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## **THE EVERLASTING COVENANT**

If you were to ask one hundred of the most religious people you know, "Do you believe in salvation by grace?" what do you believe their answer would be? Do you have an idea that almost every one of them would agree that salvation is by grace? Suppose you were to ask that same one hundred people, "What do you believe about THE COVENANT OF GRACE? What do you believe about the everlasting covenant?" What do you suppose their answer would be? Do you think you might get a lot of blank expressions?

Almost everybody claims to believe in salvation by grace, but you can never understand very much about salvation by grace, if do not know something about the covenant of grace. Trying to understand salvation by grace without knowing something about the covenant of grace is like trying to figure out the mysteries of an automobile without first discovering that there is an engine under the hood that makes it go.

The covenant of grace, or the everlasting covenant, is the driving force behind salvation by grace.

By the same token, you will never understand much about the covenant of grace unless you know what a covenant is. Webster defines a covenant as "a binding agreement between two or more individuals or parties to do or keep from doing a specified thing."

Let me ask you: if you wanted to refer to a covenant, but you could not call it a covenant, what would you call it? Now bear in mind that a covenant is "a binding agreement between two or more individuals or parties to do or keep from doing a specified thing." What would you call that? I would call that a contract, wouldn't you? Now I do not feel entirely comfortable in referring to it as a contract. That sounds so commercial, but that is exactly what it is. This covenant is a binding agreement; God has bound himself by his own word to do all that is involved in this everlasting covenant. God cannot lie, and as surely as God has promised to do anything, you can be sure that he will do all he has promised to do. No agreement that has ever been made between men is so firm, and sure, and binding as this agreement, this covenant between God the Father and God the Son. The salvation of untold millions of the children of God is the most important matter that has ever transpired in

this world, and you can be sure that God has provided the most firm and sure foundation for their salvation.

The promises of God are much more sure and dependable than most religious people have ever imagined them to be. For that matter, they are absolutely sure, and absolutely dependable. God will do all he has promised to do. The majority of people seem to have a strange view of God and his promises. They seem to imagine that God's promises are changeable and tenuous, that they are conditioned on so many propositions and possibilities that we can never know for sure what he is going to do. But God is not fickle and changeable. Listen to what he said to Isaiah, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, AND I WILL DO ALL MY PLEASURE" (Isa. 46:9,10). If God has purposed to do anything, he will do it.

This failure to realize that God is faithful to his promises has left people with an uneasiness about their own salvation, and the salvation of others. Because they do not believe they can be sure about God and his promises, they are uneasy about the salvation of sinners, and that uneasiness leads them into some of the most unreasonable notions.

When I was just a boy, I attended a seminar on "soul winning." We were taught the importance of soul winning, and we were instructed on how to approach people we hoped to convert. The instructor was very careful to point out the importance of personal grooming. She told us how very important it was that our clothes be clean, that our shoes be shined, and that we had brushed our teeth and used a mouthwash. After all, it would be a terrible thing if our bad breath might so offend the person we were trying to talk to that he would not listen to us. This might be the only chance that he would ever have to hear the gospel message, and would it not be a terrible thing if he missed this one and only chance to hear the gospel and repent and be born again?

I tried to believe the lessons I was being taught, but it seemed so strange to think that some poor sinner might burn in the flames of eternal damnation---because I had forgotten to brush my teeth and use a mouthwash. There is no end to the strange conclusions that people reach, when they forget that God is faithful to all his promises.

On the next few pages I want us to look at some of the very simple lessons the Bible teaches us about this grand covenant. And these lessons are simple. This is one of the most fascinating things about the Bible. I have discovered that if you go

through the Bible looking for simple lessons, the Bible is just filled with very simple lessons that you and I can understand. On the other hand, if you go through the Bible looking for deep, dark mysteries, the Bible is just filled with mysteries that no man on earth can entirely unravel. I have discovered that it makes this job of preaching a lot easier if we spend our time looking for the simple lessons. It is easier for the preacher to explain simple lessons, and it is easier for the congregation to understand. And there is another lesson I have learned. Sometimes those very simple lessons explain some of the most profound truths. For that matter, I am convinced that, if our minds are able to understand the lesson in the first place, the lesson can generally be explained in very simple language. (Admittedly, there some questions, such as some of the how's and why's of the Bible that we cannot begin to unravel.)

The first lesson the Bible teaches us about this covenant---this binding agreement---is that **MAN IS NOT A PARTY TO THIS COVENANT**. This is a point that most religious people have failed to realize. If they could learn this one fact, it would eliminate very much of the confusion that presently plagues the religious world. We who have a hope in Christ Jesus are the beneficiaries of this covenant, but we are not parties to it. We did not make the covenant; rather the covenant was made on our behalf.

Listen to what the Bible says. II Sam. 23:5, "Although my house be not so with God; **YET HATH HE MADE WITH ME AN EVERLASTING COVENANT**, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." The chapter begins by saying "these be the last words of David." This is David speaking, and in this text David personifies the Lord. He speaks as if it is the Lord speaking. Lest there should be any doubt that David is here personifying the Lord, in verse one, the Holy Spirit refers to David as "the **ANOINTED** of the God of Jacob." In the original language the word that is translated "anointed" is the Hebrew word "Messiah." "Messiah" is one of the titles of Jesus Christ. He was the expected Messiah. "Messiah" (Mashiyach) in the Hebrew, and "Christ" (Christos) in the Greek are the same word, and they mean "anointed." So to remove all doubt as to whether David personified the Lord, **THE SPIRIT LITERALLY CALLS HIM THE "MESSIAH."** Now David was "anointed of the God of Jacob" in a different way than Christ was, but he was anointed in such a way as to represent Christ Jesus. David the son of Jesse represented the Greater David, the son of God.

This covenant, this binding agreement, was made between the Father and the Son on behalf of his people. God the Father and God the Son entered into a binding agreement with each other with regard to the salvation of his people. In a few minutes we will see just how binding that agreement is.

The next lesson we notice about this covenant is that it is "AN EVERLASTING COVENANT;" it has no expiry date. "Yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant." Most of our agreements have an expiration date, and sometimes that can be a problem. Almost one hundred years ago the United States finished building the Panama Canal. The French tried to build it and failed, and then the United States took over and finished the job. We took out a hundred year lease on the canal. We made a mistake. With individuals a hundred years is a very long time, but with nations one hundred years is not very long. Several years ago we gave the canal back to Panama. That looked like a mistake at the time, but our lease was running out anyway. But this covenant, this binding agreement, will never run out; it has no expiry date.

The love of God for his people is not so fickle, and tenuous, and changeable, as some people have imagined it to be. If God ever loved you, he will always love you. He is an unchangeable God, and his love is as unchangeable as he is. Jeremiah said, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an EVERLASTING LOVE; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." The love we have for our own children is only a faint illustration of the love God has for his children. I learned long ago that there is nothing my children could ever do that would cause me to quit loving them. They have not always pleased me. Sometimes I have been very upset with one or another of them, but it seems to have been at those times when I was the most displeased that I was the most fully aware that there was nothing any one of them could ever do that would cause me to cease loving them. No doubt, you have had the same experience, but you can be sure that as unwavering and as unconditional as your love is for your children, your love is very fickle compared to the constancy of God's everlasting love for his own. The love of God is one of the attributes of God, and his love is as unchangeable as he is.

The next lesson the Bible teaches us about this covenant is that it is comprehensive. It leaves nothing to chance. It is "ordered in all things and sure." "Although my house be not so with God; yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ORDERED IN ALL THINGS AND SURE."

God's salvation of his people is not such a stopgap, plan-as-you-go, back up and start again, arrangement as some people seem to imagine. God knows exactly what he is doing, and he knew what he was going to do before he ever started.

Keep it always in mind that a covenant is "a binding agreement between two or more individuals or parties to do or keep from doing a specified thing." God the Father entered into an agreement with his Son with regard to the salvation of his people, and this agreement fixed and secured every provision that was necessary for the salvation of his people.

Suppose you were about to build a new house. You have found a contractor willing to do the work, and he is having the contract drawn up. One day he brings the contract for you to sign. You think it might be a good idea to read the contract before you sign it, and here is the way it reads: "We agree to build a right nice house, on a fair sized lot, somewhere south of town; we agree to start before very long, and to charge a reasonable amount for our services." Would you sign the contract? No, of course not. I believe that before I entered into any kind of contract I would want every detail spelled out in very clear language. Do you believe that God would enter into any such agreement with regard to the salvation of his people? The salvation of untold millions of poor sinners from eternal damnation is the most important matter that man knows anything about, and you can be sure that God would never leave any part of that work to chance. God knows exactly what he is doing. God the Father and God the Son agreed on every aspect of this grand work before he ever called this world into existence.

Paul referred to this great work as a will or testament. Heb. 9:16,17, "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." It is in the nature of wills that wills name names, and this will, this testament, names every one of the heirs of promise. It is a very poorly drawn will that fails to name the beneficiaries of the will.

The greatest benefit of time and eternity is salvation from sin by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and God would not engage in that great work without knowing exactly what he was doing, and who was going to be benefitted by it. Before God ever created the universe he chose his people; he recorded their names in his book, and he determined all that he was going to do on their behalf. Rev. 13:8, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The lamb was not slain from the foundation of the world; that happened at Calvary. He says that their names were written in his book "from the foundation of the world." Eph. 1:4, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

It is a foolish person who starts any work without knowing what the outcome is going to be. God knew exactly what the outcome was going to be before he began; he knew who he was sending his Son to die for, and who he was going to save. He suffered and died for all those whom the Father gave him in the covenant of grace, and he will save everyone he died for.

If the redeemed family was chosen out of the race of mankind, it follows that not all of mankind was so chosen and redeemed. Lest anybody might get the idea that some injustice was done to those who were not chosen, we need to remember that the elect family of God was not chosen out of a race of kind, innocent people who were in every way deserving of the kindness of God. The entire race of mankind is by nature dead in trespasses and sins. Fallen man is by his very nature a wicked, depraved sinner, who lusts and pants after sin. He is totally alienated to all good, and totally inclined to all evil. In actual practice no man is as evil as he might be, but it is only because of the restraining power of God that he does not act out in actual practice the corruption that is in his own heart. If it was not for the restraining power of God, every man would be proven to be the depraved sinner that he is. The earth would become a slaughterhouse, and there would be no place that any person could hide from the danger that raging all around him. Perhaps the most fundamental mistake of modern religion is the failure to realize how desperately sinful that man is, and how desperately he stands in need of a Saviour. Gen. 6:5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that EVERY IMAGINATION of the thoughts of his heart was ONLY EVIL CONTINUALLY." Jer. 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Rom. 3:10-18, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes." In this text Paul is not describing what some men have become, but what all men are by nature.

If all men were left to themselves, there is no man who would choose God and righteousness. When Paul said there is "none that seeketh after God," he was describing the condition of every man who is devoid of the Spirit of God. If we encounter any man who is seeking after God, we have found one who is already born of the Spirit.

Those who object to the doctrine of election, and wish that God had never made any such choice are really wishing that all men might perish eternally. If God had never chosen any man to salvation, and determined to do all things necessary to bring him home to eternal heaven, there would never have been the first person saved. If sinful man was left to himself, there is no man who would have repented of sin, no man who would have believed the gospel, no man who would have had the love of God in

his heart. Those are all the outworking of the Spirit of God implanted in the heart in the work of regeneration.

This covenant is "ordered in all things and sure." It is ordered and sure in that it names every person who will ever benefit from its provisions. It binds every face in secret. We are not able to look on God's book, and read the names that are recorded there; but God knows them every one. II Tim. 2:19, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS."

Not only is this covenant "ordered in all things," it is also sure to be fulfilled. "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and SURE." God is sure to do all he has purposed to do. Sometimes it happens that somebody enters into a agreement that he does not intend to fulfill. Not every man can be depended on to do as he says. But you can be sure that God will do all he has promised to do. It is so certain that God will do all he has purposed to do that he CONFIRMS IT WITH AN OATH. It is not necessary for God to swear that he will fulfill his promise; a simple statement is enough. It is not possible for God to lie, but FOR OUR BENEFIT God confirms his promise with an oath. Isa. 14:24,27, "The Lord of hosts hath SWORN, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand....For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back."

Consider for a moment, if you will, how firm and secure this covenant is. It is a binding agreement between God the Father and God the Son. It is "ordered in all things." There is not one consideration that is not completely provided for. God is so determined that every item of the agreement will be fulfilled that he confirms with an oath that he will do everything he has purposed to do. It is impossible to imagine anything more dependable than this covenant is.

In the eighty-ninth Psalm David talks about this covenant. He is still referring to the Greater David, the Son of God. Verse 3, "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant." Again, notice that this covenant was made with David---with the greater David the Son of God. The language of this chapter is too clear to be misunderstood. Throughout the entire chapter he is talking about this covenant that God the Father made with his Son. This covenant was not made with his people; it was made with his Son on behalf of his people.

There is no possibility that the Lord Jesus Christ will not be able to do what he has promised to do. In verse 19, "I have laid help upon ONE THAT IS MIGHTY." There

are those who agree to do what they do not have the ability to perform. But the parties to this covenant have the power to do what they have agreed to do. There are those who talk about God as if he was a whimpering, whining, begging, pleading, trying and failing God, who tries to do ever so many things he is not able to do; but that is not the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible speaks and it is done; he commands and it stands fast (Psa. 33:9). He would never have entered into this agreement if he was not able to perform it. God is not so foolish as to promise what he cannot do.

This covenant, and the benefits of it, are not based on the goodness of men, nor on their own personal righteousness; they are based wholly and solely on the mercy of God. The entire eighty-ninth Psalm deals with this covenant. Verse 1, "I will sing of the MERCIES of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known my faithfulness to all generations." The first thing this chapter tells us about this covenant is that it is rooted in the mercy of God. There are those who think they can earn their way into heaven by their own accomplishments, but they have never seen themselves for the sinners they are, nor God for the righteous judge that he is. No man who has seen himself for what he is could imagine that he could ever stand justified before God on the basis of his own merit.

Isaiah said, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." When I was just a boy I remember hearing a preacher trying to preach on salvation by grace. He said, "I know that we are saved by grace, but when I stand before God in judgment, I hope I have enough good works to finish out the score." I was just a boy, and I did not know much, and I still have a lot to learn---but I knew there was something wrong with that. Can you imagine somebody standing before God in judgment and saying, "Lord, I believe I have enough good works to finish out the score." And can you imagine that God might ask him to produce any claim he thinks he might have on eternal heaven, and he drags out an old dirty handkerchief he has been carrying around for two weeks with a cold, and dangling that filthy handkerchief before the throne, and saying, "Lord, here is my claim on eternal heaven." Now I know that is not a very pretty illustration, but that is the language the prophet uses. All of our righteousness is nothing more than "filthy rags" in the sight of a thrice holy God. Those who think they can work their way to heaven by their own merit have entirely too high an opinion of themselves.

There is nothing about any of us to commend us to God. If we received what we justly deserve, there is none of us who would live with God in heaven. We are a lot like the old boy who was caught stealing chickens. The day of his trial arrived, and he could not sit still. He was pacing back and forth, up and down the corridors of the court house. His lawyer was trying to calm him down, and he said, "Just be patient; I



will present your case; you will get justice." The old boy said, "Yassuh, yassuh, I knows that, but, you see, it's that justice I'se so worried about."

Simple justice demands that every sinner who ever lived must suffer eternally as the just punishment for sin, and yet, it is the wonder of God's grace that the same justice which, apart from the grace of God, demands our eternal punishment, now--- because of God's grace---demands the eternal salvation of everyone Christ died for. The shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ has made eternal satisfaction for the sins of all the redeemed. Our sins are put away; there is not a charge that can be made against any person for whom Christ died, so that God can be both just and the justifier of every child of grace (Rom. 3:26). Verse 14, "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face." God does not sacrifice justice in order to be merciful; he is both merciful and just in all he does.

Another lesson this chapter teaches us about this covenant is that it is grounded in the faithfulness of God. The ground of our hope is not our faithfulness to God, but rather his faithfulness to his own promises. Verse 2, "For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever; THY FAITHFULNESS shalt thou establish in the very heavens." As faithless and unbelieving as most of us sometimes are (in spite of our best efforts to the contrary), if our salvation was based on our faithfulness, we would every one be lost world without end. That person who is looking to his own faithfulness to God as the ground of his hope of heaven, and has lost sight of God's faithfulness to his promises has made a very poor trade.

It is amazing how simple the Bible becomes, when we just let it say what it says, without trying to read into it something that is not there. Most of the problems in studying the Bible are caused when people bring their own preconceived notions to the Bible, and try to make it say what they want it to say. Then the Bible does really become mysterious; it just will not say what men want it to say.

It is very encouraging that the most effective of all methods of Bible study is also the easiest and most natural of all methods. If the humble, faithful, prayerful child of God would study and benefit from his Bible, let him simply read the Bible, and believe it for what it says. Let him lay aside his own agenda; let him forget his own notions and prejudices, and accept God at his word. "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar," Rom. 3:4.

Then it is amazing how simple the Bible becomes. Habakkuk said, "Write the vision, and MAKE IT PLAIN upon tables, that he may run that readeth," Hab. 2:2. This book is as plain as it needs to be. The problem is not nearly so much that people cannot understand the Bible, as it is that they will not believe what they read. Isaiah

said, "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein," Isa. 35:8. Any humble, faithful, prayerful child of God can study it and understand it, if he will just let it say what it says. There will always be mysteries in the Bible that he will never entirely unravel, but he will be able to understand enough of it to satisfy his spiritual need.

The covenant of grace is the most profound of all principles. It lies at the foundation of everything God has done on behalf of his people. It is the motive force behind our salvation. And yet, as profound and as fundamental as this principle is, the Bible presents it in such simple language that there is no reason any person should have any trouble at all in understanding it.

We have pointed out several times that this covenant is a binding agreement between the Father and the Son---that it is literally a contract between them to perform all the provisions of the covenant. Now you may have trouble reading contracts. At one time or another you may have tried to read one of your insurance policies, and with all the legal language, and with the special provisions and exceptions, you wound up about as confused as you were before you started. I spent twenty-four years in the insurance business, and if I learned anything about insurance, I learned that those companies do not really care whether you understand those policies or not. But whether you understand legal language or not, there is no reason that you should have any trouble understanding the provisions of this covenant. The provisions are clearly spelled out in the Bible.

Not only does the Bible tell us everything we need to know about this covenant, it literally allows us to listen in as the Father and the Son---in eternity past---agreed on all the provisions of the covenant.

The Bible is written in a different manner than any other book that has ever been written. For the most part, the Bible simply records the acts and the speeches of its characters without a lot of comment. It simply records what they said and what they did. Taken purely for its literary style, the Bible provides a kind of record that is THE NEXT BEST THING TO BEING THERE. The way the Bible is written, simply recording the acts and words of its characters, puts the reader in a position as if he was standing off to the side listening and watching what was going on. Reading the Bible in this manner---almost feeling as if we were there---leaves us feeling as if we are acquainted with the characters we read about. The language of the Bible is so free and natural, and its characters are so true to life, that the speeches and the scenes of the Bible literally come to life.

Not only are the historical portions of the Bible written in this manner, but when the Bible talks about this covenant of grace, in the very same manner, it allows us to listen to the Father as he speaks to the Son, and it allows us to listen to the Son as he replies to the Father. So far as words and revelation can do it, the Bible transports the reader all the way back to eternity past and allows us to listen in on the very covenant of grace itself. Think about that. In the verses that we will examine in just a few moments we will be literally listening in on this covenant, this "counsel of peace" (Zech. 6:13). If that does not excite you, it ought to---to think that we poor mortals can listen in on the very making of the covenant of grace---to think that we can listen as God the Father and God the Son devise all that is necessary to be done to bring about the salvation of the entire family of God.

We need to point out one thing more, before we launch on this very interesting, and very uplifting study. We pointed out earlier that a covenant is simply another name for a contract, and it is in the nature of contracts that we put them in writing. It is not always necessary that a contract be put in writing. We can make a verbal contract, before witnesses, and seal it with a handshake, and that agreement can be legally binding. God certainly did not need for this covenant to be put in writing in order to bind him to do all he had promised to do. God the Father and God the Son both knew exactly what they had agreed to; they are faithful to their word, and there was no possibility that either of them would forget, or that either of them would ignore any part of the agreement. **BUT GOD HAS PUT THIS COVENANT IN WRITING FOR OUR BENEFIT.**

While God knows everything that is in this agreement, you and I did not---not until God revealed it. It was for our benefit that God put this agreement in writing. It was not put in writing in order to bind him to the agreement; it was put in writing in order to inform us of the benefits that are ours because of it. We are not parties to the covenant, but we are the beneficiaries of it, and because we are the beneficiaries of it, God has revealed it to us.

God has given us the written record of this everlasting covenant in the Bible, but he has not given all of the record in any one place. He has given us bits and pieces scattered all through the Bible. In some places, such as the eighty-ninth Psalm, he gives us very long sections of it. In other places he gives us very brief portions. That is the Bible pattern. Isaiah said that the pattern is "precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line, **HERE A LITTLE, AND THERE A LITTLE,**" (Isa. 28:10).

Let me point out that when we read the verses we will be examining during the

next few pages, WE WILL LITERALLY BE READING FROM THE DOCUMENT ITSELF. I must say it again: if that does not excite you, it ought to. These are the very words of God. These are the actual words of the promise that God made to his Son, and the actual promise the Son made to his Father. God has preserved those very words for our benefit. This is the ACTUAL TRANSCRIPT of that "counsel of peace," that took place between the Father and the Son in eternity past.

One more thing before we start: let me ask you, if you are reading a contract, what are the two words that you will likely find most often in that contract? The two words most often found in contracts are the words "will" and "shall," are they not? "The party of the first part agrees that he WILL do thus and so," and "the party of the second part agrees that he WILL do thus and so." Those are the most common expressions in contracts, and it is no different in this covenant, this binding agreement between the Father and his Son with regard to the salvation of his people.

When you are reading your Bible, if you come across the words "will" or "shall," especially as it relates to what God has promised to do, it is very possible that you have found an excerpt from the covenant of grace. You are reading directly from the record. THE WILL'S AND SHALL'S OF GOD are some of the most exciting and the most reassuring passages in the Bible. If God has promised that he will do something, you can be sure that he will do it.

The very first thing the Bible tells us about the covenant of grace is in the second Psalm. The Father says to the Son, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," (Psa. 2:8). Notice the word "shall;" we are reading directly from the document, from the written record of this covenant. Before God ever created the universe, the Father promised to give a people to his Son. Paul talked about the same thing in his letter to the Hebrews. "And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me," Heb. 2:13. The very first provision of the covenant was that the Father promised to give a people to his Son. John 6:39, "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that OF ALL WHICH HE HATH GIVEN ME I should lose nothing, but raise it up again at the last day."

When I was just a boy I heard a man talking about his efforts at "soul-winning." He allowed that when he stood before God in eternity, he hoped that he could carry along at least one hundred people, whom he had "led to the Lord." He hoped that on that grand day he would be able to present those people to the Lord and say, "Lord, here are all these people I have led to you." Well, I knew there was something wrong with that. First off, to me it sounded a lot like bragging. I did not know that verse in

Hebrews was in the Bible, but I knew that the man's project just did not sound right. Do you see, it is not the job of poor mortal man to present the Lord with a people. That is too important a job to leave to sinful men. It would be the height of folly for God to leave anything so important as the eternal destiny of untold millions of poor sinners in the hands of other sinners. God took care of that in eternity past, and he took care of it in such a manner that not one of those whom the Father gave to the Son can ever be lost.

The Father promised to give the Son a people, and the Son promised to redeem them from their sins, to pay their sin debt, and to secure them a home in heaven. God is a righteous and holy God. He will not approve of sin, and he will not allow sin to stand in his presence. There is no way that any sinner could ever live with God in heaven, unless his sins had been removed, unless he could stand before God justified from his sins.

Isa. 53:10,11, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou SHALT make his soul an offering for sin, he SHALL see his seed, he SHALL prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord SHALL prosper in his hand. He SHALL see of the travail of his soul, and SHALL be satisfied: by his knowledge SHALL my righteous servant justify many for he SHALL bear their iniquities." Again notice the repeated use of the word "shall." We are reading to you directly from the document, from the written record of that agreement between the Father and his Son. I hope that I do not bother anyone by my excitement over this matter, but it is the most exciting thought in the world to me to think that, not only has God made this firm and binding agreement with his Son on behalf of his people, but that he has put it all in writing for our benefit, and that he has given us ACCESS TO THE VERY DOCUMENT itself, if we are only willing to read our Bibles and to search it out.

The shall's of this text tell us what the Son has promised to do---what he has bound himself to do---on behalf of his people. Apart from the grace of God every one of us is helpless to justify himself before God. Apart from his grace every last one of us would suffer the wrath of God in all eternity. We had no power to help ourselves, and in spite of our helplessness, and of the fact that none of us deserved any good thing from God, the Son of God stepped forward and agreed to do everything necessary to remove our sin, and to secure us a home in eternal heaven.

Notice first that God has promised to "make his soul an offering for sin." II Cor. 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." God imputed our sin to his Son, charged our sin against his Son, in order that he might impute his righteousness to us. He carried our

sins to the cross, and there on the cross he suffered the penalty that was rightly due us. On the cross the Lord suffered the penalty that was due us, in order that we might enjoy the blessedness that belonged to him. In eternity past he promised to do it; on the cross he did what he promised to do, and when he had accomplished all he had promised to do he cried out, "It is finished," (John 19:30), and "he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." Isaiah went on to say, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Every attribute of God is satisfied in the salvation of his people. God did not sacrifice justice in order to be merciful. God's love is satisfied, because every one he loved is redeemed and atoned for by the suffering and death of his Son. His mercy and his grace are satisfied, because every subject of grace, every subject of mercy is redeemed; every one of them will be with him in eternal heaven. And his justice is satisfied, because he has borne our sins; every sin has been paid for and removed by his suffering and death.

Another quote from this covenant is found in Matthew chapter one. "And she SHALL bring forth a son, and thou SHALT call his name JESUS: for he SHALL save his people from their sins," Matt. 1:21. I never will forget the first time that verse caught my attention. For years I had heard about God's efforts to save sinners. I had heard how he needed help if he was going to save sinners, that he was doing the best he could, but without more assistance, that untold millions of those whom he wanted ever so much to save were going to suffer eternally. That was a disturbing prospect, to say the least, to think that God was doing the best he could, and still failing in the effort.

And then one day I read this verse, and it sounded like nothing I had ever heard before. It rang out with such confidence, such absolute certainty, that God was going to do exactly what he intended to do. It said in no uncertain terms, "He shall save his people from their sins." There were no if's, no and's, no but's, no conditions of any kind. It was a clear and simple statement of fact. He came into this world with a work to do, and that work was to "save his people from their sins," and this verse said that he was going to do what he came to do.

I had always heard that the sinner had to be saved in order to become one of his people. But this verse indicated that they were already his people, and that because they were his people, he came to save them. At that time I had never heard of the covenant of grace. I had never heard that, before the foundation of the world, God gave a people to his Son, and I had never heard that before God ever created the universe he had already determined to do all things necessary to save those very people whom he had given to his Son. I had never heard about the everlasting and unchangeable love God has for his people, and I had no idea that his love for his

people was so firm and unshakeable that nothing could cause him to cease to love them, or to allow them to suffer eternally. Jer. 31:3, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with AN EVERLASTING LOVE: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

The Holy Spirit also has its part in this grand work. Man is by nature dead in trespasses and sins. He inherited a sinful nature from his first ancestor Adam, and that sinful nature is seen in everything he says and does. It is seen both in his actions and in his thoughts. The Bible evidence is abundant and clear. Gen. 6:5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Jer. 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it." If he was left to himself, there is no man who would turn to God. Those who have the idea that they are persuading wicked sinners to repent of sin, and to learn to love the Lord are mistaken. Those who are dead in trespasses and sins cannot be taught by other men. Unless God performs a miracle of grace on the heart of the sinner, no man will ever be able to reach him with the gospel message. Those who believe they have taught someone to love the Lord were really dealing with somebody who had already been quickened by the Spirit of God. If God's Spirit had not already done its work, nothing they could say would have any effect.

The Holy Spirit is just as sure to do its work, and to quicken all those whom the Father gave to the Son, as the Son is to redeem them. God has never been unfaithful to any of his promises. Psa. 110:3, "Thy people SHALL be willing in the day of thy power." Here is another excerpt from that everlasting covenant. Just as surely as the Father chose his people, and the Son redeemed them, just that surely the Holy Spirit will quicken every one of the them, and make them willing. They are willing because the Spirit of God has made them willing. Again notice that there are no if's, no and's, no but's; it is the simple promise that they will be willing. In John chapter three, in that beautiful passage on the new birth, the Lord uses the awesome power of the wind to show how effective and how powerful the Spirit is in the work of regeneration. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." We are very often reminded of the awesome power of the wind. When the wind reaches hurricane force, it carries everything in its path. But the mightiest wind that ever blew is only the faintest reflection of the power of God. The Holy Spirit is God himself--- God the Spirit---and just as surely as no human mind can comprehend the awesome power of God in the natural creation, no human mind can comprehend the awesome power of God's Spirit in the work of regeneration. God simply spoke and this entire universe became a reality, and God simply speaks and sinners are quickened by that

same power. No man on earth can resist the powerful force of the wind, nor can he command the wind, and direct it to blow where he wants it to blow. And by the same token, God is sovereign; he sends the wind of his Spirit to blow where he chooses for it to blow, and quickens those whom he chooses to quicken.

God does not depend on us; he is not dependent on sinful men to teach other sinful men to know the Lord. We may teach those who are already born again what they ought to know about the Lord, and how they ought to live in order to please him, but the work of quickening those who are dead in sins, and bringing them into a personal relationship with God is the work of God himself. And just as surely as God has never failed at anything he ever intended to do, he has never failed at this job either. Everyone whom he has chosen in his Son will be taught to know him in the work of regeneration. Heb. 8:11, "And they SHALL NOT teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all SHALL know me, from the least to the greatest." Again notice the repetition of the word "shall." We are reading to you directly from the covenant, and lest there should be any question in the mind of anybody that we are actually reading a word for word excerpt from that everlasting covenant, let us take the time to go back and read the entire passage. Heb. 8:10,11, "For THIS IS THE COVENANT that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I WILL put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I WILL be to them a God, and they SHALL be to me a people. And they SHALL NOT teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all SHALL know me, from the least to the greatest." The Holy Spirit makes the passage as clear as it needs to be. If there is any doubt in the mind of anybody as to where this language comes from, he points out that, "This is the covenant." God will do all he has promised to do. He has promised to quicken all of his redeemed by his Spirit, and he will be faithful to that promise. Just as surely as one was redeemed by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, at his own appointed time, God will send his Spirit into his heart and quicken him by his grace.

Men have far too high an opinion of themselves. They seem to think that God depends on them, and that he could not get his work done, if they do not pitch in and help him. They can wax ever so eloquent when they talk about the power of God in creation, and his power in the resurrection, but they seem to think that God is helpless, or largely so, in the work of regeneration. They seem to think that if they do not help him, he will never get the job done. But God is not helpless; he will do all he has purposed to do. Isa. 46:9,10, "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is none else; I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying MY COUNSEL SHALL STAND, AND I WILL DO ALL MY PLEASURE."



The question always arises: but what if the sinner does not do his part. The fact is that the sinner does not have a part; he is not a party to this covenant. Now it is the duty of the sinner to repent of sin, and to turn from it. It is his duty to believe the truth, and, to the best of his ability, to keep the commandments of God, and after he is born of the Spirit, he does have the ability to do all of those things. Before he is born again, he is dead in trespasses and sins, and he does not have the ability nor the desire to obey God. After he is born again he has both the ability and the desire, but by then the work is already done; it is too late for him to assist in the matter of his salvation.

In the eighty-ninth Psalm David deals with this question in the very clearest language. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes," Psa. 89:30,32. The language could not be any clearer. If the children of God transgress the commandments of God, they will suffer his chastening rod. God loves his own, and he chastises them when they sin. Heb. 12:6-8, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are bastards, and not sons." Every child of God can bear witness that God has been faithful to that promise. When we allow sin in our lives, God sends his chastening rod. It is a token of the love of God for his own that he chastises us when we sin. We can only imagine what a shambles we would make of our lives, if God allowed us to follow the lead of our old carnal nature, without chastising us, and bringing us to our knees in repentance before him.

The main theme in this eighty-ninth Psalm is the everlasting covenant. That theme runs all through the chapter, and that is what is under consideration in this passage. Notice how he continues, "Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. MY COVENANT WILL I NOT BREAK, nor alter the think that is gone out of my lips. ONCE HAVE I SWORN by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah," (verses 33-37). The mercies of God for his people are based on his everlasting covenant---and if he does not break that covenant, it cannot be broken---he is the only party to the covenant. That covenant was made between God the Father and God the Son; man is not a party to it. The redeemed are the beneficiaries of it, but they are not parties to it. The eternal salvation of all the redeemed family is far too important a work to be put in the hands of sinful men.

The last provision of that covenant is found in the sixth chapter of John's gospel. "And this is THE FATHER'S WILL which hath sent me, that of ALL WHICH HE HATH GIVEN ME I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the WILL of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I WILL raise him up at the last day," John 6:39,40. Again notice his repeated use of the word "will." Those whom the Father gave the Son were those whom he gave to him in this everlasting covenant.

He is talking about the same thing in the fourth chapter of First Thessalonians. "But I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus WILL God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord SHALL NOT prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself SHALL descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ SHALL rise first: Then we which are alive and remain SHALL be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so SHALL we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words," I Thess. 4:13-18. The final act that God has promised to perform on behalf of his redeemed is to raise them from the dead, and to carry them home to live with him eternally, and as surely as he will perform all of the other provisions of his promise he will perform this also.

The purpose and promise of God form one golden chain which began in eternity past and reaches all the way to eternity to come. God cannot lie; all his promises are sure. Whatever God purposed to do and promised to do, he will perform. Rom. 8:28-30, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Eph. 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Others may be alarmed, but we do not need to be uneasy about the faithfulness of God. He will do all he has purposed to do. He has purposed to redeem all of his elect family, and to carry them home to live with him in heaven, and you can be sure that he will save every one of them without the loss of so much as one. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words," I Thess. 4:18.