

God of Covenants

Perhaps one of the greatest and most comforting, and yet most frightening, characteristics of God is His honesty. God cannot lie (**Hebrews 6:18**). This is not because lying is not within God's power and ability, but because it is completely contrary to His nature. We might as well ask God to cease to exist as to ask Him to cease to tell the truth. If God cannot tell a lie, He cannot go back on His Word. Faithfulness goes hand in hand with honesty. God cannot tell a lie about what He is going to do in the future, nor can He act in such a way as to make Himself out to have been a liar. In other words, if God says He is going to do something or not do something, we can trust Him.

We see a great example of that in **Genesis 9:8-17**. When Noah and his family left the ark, God made a covenant with them. Not with them only, but with all of Noah's descendants, including us. God promised to never destroy all living creatures by flood again. Note, the promise was not that He would never destroy anyone by flood again, but that He would never wipe out all the earth by flood again. Then He set a sign of the covenant in the sky—the rainbow. According to the world, the rainbow is nothing more than light refracted through water droplets in the sky. But to the Lord's people, we know it is a promise. It is a sign. God made a promise. He'll keep it.

He has kept it. For here we are thousands of years later without a worldwide flood. Despite the evil that has happened and transpired, God has never destroyed every living creature by flood. I have no doubt we have deserved it. I have no doubt the world has again been in the same state that caused God to want to destroy it by flood the first time. But He hasn't done it. And every time we see a rainbow, we are reminded that God is a God who keeps His Word. God is a God who keeps His covenants. He is faithful and trustworthy.

That is a powerful comfort to His children. Each week, when we participate in the Lord's Supper, a sign similar to the rainbow, we are reminded of God's covenant through Jesus Christ. When we face temptation and struggle throughout the week, we might be tempted to believe that God forgets His covenant. When we face the attack of enemies and life isn't going our way, we might be tempted to believe that God forgets His covenant. When hardship hits, we might be tempted to believe that God forgets His covenant. But remember that rainbow. Remember that God hasn't destroyed the world by water. God keeps His promises. Remember that Lord's Supper. God keeps His promises.

But there is a frightening side of this as well. For those who refuse the covenant, God has also made promises. God promised to never destroy every living creature by flood. But even in **Genesis 8:21**, God said this promise was only "while the earth remains." In other words, the earth will come to an end someday. Peter explains that end in **II Peter 3:1-13**. "The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed" (ESV). On that day, Jesus will be revealed from heaven "in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (**II Thessalonians 1:8**, ESV). And so, Peter asks, "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness" (**II Peter 3:11**, ESV).

Sadly, many are happy to say that God keeps His promises to those who are His children, but who do not give Him the same credit regarding His promises to those who ignore His covenant. Too many view God as a gigantic, gruff grandfatherly figure who blusters a big talk, but in the end can't bring Himself to carry out the punishments He has promised. But God is not that enmeshed with us. He is not so dependent on our relationship as to ignore His own boundaries. He will rescue the godly from trials, but he will reserve the unrighteous for punishment and judgment (**II Peter 2:9**). God cannot lie. If you haven't surrendered to His covenant, do not be surprised when His promised judgment occurs.

However, God does want that relationship with us. Therefore, He is patient. "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (**II Peter 3:9**, ESV). Why hasn't His promised judgment or ultimate salvation taken place yet? Not because God doesn't keep His Word, but because He does. And He wants to give everyone the opportunity to participate in the positive promises of His plan for our redemption. He doesn't view time the same way we do. He doesn't experience it the same way we do. So He is patient.

Let us see the rainbow and remember that God is a God of covenants. He is a God who keeps His promises. And let us "count the patience of our Lord as salvation" (**II Peter 3:15**, ESV). If you are already His covenant child, do not fear that the struggles of each day mean He has forgotten His promise to you. He hasn't. If you are not His covenant

child, do not rest in thinking that the safety of each day means He has forgotten His promise to you. Let His patience be your salvation. Enter His covenant today. Surrender to Jesus today. If we can help you, let us know.

—Edwin L. Crozier