



God's Covenant with Man

Martin Luther wrote that "Unbelief is the root, the sap, and the chief power of all sin. God has not dealt, nor has he ever dealt, with man otherwise than through a word of promise. God does not desire works, nor has he need of them; rather we mortals deal with men and with ourselves, not God, on the basis of works. But God has need of this: that we consider him faithful in his promises, and patiently persist in this belief, and thus worship him with faith, hope, and love." In no other way can man come to God or deal with him than through faith. That is to say, that the author of salvation is not man, by any works of his own, but God, through his promise; and all things depend on, and are upheld and preserved by the word of his power. God's word of promise to Adam, after his fall, was to restore him through the "seed of the woman," Christ, who would trample the Serpent's head of sin under foot and provide a gift of free salvation through faith for all mankind. God's promises to Old Testament patriarchs, e.g., Noah, Abraham, Moses, were accepted by them, by faith, and through faith God counted them justified. To King David, God made clear the promise of Christ and what the promise to Adam really was. Quoting Martin Luther again, "so it finally came to the most perfect promise of all, that of the New Testament, in which, with plain words, life and salvation are freely promised, and actually granted to those who believe the promise. And he distinguishes this testament from the old one by a particular mark when he calls it the "New Testament." For the "Old Testament" given through Moses was not a promise of forgiveness of sins or of eternal things, but of temporal things...by which no man was renewed in spirit to lay hold on the heavenly inheritance. Wherefore also it was necessary that, as a figure of Christ, a dumb beast should be slain, in whose blood the same testament might be confirmed, as the blood corresponded to the testament and the sacrifice corresponded to the promise. But, here Christ says, the New Testament in my Blood" [Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25] not somebody else's but his own, by which grace promised through the Spirit for the forgiveness of sins, that we may obtain the inheritance." Because we, through faith, believe in Christ, God is favorable and gracious to us and will not count our sins against us or judge us because of them. Rather he deals with us according to our faith in Christ.