



A Perpetual, Everlasting Covenant... Selected Texts

There is a wonderful scene in the movie *Patton* where George C. Scott as Patton and Karl Malden as General Bradley are visiting the ruins of ancient Carthage during World War 2. In the scene, Patton is waxing eloquent about the glories of the war between the Carthaginians and the Romans when he says:

It was here. The battlefield was here. The Carthaginians defending the city were attacked by three Roman Legions. The Carthaginians were proud and brave but they couldn't hold. They were massacred. The Arab women stripped them of the tunics and swords, and lances. And the soldiers lay naked in the sun. 2000 years ago. I was here. You don't believe me do you Brad?¹

And then Patton recites a poem...it went like this.

Through the travail of the ages,
Midst the pomp and toil of war,
Have I fought and strove and perished
Countless times upon this star.

So as through a glass, and darkly
The age long strife I see
Where I fought in many guises,
Many names, -- but always me.²

Now the poem is a piece from a longer poem written by Patton himself called "Through a Glass Darkly." The title is, of course, an allusion to the Authorized Version's and its reading of 1 Corinthians 13:12 where it says, "For now we see through a glass darkly." In the movie, the poem is used to explain Patton's belief in reincarnation...and his belief that he was born to be a perpetual warrior but I thought I might exercise a little literary license and apply it to our study of the covenant.

You see there is a sense in which the covenant of grace...the covenant in which God graciously determined to save the elect on the basis of their faith in the redemptive work of Christ alone...shows up in many different forms and places in the Bible...and sometimes the names applied to it are different.

Over the last few weeks, I have been trying to explain that there are a number of covenants mentioned in the Bible and those covenants are inextricably related to each other in the redemptive plan of God. I have been making the point that the various covenants mentioned in the Bible are, in fact, simply different administrations or outworkings of the one true covenant of grace. Now because of that I have been arguing that the covenant God established with Abraham is especially important for understanding the nature of the covenant of grace. That is true because the covenant with Abraham was given as a perpetual, everlasting covenant and as such it is an essential, foundational building block of the one covenant of grace.³ Now in making that point, I explained that the Abrahamic covenant first given to Abraham was first given in a rather rudimentary or undeveloped form. What I meant by that is that it was first given to Abraham in a form that would later be altered or perhaps it is better to say "added to". Not all of the richness of the God's covenant with Abraham was fleshed out when it

was first given in Genesis chapter 12. Other details were added as God's revelation to Abraham was unfolded. In fact, the word "covenant" was not actually used in relationship to God's dealing with Abraham until Genesis 15. Still, the language of chapter 12 is decidedly covenantal. That is, the language of chapter twelve includes all of the essential elements of a covenant. You can tell that simply from the graciousness of the promise God makes. Look at the first three verses of Genesis 12.

^{ESV} **Genesis 12:1**...Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Now you can see that in Genesis 12 the details of God's covenantal arrangement with Abraham were not totally fleshed out. That doesn't mean that what was given or said was anything less than extraordinary. But it does mean that what was given or promised was not complete and more was to come with regard to the arrangement.

Over the last couple of weeks, as we have seen that the details the life of Abraham unfold, we have also seen the details of God's covenant with him unfold as well. For example, in Genesis 15 we saw God come down from heaven and ratify His covenant with Abraham by walking through the severed pieces of a several animal carcasses in a gruesome blood covenant ceremony.⁴ After the ceremony, a ceremony in which Abraham was completely passive...virtually unconscious, God elaborated His previous promises to Abraham both by filling

in some of the more important details already given and expanding beyond what had already been promised.

Look at Genesis 15:17 and following with me.

^{ESV} **Genesis 15:17**...When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

You'll notice here that the geographical extent of the land promises to Abraham is fleshed out in very specific detail. That is, God fills in the details of what His previously made covenant with Abraham actually encompassed. In that sense, the covenant was progressive. There is movement to it. That is, God made His initial promise to Abraham and then filled in more and more detail regarding what the covenant meant for Abraham. He did that both in terms of the land promises Abraham's descendents were to receive as well as the covenantal obligations that were being placed on him and his seed. Those obligations don't actually come up until Genesis 17 some five chapters after the initial call and promise made to Abraham. Still, it is not another covenant...not a different covenant. It is the same covenant. I want to make sure you understand that even though in chapter 17 God adds both a sign to the covenant some rather specific covenantal obligations or expectations as well.⁵

Look at Genesis 17:9-10 and then on down to verse 14.

^{ESV} **Genesis 17:9-10, 14**...And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised...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."

Now those verses are set in a context describing who was to do what in the covenantal arrangement. And the way God does that is by saying, "This is what I will do...and this is what you must do." That arrangement occurs in the verse where God says, "as for you, you shall keep my covenant." The phrase "as for" occurs three times in chapter 17. It occurs in verse 4 where God says, "as for me." It occurs in verse 9 where God said "as for you", and it occurs in verse 15 where God says, "as for Sarah." That formula, a formula where each covenant participant has both God's promise and their responsibility or obligation spelled out is fairly typical of ancient suzerain/vassal or king/subject treaties or covenants.⁶

Now I have to be especially careful at this point because I don't want to make the God's covenant with Abraham seem contingent upon Abraham's obedience. It was not. That ought to be especially obvious from last week's study in which God provided, in type, a sin offering for Abraham and his son Isaac so that Isaac might not have to die. Nevertheless that doesn't remove the plain and simple fact that God's covenant with Abraham, though gracious, imposed demands upon Abraham and his descendants.

What I want to show this morning is that the covenant promised under Moses was not a different covenant than the one promised Abraham. It is the same covenant. It is amplified. It is expanded and further obligations are added but

still it is the same covenant. We will discuss at a later point why so many additional and seemingly harsh obligations were added but for now I would like to try to demonstrate that the two covenants are not altogether different covenants but different administrations of the same covenant.

I want to do that by having you to turn to Exodus 2:24.

^{ESV} **Exodus 2:24**...And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵ God saw the people of Israel--and God knew.

Now the children of Israel had been in cruel bondage for some 400 years just as God had prophesied and promised Abraham in Genesis 15. But the point of the passage is that God both saw and knew about their bondage...and He remembered...remembered what He has said to Abraham some five or six hundred years earlier.

^{ESV} **Genesis 15:13**...Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

And the point the Exodus passage is trying to convey is that it was at that point that God heard their groaning and saw their mistreatment that He remembered His covenant with Abraham. It wasn't that their suffering had failed to get His attention all along. It wasn't that He failed to have concern for the individuals that lived and died in that awful place. It was rather that God was working out His redemption of a people for Himself. He remembered His promise to Abraham and He decided to act.

Now what is remarkable is that when God decided to act and to use Moses to bring about the Israelite deliverance He gave Moses explicit instructions to go to the children of Israel and tell them that He was at last fulfilling His covenant to them. You will remember, of course, that initially all did not go well. Pharaoh resisted Moses and in resisting Moses resisted God. And even though God kept applying pressure through Moses Pharaoh did not relent. Instead things got worse for the Israelites...so bad, in fact, that it caused Moses to cry in protest to God. It was then that God spoke and revealed to Moses His great hidden, covenantal name. Look with me at Exodus 5:22.

^{ESV} **Exodus 5:22**...Then Moses turned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? ²³ For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all." ^{ESV} **Exodus 6:1** But the LORD said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land." ² God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD. ³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. ⁴ I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. ⁵ Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant.

Now, I could speak at length about the significance of God giving His previously hidden name Yahweh but I think the point I am trying to make here, and I want to make it before it gets lost, is that all that the Lord did for Israel He did because of the covenant that He had made with Abraham.⁷ That last phrase in Exodus 6:5 is particularly telling.

^{ESV} **Exodus 6:5**...Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant.

Now to further buttress the point that I have been making...that the two covenants with Abraham and Moses are really the same covenant, I would like for you to look at two additional passages. The first is Exodus 32 and covers the incident when the children of Israel make and worship the golden calf. The second is Deuteronomy 9 and covers God's final word to the nation before they go into the land of Canaan.

Now in Exodus 32, the children of Israel had grown weary of waiting for God to come down off the mountain of God where unknown to them God was giving Moses the tablets of the law. Anyway the text says the Israelites told Aaron to fashion them a gods to worship. The text goes on to say that Aaron fashioned a golden calf out of the golden ornaments they had brought out of Egypt and that they worshipped the golden calf sat down to eat and drink and then rose up to play. Now how Aaron could have done that when he his sons and seventy elders chosen of the people had come onto the mountain and seen the throne of God and had eaten and drank in God's presence and had lived to tell about it is beyond me. But that is what the text says, Anyway, God tells Moses to go down off the mountain because He intended to destroy the people.

Look at it with me in chapter 32.

^{ESV} **Exodus 32:7**...And the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. ⁸ They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" ⁹ And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰ Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn

hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you."

Anyway a few verses later, Moses appeals to God not to destroy them but to be gracious to them and he does so not just on the basis of the Exodus or on the basis of what unbelievers will say but rather on the basis of something even more important to God...the covenant he had made with Abraham.

^{ESV} **Exodus 32:11**...But Moses implored the LORD his God and said, "O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. ¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.'" ¹⁴ And the LORD relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.

Now I love that for clarity's sake. It is obviously an allusion to Genesis 15 where God told Abraham to go out and to look at the stars and see if he could number them. Of course, indirectly Moses is reminding God of that particular and he is appealing to Him to remember how He came down and made a blood covenant with Abraham. And the remarkable thing about Moses' appeal is that it works...it gets God attention. Of course, we know looking back that God was using the scene to teach Moses about His covenantal faithfulness. Still the passage is remarkable.

Now the second passage I want you to look at is Deuteronomy 9:5-6. In it God speaks to the nation through Moses as He is preparing to lead them into the land

of Canaan. And as He does, He takes the time to remind them of the reason He delivered them out of bondage in the first place and as God does that He feels compelled to strip away any sense of arrogance or self-importance they might feel...or any sense of deserving God's favor. Look at what he says in verse 5.

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 9:4...**"Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. ⁵ Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. ⁶ "Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people.

No one can ever accuse God of trying to falsely build up the self-image of the children of Israel. In fact, He goes out of His way to point out that the reason, the only reason, He is delivering them into the land of Canaan is because of His covenant with Abraham.

So, the thing I would like you to see is that prior to the deliverance of the nation God gave the reason for their deliverance as the covenant with Abraham. In the midst of their deliverance, God gave the reason for their deliverance as the covenant with Abraham, and even after the deliverance, God gave the reason for their deliverance as the covenant with Abraham. And once in the very midst of their deliverance God's impending judgment, anger and wrath was turned aside...solely on the basis of the Moses' appeal to remember the covenant He had made with Abraham. Now I don't see how a person could come to any other conclusion than that whatever the relationship was that God had to the nation of

Israel under Moses...it was inextricably wrapped and bound to the eternal, continuing promises connected with the Abrahamic covenant.

Now because of that I am posing the idea for you that the Mosaic covenant was not a different covenant but simply a different administration of the previous covenant made with Abraham

I am making the point because there are and have been a number of scholars that want to see the Mosaic or Sinaitic covenant as something entirely new and different than the Abrahamic covenant.⁸ They think of the two covenants as antithetical...rather than as different administrations of the same covenant of grace.⁹ Part of their concern is understandable. Part of their concern springs from the fact that the Mosaic covenant adds a bunch of stipulations and laws...that in places it feels more like covenant of works than it does a unilateral covenant of promise.¹⁰

And because that is a fair observation, I will be trying to explain how that there was, in fact, a works principle attached to the Mosaic covenant that had to do with the theocratic establishment of the nation. But that is ways off...in the meantime I want you to focus on the fact that the two covenants are still both gracious covenants connected at the hip as sequential steps along the path of the one covenant of grace.

Now, I want to look at two other things that will help you connect the Mosaic covenant with the Abrahamic covenant. The first is perhaps one of the strangest passages in the Old Testament and is, in fact, so strange that it is almost impossible to understand except for the fact that it serves to connect the Mosaic

covenant and Abrahamic covenant together through the importance of God's covenant sign...circumcision.¹¹

^{ESV} **Exodus 4:21**...And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. ²² Then you shall say to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, ²³ and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me." If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.'" ²⁴ At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. ²⁵ Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!" ²⁶ So he let him alone. It was then that she said, "A bridegroom of blood," because of the circumcision.

Now the context of the passage is God's word to Abraham to go to Pharaoh and warn him that his continued refusal to let the children of Israel go would lead to death of his firstborn son. Anyway, in this passage, it appears that God met Moses, Zipporah and Moses' son Gershom on their way back to Egypt with the intention of killing either Moses or perhaps his son Gershom (the way the pronoun is used in Hebrews makes it impossible to know for certain) because of their failure to obey the rite of circumcision, which had been given to Abraham. You will remember that God had told Abraham that failure to circumcise one's children meant that they were cut off from the covenant.¹² Now in the passage, it is hard to know whether Zipporah was angry with Moses because she had to circumcise their son at all or because Moses had failed to keep his covenantal responsibility.¹³ But the one thing is clear, the command to Abraham to circumcise his descendants...and the warning that anyone not circumcised would be cut off from the promise applied to anyone and everyone in Israel...even their national deliverer.

The second passage is in Exodus 12:43 where God is instituting the Passover meal. God places specific requirements on those that to participate and the only thing I want you to notice is how similar the language is to the command given to Abraham. First, let me read what was said to Abraham.

^{ESV} **Genesis 17:9**...And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹² He who is eight days old 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, ¹³ 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. 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."

Now, look at what God commanded the Israelites to do in preparation for the first Passover.

^{ESV} **Exodus 12:43**...And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, ⁴⁴ but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. ⁴⁵ No foreigner or hired servant may eat of it. ⁴⁶ It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. ⁴⁷ All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. ⁴⁸ If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. ⁴⁹ There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you." ⁵⁰ All the people of Israel did just as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron. ⁵¹ And on that very day the LORD brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts.

Now, there is an additional reason why I wanted to show that the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant are linked together and are in fact different administrations of the one covenant of grace. It is because much of modern evangelical Christianity is based upon a system called dispensationalism. In dispensationalism, there is an emphasis that Israel and the church are quite distinct. There is an emphasis that the way people were saved under the two dispensations was also quite distinct. In older dispensationalism, some even said that that people under the Mosaic covenant were saved by keeping the law, which of course cannot be right.¹⁴ If we know anything from the rest of Scripture, it is that no person was ever justified by keeping the law. If keeping the law saved the Israelites, then no Israelites were ever saved.

The thing I want to demonstrate to you is that anyone who is ever saved is saved by faith on the basis of Christ's atoning work. Salvation or justification is imputed to anyone and everyone who places their faith or hope in Christ. Abraham believed God and it reckoned or imputed to him as righteousness.

Now let me close with this. I read earlier in Exodus 6:3 that God had not revealed His name to be YHWH until He revealed it to Moses in Exodus 3:14. He made it a point to Moses to explain that that was His name and though He had made covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob He had not revealed His name to them. But in the passage with Moses He does reveal it and what we know is that it is His great covenant keeping name. It means something like "I am" or "I am that I am." Now it was name reserved for His covenant people and they accepted His name with dread and wonder and out of respect almost never said His name out loud for fear of blaspheming. In fact whenever His name came up in the biblical text they avoided reading it out loud and to remind themselves not to read it

they applied the vowel points from another word for God Adonai. That is they took the "a" and the "o" and so on and placed them on the word YHWH. They did so to remind themselves to say Adonai and not YHWH and the result, of course, is that when the Bible was translated into English....translators combined the word YHWH with the vowels from the word Adonai and it came out Jehovah.

Now in the New Testament the Lord Jesus sometimes found Himself in trouble because He used the phrase "I am" in such a way that the Jews understood Him to be applying it to Himself...which He was. One such example is John 8:58 where He was arguing with the Jews about Abraham. Anyway what He said was...

^{ESV} **John 8:58**..."Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."

The Jews actually took up stones to stone Him for blasphemy.

There is another passage where He does the same thing and it is remarkable. It occurs in John 18:3.

^{ESV} **John 18:3**...So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴ Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" ⁵ They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶ When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. ⁷ So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸ Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." ⁹ This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one."

Do you see what happens there? The Romans come to arrest Jesus and intend to arrest the disciples as well. But Jesus stops them by invoking His great covenant name and the Romans fall backwards and to the ground until they decide to do as HE commands and let the disciples go.

He was exercising His great covenantal faithfulness by using His great covenantal name. And you know it is the same covenantal faithfulness He exercises toward us in redeeming us from our sins and making us to be at peace with God and moving us along in our sanctification. Let us rejoice and be glad.

Let's pray.

¹ [http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Patton_\(film\)](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Patton_(film))

² Charles M. Province, "Through a Glass Darkly" in *The Unknown Patton* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1983), 65.

³ T.M. Moore, *I Will Be Your God* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishers, 2002), 33. He writes, "The significance of Abraham appears over and over in Scripture as foundational to everything else God would do with and for His people."

⁴ O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishers, 1980), 128-131.

⁵ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Sin and Salvation in Christ Volume 3* translated by John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 204. Bavinck writes: "This unilateral character had to come out with ever-increasing clarity in course of history. True, the covenant of God imposed obligations also on those with whom it was made—obligations, not as conditions for entering into the covenant (for the covenant was made and based only on God's compassion), but as the way the people who had by grace been incorporated into the covenant henceforth had to conduct themselves (Gen. 17:1—2; Exod. 19:5—6, 8; 24:3, 7, Lev. 26:14f.; Deut. 5:29; 27:10f.; 28:11; 30:1f; etc.). But although Israel repeatedly accepted God's covenant it did not walk in the way of the covenant but consistently desecrated and broke it. Thus question arose whether this covenant of grace was as unstable as the covenant works had been before the fall. Replying to this question, revelation answered ever more forcefully and loudly as apostasy increased. No, this covenant does not falter; *people* may become unfaithful, but *God does not* forget his promise. This covenant is anchored solely in his compassion."

⁶ Michael D. Williams, *As Far as the Curse is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2009), 140-141. A new description.

⁷ Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983), 79. Cassuto confirms the fact that the text is referring to a covenant that already existed and not to the making of a new covenant. He writes: “Verses 4 and 5, both of which begin with the word וְאִם [‘and also’, ‘moreover’], point to two parallel statements: on the one hand, I have established, etc., and on the other, I have heard, etc. I discussed the signification of the idiom ‘to establish a covenant’ in my commentary on Gen. vi 18, where I showed that it was not identical with that of the expression ‘make [literally, ‘cut’] a covenant’, as most commentators are accustomed to suppose, particularly modern exegetes, who regard the use of the two different terms as a sure indication of divergent sources. The expression ‘to establish a covenant’ connotes the fulfillment of a covenant that has already been made. The Lord says: Let it be known to you, Moses, that I have established My covenant, which I made with them. The words ‘with them’ belong not to the verb ‘established’ but to the substantive ‘covenant’, as is shown by ii 24: ‘And God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.’ The covenant was a promise (on the use of the word covenant in the sense of a unilateral promise, see my note on Gen. vi 18) to give them — that is, the Patriarchs and their descendants — the land of Canaan, the land of their sojournings, wherein they sojourned. This assurance I have established, I have given it permanent validity, it exists before Me constantly.”

⁸ Michael Horton, *God of Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 103. Horton is not one of those that think that the covenant with Moses was a works covenant. He still believes it was part of the one covenant of grace. However, he does identify the tension that exists between good men like O. Palmer Robertson and Meredith Kline where Robertson accuses Kline of holding that position. This section deals with that tension and is quite helpful. Horton writes, “Clearly, law functioned before and after this covenant, so why is it distinctively styled a law covenant? First, it is considered a law covenant because it gives greater fullness to God’s previously enunciated commands. There is a particular concentration on the duties required of God’s covenant people in this section of the canon and in this period of redemptive history. Second, law is the basis for whatever is distinctive about this covenant, The words here are carefully chosen: the writer is not saying that the entire reality of God’s dealings with his people during this epoch is controlled by the principle of law or founded on it rather than on promise, but that whatever is distinctive about the ministry of Moses relates to the earthly, national, temporal, transitory, shadowy, pedagogical—and that this is administered by law (foreshadowing the true Israel) rather than promise. Still, the very fact that the true Israel himself nevertheless fulfills “all that is written in the law to do them” demonstrates that individual believers and their seed—even during the theocratic epoch—inheriting everlasting life according to a covenant of grace. Israel’s covenant-breaking, no more than David’s and his descendants cannot annul God’s promise to Abraham and his seed (and in him, us all).”

See also, O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishers, 1980), 4.

⁹ Arthur W. Pink, *The Divine Covenants* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1973), 143. Pink highlights some of the conflicting views and problems.

¹⁰ Hence Robertson's desire to not use phrases like "works principle." See pg. 175.

¹¹ Robertson, 149-152.

¹² See Cassuto, 60. See also R. Alan Cole, *Exodus in the TOTC Series* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 78.

¹³ R. Alan Cole, *Exodus in the TOTC Series* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 78. Cole writes, "'Him' is ambiguous, and could refer to either Moses or Gershom; the natural presumption would, however, be Moses. On the other hand, if the 'him' refers to Gershom, then there is a closer link with the context (death of the first-born), as showing how Moses' first-born nearly died. Some have assumed that Moses, like his son, did not bear the sign of the covenant on his body, but this is unnecessary (Moses was a baby in a Hebrew home) and unlikely in view of the known Egyptian practice. In any case he was struck down by some dangerous sickness or other blow as the sign of God's displeasure."

¹⁴ Vern Poythrees, "Presbyterianism and Dispensationalism" in *The Practical Calvinist: An Introduction to the Presbyterian and Reformed Heritage* edited by Peter Lillback (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2003), 415-424. Poythress writes: "And indeed there is a danger. At times some dispensationalists, in their zeal to distinguish grace from law, used language that suggested there might be different ways of salvation offered for different dispensations. For example, the *Scotfield Reference Bible*, in its note on 1 John 3:7, says baldly, "The righteous man under law became righteous by doing righteously; under grace he does righteously because he has been made righteous (Rom. 3.22; Rom. 10.3, note)." Commenting on the petition in the Lord's Prayer to "forgive us our debts," the *Scotfield Reference Bible* states, "This is legal ground. Cf. Eph. 4.32, which is grace. Under law forgiveness is conditioned upon a like spirit in us; under grace we are forgiven for Christ's sake, and exhorted to forgive because we have been forgiven. See Mt. 18.32; 26:28, note." We hope that Scotfield did not intend it, but it sounds as if the Israelites under Moses were saved by works, whereas now the church is saved by grace."

See also, Bryan Estelle ed., *The Law is Not of Faith*, (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2009), 17.