

# The Two Covenants

## CHAPTER I.

### A COVENANT GOD

*“Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments.” DEUT. 7. 9.*

**M**EN often make covenants. They know the advantages to be derived from them. As an end of enmity or uncertainty, as a statement of services and benefits to be rendered, as a security for their certain performance, as a bond of amity and goodwill, as a ground for perfect confidence and friendship, a covenant has often been of unspeakable value.

In His infinite condescension to our human weakness and need, there is no possible way in which men pledge their faithfulness, that God has not sought to make use of, to give us perfect confidence in Him, and the full assurance of all that He, in His infinite riches and power as God, has promised to do to us. It is with this view He has consented to bind Himself by covenant, as if He could not be trusted. Blessed is the man who truly knows God as his Covenant God; who knows what the Covenant promises him; what unwavering confidence of expectation it secures, that all its terms will be fulfilled to him; what a claim

and hold it gives him on the Covenant-keeping God Himself. To many a man, who has never thought much of the Covenant, a true and living faith in it would mean the transformation of his whole life. The full knowledge of what God wants to do for him; the assurance that it will be done by an Almighty Power; the being drawn to God Himself in personal surrender, and dependence, and waiting to have it done; all this would make the Covenant the very gate of heaven. May the Holy Spirit give us some vision of its glory.

When God created man in His image and likeness, it was that he might have a life as like His own as it was possible for a creature to live. This was to be by God Himself living and working all in man. For this man was to yield himself in loving dependence to the wonderful glory of being the recipient, the bearer, the manifestation of a Divine life. The one secret of man's happiness was to be a trustful surrender of his whole being to the willing and the working of God. When sin entered, this relation to God was destroyed; when man had disobeyed, he feared God and fled from Him. He no longer knew, or loved, or trusted God.

Man could not save himself from the power of sin. If his redemption was to be effected, God must do it all. And if God was to do it in harmony with the law of man's nature, man must be brought to desire it, to yield his willing consent, and entrust himself to God. All that God wanted man to do was, to believe in Him. What a man believes, moves and rules his whole being, enters into him, and becomes part of his very life. Salvation could only be by faith: God restoring the life man had lost; man in faith yielding himself to God's work and will. The first great work of God with man was to get him to believe. This work cost God more care and time and patience than we can easily conceive.

All the dealings with individual men, and with the people of Israel, had just this one object, to teach men to trust Him. Where He found faith He could do anything. Nothing dishonored and grieved Him so much as unbelief. Unbelief was the root of disobedience and every sin; it made it impossible for God to do His work. The one thing God sought to waken in men by promise and threatening, by mercy and judgment, was faith.

Of the many devices of which God's patient and condescending grace made use to stir up and strengthen faith, one of the chief was - the Covenant. In more than one way God sought to effect this by His Covenant. First of all, His Covenant was always a revelation of His purposes, holding out, in definite promise, what God was willing to work in those with whom the Covenant was made. It was a Divine pattern of the work God intended to do in their behalf, that they might know what to desire and expect, that their faith might nourish itself with the very things, though as yet unseen, which God was working out. Then, the Covenant was meant to be a security and guarantee, as simple and plain and humanlike as the Divine glory could make it, that the very things which God had promised would indeed be brought to pass and wrought out in those with whom He had entered into covenant. Amid all delay and disappointment, and apparent failure of the Divine promises, the Covenant was to be the anchor of the soul, pledging the Divine veracity and faithfulness and unchangeableness for the certain performance of what had been promised. And so the Covenant was, above all, to give man a hold upon God, as the Covenant-keeping God, to link him to God Himself in expectation and hope, to bring him to make God Himself alone the portion and the strength of his soul.

Oh that we knew how God longs that we should trust Him, and how surely His every promise must be fulfilled to those who do so! Oh that we knew how it is owing to nothing but our unbelief that we cannot enter into the possession of God's promises, and that God cannot -yes, cannot-do His mighty works in us, and for us, and through us! Oh that we knew how one of the surest remedies for our unbelief—the divinely chosen cure for it—is the Covenant into which God has entered with us! The whole dispensation of the Spirit, the whole economy of grace in Christ Jesus, the whole of our spiritual life, the whole of the health and growth and strength of the Church, has been laid down and provided for, and secured in the New Covenant. No wonder that, where that Covenant, with its wonderful promises, is so little thought of, its plea for an abounding and unhesitating confidence in God so little understood, its claim upon the faithfulness of the Omnipotent God so little tested; no wonder that Christian life should miss the joy and the strength, the holiness and the heavenliness which God meant and so clearly promised that it should have.

Let us listen to the words in which God's Word calls us to know, and worship, and trust our Covenant-keeping God, it may be we shall find what we have been looking for: the deeper, the full experience of all God's grace can do in us. In our text Moses says: "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant with them that love Him." Hear what God says in Isaiah: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall My covenant of peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." More sure than any mountain is the fulfillment of every Covenant promise. Of the New Covenant, in Jeremiah, God speaks: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear

in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” The Covenant secures alike that God will not turn from us, nor we depart from Him: He undertakes both for Himself and us.

Let us ask very earnestly whether the lack in our Christian life, and specially in our faith, is not owing to the neglect of the Covenant. We have not worshipped nor trusted the Covenant-keeping God. Our soul has not done what God called us to—”to take hold of His Covenant,” “to remember the Covenant”; is it wonder that our faith has failed and come short of the blessing? God could not fulfil His promises in us. If we will begin to examine into the terms of the Covenant, as the title-deeds of our inheritance, and the riches we are to possess even here on earth; if we will think of the certainty of their fulfillment, more sure than the foundations of the everlasting mountains; if we will turn to the God who has engaged to do all for us, who keepeth covenant for ever, our life will become different from what it has been; it can, and will be, all that God would make it.

The great lack of our religion is—we need more of God. We accept salvation as His gift, and we do not know that the only object of salvation, its chief blessing, is to fit us for, and bring us back to, that close intercourse with God for which we were created, and in which our glory in eternity will be found. All that God has ever done for His people in making a covenant was always to bring them to Himself as their chief, their only good, to teach them to trust in Him, to delight in Him, to be one with Him. It cannot be otherwise. If God indeed be nothing but a very fountain of goodness and glory, of beauty and blessedness, the more we can have of His presence, the more we conform to His will, the more we are engaged in His service, the more we have Him ruling and working all in us, the more truly happy shall we be. If God indeed be

thereby Owner and Author of life and strength, of holiness and happiness, and can alone give and work it in us, the more we trust Him, and depend and wait on Him, the stronger and the holier and the happier we shall be. And that only is a true and good religious life, which brings us every day nearer to this God, which makes us give up everything to have more of Him. No obedience can be too strict, no dependence too absolute, no submission too complete, no confidence too implicit, to a soul that is learning to count God Himself its chief good, its exceeding joy.

In entering into covenant with us, God's one object is to draw us to Himself, to render us entirely dependent upon Himself, and so to bring us into the right position and disposition in which He can fill us with Himself, His love, and His blessedness. Let us undertake our study of the New Covenant, in which, if we are believers, God is at this moment living and walking with us, with the honest purpose and surrender, at any price, to know what God wishes to be to us, to do in us, and to have us be and do to Him. The New Covenant may become to us one of the windows of heaven through which we see into the face, into the very heart, of God.