

Title: **COVENANTS AND THE COVENANT**
Text: Genesis 6:18
Subject: *The Unity of the Covenants*
Date: Sunday Morning — February 19, 2006
Tape # Y-90a

Introduction:

You may recall, in my message to you Tuesday night, I made the statement that, “All the covenants of promise God made with men in the Old Testament were but partial revelations of the everlasting covenant of grace made with Christ before the world began.” After the service, Bro. Larry Brown said to me, “If you ever have liberty to do so, I sure would like for you to explain to us how all the covenants of the Old Testament relate to that everlasting covenant.” That is what I hope to do in this message. The title of my message is “**COVENANTS AND THE COVENANT**.” Let’s begin in Genesis 6:18. That is the first time we find the word “*covenant*” used in the Word of God. Before he sent the flood, the Lord God said to Noah...

(Genesis 6:18) But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons’ wives with thee.

You all know and understand that our salvation in Christ is “*according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*” and “*according to his purpose*” of grace, as it is set forth in the “*everlasting covenant*” made for us with Christ our Surety before the world began. That eternal, immutable covenant of grace and salvation is sometimes referred to as the “*new covenant*” or “*new testament*” because it is newly revealed in this gospel age and because it is new in the experience of every chosen sinner, when he is born of God and given faith in Christ; but the covenant was made between the three persons of the Holy Trinity before the world was made.

Proposition: I have shown you, many times, that all the blessings of grace come to chosen sinners in Christ according to that everlasting covenant, and only according to that everlasting covenant (Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:3-6). — In a word, God only deals with sinners in grace according to the covenant of grace made with Christ our Surety in eternity. God always deals with his elect in grace because of that covenant.

Yet, the Word of God speaks of many covenants God made with men in the Old Testament. The words “covenant” and “testament” are translated from the same word and appear over 300 times in Holy Scripture. Obviously, I do not intend to exhaust my subject today! I only want you to see that...

- The covenant God made with Adam before the fall (Gen. 1:26-31; 2:15-21),
- The covenant he made with Adam after the fall (Gen. 3:15-17),
- The covenant made with Noah (Gen. 9:1-18),
- God’s covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-4; 13:14-17; 15:1-18; 17:1-8),
- The Mosaic, or Sinai, covenant (Ex. 19:4-6; 20:1-26),

- The Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:1-16; 23:5; 1 Chr. 17:3-15),
 - Are all, in one way or another, connected with the new covenant, or the covenant of grace.
- It is failure to see this unity of the covenants that leads to much confusion and misunderstanding. These covenants are all part of God's progressive revelation of our redemption by Christ.

The covenant of grace is one. It is the same in all ages. And of that covenant Christ is the substance. He was for "*a covenant of the people,*" of all God's elect; and he is, as Gill put it, "*the same*" in the "*yesterday*" of the Old Testament, and in the "*today*" of the New Testament, and "*forever.*" He is now, always has been, and ever shall be "*the way, the truth, and the life.*" — "*There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" There never has been any other, and never can be any other.

The patriarchs before the flood and after, before the giving of the law of Moses and under the law, before the Christ's coming, and all the saints since, have been and are saved in exactly the same way, "*by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,*" by the grace of God and the blessings of grace bestowed upon God's chosen in Christ before the world began.

EDENIC COVENANT

The first time the word "*covenant*" is used is Genesis 6:18; but the Lord God made a unilateral covenant with Adam in the Garden of Eden, before the fall (Gen. 1:26-29; 2:15-17).

(Genesis 1:26-29) And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. (27) So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (28) And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (29) And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which *is* upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which *is* the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

(Genesis 2:15-17) And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. (16) And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: (17) But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

It was a unilateral, one sided, covenant. That is to say, God required one thing from Adam, obedience. It was, like the law given to Israel at Sinai, a covenant of works. Adam broke the covenant by his refusal to bow to God's authority as God, by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This covenant was made with Adam as the federal head and representative of the entire human race. And when he broke the covenant, we all sinned in him and died in him. That is how we got into the mess we are all in by nature, that is called "sin"

(Rom. 5:12). Because we sinned in Adam, we all came forth from the womb speaking lies, conceived in sin, shaped in iniquity, and born transgressors.

Yet, even in that covenant of works, which we all broke in the garden of Eden, several things are revealed about grace and salvation. I do not suggest that Adam knew these things. In fact, I am confident he could not have known them until after the fall. He could not have known them until he first knew sin. But, now, as we look back upon the events that transpired in the garden through the light of Holy Scripture, these things are as obvious as the noon day sun.

1. Adam himself was made in the image of and typical of another Man, the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:12-19). The fact that he existed was evidence of God's covenant made with Christ, our Surety, in eternity.
2. The entrance of sin into the world proclaimed the need of redemption and grace.
3. The fact that we were made sinners by the deeds of one man, might well have suggested the hope of another man.
4. I say that because there was another tree in the garden, called "*the tree of life*" (Gen. 2:9); and that "*tree of life*" is the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior (Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14). — You will remember that after the fall, when God drove Adam and Eve out of the garden, he "*placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword to keep (guard and keep open) the way of the tree of life*" (Gen. 3:24).

ADAMIC COVENANT

Then, after the fall, before driving Adam and Eve out of the garden, the Lord made another covenant with Adam. This covenant was all grace. Though cursed because of sin, God made a covenant of pure, free grace with our fallen parents, a covenant in which he both promised and portrayed redemption and salvation by Christ (Gen. 3:15-21). Again, this was a unilateral (one-sided) covenant.

1. The Lord God called Adam (v. 9).

(Genesis 3:9) And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou?

2. He made Adam acknowledge and confess his nakedness (his sin) (v. 10).

(Genesis 3:10) And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself.

3. Then, the first gospel message was preached by the God of all grace to fallen man (Gen. 3:15; Gal 4:4-5).

(Genesis 3:15) And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

(Galatians 4:4-5) But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, (5) To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

4. Then, as if to make certain that Adam and Eve understood his promise, the Lord God stripped them of their fig leaves, sacrificed an innocent victim, made skins for them, and clothed them with the skins of the slain animal (Gen. 3:21). Adam and Eve got the message (Gen. 4:1).

NOAHIC COVENANT

We saw that in Genesis 6:18, before he sent the flood, God promised to establish his covenant with Noah. And after the flood was over, once Noah had come out of the ark, the Lord God established his covenant with that man who had “*found grace in the eyes of the Lord*” (Gen. 6:8; 9:1-17).

Remember, in each covenant, God gave a progressive revelation of the everlasting covenant and of the accomplishment of redemption by Christ. He promised that the woman’s Seed would crush the serpent’s head. Now, he shows us that sin must be punished. He pictured the punishment of sin in Christ our Substitute by putting Noah into the ark, shutting him in, and then pouring out all his wrath upon the ark. Before Noah went into the ark, the Lord told him about the covenant. When he came out of the ark, he established his covenant with Noah, and set his bow in the sky, calling it his token of his “*everlasting covenant*” by which he governs all things (Rev. 4:3).

(Genesis 9:1-3) And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. (2) And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth *upon* the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. (3) Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.

(Genesis 9:9) And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;

(Genesis 9:13) I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

(Genesis 9:16) And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* upon the earth.

(Revelation 4:1-3) After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. (2) And immediately I

was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the throne. (3) And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

The fourth covenant set before us in the Old Testament is the covenant God made with Abraham. When we read all that is connected with the covenant God made with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-4; 13:14-17; 15:1-18; 17:1-8), we see that the revelation of his grace is much fuller and much clearer than it was in the previous covenants. We see the covenant stated clearly in Genesis 17; but to get a full picture of what God revealed to and taught Abraham, we have to read chapters 12-17 together.

1. In chapter 12, **God called Abram** out as the object of his grace and promised to bless him and make him a blessing. — We cannot know anything about God's covenant, his blessing, or his grace until he has called us out as the objects of his grace. — Abram was 75 years old when God called him out of Ur.
2. In chapter 15, **the Lord God revealed himself** to Abram as his Shield (Protector) and his great Reward. He promised him a Seed, through whom all nations would be blessed, a Seed who would possess all the earth. That Seed is Christ, the God who spoke to him, the woman's Seed, by whom the serpent's head must be crushed. — Believing God's revelation, Abram was justified by faith in Christ.

(Genesis 15:6) And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

You will remember (in Genesis 15) that God commanded Abram to offer all the sacrifices later revealed as sacrifices for sin (Lev. 1-5): a heifer, a she goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. Abram was required divide the heifer, the goat and the ram into two pieces, and spread them out before the Lord. When he did, the fowls (buzzards) came to devour the sacrifices, just as freewill/works religion seeks to make the sacrifice of Christ of no effect. But Abram, knowing that salvation is in Christ's sacrifice for sin, which those sacrifices represented, drove the buzzards away. Then, "*when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him*" (v. 13). But in the midst of that fear, horror, and great darkness, the Lord God assured Abram of his covenant grace, symbolically demonstrating his acceptance of Christ's sacrifice, in verses 17 and 18. — "*And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram.*" Now, read chapter 17, verses 1-8.

(Genesis 17:1-8) And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I *am* the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. (2) And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. (3) And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, (4) As for me, behold, my covenant *is* with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. (5) Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. (6) And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and

I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. (7) And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. (8) And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

3. Now, look at **the things involved** in this covenant.

- “Walk before me, and be thou perfect” (v. 1).
- **Upon the basis of perfection** demanded, and perfection given by the Sacrifice of Christ, God assured him of all covenant blessings. — “My covenant is with thee” (vv. 2-4).
- The Lord God gave Abram a new name, Abraham (v. 5; 2 Cor. 5:17).
- Then, he gave him the covenant token, circumcision, the symbolic picture of the new birth (vv. 9-13), saying, “my covenant shall be in your flesh” (v. 13; Phil. 3:3).
- Four times, in chapter 17, the Lord referred to this covenant with Abraham as an “everlasting covenant” (vv. 7, 8, 13, 19).
- When the whole thing was done, God promised Abraham a son, Isaac (another type of Christ), and promised to establish his covenant with the child of promise (v. 21); and “Abraham fell upon his face and laughed” (Gen. 17:17).

MOSAIC COVENANT

Now, we will jump ahead 430 years. In Exodus 20 we have the giving of the law in the Sinai, or Mosaic covenant, God made with Israel after he brought them out of Egypt.

(Exodus 19:3-6) And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; (4) Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. (5) Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: (6) And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

This, like the first covenant God made with Adam before the fall, was a covenant of works, and was soon broken. But it spoke of a better covenant, the covenant of grace, by which we have been made “*a kingdom of priests and an holy nation*” (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

(1 Peter 2:9-10) But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: (10) Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

This covenant was set forth under what we call “the ten commandments,” God’s revelation of the perfection he requires (Ex. 20:1-17). But the Lord showed Moses and all Israel plainly that the fulfillment of the covenant was not to be by their performance (vv. 24-26).

(Exodus 20:24-26) An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. (25) And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. (26) Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.

The Holy Spirit does not leave it for us to figure out why God gave the law covenant at Mt. Sinai. He tells us exactly what the purpose of the law was (Rom. 3:19-26; Gal. 3:19-26).

(Romans 3:19-26) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (20) Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin. (21) But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; (22) Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: (23) For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (24) Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

(Galatians 3:19-26) Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. (20) Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one, but God is one. (21) *Is* the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. (22) But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. (23) But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. (24) Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (25) But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. (26) For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

DAVIDIC COVENANT

Now, we'll take another huge jump in time. In 2 Samuel 7 the Lord made a covenant with David. Again, this was a unilateral (one-sided) covenant, just like the others. In that chapter, God promised David...

1. He would make a place for his people (v. 10).
2. He would plant his people in their place, securing them from all possibility of harm (v. 10).
3. He would establish his Seed forever (v. 12).
4. His Seed would be a King upon his throne forever (v. 13).

5. This King would build his house (v. 13).
6. And the Lord God promised, “*my mercy shall not depart away from him*” (v. 15).

When David heard these things, he understood that everything revealed to him in this chapter was not about him and his physical house, but about Christ and his house. He knew that this was another revelation of God’s everlasting covenant, that covenant ordered in all things and sure, which is all our salvation (2 Sam. 23:5). In Acts 2 the Apostle Peter confirms that fact on the Day of Pentecost, telling us that the exalted Christ is David’s Son, the King of Israel, seated upon David’s throne. Realizing the magnitude of these covenant promises, David sat down before the Lord and worshipped him with joyous hope (2 Sam. 7:18-29).

(2 Samuel 7:18-29) Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, **Who am I, O Lord GOD?** and what *is* my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? (19) And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant’s house for a great while to come. And *is* this the manner of man, O Lord GOD? (20) And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord GOD, knowest thy servant. (21) **For thy word’s sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them.** (22) Wherefore **thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.** (23) And **what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible,** for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, *from* the nations and their gods? (24) For **thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever:** and **thou, LORD, art become their God.** (25) And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish *it* for ever, and **do as thou hast said.** (26) And **let thy name be magnified for ever,** saying, The LORD of hosts *is* the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. (27) For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee. (28) **And now, O Lord GOD, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant:** (29) **Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O Lord GOD, hast spoken it: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.**

NEW COVENANT

All these promises of mercy and grace, all these covenant blessings find their fulfillment in Christ and the everlasting, new covenant revealed to us and made ours in him, “*by the blood of the everlasting covenant.*”

(Hebrews 6:17-20) Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath: (18) That by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: (19) Which

hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; (20) Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

(Hebrews 7:22) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

(Hebrews 8:1-2) Now of the things which we have spoken *this is* the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; (2) A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

(Hebrews 8:10-12) 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: (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. (12) For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

(Hebrews 10:10-22) By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. (11) And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: (12) But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; (13) From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. (14) For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. (15) *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, (16) This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; (17) And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. (18) Now where remission of these *is*, *there is* no more offering for sin. (19) Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (20) By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; (21) And *having* an high priest over the house of God; (22) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

- May God be pleased to establish his covenant with you in the blessed experience of his saving grace in Christ.
- Let us ever remember God's covenant and rejoice.
- This is certain: Our God always remembers his covenant.

(Hebrews 13:20-21) Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, (21) Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever.

Amen.

