

CHAPTER XVIII.

**ENTERING THE COVENANT:
WITH ALL THE HEART**

“And they entered into the covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart, and all their soul.” 2 Chron. 15. 12 (see 34. 31, and 2 Kings 23. 3).

“The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.” Deut. 30. 6.

“And I will give them an heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: for they shall turn to Me with their whole heart.” JER. 24. 7 (see 29. 13).

“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. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, with My whole heart and My whole soul.” Jer. 32. 40.

IN the days of Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah, we read of Israel entering into “the Covenant” with their whole heart, “to perform the words of the Covenant which are written in the book.” Of Asa’s day, we read: “They swore unto the Lord; and all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with their whole heart, and sought Him with their whole desire; and He was found of them.” Wholeheartedness is the secret of entering the Covenant, and God being found of us in it. Wholeheartedness is the secret of joy in religion – a full entrance into all the blessedness the Covenant brings. God rejoices over His people to do them good, with His whole heart and His whole soul: it needs, on our part, our whole heart and our whole soul to enter into and enjoy this joy of God in doing us good with His whole heart and His whole soul. With what measure we mete, it shall be measured unto us again.

If we have at all understood the teaching of God’s word in regard to the New Covenant, we know what it reveals in regard to the two parties who meet in it. On God’s side there is the promise to do for us and in us all that we need to serve and enjoy Him. He will rejoice in doing us good, with His whole heart. He will be our God, doing for us all that a God can do, giving Himself as God to be wholly ours. And on our side there is the prospect held out of our being able, in the power of what He engages to do, to “turn to Him with our whole heart,” “to love Him with all our heart and all our strength.” The first and great commandment, the only possible terms on which God can fully reveal Himself, or give Himself to His creature to enjoy, is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.” That law is unchangeable. The New Covenant comes and brings us the grace to obey, by lifting us into the love of God as the air we breathe, and enabling us, in the faith of that grace, to rise and be of good courage, and with our whole heart to yield ourselves to the God of the Covenant, and the life in His service.

Wholeheartedness in the love and the service of God! how shall I speak of it? Of its imperative necessity? It is the one unalterable condition of true communion with God, of which nothing can supply the want. Of its infinite reasonableness? With such a God, a very Fountain of all that is loving and lovely, of all that is good and blessed, the All-glorious God: surely there cannot for a moment be a thought of anything else being His due, or of our consenting to offer Him anything less, than the love of the whole heart. Of its unspeakable blessedness? To love Him with the whole heart, this is the only possible way of receiving His great love into our heart and rejoicing in it –yielding oneself to that mighty love, and allowing God Himself, just as an earthly love enters into us and makes us glad, to give us the taste and the joy of the heavenliness of that love. Of its terrible lack? Yes, what shall I speak of this? Where find words to open the eyes and reach the heart, and show how almost universal is the lack of true wholeheartedness in the faith and love of God, in the desire to love Him with the whole heart, in the sacrifice of everything to possess Him, to please Him, to be wholly possessed of Him? And then of the blessed certainty of its attainableness? The Covenant has provided for it. The Triune God will work it by taking possession of the heart, and dwelling there. The Blessed Mediator of the Covenant undertakes for all we have to do. His constraining love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit can bring it and maintain it. Yes, I ask how shall I speak of all this?

Have we not spoken enough of it already in this book? Do we not need something more than words and thoughts? Is not what we need rather this -quietly to turn to the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, and in the faith of the light and the strength our Lord gives through Him, accept and act out what God tells us of the God-given heart He has placed within us, the God-wrought wholeheartedness

He works? Surely the new heart which has been given us to love God with, with God's Spirit in it, is wholly for God. Let our faith accept and rejoice in the wondrous gift, and not fear to say: I will love Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart. Just think for a moment of what it means that God has given us such a heart.

We know what God's giving means. His giving depends on our taking. He does not force upon us spiritual possessions. He promises, and gives, in such measure as desire and faith are ready to receive. He gives in Divine power; as faith yields itself to that power, and accepts the gift, it becomes consciously and experimentally our possession.

As spiritual gifts God's bestowings are not recognised by sense or reason. "Ear hath not heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit. We have received the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given us of God." It is as you yield yourself to be led and taught by the Spirit, that your faith will be able, despite of all lack of feeling, to rejoice in the possession of the new heart, and all that is given with it.

Then, this Divine giving is continuous. I bestow a gift on a man; he takes it, and I never see him again. So God bestows temporal gifts on men, and they never think of Him. But spiritual gifts are only to be received and enjoyed in unceasing communication with God Himself. The new heart is not a power I have in myself, like the natural endowments of thinking or loving. No, it is only in unceasing dependence upon, in close contact with God, that the heavenly gift of a new heart can be maintained uninjured, can day by day become stronger. It is only in God's immediate presence,

in unbroken direct dependence on Him, that spiritual endowments are preserved.

Then, further, spiritual gifts can only be enjoyed by acting them out in faith. None of the graces of the Christian life, like love, or meekness, or boldness, can be felt or known, much less strengthened, until we begin to exercise them. We must not wait to feel them, or to feel the strength for them; we must, in the obedience of the faith that they are given us, and hidden within us, practise them. Whatever we read of the new heart, and of all God has given into it in the New Covenant, must be boldly believed and carried out into action.

All this is especially true of wholeheartedness, and loving God with all our heart. You may at first be very ignorant of all it implies. God has planted the new heart in the midst of the flesh, which, with its animating principle, SELF, has to be denied, to be kept crucified, and by the Holy Spirit to be mortified. God has placed you in the midst of a world, from which, with all that is of it and its spirit, you are to come out and be entirely separate. God has given you your work in His kingdom, for which He asks all your interest, and time, and strength. In all these three respects you need wholeheartedness, to enable you to make the sacrifices that may be required. If you take the ordinary standard of Christian life around you, you will find that wholeheartedness, intense devotion to God and His service, is hardly thought of. How to make the best of both worlds, innocently to enjoy as much as possible of this present life, is the ruling principle, and, as a natural consequence, the present world secures the larger share of interest. To please self is considered legitimate, and the Christlike life of not pleasing self has little place. Wholeheartedness will lead you, and enable you too, to accept Christ's command and sell all for the pearl of

great price. Though at first afraid of what it may involve, do not hesitate to speak the word frequently in the ear of your Father: with my whole heart. You may count on the Holy Spirit to open up its meaning, to show you to what service or what sacrifice God calls you in it, to increase its power, to reveal its blessedness, to make it the very spirit of your life of devotion to your Covenant God.

And now, who is ready to enter into this New and Everlasting Covenant with his whole heart? Let each of us do it.

Begin by asking God very humbly to give you by the Spirit, who dwells in you, the vision of the heavenly life of wholehearted love and obedience, as it has actually been prepared for you in Christ. It is an existing reality, a spiritual endowment out of the life of God which can come upon you. It is secured to you in the Covenant, and in Christ Jesus, its Surety. Ask earnestly, definitely, believingly, that God reveal this to you. Rest not till you know fully what your Father means you to be, and has provided for your most certainly being.

When you begin to see why the New Covenant was given, and what it promises, and how divinely certain its promises are, offer yourself to God unreservedly to be taken up into it. Offer, if He will take you in, to love Him with your whole heart, and to obey Him with all your strength. Hold not back, be not afraid. God has sworn to do you good with His whole heart: do say, do not hesitate to say, that into this Covenant, in which He promises to cause you to turn to Him and to love Him with your whole heart, you now with your whole heart enter. If there be any fear, just ask again and believingly for a vision of the Covenant life: God swearing to do you good with His whole heart; God undertaking to make and enable you to love and obey Him with your whole

heart. The vision of this life will make you bold to say: Into this Covenant of a wholehearted love in God and in me I do with my whole heart now enter: here will I dwell.

Let us close and part with this one thought. A redeeming God, rejoicing with His whole heart and whole soul to do us good, and to work in us all that is well-pleasing in His sight: this is the one side. Such is the God of the Covenant. Gaze upon Him. Believe Him. Worship Him. Wait upon Him, until the fire begin to burn, and your heart be drawn out with all its might to love this God. Then the other side. A redeemed soul, rejoicing with all its heart and all its soul in the love of this God, entering into the covenant of wholehearted love, and venturing, ere it knows, to say to Him: With my whole heart I do love Thee, God, my exceeding joy. Such are the children of the Covenant.

Beloved reader! rest not till you have entered in, through the Gate Beautiful, through Christ the door, into this temple of the love, of the heart, of God.

(See Note F. –The Whole Heart)