

Many readers of the chapter could omit the last half of verse 3 and the following two verses without realizing that anything was missing. These verses depart from the simple invitation and bring in an idea which at first sight may seem strange, but which, on closer examination, is found to be at the very heart of the chapter. They deal with the basis of the invitation and the reason that it is given. God offers an "everlasting covenant" which may be described as "the sure mercies of David." This covenant is to be made with those who listen to the invitation that the Lord has so graciously given.

In order to ascertain the nature of this covenant we must inquire what is meant by the phrase "sure mercies of David." In modern English to show mercy means to refrain from inflicting injury, but this is not the principal meaning of the Hebrew word used here. Usually it would be better translated "lovingkindness." "Blessing" might fit, but is somewhat too general.

What are the mercies that were given to David that are here presented as offered to all who become partakers of God's covenant?

In answering this question we must note in the first place the nature of God's relation to David. David's life was far from being an example of consistent holiness. Sometimes he fell into sins which impress us as very degrading. From a moral viewpoint Saul might appear as a better man than David. The difference, however, is that the sins of David were largely sins of the flesh while those of Saul were sins of the spirit. Saul was characterized by pride and unwillingness to admit that he was wrong. In the life of David we constantly find evidence of a tender conscience and of a desire to turn away from the evil into which he had fallen and to receive God's forgiveness. It was for this reason that God called David "a man after mine own heart" (Acts 13:22). Surely, then, the everlasting covenant includes maintenance of a similar relation between God and His people.

The outstanding feature of the covenant God made with David is His promise regarding a son. God promised David a continuing line of men to sit upon his throne (2 Sam. 7; 1 Chron. 17). He indicated that this line would reach its climax in the greatest Son of David, the One who is pictured