

Bethel

Pulpit

The Everlasting Covenant

Sermon Number 442

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 6th February, 2022**

Text: *“Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath 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” (2 Samuel 23. 5).*

In past years this was one of the favourite texts in our chapels. Actually, it was the text preached from at my own baptism. The old, godly people used to quote it in prayer, and they used to cling to it, that “everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” But at one time, the preaching of the everlasting covenant was not just the glory of our chapels. Even in the Church of England, there were people like Dr. Hawker who gloried in these truths – covenant love, covenant faithfulness, covenant blood, an everlasting covenant. People so often feel the uncertainty of everything here below, everything all around, everything in their own lives, everything in their own hearts. There is such a beautiful, sweet attraction in these things which are there and there for ever. “An everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.”

Now at the beginning of this chapter, we are told that these are the last words of David. He was a remarkable man, and here it is stated that these were his last words. How important last words are! I wonder what our last words will be. But we read the last words of some who have gone before, and these are the last words of David the son of Jesse. So David was coming to his end, but he was unsettled. There was something not just right. There was something amiss, when he looked around, when he looked within. There were so many things in his own family – that dreadful murder that had taken place by one of his sons, the terrible revenge from his favourite son, Absalom, and all the confusion, the distress there was in his own family, and some of them dying without hope and mercy.

Then as he looked around in his kingdom, the confusion in places. But above all, as he looked into his own heart, he could see so much wrong there. His house was not so with God, not so as he would have it to be, not so as he prayed it would be. His house was not so with God; especially

whenever he thought about that dreadful sin with Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, his house was not so with God. He was forgiven, but he carried the scars of that dreadful happening right down to his dying day. His house was not so with God.

And then by faith through grace he found a resting place. He was able to look away from everything in his own heart, his own life, his own family, his own kingdom, and he had a clear view of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the covenant, with whom all the blessings of the covenant were found, from whom they flowed, and finding a resting place, he could say, "This is all my salvation, and all my desire." He could die in peace, even although his house was not so with God. He felt the weight of that *although*, but he felt the greater weight of this *yet*. "Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."

Over the years so many of the Lord's people have felt the weight of this: "My house be not so with God" – not as it should be, not as I would have it. I would not be surprised if quite a number of you here this evening feelingly enter in there: *my house*, David, not just yours; *my house* is not so with God. But may you find that blessed hope, that blessed foundation that David found in the covenant of grace, the covenant as confirmed by the solemn oath of God, the covenant as sealed eternally with the precious blood of Christ. O what a foundation and what a hope, and what a resting place!

"Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." I am sure over the years this has been made such a comfort and help and blessing to so many. I remember years ago there was an old lady in our Bethesda Home. I am not sure what her name was. I think she was a very old member at Gower Street, though she had wandered about the country quite a lot. She was very, very old, but she seemed a most knowledgeable person. She seemed to know so many people in our congregation, who they were, all about them, and so much about ministers of the past. But for some reason, I never forgot her mentioning this verse to me. She said she was down in Battle, attending a chapel that existed at that time in Battle in Sussex, and she went to hear the minister, who was Arthur Boorman. That did interest me, because for some years he was the pastor at Bury in Lancashire. He preached from this text. She had gone to chapel in such a downcast state, feeling everything was wrong, and she said suddenly in the middle of his sermon he stopped, and he looked right towards where she was sitting, and he said, "There is

something the matter, isn't there! Things are not as you would like them to be, are they? A lot of things are wrong in your life. That is right, isn't it! You do wish they were different." And then she said, "He gave me such a lovely smile, and he said, 'Yet He hath made with me [thee] an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure,'" and what a blessing, what a deliverance. I believe there has been much of this in the past.

"Although my house be not so with God." So I would like to say a few things this evening concerning the covenant. You must notice this word comes continually throughout the Word of God. That is why I read that well-known, famous chapter of the covenant, Psalm 89. There were many covenants. There was a covenant made with Noah. There was a covenant made with Abraham. There was a covenant made with David, that one of his descendants would for ever sit upon the throne. The Word of God is a Book of many covenants, but strictly speaking in the gospel they all come down to two: one of works, one of grace; the covenant of works, the covenant of grace.

Now it is just like the doctrine of the Trinity, and so many other doctrines. It is not set out in one place or in one verse or in a few verses. It is something that the godly divines have gathered and gloried in down the ages. A covenant, you young ones, simply means *an agreement* between two people or two groups of people. Now there was a covenant made between God and Adam, and through Adam, made with the whole of the human race without exception. The condition, the terms of that covenant – they were honourable terms, they were good terms – that Adam should continue in perfect obedience, loving obedience, to his God. And Adam broke that covenant, and there has never been any hope since in that broken covenant of works for Adam's fallen race. Adam himself was ruined through breaking the covenant. Later in mercy the Lord revealed His covenant love in Christ to him.

But the whole human race and multitudes today in spirit are seeking to find salvation through that covenant. Do this, and thou shalt live; do it not, and dying thou shalt surely die. Adam broke the covenant, and in breaking the covenant, he ruined himself, he fell, he ruined the whole of his race, the whole of his descendants, and no sinner has ever yet found heaven through that broken covenant. That covenant can only condemn.

O but then in the riches of His grace, God made another covenant, and seeing that Adam would fall and break the covenant of works, God from all eternity made a covenant of grace, all of grace, and He made it with His beloved Son. The covenant of grace is made with Christ, and in Christ with every one of His chosen people. They all have an interest in that covenant that was made with Christ. No sinner ever desired or thought of salvation through it. They were not yet created, not yet born.

What were the terms of this better covenant? O how different from that with Adam! It did not depend on Adam's obedience, or your obedience, or mine. It depended upon the obedience of Christ. So the Father in everlasting love made an everlasting covenant with His well-beloved Son, and the terms of that covenant of grace to fallen sinners were that His beloved Son should one day become a real Man, live upon earth, go to the cross, die in the place of sinners, shed His precious blood, make the atonement, and on the grounds of that, being sure that Christ could never fail in it, Almighty God blessed His beloved Son and He blessed the whole blood-bought church of God in Christ. It is all of grace. It is nothing to do with human merit. Now that is the everlasting covenant.

So it is confirmed with the solemn oath of God. It is sealed with the precious blood of Christ. How you read in the Epistles to the Hebrews of the covenant, or it is called there the testament, being sealed with the blood of Christ.

“The solemn oath of God
Confirms each promise true;
And Jesus, with His precious blood,
Has sealed the covenant, too!”

And so, beloved friends, the covenant of grace as made with Christ and completely fulfilled in Him, acts in the way of a promise. Really the whole of the gospel is bound up here, and the covenant of grace acts in the way of a wonderful promise to sinners who are lost, who can do nothing in themselves, but they see in Christ everything that they need.

“Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant.” The covenant with Adam was not everlasting. Adam broke the terms of it. The covenant made with Christ, and with all the people of God in Christ, is everlasting. There is everlasting love in it. There is everlasting life in it. There is everything that a holy God can give.

There is everything that a guilty sinner can ever need or ever receive, and it is all, entirely on the grounds of grace from first to last.

“An everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” That is what makes it attractive. Everything about God’s dealings with His people in the covenant is sure. There are sure mercies. There is a sure foundation. There are sure promises. There is a sure salvation. There is nothing uncertain in the gospel. There is nothing uncertain in the grace of God, nothing uncertain in the Lord’s loving dealings with His people. Everything is sure, and that is where the safety, the security of God’s people rests, that in Christ, the sinner’s hope, the sinner’s salvation, is sure and it is eternally sure.

“An everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” “In all things.” Everything that you and I can ever feel our need of, and all these things have been ordered from everlasting. There is no disorder with God; there is no confusion; there is no uncertainty; there is not anything of the Lord not knowing what He is going to do. It has all been settled from everlasting. It is the certainty of it. It is the sureness of it. And everything in providence as well. We have talked a lot this year about the unknown way and the uncertainty of the unknown way, but there is no uncertainty with God. Everything is ordered. In Scotland in its good days, the days of godliness, there used to be a little saying. There was so much poverty up in the Highlands of Scotland, but there was a common saying. It was this: “You are sure to get the last sixpence if there is one for you in the covenant.” Now if you think of that, there is a lot of good divinity in it.

“Ordered in all things.” Every detail in the believer’s life, everything in the unknown way, already ordered and settled in the mind of God. Everything in providence, everything in grace, everything concerning prayer and answers to prayer, everything concerning the promises, the supply of His people’s every need, all the strength they need, all the grace they need, everything to them in their deepest sorrows and trials to uphold them, to help them through, everything for the time they come to die. “Ordered in all things, and sure.” They can never perish, they can never be lost. Grace can never be taken from them. Satan can never prevail against them. Indwelling sin shall never have the mastery. There is *everything* here.

“An everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” Well might David say, “This is all my salvation, and all my desire.” What more could he want to die with, and what more can you and I need in this gospel day! There is everything here, this full provision. It is all decreed and determined between the Father and the Son, witnessed by the Holy Ghost, and revealed, made known by Him. All these covenant blessings, God’s people come into them, and there is not a blessing you will ever know that does not flow from this everlasting covenant of grace, “ordered in all things, and sure.” May some of you this evening by faith have a glimpse of it, the covenant fulfilled in Christ, everything done, everything provided in His righteousness and precious blood, and then His glorious resurrection, ascension, all-prevailing intercession, His ability to save unto the uttermost, His willingness to save unto the uttermost. May some of you have a glimpse of it tonight and sweetly be able to say, “This is all my salvation.”

There may be some of you who cannot just rise as high as that and the full sweet assurance to say, “This is all my salvation,” but can you say, “This is all my desire”? Wasn’t Christ prophesied that He should come as “The Desire of all nations,” and don’t you a little enter into that word, “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart”? Because whatever else there is in the real beginnings of a work of grace, surely it is this: there are some living longings and living desires and living thoughts begin to spring up in your heart towards our Lord Jesus. “Other refuge have I none.” “Thou, O Christ, art all I want.” Can you come in this evening, old and young: “*This* is all my desire”? It was not always so with you. You did not always desire it. Christ was to you “as a root out of a dry ground,” but now Christ and Him crucified – “This is all my desire.” And as you are led in prayer and in dependence, you are sure to come to this: “This is all my salvation ... although He make it not to grow.” Now what a theme! There is everything in it.

“An everlasting covenant; ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire.” Now with the Lord’s help, coming to a close, I just say a few things about myself. We have heard today honourable mention of seventy years ago when George VI died and our queen became queen of our country. That was seventy years ago. What I am going to speak about is myself seventy years ago. It was my last year at university, and things were not going very well at all. There was all the uncertainty. It was soon after the end of the war, and ex-servicemen were

returning. It was very difficult for graduates to get a job. I did not know where I would be, whether I would get a job, where I would land up. There were so many things. I seemed unsettled and everything going wrong.

If ever the Lord blessed a word to me, it was this one I have read to you this evening. I suppose I knew it well, because the old people used to quote it so often. I just felt my house was not so with God. But how I was led into the covenant of grace and its blessings! Away from home, I had not any commentaries. I thought I would love to know more about this covenant. I prayed about it, and it came, well there are some lovely hymns in Gadsbys. I used to look them up one by one, the hymns on the covenant. If ever I felt a word, it was this:

“On my unworthy, favoured head,
Its blessings all unite.”

I do not know how long it went on for; it was a long time. But I say these things now in the hope it will be a help to some of you, especially to our young people, because I was only young when I was led into the blessings of the covenant.

But after a time of such happiness, I woke up one morning and it had all gone. I could not feel a thing. I was distressed. I did not know just what had happened. I did not know what to say, how to pray. It did not seem to mean anything more. I cried to the Lord. I said, “Lord, what has happened?” And He spoke to me. What a word:

“Though with no sweet enjoyments blessed,
This covenant stands the same.”

And what a deliverance that was! I felt I had no longer been with sweet enjoyments blessed. But it did not make the slightest difference to the glories of God in the gospel and in the covenant of His grace and in His love to unworthy sinners.

“Though with no sweet enjoyments blessed,
This covenant stands the same.”

“Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath 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.”

With David's Lord and ours,
A covenant once was made,
Whose bonds are firm and sure,
Whose glories ne'er shall fade!
Signed by the sacred Three-in-One,
In mutual love, ere time began.

Firm as the lasting hills,
This covenant shall endure,
Whose potent shalls and wills
Make every blessing sure:
When ruin shakes all nature's frame,
Its jots and tittles stand the same.

Here the vast seas of grace,
Love, peace, and mercy flow,
That all the blood-bought race
Of men, or angels know:
O sacred deep, without a shore,
Who shall thy limits e'er explore?

Here when thy feet shall fall,
Believer, thou shalt see
Grace to restore thy soul,
And pardon, full and free;
Thee with delight shall God behold,
A chosen sheep in Zion's fold.

And when through Jordan's flood
Thy God shall bid thee go,
His arm shall thee defend,
And vanquish every foe;
And in this covenant thou shalt view
Sufficient strength to bear thee through.

J. Kent