

Do Covenants License Sin?

Covenants no more give one a license to sin than civil law allows car jacking. The fact is that God's people are citizens of a kingdom that has laws that must be followed (cf. Eph. 2:19-22). The apostle Paul writes, "*shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid*" (Rom. 6:1-2). The fact that sin exists proves law's current state of existence (cf. I Jn. 3:4). The Lord has always intended for mankind to obey His laws.

God's Covenant with Man Equals Law

A covenant is "an agreement, usually formal, between two or more persons to do or not do something specified" (Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary pg. 495). God made a covenant with the house of Israel after He had brought them up out of Egyptian bondage. Moses writes, "*keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do*" (Deut. 29:9). Again the Psalmist writes, "*keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do*" (Deut. 29:9). The prophet Jeremiah reveals the fact that the NT is a covenant law that God expects His people to follow as well (cf. Jer. 31:31ff compared to Heb. 8:7ff). To violate God's NT covenant law is to sin (I Jn. 3:4) and to sin is to lose one's fellowship with the heavenly Father (I Jn. 1:5-8).

Entering a Covenant with God is a Voluntary Act

God does not force Himself on any one; however, He does invite all of humanity to partake of His rich promises of salvation (Matt. 11:28; II Pet. 3:9; I Jn. 2:25). When one "hears, believes, confesses that Jesus is the Christ, repents of sins, and is baptized into Christ for the remission of sins," then this person has entered into a covenant agreement with the Lord. This covenant means that if I remain faithful till death then I am promised to receive a crown of life (cf. Rev. 2:10). Some have dreamed up the idea that once someone enters a covenant with God, then they are always in fellowship with Lord no matter how they live from that point forward. Just because one enters this agreement (covenant) with God does not mean he or she now has a 'license' to sin. Let us look at some OT examples that prove that to enter into a covenant with God is to assume that covenant's obligations in order to receive the end reward.

First, Jeremiah speaks of God's people entering a covenant with Jehovah regarding Hebrew slaves serving six years and then being released on the seventh year (Jer. 34:10ff / Ex. 21:1-4; Deut. 15:12). When the people broke the covenant and kept their Hebrew slaves beyond the allowed six years, God termed it a "*profaning of My name*" (Jer. 34:16) and a "*transgression of my covenant*" (Jer. 34:18). The consequence of said action was punishment by "*sword, pestilence, famine, and captivity*" (Jer. 34:17). Note that there were consequences to be suffered when the agreement was **broken**.

Secondly, when Asa (King of Judah) made religious reforms in Judah the people renewed their covenant with Jehovah and determined to serve him with all their being in **obedience** (cf. II Chron. 15:11-15).

Thirdly, Ezekiel records the Lord's words regarding His covenant with His people. God had entered a covenant agreement with His people, took care of them by providing all their needs (cf. Ezek. 16:8ff). Judah responds with unfaithfulness as a wife committing adultery against her husband (Ezek. 16:38). Such disobedience provokes God to "*anger*" (Ezek. 16:26) and defines their hearts as "*weak*" (Ezek. 16:30).

Practical application for today

When one obeys the gospel and becomes a Christian, he has just begun his journey to heaven. To say that ‘once we have been saved we are always saved, now go live as you please’ is erroneous and is undoubtedly a doctrine of the devil. Such an idea has never come from the mind of God. The Christian has made an agreement with God. That agreement involves following God’s laws faithfully till death (Col. 1:21-23).

Unfortunately, we all break God’s covenant laws from time to time (Rom. 3:23; I Jn. 1:8). Thanks be to God that He has given us the remedy for the forgiveness of our sins and a way to maintain our fellowship with Him through the blood of His dear son Jesus (Matt. 26:26). With a spirit of humility, God’s sinning saints may ask the Lord for forgiveness and be confident that He surely does just that (Isa. 57:15; Acts 8:18-24; I Jn. 1:9). There is no license to sin found in God’s word!

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