Genesis 17:4-7 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you."

 I want you to think about the contracts we have in our lives for a moment. Contracts are simply defined as: "an agreement, especially a written one enforceable by law," or "a document containing the terms of an agreement." Some of us have contracts that are very involved and some of us have just the simplest of contracts, so simple that they really aren't even elaborately written out.

 Let me give you an example of the simplest of contracts. Most of you wouldn't even consider this a contract but really it is. Take the agreement between the organists and this church. There is an unwritten agreement between our organists and this church that they will play for services and that you will pay them for each service they play. This contract is found in its simplest form on our budget sheet for the new year. Under organists there is listed a projected yearly cost and the amount we desire to pay them. Very simple, but nevertheless, binding.

 On the other hand there are those of you who work for companies of some sort. You have contracts that stipulate pay scale, overtime pay scale, benefits, bonuses, raises, job descriptions, grievance steps, sick leave, personal days, vacations, etc. The contracts are really quite elaborate and cover everything they can. Usually the members or workers get to vote to accept a particular contract and that in itself can be a difficult task as many of you know.

 Now did you notice something about these contracts that we've spoken of and of contracts in general? What I'm pointing to is the fact that every contract that I've ever seen or been involved in is at least a two party contract with each party having its role to fulfill. Take our organists. They play and we pay them. They provide a service and we reimburse them for that service. The same with the big company contract. The worker provides a service or works for the company and the company in turn provides pay and benefits. Here is the heart and core of a contract. That is most contracts except for one.

 There is one particular contract in this world that is so unique and different that everyone should take notice. Imagine if you would a standard big corporation contract where pay, benefits, and the like were all provided to the employee but that employee doesn't have to work unless he wants to. I'm talking about a contract where if you work you get paid but if you don't work you get paid too. It is truly a one-side contract and I think there isn't a one of us here who would turn down such a contract.

 Yet in truth this contract that guarantees everything in this life and in the afterlife the majority of people have rejected. I think by now you realize that I am talking about the contract or covenant that God has made with men. That covenant started with the man Abram but that covenant extends to all mankind. Let's look closer at this promise of God. Our theme will be: **THE COVENANT OF GOD. 1st. A Covenant of Blessings. 2nd. A One-sided Covenant. 3rd. An Everlasting Covenant.**

 As we consider the words of the text before us please note that we are in essence dealing with a contract, what seems an agreement between two parties. In the particular case before us we have God and Abram. Abram is 99 years old. God has come to renew and remind Abram of what he had already been promised. The problem is that it has been some 25 years since God first made the promise. 25 years and what God had promised still hadn't come true. Abram couldn’t make it come true.

 What had God promised? We'll use the words of our text, **"You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you and kings will come from you."**

 God had promised that Abram was going to have lots of descendants. There is no doubt that this was a covenant of great and wonderful promises. Nations and kings would come from Abram, now to be called Abraham. The implications are immense. Should this covenant come true the name of Abraham will be known throughout the world, for probably as long as the world exists. There is no doubt that this was a covenant of great and wonderful promises.

 Now you need to realize that when you are 99 years old, your wife is 89 years old and it has been some 25 years since the promise was first given, that this is a pretty awesome promise. You also have to realize that you can't become a man of many nations unless you first have one child with your wife. Got that? You can't be the father of kings unless you are first the father of one. You can't have a God who will be the God of your descendants unless you have descendants. Yes, it was a covenant of great and wonderful blessings but would those blessings come true!

 The answer to that question is, "Yes, those blessings would come true." God kept his promise to Abraham. When Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 they begat their only son Isaac. The promised descendant of Isaac was Jacob. Jacob in turn had twelve sons that became the 12 tribes of Israel. It is from the 12 tribes of Israel that the greatest king of all time descended: Jesus Christ our Lord and King. There is no doubt that these promises as impossible as they seemed at the time, came true because this really was a one-sided covenant.

 When I say it was a one-sided covenant I don't mean to imply that there was only one party to this contract. There were two parties involved in the contract it’s just that one party gave everything and the other had nothing. One-sided. One who did all the work. One who made the promises and fulfilled them. One who guaranteed this covenant with his eternal and almighty power.

 That fact is pointed to in the opening words of our text. God says, **"As for me, this is my covenant with you."** God is telling us this covenant is one-sided. He has made the promises. He will bring the promises to fruition. There was nothing Abraham could do. At 99 and his wife at 89 (ages which Scripture makes clear put them well past any hopes of having children) there was nothing Abraham could do to make these promises come true. Nothing but believe in God's power and God's ability to carry out what God had promised. This truly is a one-sided covenant.

 How fantastic though that God in love and grace should give such a covenant. Though Abraham was a sinner God promised to be with him and watch over him. Though Abraham was helpless and useless before God, God used Abraham and exalted him as a Father of faith. God took care of every need of Abraham because God is full of grace and love. A contract that provides everything. A contract where God grants complete blessings. A contract where the recipient of the contract doesn't have to do anything because God has done it all.

 God has done it all. That applies to us also. Remember that our third part said that this would be an everlasting covenant. That's what it is. Verse 7 says, **"I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you."**

 In the Epistle to the Romans it is made very clear how this is true today. Romans 4:16-17 says, **"Therefore, the promise comes by faith so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring -- not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: 'I have made you a father of many nations.' He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed -- the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were."** We are the descendants of Abraham by faith. God is still our God and we are still His people by faith. God's everlasting covenant still applies to each of us by faith in Jesus the one who completely fulfilled these words.

 In Jesus, God the Father has given us forgiveness and eternal life. In Jesus God has made us His children and heirs of salvation. In Jesus, the Savior promised to Abraham, the Savior foreshadowed in the Ceremonial law of the Jews, the Savior born of the Virgin Mary, the Savior who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried, in Jesus, the resurrected and eternally victorious Savior we find these words of covenant applied to us. God's one-sided covenant became ours in Christ the Lord.

 An honest look will tell us that we have no more to do with this covenant becoming ours than Abraham did. Before God we are powerless. We are by nature lost and condemned creatures who can't do a thing for our own salvation. Yet God sent his Son. Jesus died for our sins. Jesus rose from the dead to guarantee that victory. What is it that we should try to claim in this effort for ourselves? Shall we claim we are obedient, that we keep God’s laws and have never done a single wrong in your lives? That would all be a lie. We have nothing to offer God. We are just as impotent spiritually as Abraham was physically before God. No, God has done it all, is doing it all for us. We are simply the recipients of the greatest contract ever given to mankind. God loves us and has saved us in Jesus. That’s what Christmas is all about. About our Savior. About how God has done it all.

 As you think on this great covenant of God, as you realize just what it is that God has done for you, may you be filled with an awe and wonder of God. May you truly be like Abraham who believed what God had promised, who fell facedown before God knowing he had nothing to give and who received what God had promised because he knew it was God's power. Your salvation is God’s power. Believe, believe in the promises of God in Jesus our Savior. Amen.