

Finding the Foundations of Grace in the Old Testament Story (Grace #2)

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Introduction

→ Must understand the pattern of God's dealings. This is the OT story, today in simplified summary, but important.

→ God desires to bless. That is his ultimate goal. He is a blessing God. He is a giving God; he seeks to bless in the context of relationship with him.

→ God initiates, offering relationship, desiring that man might respond to the offer to establish closer relationship.

→ If/when man fails to respond positively in the increased relationship, God comes looking, seeks ways to encourage the reconciliation. Man again has the opportunity to respond.

Response-ability. Man has the responsibility always in the God relationship, responsibility to respond to God's initiative, which is an indication of God's grace, a characteristic of God himself, that God is gracious.

→ God initiates to offer relationship, man has responsibility, and the outcome is based on both.

Old Testament Sin Stories

Eden is an evidence of God's grace, God's initiative, gift, commendation

- God initiates
- Man responds to his world (thus to God)
- God's response
- Man's responsibility: up or down, choice

Cain and Abel is a story of grace

- God initiates
- Man responds (obedience/disobedience), one to establish closer relationship, the other to break relationships.
- God's response is pleasure or displeasure
- What will man do? (Gen. 6:1ff)

Noah (possibly use Genesis 1-12 chiasm)

- God favors Noah
- Noah responds (obedience)
- God acts as promised
- What will man do now?

Babel

- God initiates
- Man responds (disobedience, selfishness, self-seeking)
- God acts
- What will humankind do?

The creating, blessing, promise-keeping, covenant-making God

There are three primary covenants that tell the story of God's grace in the OT—Abraham, Moses, David

Abraham

The promise is an evidence of grace

→ Three-fold promise, what Paul calls again and again the promise, precedes the law and cannot be annulled by the law.

Moses

→ What the writers know as law, which cannot annul the promise, the previous covenant, thus both remain operational.

Under the law, God promises to make his people priests and kings.

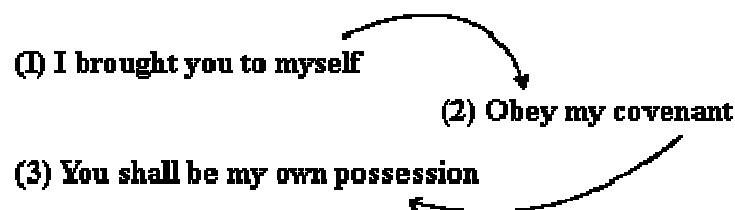
They will have a renewed relationship with him.

And they will become his possession.

The Sinai covenant is not modeled on a royal grant but on a vassal treaty, a legal form in which the vassal's obligations are much more prominent. But even here the laws are set in a context of a gracious, divine initiative. Obedience to the law is not the source of blessing, but it augments a blessing already given.

Exodus presents the release from Egyptian slavery and the Sinai covenant as God fulfilling his promise to the patriarchs that he would give the land of Canaan to their descendants (Ex. 2:24-3:17). Half-way between Egypt and Canaan the Sinai covenant is concluded. It begins with a reminder of what God has done thus far: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I . . . brought you to myself' (Ex. 19:4). Israel's obligations are then alluded to: 'Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant'. Then finally a promise is added: 'You shall be my own possession among all peoples' (Ex. 19: 5).

This last promise closely resembles what God has already done in bringing them to himself (verse 4). Israel thus finds herself in a virtuous circle. Obedience to the law issues in further experience of the initial grace of God, who brought them to himself. It may be diagrammatically represented as follows:

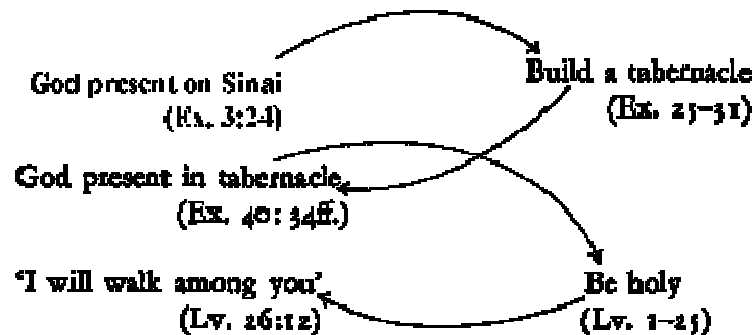


It is important to note the sequence — God's choice (1) precedes man's obedience (2), but man's obedience (a) is a prerequisite of knowing the full benefits of election (3).

He gives them the law, in order that he might be among them.

A similar virtuous circle is to be found in the material dealing with the erection of the tabernacle. After the experience of God's presence on Mount Sinai, God offers to dwell among Israel permanently if they build him a suitable shrine. When the tabernacle is completed, God does indeed appear in it (Ex. 24-40). The book of Leviticus points out, however, that the divine presence in Israel is always at risk because of sin. Various regulations about holiness in life and worship are introduced to deal with this problem.

They conclude with a series of promises, the last of which is: 'I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people' (Lev. 26:12). The word 'walk' (*hithallek*) is not used very often of God, and may be an echo of the Garden of Eden story (Gen. 3:8). Thus, according to Leviticus obedience to the law can bring man back to a near-paradise situation. But once again this is only possible through the prevenient grace of God, who made himself known to Israel in the first place. It should be noted that for Leviticus at least the greatest divine blessings are spiritual; the presence of God is more important even than peace and prosperity.



Deuteronomy is also pervaded by this notion of grace and law. God has already brought the nation into partial possession of the land. Israel is posed to take possession of the rest of their inheritance, but this depends on total obedience to the law and its demands. Only whole-hearted fidelity to God's directions will ensure them victory over their enemies and peace and prosperity within the land promised to their forefathers.

Within the Sinaitic and Deuteronomical covenants law and grace are not antithetic. Law is the gift of a gracious, saving God. Through keeping the law man can experience more of God's grace. These concepts have been brought into focus by modern studies of the covenants, especially the comparisons with oriental vassal treaties.

David

→ Another promise that there will be a descendent of David on the throne of God's kingdom, which again does not annul the previous covenants, but adds to them.

The Perpetual Covenant--Christ

The ultimate fulfillment of all three of these covenants is in Christ.

Christ is the fulfillment of the covenant with Abraham.

Christ is the fulfillment of the covenant with Moses (Matt. 5:17ff)

Christ is the fulfillment of the covenant with the house of David.

Promise ----- leads to -----> cross

Because God cannot bless the nations without dealing with the sin/separation problem.

(law/covenant) ultimately leads to.....NT covenant of promise/grace

Gal. 3:1ff

Law is schoolmaster/tutor.....leads tograce of God in Christ

Gal. 3:24

God's love/grace..... leads to (demonstrated)death of Christ

Rom. 5:8

The grace extended in Christ stands in a long line of grace actions by God.

God-----> humanity
←----- or ----->
New State

God-----> humanity
←----- or ----->
New State

Notes

Make list of evidences of grace and faith

In promise: God initiates unconditionally; grace, gift, covenant, man's responsibility

In law: God initiates unconditionally; responsibility, gift, covenant, man's responsibility

(put)	in	out	alongside	un-	accent
--pute	Impute	depute	compute	dispute	repute
		deputy			reputation