

# God's Covenants

## The Covenant of Creation - Part 3

### Key idea:

God's covenant of creation calls us to obey Him as our covenant Lord, embracing the limitations He built into us at creation, including receiving and celebrating the gift of Sabbath rest.

### Key text:

Genesis 1:26–2:3; Genesis 2:15-17

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

<sup>29</sup> Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.<sup>30</sup> And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

<sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning — the sixth day.

<sup>2:1</sup> Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.<sup>2</sup> By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.<sup>3</sup> And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.<sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;<sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

## **Key points:**

1. Our responsibilities to creation and humanity are ultimately obligations to God Himself.
2. As the image of God, humans have the freedom to choose to obey or disobey God that the rest of creation does not possess. This is inherent in our humanity.
3. To test humanity's obedience, God gave a direct Word of command that we were required to obey. This direct command was a test: would we obey or choose to go our own way?
4. Sabbath is a gift of God given to creation and especially to humanity. It gives us the freedom to stop our labor, to rest, and to enjoy God's good gifts.
5. For Christians, Sabbath is not only a time to rest; it is also a time to gather with God's people for worship. It is not only a recognition that God is our Creator, but that He is also our Redeemer, and it is a pointer to our eternal Sabbath rest.
6. Because humans are creatures, we have inherent limits given to us by God, and we only flourish when we recognize and embrace those limits.

## **Questions for discussion/application:**

1. What part of Sunday's text and teaching stood out most to me? Why?
2. Why are my responsibilities to creation and humanity ultimately obligations to God Himself? Why is it important for me to recognize this?
3. Why do I as a human possess free will? How is this seen in Genesis 1-2? Why is this important for me to understand?
4. Some people now deny free will as a mirage, saying that we are born hard-wired to make certain choices. What does such an understanding do to my conception of humanity if I embrace it? How does it affect my understanding of morality?
5. At its core, what is the principle of Sabbath? Where does it find its origin?
6. Why is Sabbath important for human flourishing? What happens to me if I do not practice the principle of Sabbath? What happens to creation if we ignore the principle of Sabbath?
7. How does the Fall affect our willingness to practice Sabbath? Why?

8. What are the components of Sabbath for Christians? How is this different than the principle of Sabbath for those who are not part of God's people?
9. What are the challenges to practicing Sabbath today? How can I plan to overcome these obstacles to build Sabbath into the rhythm of my life? Of my family life?
10. Whom can I pray for, share what I have learned, and invite to church this week?

**Preview of next week: The Covenant of Redemption (Genesis 3:14-19)**