

CHAPTER XIV.

**THE NEW COVENANT:
A COVENANT OF GRACE**

“Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” ROM. 6. 34.

THE words, Covenant of grace, though not found in Scripture, are the correct expression of the truth it abundantly teaches, that the contrast between the two covenants is none other than that of law and grace. Of the New Covenant, grace is the great characteristic: “The law came in, that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly.” It is to bring the Romans away entirely from under the Old Covenant, and to teach them their place in the New, that Paul writes: “Ye are not under the law, but under grace.” And he assures in them that if they believe this, and live in it, their experience would confirm God’s promise: “Sin shall not have dominion over you.” What the law could not do—give deliverance from the power of sin over us—grace would effect. The New Covenant was entirely a Covenant of grace. In the wonderful grace of God it had its origin; it was meant to be a manifestation of the riches and the glory of that grace; of grace, and by grace working in us, all its promises can be fulfilled and experienced.

The word grace is used in two senses. It is first the gracious disposition in God which moves Him to love us freely without our merit, and to bestow all His blessings upon us. Then it also means that power through which this grace does its work in us. The redeeming work of Christ, and the righteousness He won for us; equally with the work of the Spirit in us, as the power of the new life, are spoken of as Grace. It includes all that Christ has done and still does, all He has and gives, all He is for us and in us. John says, "We beheld His glory, the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." "The law was given by Moses grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." "And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." What the law demands, grace supplies. The contrast which John pointed out is expounded by Paul: "The law came in, that the offence might abound," and the way be prepared for the abounding of grace more exceedingly. The law points the way, but gives no strength to walk in it. The law demands, but makes no provision for its demands being met. The law burdens and condemns and slays. It can waken desire, but not satisfy it. It can rouse to effort, but not secure success. It can appeal to motives, but gives no inward power beyond what man himself has. And so, while warring against sin, it became its very ally in giving the sinner over to a hopeless condemnation. "The strength of sin is the law."

To deliver us from the bondage and the dominion of sin, grace came by Jesus Christ. Its work is twofold. Its exceeding abundance is seen in the free and full pardon there is of all transgression, in the bestowal of a perfect righteousness, and in the acceptance into God's favour and friendship. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin according to the riches of His grace." It is not only at conversion and our admittance into God's favour, but throughout all our life, at each step of our way,

and amid the highest attainments of the most advanced saint; we owe everything to grace, and grace alone. The thought of merit and work and worthiness is for ever excluded.

The exceeding abundance of grace is equally seen in the work which the Holy Spirit every moment maintains within us. We have found that the central blessing of the New Covenant, flowing from Christ's redemption and the pardon of our sins, is the new heart in which God's law and fear and love have been put. It is in the fulfilment of this promise, in the maintenance of the heart in a state of meetness for God's indwelling, that the glory of grace is specially seen. In the very nature of things this must be so. Paul writes: "Where sin abounded, grace did more exceedingly abound." And where, as far as I was concerned, did sin abound? All the sin in earth and hell could not harm me, were it not, for its presence in my heart. It is there it has exercised its terrible dominion. And it is there the exceeding abundance of grace must be proved, if it is to benefit me. All grace in earth and heaven could not help me; it is only in the heart it can be received, and known, and enjoyed. "Where sin abounded," in the heart, there "grace did more exceedingly abound; that as sin reigned in death," working its destruction in the heart and life, "even so might grace reign," in the heart too, "through righteousness into eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." As had been said just before, "They that receive the abundance of grace shall reign in life through Jesus Christ."

Of this reign of grace in the heart Scripture speaks wondrous things. Paul speaks of the grace that fitted him for his work, of "the gift of that grace of God which was given me according to the working of His power." "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love." "The grace which was bestowed

upon me was not found vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” “He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; My strength is made perfect in weakness.” He speaks in the same way of grace as working in the life of believers, when he exhorts them to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus”; when he tells us of “the grace of God” exhibited in the liberality of the Macedonian Christians, and “ the exceeding grace of God “ in the Corinthians; when he encourages them: “God is able to make all grace abound in you, that ye may abound unto every good work.” Grace is not only the power that moves the heart of God in its compassion towards us, when He acquits and accepts the sinner and makes him a child, but is equally the power that moves the heart of the saint, and provides it each moment with just the disposition and the power which it needs to love God and do His will.

It is impossible to speak too strongly of the need there is to know that, as wonderful and free and alone sufficient as is the grace that pardons, is the grace that sanctifies; we are just as absolutely dependent upon the latter as the former. We can do as little to the one as the other. The grace that works in us must as exclusively do all in us and through us as the grace that pardons does all for us. In the one case as the other, everything is by faith alone. Not to apprehend this brings a double danger. On the one hand, people think that grace cannot be more exalted than in the bestowal of pardon on the vile and unworthy; and a secret feeling arises that, if God be so magnified by our sins more than anything else, we must not expect to be freed from them in this life. With many this cuts at the root of the life of true holiness. On the other hand, from not knowing that grace is always and alone to do all the work in our sanctification and fruit-bearing, men are thrown upon their own efforts, their life remains one of feebleness and bondage under the law, and they never yield themselves to let grace do all it would.

Let us listen to what God's Word says: "By grace have ye been saved, through faith; not of works, lest any man should glory. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" Grace stands in contrast to good works of our own not only before conversion, but after conversion too. We are created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God had prepared for us. It is grace alone can work them in us and work them out through us. Not only the commencement but the continuance of the Christian life is the work of grace. "Now if it is by grace it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; therefore, it is of faith that it may be according to grace." As we see that grace is literally and absolutely to do all in us, so that all our actings are the showing forth of grace in us, we shall consent to live the life of faith—a life in which, every moment, everything is expected from God. It is only then that we shall experience that sin shall not, never, not for a moment, have dominion over us.

"Ye are not under the law, but under grace." There are three possible lives. One entirely under the law; one entirely under grace; one a mixed life, partly law, partly grace. It is this last against which Paul warns the Romans. It is this which is so common, and works such ruin among Christians. Let us find out whether this is not our position, and the cause of our low state. Let us beseech God to open our eyes by the Holy Spirit to see that in the New Covenant everything, every movement, every moment of our Christian life, is of grace, abounding grace; grace abounding exceedingly, and working mightily. Let us believe that our Covenant God waits to cause all grace to abound toward us. And let us begin to live the life of faith that depends upon, and trusts in, and looks to, and ever, waits for God, through Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, to work in us that which is pleasing in His sight.

Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied!