise and sign that we get to see; God cuts a covenant with Noah and then He creates a sign to symbolize this covenant. It's just like a bride and groom who covenant to one another and then they have a sign that signifies that covenant saying "I bind myself to you, and I'm going to exchange rings with you to pledge to you my constant faith and abiding love". It's a sign for all to see, a sign for them to remember the covenant that they are making to commit to that relationship. So what is the sign of the covenant with Abraham? It's circumcision. How will Abraham and his family remember the covenant that God made that He will be their God and we will be His people? It's through circumcision. Through circumcision, they can see and know that I am Yours and You are mine.

So remember, our big thought is to know and find comfort in the truth that if you are in Jesus, God says "I am yours and you are mine". God is your God and you are God's people. As Jesus fulfills every aspect of this covenant so we see Him fulfill and complete all the promises, now let's look at the conditions. So one of the conditions is the sign of circumcision but I'll jump to the first condition that is in the text and that is in verse one. God shows up and says "*walk before me and be blameless*". Ok, I don't know how you guys enter into relationships, but that's never how I've started a friendship. "Never do anything wrong against me, ever. If you don't text me within two days, or call me back, if you don't go to the movies with me, I'm done." "*walk before me and be blameless*", be upright, orient your whole life around My Presence, My demands, and My promises. Walk before me, or another biblical phrase is "be perfect as the

Heavenly Father is perfect”. And who said that? Jesus, on the Sermon on the Mount which is captured on Matthew 5 and not only did He say it, He lived it; He was perfect as His Father was perfect. Who fulfilled this condition? Jesus, in every aspect, He was blameless, without sin, He walked perfectly before the Father. Jesus oriented His whole life around the Father’s will, the Father’s love, the Father’s demands, the Father’s Presence. He fulfills the first condition of this Abrahamic covenant; Jesus walks before the Father and He is blameless.

Guess what, He also fulfills the second condition. Surprise! He fulfills the first covenant and is blameless before God but He also fulfills the second condition and that is circumcision. Be circumcised; and I don’t mean this metaphorically. Now in technical, medical jargon, circumcision is cutting away for the foreskin of the male reproductive organ; and this is the sign. God says to do this and He will be your God and you will be His people. Circumcision offers its perpetual witness to the permanence of this bond between God and man. And then it being the male reproductive organ, shows special significance when we think about what is the big promise--that Abraham will have a son and be a father of a multitude of nations, so there’s going to be this seed multiplying, a huge family that nations are going to come from you. So you can understand, why this is connected, why this is the sign. Through your family, Abraham, all the families of the earth will be blessed and your family will bear the mark of my covenant with you: all the males will be circumcised. All of the family will know that I am yours and you are Mine through circumcision. And it is within Abraham’s family that Jesus is born, and what happens on the eighth day? He is circumcised. And what happens on the eighth day when He is circumcised? He is given His name, which means “Jehovah saves”, “God saves”. He fulfills all righteousness, He is circumcised on the eighth day and fulfills the law fully, completely. When you think about His name being “God saves”, and Him being circumcised, it doesn’t happen for His sake, He does not need to be clean or cleansed. He has come to cleanse a people, to save a people, to wash a people clean. So Jesus fulfills all the promises and all the conditions of this covenant, securing for us that “I am yours and you are Mine”. I’ll say one more thing about circumcision: throughout the Old Testament and into the New, the authors pick up on something else, they pick up on the idea that this is an outward sign of an inward need. Its an external showing of what needs to happen internally. Because the act of circumcision was to remove the uncleanness, to cleanse, and this is what needs to happen. Up to Deuteronomy, Moses picks up on this and it says they needed to be circumcised of the heart. This outward showing is just a sign of what we all need: we all need to be clean, to be washed, for the filthiness to be removed and cut off from us. If you think about what this shows, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. He was made right before God and then he is sealed with this sign that this uncleanness has been physically taken away, which has also happened in your heart.

So this is why Paul picks up on circumcision and parallels it to baptism in Colossians 2 and Romans 4 and he talks about this external symbol is to show what God has done in your heart. If you put your faith in Jesus, then He has washed you clean, removed your filth and dirt, shame, sin; He has washed you clean. And then we dunk you, we don't just take one part of your body, we take your whole body and we dunk you. Because this is what has happened to you if you've put your faith in Jesus, you've been washed clean. So we throw you in the water and pull you back up and the person celebrates because Jesus has washed you clean. And how does that happen? We believe in the One who became sin for us, the One who is blameless took our blame; our shame, our dirtiness on Himself to make us clean. That's the joy and the amazement of Jesus fulfilling every promise and condition of this covenant. We need to be made clean.

I know that some of you grew up in church and around this idea and you think that because you're a part of a church gathering, or that you say you're a Christian, that you're a Christian. And that's not true. Just because you label yourself something doesn't mean that it is a reality. I pray that you be awakened to the fact that you don't know Jesus and that you would meet and put your faith in Jesus, that you not just know about Him, but that you know Him intimately, trust Him, give your life to Him. And then there's some of you that didn't grow up around this idea and maybe the first time you've been in a gathering of the church and you think it's weird. "This is not what I planned, this guy has just been talking for 30 minutes about circumcision. How am I supposed to go have brunch after this?", is maybe what you're thinking. My hope for you is that even though some of this is weird, maybe even uncomfortable, that these connections to Jesus keep penetrating and tugging at your heart and that you'd see it as true. Jesus is good, and what He's done is amazing--there are thousands of years between these events and Jesus fulfills the covenant perfectly. Maybe you like Him, or want to know more about Him and who He is and what He's done. So I encourage you to do the same thing--put your faith in Jesus, trust Him, give your life to Him. And to both groups, we'll dunk you on October 4th, it will be the sign to show what Jesus has done, He's washed you clean, He's made you new, He's taken my sin and my shame upon Himself and He has washed you clean.

Jesus fulfills every aspect of this covenant. This gets me, it blows my mind that every promise, every condition, Jesus fulfills. But also, He fulfills the curse. Track with me for this: He is made unclean to make us clean, which goes into the curse. He fulfills the promises, the conditions, but He also takes upon Himself the curse of the covenant. Look at verse 14, "*Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.*" If you're not circumcised, you will be cut off. If your uncleanness is not cut off, you will be cut off. You will be cut off from the covenant community, from the family, excommunicated, not included in the land or blessing, you will not be a blessing to the nations.

You will be cut off from God. The crux of this is “I will be your God and you will be my people”, but we will be cut off from this. Cursed, cut off, or what God calls it later, if you are cut off from this, I will not call you not My people. That’s your new name: not My people.

But this again is where “I am yours and you are Mine” is secured for us in Jesus. We have broken the covenant, we are unclean, filthy, defiled, our hearts are dirty, meaning we all should be cut off. But instead, Jesus takes the curse of the covenant for us: He is cursed, cut off, forsaken in our place and treated as our sin, shame, uncleanness, dirt. He is cut off from the Father, cut off from the land of the living as Isaiah 53 states, He dies as our substitute. No forgiveness of the guilty can come without the shedding of blood so Jesus, as the perfect Lamb, offers His body as the sacrificial victim to take the curse in our place. This is amazing: the One who perfectly fulfilled the conditions now moves, in love, to take the curse. You didn’t fulfill the conditions; He perfectly keeps and fulfills every condition. He doesn’t leave you in the curse or give you what you deserve, He takes the curse upon Himself. I’ll say it one more way: the curse says you are unclean—you have broken the covenant, you deserve to die, you are cut off. But the good news of Jesus says you broke the covenant, I will die. Jesus says I will die in your place and then you will not be cut off, you will be welcomed into the family. “I will be your God and you will be My people”; He fulfills every promise, every condition, and He even takes upon Himself the curse that you deserve. Because of Jesus, we are His and He is ours. This is the reality of our life. If you’ve trusted and given your life to Jesus, that means that in your place, He has fulfilled the promises, conditions, and He’s taken the curse on your behalf. If this is your reality, then I think we respond just like Abraham: facedown worship, grateful, affectionate for Jesus, stirred because of who He is and what He has done in our place. He’s fulfilled it all. So the promise is a cure for you now and forever “I am yours and you are Mine”. He has bound Himself to you and sealed you with His own blood.

Let’s pray. Father you are our God and we are Your people. You have made this covenant with us, there is nowhere that we could run or escape from You; we cannot break Your love. Your immovable love is our firm foundation. Love that is securely bound in covenant, You have sealed it with Your blood, and though we run against it, pull away from it, disbelieve it, we cannot break Your love. Your love for us is greater than our love for our sin. Your commitment to us is greater than our commitment to our sin. Your cosmic plan of redemption is greater than our half-hearted attempts to get better. Your love is steadfast, true, immovable, unbreakable, always and forever. So I rejoice in You, I worship You, You are good. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

