

CHAPTER XVII.

**HIS HOLY COVENANT**

*“To remember His Holy Covenant; to grant unto us that we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, should serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all our days.”*  
LUKE 1. 68-75.

**W**HEN Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, he spoke of God’s visiting and redeeming His people, as a remembering of His Holy Covenant. He speaks of what the blessings of that Covenant would be, not in words that had been used before, but in what is manifestly a Divine revelation to him by the Holy Spirit; and gathers up all the former promises in these words “That we should serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.” Holiness in life and service is to be the great gift of the Covenant of God’s Holiness. As we have seen before, the Old Covenant proclaimed and demanded holiness; the New provides it; holiness of heart and life is its great blessing.

There is no attribute of God so difficult to define, so peculiarly a matter of Divine revelation, so mysterious, incomprehensible, and inconceivably glorious, as His Holiness. It is that by which He is

especially worshipped in His majesty on the throne of heaven (Isa. 6. 2 ; Rev. 4. 8, 15. 4). It unites His righteousness, that judges and condemns, with His love, that saves and blesses. As the Holy One He is a consuming fire (Isa. 10. 17) ; as the Holy One He loves to dwell among His people (Isa. 12. 6). As the Holy One He is at an infinite distance from us; as the Holy One He comes inconceivably near, and makes us one with, makes us like Himself. The one purpose of His holy Covenant is to make us holy as He is holy.

As the Holy One He says: “I am holy; be ye holy; I am the Lord which hallow you, which make you holy.” The highest conceivable summit of blessedness is our being partakers of the Divine nature, of the Divine holiness.

This is the great blessing, Christ the Mediator of the New Covenant brings. He has been made unto us “both righteousness and sanctification” –righteousness in order to, as a preparation for, sanctification (Remember that the words sanctify, sanctity, saint are the same as make holy, holiness, holy one.) or holiness. He prayed to the Father: “Sanctify them; for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves may also be sanctified in truth.” In Him we are sanctified, saints, holy ones (Rom. 1. 7 ; 1 Cor. 1. 2). We have put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and holiness. Holiness is our very nature.

We are holy in Christ. As we believe it, as we receive it, as we yield ourselves to the truth, and draw nigh to God to have the holiness drawn forth and revealed in fellowship with Him, its fountain, we shall know how divinely true it is.

It is for this the Holy Spirit has been given in our hearts. He is the “Spirit of Holiness.” His every working is in the power of holiness.

Paul says: “God hath chosen us unto salvation, in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” As simple and entire as is our dependence on the word of truth, as the external means, must our confidence be in the hidden power for holiness which the working of the Spirit brings. The connection between God’s electing purpose, and the work of the Spirit, with the word we obey, comes out with equal clearness in Peter: “Elect, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience.” The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the life of Christ; as we know, and honour, and trust Him, we shall learn and also experience that, in the New Covenant, as the ministration of the Spirit, the sanctification, the holiness of the Holy Spirit is our covenant right. We shall be assured that, as God has promised, so He will work it in us, that we “should serve Him without fear, in righteousness and holiness before Him, all the days of our life.” With a treasure of holiness in Christ, and the very Spirit of holiness in our hearts, we can live holy lives. That is, if we believe Him “who worketh in us both to will and to work.”

In the light of this Covenant promise, with the Blessed Son and the Holy Spirit to work it out in us, what new meaning is given to the teaching of the New Testament. Take the first epistle St. Paul ever wrote. It was directed to men who had only a few months previously been turned from idols to serve the Living God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. The words he speaks in regard to the holiness they might aim at and expect, because God was going to work it in them, are so grand that many Christians pass them by, as practically unintelligible (1 Thess. 3. 13): “The Lord make you to increase and abound in love, to the end He may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.” That promises holiness, unblamable holiness, a heart unblamable in holiness, a heart stablished in all this by God Himself. Paul might indeed say of a word like this: “Who hath

believed our report? “He had written of himself (1 Thess. 2. 10): “Ye know how holily and righteously and unblamably we behaved ourselves.” He assures them that what God has done for him He will do for them -give them hearts unblameable in holiness. The Church believes so little in the mighty power of God, and the truth of His Holy Covenant, that the grace of such heart-holiness is hardly spoken of. The verse is often quoted in connection with “the coming of our Lord Jesus with His saints”; but its real point and glory, -that when He comes we may meet Him with hearts stablished unblamable in holiness by God Himself: all too little this is understood or proclaimed or expected.

Or take another verse in the Epistle (1 Thess. 5. 21), also spoken to these young converts from heathenism, in reference to the coming of our Lord. Some think that to speak much of the coming of the Lord will make us holy. Alas! how little it has done so in many cases. It is the New Covenant Holiness, wrought by God Himself in us, believed in and waited for from Him, that can make our waiting differ from the carnal expectations of the Jews or the disciples. Listen- “**THE GOD OF PEACE HIMSELF**” -that is the keynote of the New Covenant what you never can do God will work in you “**SANCTIFY YOU WHOLLY**”; this you may ask and expect,- “and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, **UNBLAMABLE**, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And now, as if to meet the doubt that will arise: “Faithful is He that calleth you, **WHO WILL ALSO DO IT.**” Again it is the secret of the New Covenant –what hath not entered into the heart of man, –**GOD WILL WORK** in them that wait for Him. Until the Church awakes to see and believe that our holiness is to be the immediate almighty working of the Three-One God in us, and that our whole religion must be an unceasing dependence to receive it direct from Himself, these promises remain a sealed book.

Let us now return to the prophecy of the Holy Spirit by Zacharias, of God's remembering the Covenant of His Holiness, to make us holy, to stablish our hearts unblamable in holiness, that we should serve Him IN HOLINESS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. Note how every word is significant.

*To grant us.* It is to be a gift from above. The promise given with the Covenant was: "I the Lord have spoken it; I will perform it." We need to beseech God to show us both what He will do, and that He will do it. When our faith expects all from Him, the blessing will be found.

*"That we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies."* He had just before said: He hath raised up an horn of salvation for us; salvation from our enemies and the hand of all that hate us. It is only a free people can serve a Holy God, or be holy. It is only as the teaching of Rom. 6.-8. is experienced, and I know what it is that we are "freed from sin," and "freed from the law," and that "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death," that in the perfect liberty from every power that could hinder, I can expect God to do His mighty work in me.

*Should serve Him.* My servant does not serve me by spending all his time in getting himself ready for work, but in doing my work. The Holy Covenant sets us free, and endows us with Divine grace, that God may have us for His work, -the same work Christ began, and we now carry on.

*Without fear.* In childlike confidence and boldness before God. And before men too. A freedom from fear in every difficulty, because having learnt to know that God works all in us we can trust Him to work all for us and through us.

*Before Him.* With His continued unceasing presence all the day, as the unceasing security of our obedience and our fearlessness, the never failing secret of our being sanctified wholly.

*All our days.* Not only all the day for one day, but for every day, because Jesus is a High Priest in the power of an endless life, and the mighty operation of God as promised in the Covenant is as unchanging as is God Himself.

Is it not as if you begin to see that God's word does appear to mean more than you have ever conceived of or expected? It is well that it should be so. It is only when you begin to say, Glory to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think, and expect God's almighty, supernatural, altogether immeasurable power and grace to work out the New Covenant life in you, and to make you holy, that you will really come to the place of helplessness and dependence where God can work.

I pray you, my Brother, do believe that God's word is true, and say with Zacharias, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who hath visited His people, to remember HIS HOLY COVENANT, and to grant us, that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, should serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all our days."