

# The Traveling Pulpit

Published By



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## God's Everlasting Covenant of Grace

“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, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (Heb. 13:20-21)

### Introduction

In this edition of “The Traveling Pulpit”, I would like to address the subject after which this ministry is named. What do we mean when we speak of God’s Covenant of Grace? Let me first of all say that this term is not found anywhere in the Bible, but that in itself should not discredit the meaning or significance of the expression. I remind you that neither does the word Trinity appear in the Bible; but, describes the three persons of the Godhead (one God existing in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) which all Bible believing Christians most definitely agree is a major doctrine. In the Old Testament, we find several significant covenants to which we can easily relate (Abrahamic, Noahic, etc). All of these comprise God’s “everlasting covenant” that comes under the umbrella of what we call the covenant of grace. The writer of Hebrews declares that God’s “everlasting covenant” is fulfilled in Christ. God’s covenant of grace is the “everlasting covenant” that was made with the Godhead even before the creation of man. This covenant made possible the restoration of God’s redeemed people through His marvelous grace. Being “everlasting” means that this “covenant” that God has made with His “elect” (I Pet. 1:2) is secure, steadfast, immutable, and His grace inexhaustible.

Today, there are two popular viewpoints concerning the origin of the church among not only Baptist, but also most evangelicals. One believes that the church began with Christ at some point in His earthly ministry while others believe that it began on the day of Pentecost. However, John Gill and the English Particular Baptist believed that the origin of the church dates back to eternity past to the everlasting covenant of grace.

Gill defined the covenant of grace to be “a compact or agreement made from all eternity among the divine Persons, more especially between the Father and the Son, concerning the salvation of the elect.” He also said, “the covenant of grace, with respect to the elect is nothing else but a free promise of eternal life and salvation by Jesus Christ, which includes all other promises of the blessing of grace in it.” According to Gill, each person of the Holy Trinity had a part in the choosing, redeeming, and saving of the elect. That to which Gill referred is sometimes called the covenant of redemption (Jh. 6:39-44, 10:1-42, 17:1-5, 9-11, Rom. 8:28-31).

When Adam and Eve failed to keep the covenant of works, God revealed His everlasting covenant of grace. This covenant view is mainly reformed in its outlook, which means that it places emphasis on the continuity of God’s work throughout history by means of His covenants with His people. God’s covenant framework embraces the entire economy of His sovereign grace. Election is God’s choice of members into His covenant community, the church chosen in eternity past. Those included in God’s covenant makes up the church, also known as the body of Christ or the invisible or universal church. It was the conviction of Gill that only these were eligible to be members in a local visible church. This is why it is called the covenantal concept because only those who were included in a covenantal relationship with God are qualified to be members of a local church.

### **Covenants**

Everyone that reads the Bible is acquainted with the term covenant by simply the way in which Scripture is divided up into the Old and New Testaments, sometimes referred to as the Old and New Covenants. What do we mean when we use the word covenant? In the Bible, the word covenant is speaking of a solemn agreement or promise that binds the parties to each other in a permanent relationship with responsibilities imposed upon both parties. When God makes a covenant with mankind, He alone establishes the terms. In other words, man has no negotiation or say-so in placing demands upon the Almighty. It is God who is calling the shots, so to speak, and it is man who is held accountable to His Creator. When God enters in covenant with His people, He pledges to them His promises and expects obedience in return. God’s dealings with men have always been in the form of a covenant.

### **The Covenant of Works**

The term, covenant of works, does not appear in Scripture, but it is a term that refers to Adam being made the representative head of the human race (Rom. 5:12-21). This covenant promised life for obedience and death for disobedience. God created a beautiful world and placed Adam in charge of tending the Garden of Eden. He was created without sin and was allowed to work and do anything that he wanted, except for one thing. When Adam fell into sin, he led the entire human race, all of his posterity, into rebellion against God. As our representative, he could not be good enough or do any works that satisfied the righteous demands of a Holy God. Instead of letting God establish the boundary lines, Adam ate the forbidden fruit and tried to determine for himself what was good and evil. He violated the command of God and acted as though he knew better than God did. When Adam broke this covenant, all mankind in Adam broke it and stood condemned before a holy and righteous God. Adam was led by Eve who was led by Satan, disguised as a serpent. They defied God and did what He commanded them not to do. As a

result, they suffered the consequences and were cursed with pain and death. However, God did not leave them hopeless, but showed them mercy. What we refer to as the covenant of works continued to function after the fall as the moral law of God, but only Christ could live up to it.

### **The Covenant of Grace**

Instead of destroying Adam and Eve, God revealed to them His covenant of grace, this “everlasting covenant,” by promising that a Savior would come (Gen. 3:15) through the seed of woman and defeat Satan and his hellish forces. This promise is what we call the covenant of grace that promises eternal life for all who receive forgiveness of sin through Christ when He became the representative substitute in fulfilling the covenant of works for us. Years later, God entered into covenant with Abraham and promised to bless him, his family, and all the people of the world through him (Gen. 12). Scripture records that Abraham obeyed God and his faith was credited to him for righteousness in the sight of God (Rom. 4).

All the covenants that God made with Israel in the Old Testament are a continuation of His covenant of grace. In other words, the covenant of grace became the basis for all future covenants that God made with mankind. Throughout Scripture we find such covenants as the Noahic covenant (Gen. 6-9), Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12,15,17), Mosaic covenant (Ex. 19-24), Davidic covenant (II Sam. 7), and finally the new covenant that was “fulfilled” (Matt. 5:17-18) with the coming of Christ and signified at the Last Supper when He said, “this cup is the new testament (covenant) in my blood, which is shed for you” (Lk. 22:20). Submission to God and living in obedience to Him is a response to grace and not something that merits acceptance. Believing that one must contribute something to their salvation is no more than mere legalism.

Grace is God’s undeserved favor. God’s people never have and never will deserve God’s favor, but He has entered into covenant with us. What a mighty covenant of grace it is because it shows us what a mighty God of grace He is to love us and save us when we are totally undeserving. The coming of God Himself in the Person of “his only begotten son” (Jh. 3:16), Jesus Christ, fulfilled all the Old Testament promises that He had made to His people ever since the time of Adam. Christ became the “mediator of the new covenant” (Heb. 12:24) and offered Himself as the One and only true and final sacrifice for our sin. He inherited all the covenant blessings promised by the Father and will make His people “joint-heirs” (Rom. 8:17) along with Him. With the coming of Christ, the Old Testament sacrifices became obsolete because God’s eternal covenant with sinners was fulfilled. Regardless of race, the door of faith is the only way to communion with God through Christ. Outside of Jesus, there is no saving covenant relationship with God (Rom. 4,11). God’s purpose in the making of His covenants is to call out and sanctify a people unto Himself “of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” (Rev. 7:9). Someday these people that we call God’s “elect” (Rom. 8:33) will dwell in the “New Jerusalem” (Rev. 21:2). The only reason one will be there is because God is a God of great grace and has made a covenant with His redeemed people whom He chose from the “foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4-12). God keeps His word and does not break His covenant.

### **Closing**

When we think about God’s covenants, let us understand that they involve the entire concept of His sovereign grace. Salvation is not of man nor does man instigate nor take the initiative of it. God’s salvation of sinners is covenant salvation. When we think about such topics as

redemption, justification, and sanctification we need to understand that these are covenant blessings from God promised to His people. Election is the sovereign choice of God of those whom He chooses to be a part of His covenant promises. These recipients comprise the church of the living God. The only way into the church, the body of Christ, is to be born into it by the Holy Spirit (Jh. 3:3-8). Because man is totally depraved and dead in his trespasses and sins, it's impossible for him to ever choose God. Therefore, if a sinner is ever "born again", it is God who must do the birthing and making us new creatures in Christ (II Cor. 5:17). Sinful men break their promises, but Holy God always keeps His covenant and the only way for sinners to ever see the "kingdom of God" is because God has made a covenant of grace with His people.

### A Ministry Update

**The term, Covenant of Grace, is more to me than just a phrase, but a blessed event that has touched my life, redeemed my soul, and given me the hope of heaven. I've always loved the word, grace! When we home schooled our boys, we named it Grace Christian Academy. I guess that I could say it is the theme of my life! I've never been blessed with the ability to sing, but I love the song, "Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt! Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured, There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt. Grace, grace, God's grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within; Grace, grace, God's grace, Grace that is greater than all our sin!"**

**Speaking of grace, God has been gracious in allowing us another year of ministry. These are days in which everyone is being adversely effected by the downward turn in our economy. Churches and Christian Ministries are no exception. Since COGM began in 2006, this past year has hit us the hardest. However, we have been able to stay afloat and remain on radio after some negotiations with the station. I'll continue doing what God has called me to do with this little ministry as long as He provides. One of the cost-cutting measures that we'll be taking is to only send "*The Traveling Pulpit*" by postal mail to those who personally request it or have expressed interest in the past. Only those who find a notification enclosed in this postal edition will need to respond or else this will be your last publication. Our most cost-effective way is to send this by e-mail; therefore, if you have an e-mail address, please let us know. As always, "thanks" to all that support this ministry and make it possible with your donations.**

**Because of His Sovereign Grace.....BWM**

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