

Covenant of Redemption

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[0:00] So it's 20 to 2, we have just over 50 minutes left before I have to finish, and we haven't! yet demonstrated that there is a covenant of redemption. So let me tell you what I plan! to do in the rest of our time together. We will finish off that demonstration. I will then make some comments about the nature of this covenant, some cautions, look at a few questions within it, in particular the question of the involvement of the Holy Spirit as a party to the covenant. I will then very briefly state and answer some of the principal objections to the idea that there is a covenant of redemption, and then I will try to spend a good chunk of time again thinking about the pastoral fruit of emphasising the covenant of redemption in your preaching and teaching ministry, and indeed for us, ourselves as Christians. So where have we got to? We've got to the idea that we have parties in place, the Father and the Son. We've seen a good, generous spread of description of the work of the Son, especially in terms of him being the King and the Priest. We have seen some of the things promised to the Son in his work, and we have seen some things that push the timing of this covenant back before the incarnation, but not before time. So let me just finish off the biblical evidence and complete the picture by taking us to two places. First of all to Hebrews 10, and then to John's

Gospel. Hebrews 10 is a famous text in the context of discussing the covenant of redemption. It's appealed to by really all proponents of the covenant of redemption. I'm thinking here are verses 5 to 10, and the quotation from Psalm 40. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, Sacrifices and offerings you've not desired, but a body have you prepared for me. In burnt offerings and sin offerings you've taken no pleasure. Then I said, Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.

And then, as the writer goes on, he talks about being sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all in verse 10. So we notice here then a preparation by the Father. The Father has prepared a body. We notice a willing susception. A susception is a word that we need to try and bring back into use, I think. Susception is like a willing undertaking, a willing taking on of this work by the Son. I have come to do your will, O God. And we find also the content of the task. Because God has a will for the Son, he's prepared a body for the Son. Well, what for? Well, so that we might be sanctified through the offering of the body, verse 10. And so there's the work laid out. But again, you might say, what about the timing? Well, the timing is interesting here, isn't it? When does Jesus say this?

When Christ came into the world, verse 5, he said. That's interesting, isn't it? Did the baby say this? Is this the mind of the Son in becoming man? Interesting question. I think again, it's beginning to push the timing back. But it's not quite the same as giving us an eternal covenant. Though we do clearly have in Hebrews 1, verses 2 and 3, a pre-existent Son. So that's a possibility. But let's turn to John for more on that. Really, John's Gospel, John's Gospel is home for me. I was converted through studying John's Gospel at A-level, and the Reformation. So Luther and Calvin for half the A-level syllabus, and John's Gospel for the other half, which meant in the lower six actually going through John's Gospel verse by verse, with the teacher giving a commentary on it. And I grew up in a happy, moral, but non-Christian home. Probably been to church half a dozen times by then. And we just went through John's

Gospel verse by verse. And I would have always called myself a Christian, but then I saw that's what it means to be a Christian. So John is always about going home. I do think it's worth everyone spending, I know this is probably you'll spend a lot of time in every book of the Bible, but I do think John's Gospel repays particular attention because there is so much in John's Gospel, isn't there? And one of the things that you find there, Jim Packer tells us, is the covenant of redemption, explicitly declared most notably in the words of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of John. And here's Packer, you can tell he's been reading the Book of Common Prayer, I was raised on the Book of Common Prayer. The emphasis is pervasive, arresting, and inescapable. Through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault.

[5:02] There's those three that Cranmer specialised in, although they are oozing out of Packer. Pervasive, arresting, and inescapable. Jesus' own words force on thoughtful readers, recognition of the covenant economy as foundational to all thought about the reality of God's saving grace. So the idea in John occurs again and again, doesn't it? That the Father sends the Son to do a specific work. Different Greek verbs are used, *apostello*, *pempo*, not much difference between them as far as we can tell. But the point occurs again and again throughout different chapters of the Gospel, perhaps most clearly in John 17, the so-called High Priestly Prayer.

Verse 3, Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. Verse 4, I have glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. When was it given? They have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you. They have believed that you sent me, as you sent me into the world, so I have sent them. But they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me, so the world may know that you sent me. These know that you've sent me. Again and again and again. The sending of the Son to do something.

What? In John's Gospel, what is the Son sent to do? Well, actually, a whole variety of things described differently. A work he's sent to do, 4.34, 17.4. In the plural works, 5.36 and 9.4. The seeking of God's will, 5.30, 6.38. Speaking the Father's words, 14.24. Judgment, 9.39. Salvation, 12.47. But especially, he's sent to keep a commandment. What is that commandment? I've not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment, what to say and what to speak. So a big focus in John is Revelation, the Son as Prophet.

[7:05] That neglected office in the history of Reformed theology. Look it up in any systematic. How much do you find on Christ as Prophet? Very little. Very little. Just a few pages here and there. Even in Calvin, just a few pages. Look it up in church. A little bit. Nothing like the treatment of the priestly office. Or even the kingly office. The cross and the resurrection. What about the prophetic working increasingly in this country in an Islamic context.

I think this is a big issue. Jesus is the prophet, the final prophet. We need to think more about the prophetic office than we have. Anyway, a big part of his work then is this commandment, what to speak. But the command, I would say in John's Gospel, is the commandment to die. 10.18. 17.18. For this reason the Father loves me. Because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again. This charge, *entolene*, I have received from my Father. This command he's received from his Father. The command to die. He knows when he comes to do this work that the Father will undertake for him in doing it. He comes with a task to do and a promise of the Lord's help. He knows that the Lord will be at work in him accomplishing his work. I've come to be the will of him who sent me. This is the will of him who sent me. Chapter 6. This is 38 to 40. That I should lose nothing of all that he's given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life. And I will raise it up on the last day. Now, most importantly for our purposes, the material in John is formative for understanding the eternity of the Father-Son covenant concerning redemption. Because think about what it means to be sent to do a work. If you're John the Baptist, what does it mean to be sent to do a work? It just means you're given a job to do and told to go and do it.

Because John the Baptist does not pre-exist. So we do find in John, the language of John is someone sent from God. 1 verse 6.

God is he who sent me. 1 verse 33. But we would never say that John is something that John covenants in eternity with God because he didn't exist in eternity.

[9:36] But it's different with Jesus and his sending, isn't it? The Son pre-existed eternally. 1 verse 1, 3, verse 13, 8, 58. Before Abraham was, I am.

Specifically, he pre-existed in the bosom of the Father, 1, 18. And in heaven. He says, I have come down from heaven, 6, 38. Not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.

And in heaven, what was his existence like? Well, it was a glorious existence because he prays in 17, 5, that the Father would give to him the glory that he had with the Father before the world existed.

So the Son, unlike John the Baptist, pre-exists in eternity in heaven in the bosom of the Father in glory. And he is sent, therefore, from somewhere as well as to somewhere.

Whereas we might say that John the Baptist is more sent to somewhere. But Jesus is sent from heaven. And Jesus, therefore, comes from heaven.

[10:42] From the prior realm of existence. From his pre-existent state. So Jesus is sent and comes as one already existing and already consenting.

When he says, I have come to do that, what he means is, this is why I came. I came down from there with this in view in order to do it. As Augustine states, he was sent and came as God, therefore.

It was not just the man who the Word became that was sent, but that the Word was sent to become man, Augustine says. So the covenant then, the tasking of the Son, was not made with the Son already existing, but was the basis of his existence as a man.

Van Drunen and Clark have a helpful article on this covenant of redemption. And they write, the covenant of redemption was not entered into in time with the incarnate Christ, for the incarnation itself was a consequence of this covenant.

The beginning of Christ's obedience to his Father's will. And so I would argue that when we piece all of that evidence together, from the Psalms and Isaiah and Luke and Hebrews and now John, we have parties, we have conditions, we have promises, and we have eternity.

[12:14] We have ascending from eternity. And an undertaking from eternity. Podge sums up the biblical data. The Father gave the Son a work to do.

He sent him into the world to perform it, and promised him a great reward when the work was accomplished. Such is the constant representation of the Scriptures. We have, therefore, the contracting parties, the promise, and the condition.

These are the essential elements of the covenant. Questions? Anyone want to ask anything at that point before I press on?

No? Then I'll press on. Okay, there's the covenant of redemption. There's a biblical case for the covenant of redemption. Questions about it next?

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? It's the only time you're allowed to do up-speak. Up-speak is generally speaking, I think, like, like, to be avoided.

[13:15] Never mind if you didn't get that. If you've got children aged between about 7 and 15, you really get it. Because you probably spend quite a lot of time battling with it. Now, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Jonathan Edwards tells us not the Holy Spirit. He's adamant that the Holy Spirit is not a party in the covenant of redemption. Why? He has a test to determine whether someone needs to be a party in the covenant or not.

And it runs like this. He says, He says, He says, The Father can't prescribe to other persons anything of this nature without a new establishment by free covenant empowering him to do so.

So there's the test for Edwards. You need to be a party to a covenant if what you're being asked to do involves you stepping down below your economical character, below your natural position.

But if it doesn't involve that, you don't need to covenant it. Therefore, the Son, for Edwards, because he enters a state of humiliation, as in the classic reform conception of the two states of humiliation and exaltation, needs to covenant with the Father to do that.

[14:59] But the Holy Spirit, who does not enter such a state of humiliation, does not need to covenant with the Father to do that. seems to me a rather arbitrary test.

It is accused as a position of tritheism by some. Um, Hoxima says that really this position implies a denial of the Trinity.

Kuyper says the pactum salutis, which is one of the Latin terms of the covenant of redemption, can never include only the two, but must always include the three persons of the Holy Trinity. And the best person on the other side, who I've read, interestingly, is John Gayle, who I bring to you as a Presbyterian, Presbytery, a Baptist, most helpful on this point, I think.

Gill argues that the test... Are you looking for someone? Jess? Do you need... Sorry? Leo. He's bunking off.

Tell him we know. Gill says, the test is not whether you have to take on an office below your dignity, but just whether you're doing something.

[16:21] He writes this, He is set to come, this is the Holy Spirit, being sent to do these things, not without His will and consent, but according to His voluntary engagements in covenant, without which He could not be sent by the Father and the Son, being equal to them.

And this will account for the several passages where He's said to be sent by the Father in the name of Christ, and by Christ from the Father. So Gill has another test. Gill's test is not are you taking on a state of humiliation?

Gill's test is just are you being asked to do something? And if you are, as a co-equal person in the Godhead, you have to consent, you have to agree to it. You can't just be told to do it.

And that seems to me to make much more theological sense. That a co-equal person in the Godhead would agree to something, would need to agree to something if he's to do it.

Not just because it involves humiliation. But, let's pause there. Hold on a minute. Let's imagine we're Edwards and we agree with Edwards. Even if you agree with Edwards, I'm not sure that his conclusion follows, if you agree with his test.

[17:31] Might you not think, you must do what you will with this thought. Might you not think that there is something analogous in the work of the Spirit to the humiliation of the Son?

For instance, is there not a hint of this in 1 Corinthians 6? Flee from sexual immorality.

Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?

Now isn't there a sense there that sexual sin is so inappropriate because it is, it conflicts with the indwelling of the Spirit. Yes? For the Spirit to indwell sinners is, I would think, arguably, something like a humiliation.

to dwell in the midst of a sinful people, Israel. For the Ark of Glory to be carried off among the Philistines. Are these not, they're not incarnational humiliations, clearly, because the Spirit is not incarnate.

[18:45] I love Meredith Klein. You know Meredith Klein, who is a brilliant, brilliant, brilliant writer, full of really obscure, difficult things to understand. And I would disagree with him on a number of things as would be evident already from today, but absolutely worth the attention.

And he has this term endoxation. That the Son becomes incarnate, but there is an endoxation of the Spirit. The Spirit manifests in his glory in created forms.

The glory cloud and the fire. There's an endoxation parallel to the incarnation. So do you, might we not say, is there not something like the humiliation of the Son?

Such that even if we accepted Edwards' principle, we might say, you still need a covenant for the Spirit. You still need the Spirit to be in this covenant. I leave that with you, Tim.

Digest and do with what you will. He's digested already and is... It feels like it is because the persons are equal, they must always be a teaching point.

[19:51] How does that sit with the... I think there is a single giant where the concept of the world has been in that position? Well, we will come to that as an objection to the covenant of redemption.

Because that is a standard objection to the covenant of redemption, which is that God has one world. So how can there be a mutual covenant thing? Yeah. Yeah. Timothy. Exactly. I just want to know what is the word that I have 61 basically says, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me.

There's a giving of the Spirit by the Lord to anoint the appointed one. And there's a dynamic now being sent to do it all to equip and enable.

Exactly. Exactly. So, in other words, let's pause. All I've just discussed with you is whether or not the Spirit is a party to this covenant. If you conclude that he is, you then ask the question, well, what are the terms of the covenant for him?

Because we have lots and lots of stuff in the literature about what work is set before the Son and what promise is set before the Son and what he comes to do and what his reward is. But we're so far back on thinking through the role of the Spirit in the covenant that we've not got beyond the question of whether he is a party.

[21:07] What if he is? You then have to do all of that work unpacking the work and the promises given to the Spirit. Now, actually, it's not that difficult because even though it's not classified as part of the covenant of redemption, we've got plenty of material in our biblical and systematic volumes of theology to tell us what the Spirit does in the work of redemption.

So, somebody like Edwards is going to say, well, he does this, this, this, and this, and this. He just doesn't have to be a party to a covenant to do it. So, all we actually need to do is to say, well, yes, he does have to be a party to do it, and that's what it's going to be.

It's that stuff that's already there in our systematic theology. So, essentially, any of the work of the Spirit that he does in the history of redemption, if he's a party to that history, is his work that's set before him.

Perhaps slightly more subtle to ask, and what's his reward, what's promised to him, but again, it wouldn't take you long to get there, I think. And Isaiah 61 will be the kind of text that you'll be thinking of in unpacking what the Spirit's part in this covenant is.

Yeah. Okay. Yeah. Yeah. Just on the kind of consensual point of the Spirit of creation, it's obvious, isn't it true that the whole each person's consensual by the very nature of relationship to creation, humanity, confession, covenant, condensation, condensation, condensation, condensation.

[22:38] Yes. So it's sensitive that Father's going to speak, or any other way that Father manifests himself with his great humilence, there is a kind of stooping there.

But I don't know what's so special about that, or why you argue against the Spirit. I think Edwards would say there's a difference between condescension and humiliation, probably, I think.

Because you're right, any, any revelation of God to the creature is a condescension. I think Edwards might say this because there's something different about humiliation. And that's what he thinks he's meant.

He thinks that's what he seems to be in the answer. Yeah. Yeah. Okay, let's move on. Just a few things I want to point out about the conditions.

I just give them to you as headings, really. We've already touched on this a bit. The conditions for the Son are the legal consequence of the covenant of works. So what's the work that the Son has given to do?

[23:41] Well, it's the work that arises from the breach of the covenant of works. So Adam leaves humanity with a double predicament, doesn't he? First of all, Adam was meant to obey, and he didn't.

So someone's going to have to obey. Secondly, Adam disobeyed, and therefore he incurred the curse on his disobedience. So someone is going to have to pay the penalty.

So there is from Adam a preceptive and a penal debt arising from the covenant of works and it being broken by Adam.

That would be why, I would argue, as an aside, you need to have a doctrine of the imputation of Christ's act of obedience. Because Adam leaves us with a double problem, not a single problem. He doesn't only leave us with the problem of the curse, leads us with the problem that we've not obeyed. Now sometimes you can present that mathematically. You can say, if Jesus bears our punishment, it takes us back to zero, and we need to get to ten to merit eternal life, and he only takes us to zero if he only does that.

[24:46] So we need his act of obedience to take us to ten. Now I don't think that's particularly helpful, and people rightly, I think, criticize that mathematical model. Rather than doing it mathematically, view it in terms of the story of the Bible.

Okay? Here is Adam in the garden. He's in what we know is his probationary period. He needs to obey, and then he will receive his reward, whatever that is. He doesn't obey.

He falls. Now, if Jesus takes away his disobedience, think of that narrative, where do we now land in that narrative? We land back in the probationary period, don't we?

We still have to have the obedience. So although he is now innocent and perfect, yes, by being forgiven. His sins have been erased. So there's a temperament which is perfect, but he still hasn't obeyed.

So we need both. So, thinking about, what I'm trying to think about here with you is the architecture of the covenants. How do they fit together? The covenant of works, if you like, generates the legal conditions that come upon Christ in the covenant of redemption.

[25:53] This is your work. Obey in their place, bear their sins. Okay? Does that make sense? But it's interesting, isn't it? Because theologically, in terms of the order of being, it's the other way around.

Because the covenant of redemption precedes the covenant of works. So the covenant of works hands to Christ, if you like, his legal obligations in the covenant of redemption.

But actually, the covenant of redemption existed in eternity before any other covenant. covenant.

And here, I put on my superlapsarian hat. And if you need to go and look that up to remind yourself what it means, do it later.

Okay? But basically, it means Jesus is first before anything else in God's plan. And everything else is second to him. Covenant of redemption is first. Creation serves the purposes of this covenant of redemption made in eternity.

Covenant of works serves the purposes of the covenant of redemption. Covenant of redemption first, arising from that, there will be a covenant of works. Covenant of works then provides to Christ the condition of the covenant of redemption in time.

[27:07] Okay. A thought about this covenantal language, which is this.

Having spent most of the day with you defending the existence of the covenant of redemption, I do now wish to put a warning sign over it, which is the sign, not men at work, but analogy at work.

Okay. Analogy at work. The language of covenant applied to God is applied analogically. That is to say, it is not univocal.

When I say there is a covenant here between God and man, or between this man and that man, and then I say there's a covenant in the Godhead, it's not identical at every point with the other covenants that we know.

It's not univocal. We don't use the language of covenant univocally. Nor is it equivocal, which would be totally different. If we use language equivocally, it means something totally different here from what it means there.

[28:13] Rather, it's analogical. It is the same in some respects and different in others. So when we say there is a covenant in the Godhead, in certain respects that is like a covenant with people, or a covenant among people.

But in important respects we must remember that it will be different, because we predicate things of God by analogy. We say things of God by analogy. Now you may say, ah, doesn't this render the whole thing rather pointless?

No, because actually this is not something that is peculiarly true of our covenant language. It is true of all of our theological language. Everything we say about God is analogical.

God is Father, is analogical. He is not what we mean by Father in many respects, though he is in others. He is not a biological Father. God is a rock, is analogical, he is not made of stone.

All of our theological language is analogically predicated of God. Because all of our language, which is the language of the Bible, takes created terms used of created things, and applies them to the uncreated God.

[29:21] So there is nothing peculiar about covenant language here, but I just want to mention to you a few of the things that we mustn't infer of God when we say that there is a covenant among the persons of the Trinity. First of all, there are no temporal acts in God.

Human covenants are made in time. Even human covenants with God are in time, aren't they? But there are no temporal acts in God. There is no priority nor posteriority, says Patrick Gillespie, because all of God's acts are eternal.

So the covenant of redemption is a contingent thing. It doesn't have an absolute necessity like God's own life does, but it's eternal. But it's eternal but contingent on God.

Secondly, there's no deliberation in God. If I make this proposal to Christ that I made earlier on about his laptop, he's going to want to deliberate long and hard about it before, he says yes. God doesn't deliberate.

God doesn't have to sit around and agree with himself. Yes, the persons which don't enter into a debate and a deliberation and work things out. Nor, thirdly, is the will of one person changed by another, as is often the case in human covenanting.

[30:34] One party approaches another to propose a covenant, the other is initially resistant to it, but then agrees. None of that. So, when I read this in John Flavel, great Puritan that he was, on the one hand I think, wow, that preaches really well, doesn't it?

But on the other hand I think it is deeply misleading. Here's what he says. He sketches a conversation between the persons of the Trinity. You may suppose the father to say, when driving his bargain with Christ for you, father, my son, here is a company of poor, miserable souls that have utterly undone themselves.

And now lie open to my justice. Justice demands satisfaction for them, or will satisfy itself in the eternal ruin of them. What shall be done for these souls? And thus Christ returns, the son.

O my father, such is my love to and pity for them, that rather than they shall perish eternally, I will be responsible for them as their surety, their legal substitute. Bring in all thy bills, that I may see what they owe thee.

Lord, bring them all in, that there may be no after reckonings with them. Let my hand shall they require it. I will rather choose to suffer thy wrath than they should suffer it. Upon me, my father, upon me be all their debt.

[31:52] Father, but, my son, if thou undertake for them, thou must reckon to pay the last night. Expect no abatements. If I spare them, I will not spare thee. Son, content father, let it be so.

Charge it all upon me, I am able to discharge it. Don't, don't, don't. Now you may say to me, but it's like all illustrations, you can critique all illustrations, can't you? Because there's something wrong with all of them if you push them too far.

Yes? That's true, isn't it? Every illustration of a theological thing can go wrong if you push it too far and draw conclusions from it that you shouldn't draw. So surely this is okay as long as you don't conclude that this kind of deliberative discussion element is present in God.

Maybe. But I think the test of illustration is this. Is the core of what the illustration is affirming true and helpful? And the unhelpful implications would only be if you took certain peripheral aspects of it to imply things that they don't.

It seems to me here that actually the very weight of this conversation that Flavel writes about is this negotiating, resisting, deliberative aspect.

[33:00] And that actually the illustration is therefore fundamentally flawed. none of those things should be thought to apply. Next, some objections.

Okay, briefly, before we move on to application. First of all, the covenant of redemption is too legal in its understanding of the intra-Trinitarian relations, which are really relations of love.

Do you see the idea here? Covenanting is a cold, forensic, legal thing to do, and you can't understand the persons of the Godhead relating to each other covenantally, because their union is a union of love.

So they wouldn't relate to each other covenantally like this. Headline answer. What about marriage? Marriage demonstrates the compatibility of the forensic and the relational.

I think a lot of confusion in people who are getting a bit wound up about traditional things in Reformed theology arises because they're trying to antithetize relationship and law.

[34:12] Whereas in Scripture, it's perfectly possible to be thoroughly legal and thoroughly relational at the same time. Penal substitutionary atonement is another one.

People say the atonement is a personal thing, a personal thing, and this is a legal transaction, but there's no incompatibility between the two, and marriage demonstrates that.

Second objection, the one that Matthew mentioned a moment ago, there is only one will of God, so there can't be a covenant between the persons. John Owen, who doesn't agree with this objection because he believes in the covenant of redemption, nonetheless does a very good job of stating the objection well, so here it is using his summary of it.

The will, as in the divine will, is a natural property, a property of the nature, the essence, the being of God, and therefore in the divine essence it is but one.

The Father, Son, and Spirit have not distinct wills. They are one God, and God's will is one, as being an essential property of his nature, and therefore are there two wills in the one person of Christ, because he has two natures, whereas there is but one will in the three persons of the Trinity.

[35:32] How then can it be said that the will of the Father and the will of the Son did concur distinctly in the making of this covenant? Karl Barth saying the same thing, who did believe in it, in the objection I mean, agreed with the objection.

Can we really think of the first and second persons of the triune Godhead as two divine subjects, and therefore as two legal subjects, who can have dealings and enter into obligations with one another?

This is mythology, for which there is no place in a right understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity as the doctrine of the three modes of being of the one God, which is how it was understood and presented in Reformed Orthodoxy itself.

God, he says, is the one subject, the only subject. Bob Lethen, the covenant of redemption construction, tends toward tritheism by representing the persons of the Trinity as entering into agreements with one another.

Now, what are we to say to this? I take it that the basic position that undergirds the criticism is a given. It's a given of orthodoxy that will goes with nature.

[36:54] If you're going to query the premise of their argument, you've got to reconstruct the whole of patristic Christology, because it's quite clear that Christ has two minds and two wills in patristic debate as a result of having two natures.

So you move through the great controversy that leads to the council of Chalcedon between Cyril and Nestorius, and you conclude that there is one person who exists in two natures, and then a little bit later on the church reaches a clear conclusion that these natures each have a will.

It's a fundamental part of classical Trinitarian theology, that therefore, by being one essence, the three persons have one will. So I don't think you can disagree with the premise.

Here's Owen's answer. Yes, they have one will. But somehow, in that one will, the persons can act reciprocally toward each other.

He puts it like this. such is the distinction of the persons in the unity of the divine essence, as that they act in natural and essential acts, reciprocally one towards another.

[38:15] Namely, in understanding, love, and the like. They know and mutually love each other. So he says, there's no distinction of sonsry wills, but there is the distinct application of the same will unto its distinct acts in the persons of the Father and the Son.

Now, what he's doing here is this, and this is the key. Basically, my answer to the objection is, yes, it's a tricky one, isn't it? We're getting into the depths of Trinitarian theology here.

But, fundamentally, at the end of the day, the objection proves too much to be true, to be a good objection. Because what would this objection also prove that the Father and the Son can't do? If there's one subject, there's no reciprocity between the persons, then what can't the persons do? By the very logic of this objection. They can't love each other.

And they can't, no each other. No one knows the Father except the Son. And those to whom the Son chooses to reveal in Matthew 11. The Father loves the Son.

[39:30] The Son loves the Father. Now, those biblical statements tell you that you have some kind of reciprocity, some kind of mutual reciprocity between the persons of the Trinity, though there is one knowledge in God and one will in God.

Somehow. To my mind, that conclusion, which is an irresistible conclusion from the text of Scripture, already guarantees you everything you need to think that they can covenant with one another.

Because saying that they can covenant with one another doesn't imply more than saying that they can know one another and love one another. So I'm not quite sure how that works, but I know the objection can't be right.

Okay. Let's think then lastly in our remaining ten minutes or so about pastoral applications of this. What difference does it make? What is the fruit of teaching and preaching the covenant of redemption? And you can think. Yes. Yes. Yes. Surely somebody like Paul let them know the language of here I am, I've come to do your will.

[40:48] Some of it's specificity, sort of, a way, a father. You know, what does he do with that?

He must build it. That's fair. How does he not let it back and see that as heaven for what you're looking for? Simon Wakeling.

Do you know the answer to that? You've heard Bob talk about this. Do you remember him dealing with that? Two years ago. So it's slightly unfair, isn't it? Yes. No.

No. Okay. Yeah. I don't know. I've not talked about it. But the classical, the classical, not very important answer to that be, that there's a text that the human will of Christ is not going to the single denied will.

It might be. And the problem there is the evidence in John that we looked at earlier, which is that the coming is the coming of God as the Son to become a man. Yeah. And that's interesting, isn't it?

[41:54] There's a very interesting connection here between the debate about the covenant of redemption and the gender debate. Because in the gender debate, you get debates about whether there is any kind of ordering within the Trinity.

And one of the ways that you can argue that there's an ordering within the Trinity is by going to John's Gospel. And some people will say, no, no, the ordering is only the ordering of the incarnate Son. And others will say, no, no, no, the ordering is traced back into the Trinity, into the Son as God, because he comes and is sent as God.

So there's an interesting parallel there between the gender-related Trinitarian debates and the covenant of redemption debates. Okay, let's then come to some of the consequences of this.

The first one, I think, is that really the covenant of redemption reminds us that in knowing the redemptive work of God, we know the heart of God, if I can put it like that.

In other words, our redemption is conceived in the midst of the triune relations, if you like. Has its origin in the relation between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in this covenant.

[43:11] And so our very redemption and the whole idea of our redemption, the whole of redemptive history, serves as a window into the being and heart of God.

Because there's an expression of the way the Father relates to the Son, and the Son relates to the Father, and the Spirit relates to the Father, and the Son, etc. So in considering the works of God and redemption, we are discovering the reality and the heart of God in eternity.

There's a lovely contrast there, I think, isn't there, with the Islamic doctrine of God. Because a monadic God, such as Allah is described in the Quran, really is, and I think this is true to Islamic

theology, is correctly understood more as being pure will.

I think there's an analogy, isn't there, between, if you think of the medieval period, the scottistic doctrine of God in Christian theology, which is a strongly voluntarist doctrine of God, which says that God is pure will.

He could have made rape and murder and things good if he wanted to, in another universe they might be. He's pure will. He just will be what he wants to be, and that's unconditioned by other things such as holiness, because holiness is only defined as the will.

[44:32] There's that kind of doctrine of God in Christian theology, and I think the Islamic doctrine of God is like that, it's pure will. That's why, ultimately, there isn't confidence about salvation for Muslims, because Allah will do what he wants to do.

My understanding is that it's, some of you can correct me on this, that it's not even true to say that it's a case of putting all of your good and evil deeds on the scales, and if the good outweighs the evil, you'll be saved.

It's actually true, isn't it, that even if the good outweighs the evil, Allah might decide to save somebody whose scales are like that, and not somebody whose scales are like that, because he's so pure will. Now, in that kind of monadic view over God who is pure will, you don't have a heart to reveal.

You don't have a heart of love to reveal, because you don't have the relations to reveal. But in the Bible's theology, the history of redemption reveals the very heart of God in these relations. Is that correct? Those of you who know more about Islam, tell me, have I got that wrong? Some of you are nodding very shortly. Secondly, does not the covenant of redemption magnify the prevenience of God's love?

[45:45] That is to say, it really strongly reminds us that God acts first in love. Gillespie puts it like this, I love this, how should that support faith and comfort and assure our hearts that the love of God and of Christ did provide a rich inheritance for us when we were not yet created and did provide a physician before we fell sick who had a redeemer in readiness before the fall of man which he foresaw, who provided a surety before he was needed to be in readiness to strike hands for our debt.

That Christ spoke kindly for us when we were not present. That he took our case in hand undesired that he undertook for us when we had neither being nor action nor vote nor knowledge of his undertaking.

I say this advisedly, it's all done before we even exist. Now of course it's not because it's not actually done in history but the covenant is there in place the redeemer is ready in eternity. Just reminds us doesn't it if we teach and preach this it just reminds people it's I mean it really is a sort of death blow to our minionism isn't it? It's not waiting for us to do something it's all there. Therefore, thirdly, it magnifies grace. The covenant of redemption sustains a high octane monagism in our theology because it reminds us again that the plan of redemption is conceived and undertaken apart from our involvement.

[47:37] It is established before we even exist. Gillespie it bred not in our breasts but was under deliberation betwixt God and Christ long before it ever entered into our hearts.

Fourthly, therefore, does not the idea of the covenant of redemption preserve in our minds and spirits the priority of Christ over all other things?

It prevents us thinking, doesn't it, that the story of creation is a story about us. It's about you and me. It reminds us that all that we have and are comes from a covenant made first with Christ, not with us, and that our covenant with God rests upon the foundation of the Father's covenant with the Son, and that Jesus is at the center of God's purposes, and we are not.

Therefore, what's this, fifthly? Yeah, fifthly. For the same reason, the covenant of redemption contains great hope and comfort and reassurance for us, because it reminds us of the security of our salvation, because we see that our covenant with God, or rather God's covenant with us, rests within the intra-Trinitarian covenant between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

And therefore, we can gauge the certainty of God's covenant with us from the certainty of that covenant which lies behind it and guarantees it and underpins it.

[49:37] So, Gillespie says, the covenant made with us did spring out of the covenant made with Christ. Upon the stability of the covenant made with Christ doth depend the stability of the covenant with us.

So, how sure is God's covenant with us? It is as sure as his covenant with his Son. How sure is his covenant with his Son?

It is as sure as the very being of God is sure. Because the Father cannot break with the Son and the Son cannot break with the Father. So, Gillespie says, the believer can no more fall quite away from his state of grace and faith than Jehovah can break to Christ or Christ break to his Father. And so, the covenant of grace with the elect is utterly, utterly, utterly unbreakable. Because it rests on the covenant between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which is as certain as the triune relations are certain.

And they have an absolute necessity about them. And therefore, I think the real fruit of preaching and teaching the covenant of redemption will be great confidence and great security in Christ.

[51:00] lastly, this is a lovely thought, I think it's a beautiful thought from Geraspie, which is this. Apart from the covenant of redemption, the justice of God stands as a threat to us, doesn't it?

Conceived in the covenant of works, well, conceived in breach of the covenant of works, the justice of God stands against us to condemn us.

God thinks about the terms of the covenant of redemption. The father lays the work upon the son and says, if you do this, I will give you this very great reward.

What does he have to do? Pay the price for sin, merit by his obedience. When he does that, when he fulfills the terms that he's given in the covenant of redemption, God has promised that he will give him his reward, namely our salvation.

So that now, given the covenant of redemption, the justice of God actually requires not our condemnation, but the very justice of God requires our salvation.

[52:12] Because the father has made a promise to the son in that covenant. And the son has fulfilled his work. And therefore as a matter of justice, in response to his absolute, true merit, and fulfilling the condition with a capital C, we must be saved.

Measured not only by the mercy and love of God, but now measured even by the justice of God. So that the covenant of redemption turns an attribute which you would think stands as a threat against us into being the very guarantee of our redemption.

Let's pray together. Let's pray. Thank you.