

Covenant, Knowing God's Covenant
Lesson 1, Video, Wayne Barber (48:50)
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Understanding the Language of Covenant

- A. God's purpose in making man.
 - 1. An extension of OUR [God's] life.
 - 2. An expression of OUR character.
 - 3. An exhibit of OUR power.
- B. What do we learn about God's Covenant that we find in the book of Genesis with God and man?
 - 1. The motive of God's covenant is an expression of grace. Out of that is unconditional love.
 - 2. Covenant is assurance of God's promise.
 - 3. Covenant is a binding agreement.
 - 4. Covenant is a picture of oneness. It is the most intimate picture of identity.
 - 5. Covenant is very costly.

Introduction

"Now, Behold. I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you."
Genesis 9:9

"I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth." Genesis 9:13

"And He took a cup and gave thanks and gave it to them saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is to be shed on behalf of many for forgiveness of sin." Matthew 26:27-28

"Like a lamb that is lead to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth." Isaiah 53:7

Video

Now, tonight, to get into our study, turn with me if you will real quickly, to Genesis chapter 1, Genesis chapter 1. We'll get there in just a moment. But we're going to be looking at how to understand the language of covenant. Now, it's very important to realize how communication is essential in all of this. Not only from man to man, but also certainly from man to God. But on a man to man level we see it every day.

We were over behind the iron curtain and they were telling me how over there, if you don't understand our language, or if we don't understand their language, you can just make some real comical errors. And the pastor of one of the churches we were working with over there was trying to complement a lady at a group that had come with her to do some work there in the church. And he was trying to use the verse in Isaiah that says: How beautiful are the feet of those that bring, course,

good tidings, and all, I forgot exactly how the verse goes. But he didn't know "feet" from "legs" in his vocabulary. He did not understand our language. And so he had many people in the congregation that did understand English. And so here she was, she was just a gorgeous lady, and had this group with her, and she's standing there. And he quoted the verse, he said, "How beautiful are the legs of the one who brought . . ." Well, everybody that knew English immediately recognized, they weren't really communicating real well! I'm sure she really was questioning what he was trying to say.

Another one, one of the fellows there we worked with was trying to complement a chef. Over there, a chef is one who is big, big barrel-chested, I mean, they're just great big guys. I guess they sample everything that they cook; and they have great big stomachs. But in his vocabulary, he was in America, and he did not know the word for stomach. And he was searching his vocabulary trying to communicate to this guy who was a cook. And he told him, he said, "You know, you don't look like a cook." He was a great big man but he wasn't real fat. And he said, "Because you don't have a big womb." And it is very helpful to understand language in communication, you know?! You can say a lot of things but exactly what do you mean by what you say?

Now, what we're going to see in our study tonight is how God wants us to understand what He's trying to say. So, how we saw last week, He chose the word covenant, right out of the language, right out of the vocabulary of man. Man understood the word covenant. The ancient times, they, it was a center point of their vocabulary. And so God, they didn't have the Word as we have it. They couldn't look into a study on covenant so they could understand. So, God chose something that was very familiar to them, very understandable to them. And He began to reveal His heart of how He wanted to relate to man by choosing this word covenant.

What is the first time that this word really comes out in Scripture? We know it's in Genesis 6, but what's the situation? What's the critical situation that man is in that God chooses to use this word?

We're going to have to go back to Genesis chapter 1, and verse 26, Genesis 1 and verse 26. Now, this is sort of basic and fundamental to some of you. But I've found in just traveling around that a lot of people just don't have all this nailed down. So let's go back. For those of you that are so far beyond this, act like this is the first time you ever heard this, okay? And we can just get excited seeing it all over again. Verse 26. Now if you ever want to know your purpose, why did God create man, here it is in this verse.

Gen 1:26 [reads]

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."
NASB

Now, I like the way He said "our." You know, there's some scholars who say there's nothing to that word. Oh ho! There's a whole lot to that word because there's one God but He's in three persons. And He, and they're evidently conversing here and He says, "Let's make man in our image." There's three things in that verse that helps define the purpose for which man was created. And I want you to look at it.

First of all, He said, "Let's make him in our image." And the first thing is: an extension of OUR life, an extension of OUR life. "Let us make man in OUR image." But, then secondly, He says, "Let's make him according to our what? Likeness." An expression, an expression of OUR character, OUR likeness. Okay? And thirdly, let him have dominion. Let's make him an exhibit of OUR power. And isn't it incredible that that is exactly what God wants to do now in a person who becomes a believer by sending the Holy Spirit to extend the life of God, to express the character of God, and to exhibit the power of God. That was the reason man was first created, you see. And we have such a beautiful picture in Genesis chapter 1 and chapter 2 when man and God are walking in such oneness, that all of this can be accomplished.

Now, God wanted a creature through which He could make Himself visible. Now, some people say that they can't understand this. Well now, think with me for a second. If a lamp is going to express itself it needs oil, right? If a pen is going to express itself it needs what? Ink. If a car is going to express itself what does it need? Gas. Mine needs a whole lot more than that! Gas helps! All right.

Now, If God, God wanted to express Himself, He wanted a man. And so He created a man through which he could be the extension of His life, an expression of His character, and an exhibit of His power. So, that's Genesis chapter 1. The purpose of God in making man.

But you see, God did not want just a puppet and He didn't want a clone. He didn't want somebody that simply He pulled the string and the guy did it. He wanted somebody who would choose His perfect will; somebody who would come to Him; somebody who would obey Him with a motivation of love. Look in chapter 2 and verse 16 and verse 17. It says:

Gen 2:16 [reads]

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat [how?] freely; NASB

Have you ever ridden down the road and you've seen these cows? There are forty acres of lush grass behind them and that cow's got his dumb head stuck out through that barbed wire fence eating the grass on the side of the road with all that junk in it and you think, "What's wrong with that cow?" Well, after you read these two verses you're going to wonder what's wrong with Adam.

There was only one tree he couldn't eat of. He could eat of all the rest of them. And this is the one that gave him the biggest problem that God put in front of him. It says in verse 17:

Gen 2:17 [reads]

17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die." NASB

Isn't it interesting how God put one restriction in front of man? I wonder why He did that? I don't know. When I get to see Him one day I'll ask Him. But, I've got some suggestions about why He put that tree in there. Some very practical suggestions. One is to teach man that he must learn to choose, to make a choice.

You see, it's not like man did not have any integrity or any will. This is the beautiful thing about God. He trusted man, so that He made him with a choice, with a will. And He put a tree in the garden and He says, "Now, I need for you to learn to choose to do what I tell you to do. It's not going to just be as if you are a clone or a puppet. Not only will it teach you to learn obedience, it will test you as to whether or not you're going to obey." Now, that was simply the way God set it up. Why He did that, I really don't know. But these are just some suggestions.

Well, you know what happened in chapter 3. There was an adversary. But really he wasn't an adversary of man. He was an adversary of God. And of course this isn't the lesson or the time to study about how lucifer was thrown out of heaven, became satan. How he continued to do his thing against God by working on His creation. But satan came to tempt man. To get man's eyes on what he couldn't do and take them off of what God said he could do. And verse 1 of chapter 3:

Gen 3:1 [reads]

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said . . . NASB

Oh man! Listen, when He throws him into the pit of hell one day, I just wish He'd let me stand around on the precipice and be the last one just to hit him right in the mouth. It bugs me, already he's causing man to doubt what God has said.

Gen 3:1-7 [reads]

1 . . . "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'"
 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;
 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ' You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.' "
 4 And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! [oh boy! She's in trouble]
 5 "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
 6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.
 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened . . . NASB

Now remember, what did He say the penalty was going to be if man disobeyed Him? He was going to die. Now, you've got to understand that word "death." Most of you do. But in the Greek and in Hebrew, the word "to die" means "to be separated from," to be separated from. The word *thanatos* in the Greek [G2348] and the word in the Hebrew [H4191 *muwth*] are very common. To be separated from.

So immediately there was something that happened. It's almost like a time-release vitamin. The first thing that happened Boom! The first thing that happened was he was spiritually dead. God withdrew His Spirit. There was no more capacity to relate to God. This is why Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1 says, "You are dead in your trespasses and in your sins."

Now, a lot of folks can't understand that. Ever try to witness to somebody and explain that? You look at them and say, "You're dead." And they say, "Right. You got it all together."

I used to pray when I'd get on a plane, "Lord, just give me somebody I can witness to." I don't know why it is, I used to get under condemnation when I didn't get a lost person, couldn't lead them to Jesus. You know what I'd get 99.9 percent of the time? Christians. I mean, you write it down. I guess because my gift would be in the area of encouragement and every time I'd get on a plane or anything else, I'd get a Christian who's messing up somewhere and they're just bemoaning everything

and they just bend my ear to all the way where we're going and I can encourage them and get them back on their feet.

I used to look for the lost people. Where are they? I don't know. I get all these Christians beside me. But sometimes there's an exception to the rule. And one night, one night, one day rather, I got into Atlanta. I said, "Lord, if he's on this plane You set him beside me and I'll witness to him." Oh, I felt so holy. I got on the plane.

Well, I smelled the guy before I saw him. He had enough Brute on that you could of smelled him. Most of us guys could have walked by and it would have lasted us for another six months. He was really loaded. I smelled him and then I heard him. I hadn't seen him yet; he was behind me. And I can hear him blowing off and he's cussing every other word. And I think, "Oh no, no, no, no, no. Now, Lord . . ." He's got a sense of humor, folks. And I said, "No, no, no, no." I said to myself, "Don't put this guy next to me. Please, don't put this guy next to me."

Well, you know what happened. He walks up, got his hair all styled back, you know. Got his Pinky Freeman overcoat on and Heart Chapter and Marks suit and his alligator shoes and his brief case and his sissy umbrella. And he walked over to me and he pulled out his boarding pass. And he looked to see if he was in the right place, you know. And then he put his stuff up, like about smothered me putting that up there. And he sits down in a big huff. Puts his belt on and looks over at me and you, you can tell he's got the world by the tail. He says, "Well, what do you do?" [Big laugh!] I love it! I love it! They open these doors, you could drive a Mac truck through them.

I said, "Well, tell you what. I'm a Christian. I'm going to Houston, Texas, to tell people about Jesus. What do you do?" Now folks, listen. You have never seen anything comical until you see these guys. He's got the world, I mean, these are successful dudes. And they're sitting up there and boy, they've got everything and boy, they've got life together and they meet a Christian and they don't know how to talk. He couldn't hardly spell his name.

And he said, "Well a, well a, I sue railroads." And I thought he was joking! I mean, who gets paid for suing railroads? I said, "Sure you do." And I laughed. He said, "Don't laugh, man. I do." He said, "You got any railroads you want sued?" Well, no. I got a train set in the basement. Well, we start off this way.

It's a two hour ten minute, nonstop flight all the way to Houston. He won't let me talk the first hour, ten minutes. Do you know why? Yeah, you know why. I've already hung myself. He knows exactly who I

am. And so he just talks, talks, talks, talks, talks, talks, talks. I said, "Uh huh, is that right? Hmm. I didn't know that."

But hour, ten minutes into the program, into the program! Into the trip! [belly laugh!] He looked over at me and says, "Are you comfortable?" And I was really, I painted the wrong picture a while ago. He's sitting on the aisle and I was sitting in the middle of three seats. And they do not make planes for our size. And he says, "Are you uncomfortable?" I said, "Yes, I am." So he said, "Let's swap seats." So I sat over next to him and stretched my legs out and the blood started running down through my legs, you know.

And he said, "Listen, preacher." Now, isn't that interesting? I didn't tell him I was a preacher. I said I was a Christian going to Houston, Texas. I guess that's what's wrong with the church today. Everybody expects the preachers to tell people about Jesus in their place and they forgot. It's a Christian . . . But anyway, He said, "Listen, preacher." He says, "I want to be honest with you." I thought, well, you know, if you've been lying to me two and a half hours, hour and a half, I'd like to know what the truth is.

And he said, "First of all, I want to show you something." And he pulled his wallet out. And it's the funniest thing. 'Cause you know where you put the bills in there? I'm serious. That sucker was that thick [holding his fingers about an inch apart]. I was thinking, "I wonder if they're hundreds." If it's my wallet . . . I went by to buy some gas tonight and I had, I forgot what I gave the lady. But she gave me, honestly, a \$50 bill. I get few of those ever in my life. But I gave her a \$50 bill and she gave me, she gives me back in one lump, twenty-five ones and then the rest of it's in ones, and then a five and I don't have any ones. I've got them stacked up and she said, "Boy, everybody'll think you're rich!" And that's what my wallet would have looked like if it had been that full. It'd all been one dollar bills. And I was wondering what was in there.

He said, "Let me show you a picture of my wife and my family." And I said, "Fine." And boy, gorgeous wife and just beautiful children. But what I was looking at was the mansion that was behind this thing. And I looked and I said, "Do you live in that house right there?" And you could tell it had a pool. It must have been taken in the backyard.

And he said, "Man, listen." He said, "I make over \$75,000 a year after taxes. And I don't have to leave home to do it. I mean, I don't even have to work for that. That's just, I can stay home and make that." And I'm thinking to myself, "And you've got a problem?" I said, "What's your problem?"

He said, "Preacher, what in the world's wrong with me?" He said, "I've been in churches all my life." He said, "I've done everything everybody's ever told me to do." And he said, "My problem is I don't have any peace in my heart and I can't sleep at night." Whew! I mean, it was like the Lord was saying, "You think you can handle that one, Wayne?" And so we began to share and I took him to Ephesians 2:1. I talked about being dead in your trespasses and your sins. And he looked at me like I was the biggest nut he'd ever talked to. He said, "You don't make any sense at all. You're telling me I'm dead and I'm sitting here talking to you!"

Well, see you must understand that when man fell the first thing that happened was he was spiritually separated from God. That's the first thing that happens in redemption. We become spiritually untied to God. But something else began to happen. Mentally, there's a progression started here. He began to pull away from thinking the thoughts of God. And you can see where we are now today. After oh, year after year after year, man no longer can think the thoughts of God. Since he didn't have in his spirit a means of communicating with God, now he didn't know how to think like God thinks. How he's on his own. Now he has his own mind to deal with. Then not only that, physical death became a reality. And you know, all through death was an enemy because they knew when they died it was all over. People feared death. It was Jesus who came to the cross that conquered death, you see. And so, we begin to see something take place when man sinned. He spiritually was immediately separated from God and he mentally began to progressively stray away from God and physical death became a reality.

Now, watch what happened. The rest of chapter 3 all the way through 6, we begin to see man go down, down, down. And we find man over in chapter 6 and God is about to destroy the world with the flood. And folks, if you don't think God wasn't upset, He was just going to flush the whole thing and except for one family and a man by the name of Noah. And that's the first time we find the word covenant mentioned.

Look at verse 7 of chapter 6. Now, here's God's intentions. Man has gone down, down, down, down. Since chapter 3 a lot has happened. Since he no longer can communicate with God, now his mind is degrading daily and he's beginning to physically die.

Gen 6:7 [reads]

7 And the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; [now watch this] for I am sorry that I have made them." NASB

Boy, when man sinned the disappointment that that brought to the heart of God, in our understanding of that. One day in His sovereignty He'll help us understand that better. But from our point of view we can see the fact that He was sorry that He had ever made man.

And then look in verse 18. Now, He picks out Noah. Look at verse 8, excuse me. Look at verse 8.

Gen 6:8-18 [reads]

8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

9 These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.

10 And Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

11 Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence.

12 And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

13 Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

14 Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch.

15 And this is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.

16 You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks.

17 And behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish. [Well, look at verse 18]

18 But [I love that contrasting word in Scripture] I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark — you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. NASB

Now, that's the first mention of covenant. In the midst of one of the most awful situations that you can possibly describe, God is absolutely sorry He's ever made mankind. Man has sinned, rebelled against Him. Now it's caused death to move into man. And you see in this critical, desperate state God brings up for His first time, the word covenant that we ever find in Scripture.

Now, I want to take you back to something to see if you caught it in your study. Most of you are a lot sharper than I am. But, look in verse 8. Go back to verse 8.

Gen 6:8 [reads]

8 But Noah found [what?] favor in the eyes of the LORD. NASB

Somebody got ahead of me. I heard that. Somebody's already said it. The word "favor." Well, it's also the word "grace." And it comes from the word that means gracious. To be gracious to someone. It comes from the word that means to have compassion or pity upon someone. Isn't it interesting, when God owed man nothing, and man owed God everything, and right in the midst of the most serious dilemma ever on the face of this earth, right in the midst of that there's the word grace. Had grace upon Noah. Showed compassion upon Noah. Did Noah deserve it? He couldn't have because the word itself denies anybody ever being worth it. He was just like any other man. The difference was he did seek to walk with God. And the Scripture tells us of those credentials. But don't every think that he was any better inside than any other man was. But God found favor with him. He had grace upon him.

You know, I got to thinking as I was studying. I don't need to study any more in Genesis. Just throw the whole thing, rest away. I don't need the rest of the book to understand the heartbeat of the word covenant in God's relationship to man, because the root motivation of it is grace. God is a god of grace. You know, we're always talking about man hungering for God. But have you ever thought about in Genesis chapter 3 on, it is God hungering for His man, for His creation?

And He found Noah and He had favor upon him. He showed grace to him, you see. He was gracious and compassionate to Noah. So, as we get into this study of covenant it is good to understand that love and grace are the motivations of God's covenant with man. Why does God do what He does?

And by the way, this is that book of covenant, right? [Holding up Bible] It's full of it. The other word for covenant means testament. So make sure you understand that all you find in here has a red line running all the way through it and that's God's grace and that's God's love for man. That's why we find covenant in our relationship to Him.

Well, what I want to do is just go over that to remember the setting and the situation to where we first find the word mentioned. It's when He's going to flush creation down the drain. But He found grace and He gave grace to Noah. He was gracious to him and He had compassion upon him.

Now, let's examine then, the covenant language and see if we can't get some pictures of what we're going to be studying. One of the hardest things I've got to do is to do this without pre-empting what

you're going to study. I'm telling you, this is the biggest frustration; I can't wait until we start getting into the meat of this thing. Right now we're just cranking up and warming up. We haven't even got into it yet. Just little pictures I'm going to try to bring out. And hopefully you've already got them and you can punch your neighbor, say, "I've already got that." Great. Then the Holy Spirit taught you, taught me, and we'll give Him glory, not Wayne, all right?

The different things that tell us in Genesis, covenants with God and man . . . Now, of the one things I'm not going to do is look at the ones with Abraham and Abimelech, and Isaac and Abimelech. I'm talking about with God and man. What do we learn about God's covenant that we find in the book of Genesis? All right. Number one. First of all, it teaches us and we're going to go back and reiterate what I just said, that the motive of God's covenant is an expression of grace. The motive of God's covenant is grace. And don't ever forget it. The motive of God's covenant is grace. And I think, out of that, an expression of that grace is unconditional love. I don't equate grace and love. I think there are too many aspects of grace. One of the aspects of grace is His unconditional love that He has for us.

My daughter and son were down on the mission field this summer and they were at the same place they were at last summer. So, last summer they had . . . and I don't know if I've told you this or not. I'm getting over forty so I've got an excuse for repeating myself. But they were riding along in a van and Stephanie made this statement, not meaning anything by it. I mean, the water was terrible, there was no air conditioning and it was hot, and of course, these kids are used to being spoiled at home. And now they're down on the mission field. And they were kind of griping and one of them said, "We don't deserve this." And the missionary's son was riding along with them and hadn't said a word, just hadn't said a word. And he was about five or six years younger than these kids were. And he was just real to the point though. And right when somebody said, "We don't deserve this," he just looked up and said, "You deserve hell." End of conversation. If anybody else would like to speak, here's a roving mic, you know?

Did he have a point? Sure he had a point. And you see, please understand. We've got to start there. It's grace. We're not going to get into this study until you recognize that the things you're going to start seeing in covenant, remember this, it's a graceful God that let's us even sit here tonight calling our self believers, understanding His Word, and how to relate to Him through this.

The motive of covenant is God's grace. He had grace with Noah. So that's the first one. We've already said it. But I want to list it and on our list as

we go through this tonight. Let's move on than to number two.

Okay, the second one is this and we find it just a little later on. Covenant, in the Genesis account, teaches us that covenant is assurance of God's promise. Let's put it this way. Covenant is assurance of God's promise.

Now, one of the things that was very common to them in those ancient times that we don't have much of today is that when you gave your word to somebody, buddy, you could take it to the bank. And when God gives His word and then draws covenant with man He is saying, what I am saying to you. "You can be assured I will do what I say I will do." This is very important.

I've had people come to me as a pastor and say, "Wayne, I know that what you say in Scripture is true, but I don't think it's for me. I don't think God can love me."

Well now, folks, if you understand covenant at all, when you find it in there and you can understand the promise and if it's made for everyone than it's for you. And you have an assurance built into the word covenant that God will do exactly what He says He'll do. Now, look in chapter 6 at verse 18 again. He says:

Gen 6:18 [reads]

18 But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark — you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. NASB

All right. Now, look down in chapter 7 beginning in verse 1.

Gen 7:1-5 [reads]

- 1 Then the LORD said to Noah, "Enter the ark, you and all your household; for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time.
- 2 You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female;
- 3 also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth.
- 4 For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made." [obviously, with the exception of them]
- 5 And Noah did according to all that the LORD had commanded him. NASB

Now folks, if you didn't understand covenant or have that in your vocabulary, how would you like to be Noah? If you couldn't believe that what God was saying was right, would you have built the ark?

Would you have taken all those years to have built it? But he did and he did exactly what God said and he was assured in the fact that God had promised him he's going to be all right by the fact that God had given covenant with him.

All right. Look in chapter 8 in verse 13. Did God do what He said He was going to do? Verse 13 in chapter 8.

Gen 8:13-16 [reads]

13 Now it came about in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first of the month, the water was dried up from the earth. [just exactly like God said] Then Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the surface of the ground was dried up.

14 And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.

15 Then God spoke to Noah, saying,

16 "Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons' wives with you. NASB

God did exactly what He told him He was going to do. He wiped out every living thing on the earth; He spared them in that ark; and when the time as over with He brought them to safety, told them to get back out of the ark; the land was dry.

You see, covenant teaches us that. When God says something, when He makes a promise, He's going to do exactly, exactly what He said He was going to do. And as we go through this study, you're going to find promises, like I said. If we could do this lesson right now, eleven weeks from now you'd shout because you already know now what the promises are of the covenants we're going to study. Already you would know what God has said. And you could just stand up and shout. But right now you don't yet. Ahhh, it's bugging me. But every time you find one remember the word covenant itself is built on the fact of assurance. If God said it He's going to do it.

Heard a man say one time: "God says it, I believe it, and that settles it." That's wrong, did you know that? It's: "God said it, that settles it," whether you believe it or not. If God said it, buddy, that's it. Period. And that's exactly what covenant teaches. He did exactly what He told Noah He was going to do. He spared them, He wiped out all of creation, and He put their feet on dry land.

So, as you study this covenant, remember the covenant, the motive of all of it is grace. And now that grace is of undying love. Then secondly, covenant is assurance of all of God's promises. All of God's promises. You don't ever have to worry about God's promises if you find it in covenant. All right?

Thirdly, covenant language also teaches us that covenant is a binding agreement. Covenant is a binding agreement. I'm trying to get some folks when I marry them to really get serious with this thing. They'd let us cut the wrists and everything but I can't get anybody to find a red dress. But a covenant is a binding agreement.

Let me just show you something. And I don't try to pre-empt, but if I do, forgive me. But, look in Psalms 81. This is Israel now. Israel hadn't even come on the scene in our study in Genesis right yet. But let's look at Psalms 81 and verse 10.

You know, God binds Himself to His word. It's incredible. This is not, now the old pantheism. It says God is bound by His word, so you speak His word and God has to do it. That's not what we're talking about. But there is a sense in which God has bound Himself to us, undeserving people, out of grace. Look what He says in verse 10.

Ps 81:10 [reads]

10 "I, the LORD, am [whose God?] your God . . . NASB

Boy, isn't that incredible? Israel? Are you kidding me? Stiff-necked, rebellious people. God's their God? You see? Yeah. That's right. Well, they don't deserve it! Yeah, I know. It's by grace. All covenant's by grace, friends. You don't deserve it either. But look at it as it goes on. It says:

Ps 81:10 [reads]

10 . . . Who brought you up from the land of Egypt; [Look at what He says] Open your mouth wide [and I'll what?] and I will fill it. NASB

Do you know what that's a picture of? A mama bird and a bunch of little baby birds. And that mama bird, have you ever seen them? And those little baby birds . . . Squawk! Squawk! Squawk! Boy, just rough life, rough life, you know? Really, really having a hard time in life. All they have to worry about is how much worm they can get down at one time, you know? But they're just sitting there, just squawk! Squawk! Got their little mouth just open wide and the mama bird just poking it down their mouth, just poking it down their mouth. And that's exactly what God's trying to say to Israel. "I have bound Myself to you. What I have said to you because of covenant is a binding agreement."

Now, in our study we saw some of that. Look in chapter 9 when the covenant pops up again. Verses 9 through 15. Chapter 9, verse 9. He says in verse 9:

Gen 9:9-12 [reads]

9 "Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you;

10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth.

11 And I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off [now here's His promise built in] by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth."

12 And God said, [now watch] "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you . . . NASB

You know, it's one thing to promise somebody something, it's another thing to give a sign to remind them over and over and over and over again that I have promised it and to keep Me at My word and to keep you believing that I'm going to do what I tell you to do.

Well, what was that sign? It was that rainbow. And you see them all the time. Every time I see one I think of covenant. Boy, I just want to shout out on an airplane, especially when you're up above clouds and those rainbows just split across the sky and you can't even see down below. I just want to say, "You all don't understand what that is!" And He's still got it in the sky today. A rainbow to show us that He has promised that man will never be destroyed by water. But what will man be destroyed by? Fire, that's right brother. But not by water. 'Cause He made a covenant that it would never be destroyed again. And He made a sign to that covenant.

Now, as you study covenant and if you know the covenant rituals, some of you have been through this and you're cheating, but you've been through it. And you start looking at the different ritual of it and you'll see where that sign pops up. And you'll see the sign of the Old Covenant and you'll see the sign of the New Covenant and whew! It'll begin to excite you. Because every time you see that sign it becomes a reminder, a memorial of the fact that God said, "I'm going to do it, and I'm bound to My word. I'm going to come through like I said I would come through."

You know, when I got married I got a ring on my finger. And sometimes I try, if I ever try to act like I'm single, and Dinah's short, she's not really short, but she's quiet and she carries a mean stick. Because see, I got to be reminded all the time. There's a sign of vows that I made to her of faithfulness to her and her life. Boy, every time I look at that thing it reminds me. Big boy, buddy, you promised and you are in covenant before a living

God that you're going to keep that covenant with your wife.

Well, that's a trite illustration but it's kind of what we're talking about here. God could have just said, "Just don't worry about it. I won't do it." But He didn't do that, did He? He said, "This is a sign for you, buddy. Every day you get up and it's rained and there's a rainbow in the sky you remember what I told you. I'm bound to My word. Not in the sense you can command Me anything. But, I am bound to what I say. I'll back up, you see, what I have told you." And this will mean so much later.

I think a lot of people who get off on their doctrine forget that when God says something God's going to do it exactly that way.

A matter of fact, a lot of folks these days are real curious about this little book that's been written. Called *88 Reasons Why Christ Is Going to Come in '88*. And ah, some of you are smiling! But you know, the one thing about the rapture that I am excited about and I know a lot of people I'm speaking to, maybe not in here, but out there wherever gets these tapes, don't believe in the rapture. I'm not going to fight a one of them.

One thing about the rapture for me, that's exciting to me, when He says, "I will catch you up in the air," and the word rapture comes right out of the word. It's not somebody's imagination, "I will catch you up in the air; I will meet with you in the air." And see, God promised that. And I don't know if He's going to come today, tomorrow, yesterday . . . no, He didn't come yesterday! If He came yesterday we're in trouble folks!

We got a youth director on our staff and that's a point for youth directors. These guys, man, they, well, people who go into youth work have to be a little off. And several years ago, on April Fool's Day, I don't believe anything on April Fool's Day around our church. I mean, someone can die, don't tell me about it. I'm sorry. I'm not believing you. I have had everything pulled on me. You can't believe what I've had pulled on me.

Well, I come to church that day here's our youth director's car up against the post. There's a big pillar in the back of our church; it's up over the curb now, up against the post as if he's wrecked and the car motor is running, the radio was on. Inside the car is a pile of clothes. The shoe is still laying on the accelerator with socks in it. Now, that's when the plot began to thicken. I thought, "Oh no, you're kidding me."

I walked inside, here's a little pile of clothes over here by the doors as you go into the auditorium. I mean, BVDs and everything! Man, they're all just

sitting there in a pile. And I'm thinking, "This is not, I'm not, I'm not believing this." And I walk over to the secretary's office, phone is off the hook and buzzin' like it's been going; typewriters are all on. They cooperated! There's piles of clothes in the chair and shoes down on the floor. I'm thinking, "I'm not believing this!"

And I go over to the other secretary. The same thing. And nobody is in sight. And it gets me so tickled. I can't help it. I just laid down on the floor. Finally, they're all in the storeroom closet.

But the thing that was funny to me was that they had waited to get me. And I didn't come in until about noon that day because I've got these banker's hours, you know. And they had waited for about two hours. And there's no telling who came to that building during that period of time! And ah. [hysterical laughter]

Oh, I got to tell you one more. I got a, when I was in college I got up one morning. I got up very rarely any mornings. We played Hearts all night; and I loved college I just hated class. And I got up one morning and I thought it was 7:30 and it was 8:30. And my clock had done something funny and I just got up and left. I noticed that I didn't hear anybody in the dorm at all. I got down to the cafeteria, it was in the winter time. There wasn't a soul on campus just things blowing across the campus, you know? I walked up to the cafeteria door and all the chairs were set up as if nobody'd even been there. I thought, "Wait a minute. It's 7:30."

I should have known. I was at a denominational school; I know not everybody's going . . . I'm sorry, but anyway, I looked around, but about that time the bell rung and everybody walked up and I felt much better.

But about the rapture, I know it's just a crazy illustration, but when God promises something folks, take it to the bank. If He said it and He's given marks and signs of His New Covenant, and that's way ahead of us right now. But He seals it, buddy, and He puts a sign there; covenant means you can take it to the bank. It grants the fact that God is bound to what He has said, okay?

So, we see then that covenant is assurance of God's promise, it's a, the motive of covenant is grace, and covenant is a binding agreement between two people.

Well, fourthly, another one I want you to see is this right here. Covenant in Genesis teaches us identity and oneness. It teaches us identity and oneness. You see, the relationship in covenant is one of oneness and is a tremendous picture of identity in this thing. So covenant is a picture, I guess you

could say, of oneness. It's the most intimate picture of identity.

In a marriage covenant, we always use in the marriage ceremony the two become what? One. And of course, Ephesians 5 says it's a picture of Christ and His church. It's a picture of oneness. It's a picture of that intimacy of identity. Look with me in chapter 15 of Genesis. Oh, I can't wait until we really dig into these things. Genesis 15, 1 through 6.

Now, here's old Abram. He's not a Jew, he's Chaldean. The Jews hadn't been thought of at this particular point. Well, God had, but they hadn't.

Gen 15:1-6 [reads]

1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great." [now, the greatest reward a person can have would be to have a son, to have an offspring]

2 And Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what wilt Thou give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"

3 And Abram said, "Since Thou hast given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir."

4 Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir."

5 And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

6 Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. NASB

Ooh, I want to preach on that right now! But that's later, okay? All right. He makes a promise to Abram, right? Was it Abraham? No, it's Abram. Now, look in chapter 17. I want you to see that picture of oneness and identity. And oh! How exciting this will be when you get over to the New Covenant and you start seeing this work itself out. It's just, we're taking it in step, all right? Chapter 17 and verses 3 through 5.

Gen 17:3-5 [reads]

3 And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying,

4 "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.

5 "No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be [what?] Abraham . . . NASB

Now, it's difficult to say because that "H" is a "ya wey" sound. And what's happening here is really A bra ham; it's a breath. You can't say "ya wey," it's a breath. And so it's "Abraham," you see. "For I will

make you the father of a multitude of nations." See Abram became Abraham, like we say in America, man, it's Abraham. Now watch in verses, verse 15.

Gen 17:15 [reads]

15 Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, [but what?] but Sarah shall be her name. NASB

Now what's the significance of that? Well, what's happening is God is giving them His name. And it's a oneness here. It's a picture here of oneness, an intimate oneness. Now, they even bear His name.

What happens in a marriage covenant? Boy, did I ever mess my wife up. Her last name is Barker and now her last name is Dinah Barker Barber. Which she took upon herself, my name. You see, a picture of this identity and this oneness. And that's what you're going to see in covenant. Oh folks, when you begin to realize what this identity is all about, when we start studying the rituals, when we start seeing, Whoop! It's going to be exciting. But anyway, covenant is a picture of oneness; it's the most intimate picture of identity.

And then fifthly, I could just go on and on. But I just picked five. Covenant language in Genesis teaches us that covenant is very costly. Covenant is very costly. I'll tell you what, when you start studying the New Covenant you'll blow away any kind of easy believism when you begin to realize what covenant is all about and where people were when they took their vows and what all that meant.

But, let's look in chapter 15 again in verses 9 through 11. 15, verses 9 through 11.

He says in verse 9, and this is of course, Abram. Abraham, as 17 tells you.

Gen 15:9-11 [reads]

9 So He said to him, "Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon."

10 Then he brought all these to Him [now, watch this] and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds.

11 And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away. NASB

There was a sacrifice of an innocent animal in order to solidify a covenant that Abram had with God. Oh, when you start seeing this and realizing what that path became, the way of death, and the path of blood. You begin to understand how you enter into covenant and the costliness of covenant and the sacrifice that is required for us to enter into a covenant with a living God. So, we see then, that covenant is costly.

And there's so much I want to say but if I do I'm going to pre-empt your fun of, your joy of discovery when you start seeing some of these things come together.

But listen, let's go back over. Covenant then, teaches us that the motive is love. It's a motive of grace where God found favor upon Noah. Not only that, covenant, just the word covenant, is assurance that God's promises will be done. Not only is it just assurance, but it is a binding agreement. Matter of fact, God seals it with a sign. There's a sign. Not only that, covenant in Genesis teaches us identity, intimate oneness. And it teaches us that covenant is very sacrificial.

Well, I tell you what, if anybody in here is thinking about getting married and you start realizing that marriage is a covenant, it might be real good for you to rethink it; make sure you understand what you're getting into and how God views that relationship. Because back then, in ancient times, the word covenant, buddy, was a serious matter and people didn't take it lightly. When they enter into covenant it was a very serious . . . And only death alone could break any of these covenants as far as relationships with one another. So it's a very serious and a very somber type of situation.

Well, are you ready? You know, always the first couple of weeks, like I said, just frustrate the dickens out of me because we can't really get into the meat of it yet. But you're going to start seeing these things start to come up. When you study the covenants remember these things that we've looked at tonight. All right?

Let's bow our heads for our prayer.

Father, we just thank You so much as we inch along in our study of covenant.

Well, we thank You for the Law of First Mention. We thank You Father, that when You showed Your graciousness to Noah, that that was all out of a heart of grace.

And Lord, we thank You so much for how You love us. Lord, we didn't seek You, You sought us and we thank You for that. What is man that You're mindful of us?

Father, we recognize the weaknesses of our old sloppy flesh; we thank You Father, for grace that can transform us and cause us to soar like the eagle You want us to be.

And Lord, we just pray now, as we continue this study that You just continue to reveal to us what You're trying to say of how we are to relate to You and we'll continually praise you for it. In Jesus' name, amen.