

The New Covenant Church of the Body of Christ

The understanding of "covenant" language and concepts is extremely important if we are to fully grasp Paul's "gospel of salvation" to both Jews and Gentiles. R. David Kaylor, Professor of Religion at Davidson College, has written an excellent book on Paul's covenant emphasis entitled *Paul's Covenant Community: Jew & Gentile in Romans* (John Knox Press, 1988). I quote from his book pp. 20, 23-24:

Paul addresses his letter to "all of God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints" (Rom. 1:7). The terms of this address reveal the extent to which his thinking is dominated by his central conviction: in Jesus Christ God has acted to form a new covenant community incorporating both Jew and Gentile. "Beloved," "saints," "called," and "all" imply the notion of one covenant community, elected by God ... Paul proclaims that in Christ all can know the unity of a new humanity as they come to celebrate the oneness given to all - whether Gentile or Jew, male or female, slave or

free. The way out of human alienation was in Paul's view the reconciliation of all as one new human community, not the triumph of one group over another. Paul considered himself a minister of a new covenant (II Cor. 3:6); his task was to be an ambassador through whom God's offer of reconciliation was extended to all ...

The church in Paul's understanding is confessional, eschatological and charismatic. "Confessional" means that whoever through the Spirit makes the confession "Jesus is Lord" is within the "body of Christ" (I Cor. 12:3-12). "Eschatological" means that it is a community of the end-time, the people of God for a new age. "Charismatic" means that the church moves as it is impelled by the Spirit, who endows it with gifts for the fulfillment of its mission ... The early church shunned any technical conceptions of office so commonly seen in other religious associations of the time. It was expected that priesthood was universal since the Spirit was universal, granting gifts to all for the common good. There are differences among the gifts of the Spirit so that the church can function effectively; those who possess particular gifts are to be respected for the work they do, but they do not belong to a class or category separate from others.