

# THE LASTING COVENANT

## A SERMON

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“And I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall know that I am the Lord.” Ezekiel 16:62

THIS chapter describes how and to what extent the Jewish nation became heathenized; how they sank down by degrees into entire conformity to the heathens around them. And of all the parts of that nation, Jerusalem, where the temple was, where the priests were, where the mercy-seat was, Jerusalem, the very center, we should have thought, of everything good, was the worst of them all. And that is the case when men go away from the truth, the greater profession they make, the more their hearts are hardened against God's eternal truth. And it is a remarkable thing that where there is a great deal of human authority put into the place of God's truth, in the very places where that is, you will generally find there is a wonderful deficiency in vital godliness. If you range over the world, and find out where those seats of human authority and of professed human righteousness are, you will find less vital godliness in those places than you shall where there is no such profession made. Take Rome, for instance. Why, there is not a worse city upon the face of the earth, in any one sense of the word, than that city; sunken down beneath the lowest. Then if we come to England, in our holy towns, according to human notions, it is a remarkable thing that vital godliness seems to take no hold. Take Canterbury; why, they are all dead together. Take Exeter; how little vital holiness there is there! Take Winchester, take Farnham, take Norwich, take any place where there is a bishop residing, and you will find very little vital godliness. This is a fact that we ought to take notice of. It is that the Lord despises human authority in things that are eternal. He loved his people by his own authority; he chose them by his own authority; he saves them by his own authority; he calls them by his own authority; and he has mercy upon whom he will. When the Savior was in this world, and a sinner bought to him for mercy, he did not say: Well, I must go and ask the priest first; I must go and consult the elders first; I must have a little talk with the scribes first: for if I open your eyes, if I cleanse your leprosy, if I take away your palsy, if I raise your daughter from the dead, if I heal your servant. It may be offensive to those respectable men; therefore, I had better consult them first; and especially if I should do it today, which is the Sabbath day, it might give great offence; so, I will go and consult them whether they approve of it. Did he do so? Did he not disdain the thought, and have mercy upon whom he would

have mercy? And as he did then, so he goes about now, by his gospel and by his Spirit, doing good even as he will. Therefore, it is not either of him that wills or of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.

You find after the Lord had reached descriptively their lowest state of apostasy and heathenism, then there is a turn of language, “Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish unto you an everlasting covenant. Then you shall remember your ways, and be ashamed, when you shall receive your sisters, your elder and your younger: and I will give them unto you for daughters, but not by your covenant. And I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall know that I am the Lord.” How many have made use of this paragraph to prove that it relates to some future restoration of the Jews to Canaan! Whereas the covenant here spoken of is not the covenant the Lord made with the Jews as a nation. The covenant he made with them in their youth is not the covenant here referred to. Just look at the terms; “not by your covenant;” and my text says, “I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall know that I am the Lord.” In taking the great question of our text this morning, I shall in the first place point out *what this covenant is, as revealed to a people among the Jews in the youthful period of that nation*. I shall secondly show *how this covenant is an everlasting covenant*. I shall thirdly notice *the note of time*, “Then you shall remember your ways, and be ashamed, when you shall receive your sister, your elder and your younger: and I will give them unto you for daughters, but not by your covenant.” Fourthly, *the confirmation declared in our text*, “I will establish my covenant.”

First, *what this covenant is, as revealed to a people among the Jews in the youthful period of that nation*. Now, then, “nevertheless,” notwithstanding all this heathenism, “I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth.” The covenant was made with a people among the Jews in the youthful time of that nation. First, in the 3rd verse of the 12th of Genesis, the Lord said to Abraham, and that was the infancy, the commencement of the nation, “In you shall all families of the earth be blessed;” which is afterwards explained to mean that in Christ Jesus shall all families of the earth be blessed. That is God's covenant. Now just look for a moment at the suitability of this. It is in Christ Jesus. What is it that we need? Why, the very first thing that every man needs, is a Savior. We are by sin lost. And so, in the very first chapter of Matthew, “You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.” Here, then, this covenant is nothing else but a positive engagement on the Lord's part to bring about eternal salvation. He has done that. And how suited this is! Suited not only in itself, but in its manner, that “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;” that is, brought to see what Jesus Christ is as the Mediator of this covenant. Let your confidence be in his person, in his righteousness, in his atonement, and in the promises that are by him; and if you can do nothing else but go on from time to time with “Lord, save me; Lord, have mercy upon me; Lord, look upon me; Lord, teach me; Lord, direct me;” if you have these desires, together with an acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the blessings are, then you will not be lost, for “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Then, again, it was nothing else but the carrying out of this covenant when the Lord said to Abraham, in the 15th of Genesis, “Fear not, Abram.” And the Lord gives him two reasons there why he should not fear; and I am sure, if the Lord is pleased to bless us with a confidence in him in that order of things, we may not fear either. “Fear not, Abram; I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward.” This is nothing else but the carrying of the covenant. But how can the Lord himself be the reward? The answer is this, that the Lord Jesus Christ died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God; and the reward is not a reward of works but a reward of

faith. It is faith that receives the Lord Jesus Christ. So says the apostle, "If the reward be of works, then faith is made void: but the reward is of grace. And Jesus Christ thus brings us to God, this the way that God is our reward. To speak plainer if I can, God is the reward of the Savior's love. His work was such as to entitle him to be what he is, and where he is, and to possess what he possesses; and such is the ground and delightful order of things, that whatever the work of Christ entitled him to, it entitles everyone to that who is one with him, that is a believer in him, and that loves him in sincerity and in truth; for such are heirs of God; we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. "Fear not, Abram; I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward." God is the reward, and God our defense by the way. "I am your shield." Then again, the Lord carries out this covenant in the 28th of Genesis with Jacob, "Behold, I am with you." So, if we are believers in the Mediator of this covenant, remember, the promises of God are as much to us as they were to Jacob; for the promises are to character; and the great discriminating feature of character is faith in Christ, that works by love to his truth. Hence it is "all shall be damned that receive not the love of the truth." Jacob was loved by divine authority; he was loved sovereignly. And the Lord says, "I will keep you in all places whither you go;" and so the Lord did; he did not cast him away; "and I will bring you again into this land; for I will not leave you until I have done that which I have spoken to you of." And so, it was, and Jacob, as we see, died happy in the Lord. Then, again, Moses in the 33rd of Deuteronomy carries out very beautifully the items of this covenant; for though he is there speaking to the Jews as a nation, of course what he there says in a way of blessing has a typical meaning. He there carries out very beautifully this new covenant in contrast to the temporal covenant that is waxed old and passed away. "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Where is he our refuge? In Christ. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." The claims of Christ and the cause of his people are supported by the eternal plan of the everlasting God. "And he shall thrust out the enemy from before you, and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone; the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also, his heavens shall drop down dew." If the Lord be thus our refuge, it will indeed make the gospel to us as the rain and as the dew, refreshing us from time to time. "Happy are you, O Israel, who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help, and who is the sword of your excellency, and your enemies shall be found liars unto you, and you shall tread upon their high places." The Lord says, I will remember this covenant. A great many hundreds of years had now rolled over, but the Lord remembered that he had said these things and therefore remembering them, he looked about to see who the persons were that were included in this covenant. So, Zacharias, you will find in the 1st of Luke, when the Lord appeared to him, recognized this covenant; that the Lord had done this in remembrance of "his holy covenant; the oath which he swore to our father Abraham." Here, then, is the fulfillment, "I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth."

I will now, secondly, show *how this covenant is an everlasting covenant*. The covenant the Lord made with the Jews, that he was to be their God, and that they were to have the land of Canaan, and the great advantages of national distinction, as described in the word of God, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and many other places, they were to continue to enjoy all these on the ground of their conformity to that covenant; they were to continue in the purity of it. But instead of this they forsook God's covenant threw down his altar, the altar of sacrifice and the altar of incense and the next thing of course was to slay those prophets and ministers that preached even this national covenant. There was no righteousness belonging to that temporal covenant that was eternal, and that could therefore perpetuate the covenant. There was no sacrifice in that covenant that could

take away sin, and that could consequently perpetuate that covenant. If the people apostatized or gave way, then everything was gone. But here the Lord says, "I will establish unto you an everlasting covenant. Here is a testamentary will wherein God has willed everything by Christ Jesus. Now Jesus Christ has brought in everlasting righteousness, for his righteousness is everlasting, and this perpetuates the covenant. This covenant and the promises cannot fail while Christ's righteousness remains what it is; and as his atonement is perfect, and he has perfected forever all them that are sanctified, here it is the covenant is perpetuated. It must remain. The fall of the people in Adam made way for this covenant, God foreseeing that fall. The sins of which they were the subjects before they were called by grace, made way for this covenant. God has taken advantage of our sinner-ship to commend his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ appeared as the messenger and mediator of this covenant. And the sins of which the people of God are the subjects after called by grace, cannot make the slightest difference whatever to this covenant. It is ordered in all things in Christ; it is as sure as his righteousness, as sure as his eternal atonement. It is increasingly my prayer to God that we may live more and more that life indicated by the apostle when he says, "The Lord fill you with all joy and peace in believing." We are poor, changeable, rebellious hard-hearted creatures. My wicked heart, I know, sends forth sometimes the worst possible thoughts of God; and I speak no fable when I tell you I believe none but God, being what he is, could bear with such a poor creature as I see and feel myself to be. But here is an eternal covenant, perpetuated not by my righteousness, not by works of righteousness that I have done, but by the eternal righteousness of him who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Here is a covenant perpetuated by the blood of the Mediator, the blood of the everlasting God. It must of necessity be eternal, because the mediation of Christ is eternal and infallible. So, we read that God is abundantly willing to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, that those who have fled for refuge may thus have strong consolation, these are wonderful endearments! As to what carnal men may say about its being a dangerous doctrine, a high doctrine, and this, and that, and the other, I only say we are obliged sometimes to pay a little attention to what they say for the sake of setting at rest the minds of those who are sincere; not because what they say is worthy of notice, for the natural man receives not these testimonies of the Spirit, neither can he know them. But we who know this everlasting covenant in contrast to a temporal covenant, we who know it find our very feelings described: as a dying man I can truly say it just describes my feelings. In Malachi, where the Lord says, "The Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in." Where is there a Christian that has not admired, and in the right sense of the word envied, the Psalmist when he as dying, losing sight of his life, the good and the bad, losing sight of circumstances, and his house domestically not being with God as he could wish, and such seldom is the case with Christians when they die; the crooks shall come straight in God's own time, but those that have any experience of those things are the persons that know most about it; the Psalmist says "Although my house be not so with God, yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant," that is, he has brought me into the faith of Christ's eternal sacrifice and righteousness, into the faith of the yea and amen promise, into the faith the mystery of his will; "he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." Here, then, is the only firm standing for any creature on earth, or any creature in heaven. Even the angels could not stand if God had not chosen them with a choice with which he never chose those that fell. Hence those that are preserved are spoken of as "elect angels." Thus, then, he has established an everlasting covenant. He said he would do so ages before he did it; and in the fullness of time the Savior came; and as

though he could say to his disciples, You little think of the depth, the height, the infinity of happiness awaiting you embodied in these few simple words, "This is the new testament in my blood," the words are very simple, intended for simple people like myself and some of you, very simple, but there is an infinity of depth and an eternity of value in them. "This is the New Testament in my blood," that is, the new covenant. As though he should say, When you reach the realms of bliss, and find yourselves perfect in holiness, in righteousness, in royalty, in happiness, and in wisdom, strength, safety, and glory, then you will be able somehow to understand the words, "This is the New Testament in my blood." What a faithful God, then! He said he would establish an everlasting covenant; he has done so. We rejoice in it; we bless his holy name for any reason that we have to believe that that gracious promise is fulfilled in us, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant;" reveal to them this everlasting covenant. Christian, if you would walk with God comfortably, it must be in this way; for when the blood of the covenant is sprinkled upon our souls, that it is that drives away our doubts and fear. And if you would die happy, it must be in this covenant. For Simeon, though he does not name the covenant, names the salvation of the covenant, and his words are remarkable. He says, "Now let you your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen *your* salvation." Many men see a salvation such as it is, a Popish salvation, or a free will salvation, or a duty faith salvation, or a Puseyite salvation, and a great many salvations, which in reality are damnations to them that trust in them. But "my eyes have seen *your* salvation, which *you* have prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles," a light that shall penetrate their souls; and when the Gentiles are turned into Israelites, then it shall be "the glory of your people Israel" forever. "*Your* salvation." I first saw a Church of England salvation. There are some good men in the Church of England but the system itself is I shall not say from where now. I then saw a Wesleyan salvation; that did not do. I then saw a duty faith salvation; that looked to me more respectable than the rest, but that did not do. Unhappily for my parson, very unhappily. I used to sit up late of nights reading the Bible, with a hunger, and a thirst, and a trembling, and a concern, and an anxiety, that I should be glad to have a little more of than I do now. The 54th of Isaiah was the Aaron's rod that swallowed up all delusion; there the Lord revealed to me the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; away I started a few weeks after that, began to preach forty years ago, and have not left off yet, no; the same theme, the same subject. Bless the Lord, I know how I came by my religion. I could give a reason for the hope that is in me to fallen angels, to the world, to the church, to the great God himself. I look back and see how I was cut up and cut down, and how I saw a great many salvations and a great many gospels; but when I saw God's salvation, Ah, I said, you excel them all, you surpass them all. This God shall be my God, this people shall be my people; where they lodge, if their lodgings be ever so rough, let me lodge; where they go let me go where they die let me die; let their portion be my portion, and it shall be well with me.

Thirdly, we come to *the note of time*. Now when you are brought to receive this covenant, there is a certain temper of mind. "Then you shall remember your ways and be ashamed." Saul of Tarsus, before he was brought to this covenant, remembered his ways, and was delighted. Ah, I have killed some of these Antinomians; I have cast others into prison. I look back with great pleasure at what I have done. I am sure that God Almighty must be wonderfully indebted to me; I shall get rid of these dangerous people altogether by and by. So, he granulated himself, prided himself, exalted himself, delighted himself. Nothing to ashamed of, oh no; "the most strait sect", two superlatives at once "and touching the law blameless." The fact is I am the best man living. But when the Lord took hold of him, and brought Saul down, and brought his sins up, and he saw what he had been

doing, oh, how ashamed he was! He was ashamed to look God in the face, and ashamed to look the saints, as it were, in the face. Oh, how ashamed, how abashed he was! He says, "I was indeed a blasphemer; I was indeed injurious; I was indeed a persecutor; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." God has had mercy upon me. And that wonderful man never seems able to do enough to express his gratitude to God. "What mean you to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." So, with us, we shall have the same kind of spirit, if not in the same degree, when brought into this covenant. We shall say, Ah, I can see what I have been doing; I have been setting God aside, and Christ aside, and the truth aside, and everything aside. I was deceiving myself; I was on my road to hell. I thought there was nothing to fear, and there was everything to fear; I thought I had no reason to hate myself, and now I see I have reason to do nothing else but hate myself. Ah, Lord, I hate myself, I abhor myself, I am as a beast before you, I am as a piece of stubble, an autumn leaf, a pelican of the wilderness, an owl in the desert, a sparrow alone on the housetop, and it is of your mercy that I am not consumed. This is the temper of the man that is brought into this covenant. "Then you shall remember your ways and be ashamed." Then there is a note of time. "When you shall receive your sisters, your elder and your younger; and I will give them unto you for daughters, but not by your covenant" Let us trace out the fulfilment of this if we can and see how faithful the Lord was. In this chapter the Lord said, "Samaria is your elder sister, and Sodom is your younger sister." Do notice one thing, that Sodom had ceased to exist at the time of Ezekiel more than a thousand years; therefore, we cannot take Sodom literally; we are obliged to take it in accordance with the subject in hand, namely, this new, spiritual, and eternal covenant. And so, Samaria will represent the northern Jews, that is, the northern part of Canaan; Sodom that had no existence at this time, destroyed, as you are aware, in the days of Abraham, is made use of here mystically, to represent the Gentiles. Ah, says one, if you could bring one scripture to authorize your reasoning like that, then we would listen to you; but we mean to reject this part of your sermon unless you can. Very well, suppose I do bring one then, because your reasoning is perfectly right. Are those who are enemies to Christ, living in enmity against his truth and his people, and who would crucify him again if he were on earth, are the people so doing and so characterized spoken of figuratively, mystically? If so, I think I am right. Well, in the 11th chapter of the Revelation you will find that when the ecclesiastical, and I may say civil, power is taken away from the people of God, and they are ecclesiastically and civilly dead, it is said, "Their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt." Egypt and Sodom therefore represent, in reality, the whole world of enemies against God. Now here is a mother and two sisters, and these two sisters are to be turned into daughters. Where was it formed? I might go a little further back, but I will take it on the day of Pentecost. Go to the 2nd chapter of the Acts, and there you will get the complete pattern; there it is laid down for us. The pattern is clear. Let us see whether we of the Surrey Tabernacle are a church according thereto, and in the same order. First, the Holy Spirit descended, the word was preached, and thousands were pricked in the heart, and were brought to receive the testimonies borne on that wonderful occasion by the apostle Peter. They said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Why, "repent," change from your old position, and come into this new one, "and be baptized." "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." There it you see; there is the pattern. There is the metropolitan church; there is the church formed at Jerusalem. Here is a church formed, then, of people called by grace, regenerated by the power of God; second, they are baptized; third, they break bread, attend the Lords Supper. This is the pattern given. All you that are not Baptists are wrong; and those that are halfway Baptists are

wrong. There was not one that was not baptized that was then called by grace, and in all the after parts of the Acts of the Apostles. Ah! but, say some, were not the disciples mistaken in some things? Stop, they were not merely disciples now; they were apostles now; they were filled with the Spirit of God now; they cannot err now; they cannot see wrong now; they cannot make any mistake now; no, the Holy Spirit fills their minds with all that knowledge that makes them infallible here. So, the Lord thus brought again Zion, and they saw eye to eye. There you have the pattern of a Strict Baptist church; and if a church is not a Strict Baptist church, it is no Baptist church at all. Where is your reverence for God, where is your reverence for Christ, where is your respect for his word? Ah, look at it! Do not go home now and tear out that leaf in the 2nd of the Acts, as a Wesleyan once did the 9th of Romans. I was going to preach from it, and I could not find it in the Bible. Why, he said, you cannot preach then, can you? Oh yes, I said; I have got it here, in my mind, and it is no use you're taking the leaf away. Now, said I, I must make up for the absence of the leaf by being a few degrees higher than I should have been if it had been there. Depend upon it, if you rob the righteous, they will show the lion's face directly. I would not give a rush for the man who would not contend to the last drop of his blood for the glorious testimonies of God's eternal truth. Now here is the mother, then, and this mother is to receive two sisters, Samaria and Sodom. We will begin with Samaria, that is one sister, the Jewish sister; we will let the good Samaritan be the first. There are three persons that are Samaritans noticed in the New Testament very interestingly, showing that they were not so hard as those abominable Pharisees at Jerusalem; for there was not a Jew that would have shown the kindness to a poor creature that the Samaritan showed to the man fallen among thieves. The Levite passed by. He has been robbed, and all his money is gone; I shall not get anything if I go to him. Then the priest comes. Have you no pity for him? Oh, he cannot give me anything; why should I go? But the Samaritan comes along. Ah, he says, money, I don't want it; here is the poor man half dead. And see how kind the Samaritan was to him. You know the whole of the beautiful story, which I must not now stop to give you, merely refer to it. He was a Samaritan; just showing that these poor Samaritans, that were half Jews and half Gentiles, were not so hardened as the Jews were, until God himself took them in hand. It is true the Lord began with the hardest first, began with the Jew first. Then you go to the 17th of Luke, after passing by the 10th, and there were ten men that were lepers, and I should think nine of them were Jews. Well, the Savior healed them, but the nine did not stop to thank him. But the one returned to give thanks, fell down on his face at the Savior's feet, and did not know how to thank him enough for such mercy. "And he was a Samaritan." And the Savior said unto him. "Arise, go your way; your faith has made you whole." And then the good old woman of Samaria, she was the means of the bringing out great truths, and the means of bringing many poor sinners to Christ. She went and preached a glorious sermon. "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" And many of the Samaritans believed on him. And Philip went down to Samaria, and preached Christ, and wrought wonders, to the great joy of the city. Thus, the mother soon received her sister. "And when the apostles heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John." Here is a little sister; let us look to her. "I will give them unto you for daughters." She is a daughter, the offspring of the mother at Jerusalem. Then take Sodom to represent the Gentiles. The Lord appeared to Peter. Peter did not much like the idea of going down to the Gentiles, but he went; and the Holy Spirit descended upon them. When Peter came back to Jerusalem, he was called to account. "You went into men uncircumcised, and did eat with them." Well, he said, be quiet, and I will tell you. So, he related the whole matter, shut their mouths, and at the same time opened their eyes. I always think when a man's mouth is shut, that is a hopeful sign that his eyes are going to be opened. So here, "when they heard these

things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then has God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." It has pleased God to destroy the distinctions of caste, and to bring Gentiles into oneness with us. But we find that the Christian Jews generally were very slow to learn this. Hence the apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews had to use all the logic of which he was master to reason out the great designs of the ceremonial law; that those designs were answered, and that now another priesthood, another order of things had taken the place thereof. Thus, then, "you shall receive your sisters, your elder and your younger, and I will give them unto you for daughters;" so that the Samaritan and the Gentile churches became the daughters of the metropolitan church. Now notice the language of the Lord, "I will give them unto you;" not offer them; not ask you whether you will have them. No; if I were to come and offer you the Samaritans you would say, No, we are not going to have those Samaritans; the Jews do not degrade themselves by having any dealings with the Samaritans. Gentile dogs, who is going to receive them? No; the Lord says, "I will give them." "But not by your covenant" no, but by this new covenant. It is true the Jewish covenant was God's covenant, but not in the sense of this new covenant. This new covenant was confirmed by the blood of God himself; the other covenant was confirmed, as far as it could be, by the blood of bulls and goats, but this covenant, that is, God's covenant in a higher sense than any other covenant is, was confirmed by his own blood. "Feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood." All creatures belong to God, but none others are his in the high and lofty, near and dear, and glorious sense that his loved and chosen people are. So then, "not by your covenant," which you have broken, and which you have forsaken.

Fourthly, just a word upon *the confirmation declared in our text*, "I will establish my covenant with you." We shall have a sermon next Sunday morning upon the last verse of this chapter, if I am spared; that is, if I am of the same mind as I am now; I will throw in that one condition. "I will establish my covenant with you;" that is, confirm it.