

TAKING HOLD OF GOD'S COVENANT.

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“And take hold of my covenant.” — Isaiah 56:4.

“And taketh hold of my covenant.” — Isaiah 56:6.

IT was generally supposed by the Jews that no one, except the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, could be in covenant relationship with God. You remember, however, how Paul says, in writing to the Romans, “But Esaias is very bold;” and he is so in this instance. He declares that men may take hold of the covenant of God though, heretofore, they appeared to be shut out from its privileges. There were certain poor mutilated beings, who were despised by some, because of their disabilities; yet they were to be encouraged to keep the Lord's Sabbaths, to choose the things that pleased him, and to take hold of his covenant. Then there were the foreigners, of whom the Lord said, “Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to Jehovah, to serve him, and to love the name of Jehovah to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.”

It was thus clearly revealed that persons, who appeared to be shut out from the covenant because they were not of the seed of Abraham, were, in after days, to be encouraged to obey the commands of God, and especially to obey his ordinance, concerning the keeping of the Sabbath, which separated his people from the rest of mankind, and to take hold of his covenant. It is of that particular action of taking hold of God's covenant that I am about to speak as the Holy Spirit shall enable me.

I. And, first, let us enquire, WHAT IS THIS COVENANT? We must know the truth concerning this point, for it has been well said, "He who understands the covenants holds the key of all theology."

Well, then, let us bear in mind the fact that there was, first of all, a covenant made with our father, Adam; — not perhaps, in set terms, but virtually, — that, if he should do the will of God, he should live; and that, if he did so, we also should live by virtue of his obedience. But, alas! our great covenant head, Adam the first, could not keep that covenant. He took of the fruit of the tree which he was forbidden to eat, and so, the covenant of works, which had been made with him, was rent in pieces. We might say of that sad event what Mark Anthony said of the murder of Julius Caesar, —

*“Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down.”*

I should think that none of us want to take hold of that covenant, for we are all sufferers by it already; we are all of us the heirs of sorrow, and travail, and death, as the result of that broken covenant. Those of you, who fancy that you can get to heaven by obeying the commands of God, should recollect that even the perfect Adam could not keep the law, so how shall his imperfect children do what he failed to accomplish! He, in whom was no sin, for he was created without taint of guilt, disobeyed his Maker; so, shall not we be sure to disobey him when all our powers and faculties are debased by the guilt which we have inherited from him? Yea, we have disobeyed him already; we have broken his law again and again; so, any hope of happiness, through the keeping of the law, which we may have cherished, is forever vain. The covenant, of works is broken, and all hope of our being saved by it is gone for ever.

*“Vain are the hopes the sons of men
On their own works have built;
Their hearts by nature are unclean,
And all their actions guilt.*

*“Let Jew and Gentile stop their mouths
Without a murmuring word;
And the whole race of Adam stand,
Guilty before the Lord.*

*“In vain we ask God’s righteous law
To justify us now;
Since to convince and to condemn
Is all the law can do.”*

But, now, blessed be the name of the Lord, there is a second covenant, made with the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ; and by that covenant, made with him on the behalf of all his people, it was provided that he should himself perfectly keep the law, and also that he should suffer the penalty due from his people for their breaches of the law; and that, if he did both these things, then all those who were represented in him should live for ever. We rejoice to know that Christ has both kept the law himself, and paid the penalty that his people had incurred by breaking it. He has rendered both an active and a passive obedience to the law of God; so, now, according to the conditions of the covenant, all those for whom he lived and died inherit, by right divine, all the blessings which Christ, their covenant Representative, has procured on their behalf.

I have already read to you the inspired record of what those blessings are; let me just recall them to you: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” All these are clear, definite, unconditional promises; there is no “if” or “but” in the whole quotation. There is nothing to be done, on our part, in order to win the blessing; all that had to be done was done by Christ our Representative more than eighteen centuries ago. We fell, by no act of our own, in the first Adam; and we rise, without any merit of our own, in the second Adam.. The only question, about which we need to be concerned, is, — Are we in him? I know that question can be answered in the affirmative by many of us, and I trust that others of us will be able to lay hold on that covenant by the life — grip of faith; then, they also will be

able to say, “Yes; we are among those over whom Christ is the Head, and we have a share in all the privileges of the covenant into which he entered on our behalf.”

The first covenant was a covenant of works: “This do, and thou shalt live.” That covenant, as I have shown you, was broken; but the new covenant is a covenant of pure grace. Christ has fulfilled all its conditions on his people’s behalf; and, therefore, all its privileges are theirs. Because he lives, they shall live also. Because he honored and kept the law, — because he bore the shame and death of the cross, — because he rose again from the dead, and ascended to his Father’s right hand, where he ever liveth to carry on his glorious work of intercession, therefore all they who are in him shall have their iniquities forgiven, their natures changed, their hearts renewed, and their whole souls filled with the overflowing grace of God.

Not only is it a covenant of pure grace, but it is also a “covenant ordered in all things and sure.” The first covenant failed because it rested upon Adam; the pivot of the machinery broke, and the whole thing fell with a crash. The new covenant stands because Christ did not fail. The ancient prophecy concerning him was, “He shall not fail nor be discouraged;” nor was he. He went right on with the great work he had undertaken, treading the winepress alone, until he cried, “Consummatum est,” — “It is finished,” — and then, and not till then, he gave up the ghost. Now, as every condition of the covenant has been fulfilled by Christ, the whole of it stands fast as a clear matter of promise which a truth-speaking, ever-faithful God must keep. He cannot run back from it, nor does he wish to do so.

*“Engraved as in eternal brass
The mighty promise shines;
Nor can the powers of darkness raise
Those everlasting lines.”*

Yet once more, let me remind you that the ensign of this covenant is faith. Under the old covenant, it was, and always would have been, works; but, under the new covenant, it is faith. Believest thou? Then, thou art in Christ, and all the blessings of the covenant of grace are thine. Dost thou accept Christ to stand as thy Substitute? Dost thou lay hold on this covenant, and claim an interest in it for thine own soul? Dost thou cast thyself wholly upon him who kept that covenant for thee? Then, it is thine; and God speaks to thee, my believing hearer, as though there were no other person

in the whole universe, and he says to thee, “I will sprinkle clean water upon thee, and thou shalt be clean; I will put my law in thy mind, and write it on thy heart; and I will give thee a new heart and a right spirit. From all thine uncleanness will I cleanse thee, and thou shalt be my child, and I will be thy Father and thy God.” What a covenant of grace this is! I have given you only a bare outline of its provisions, but I hope that outline will make many of you want to know how you can lay hold upon it for yourselves.

II. That is the next question I want to answer. How CAN WE LAY HOLD OF IT? My text speaks of “taking hold of my covenant.” how can I do that?

Well, the first thing that I must do is, I must loose my hold of the old covenant. Oh, what dolts, what fools, men are, to cling to the old covenant, which never can do anything but curse them! You say that you hope to be saved by keeping God’s law; but, man, you have already broken that law! If you had a beautiful vase in your home, and it had the slightest crack or flaw in it anywhere, it would not be a perfect work of art. Now, the law of God is so tender, and delicate, and enters so into the spirituality of man’s nature, that even a sinful thought spoils the perfection of obedience to it; and you have had a great many more than one sinful thought, I know, whoever you may be. And many an idle word have you uttered; and, I fear me, many a wrong act have you done. You have broken the law to shivers; it is clear that you cannot keep it. It is absurd and wicked for you to talk of doing so. But you will try to do your best, you say. Well, then, if it be your deliberate choice to come under the law, let me tell you what the law requires of you. It says, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” That is all you will ever get out of the law, — a curse. You may try to keep it till you wear the skin from your bones; but that is all it will ever give you, for you have not continued in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them, so your deficiencies and your transgressions must inevitably bring a curse upon your head. I pray you, if you are in your right senses, to have done with that old covenant of works. There is no hope for you there, so get away from it at once, You cannot be saved in that way, “for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” The law brings sin to our knowledge as we see what its demands are, but it never kills sin. It never thinks of pardoning sin, it makes no provision for anything of the kind; so, dear friends, let all your good works go; let all confidence in your prayers, — all confidence in your own repentance — all confidence in anything that you can do or be, — let it all go; do not retain a

rag of it. If you do, it will be like keeping something that is full of the seeds of disease and death. When a man dies of a foul fever, or the plague, burn every rag he has had on him. "Oh, but I should like to save that little piece of fringe; it is so beautiful!" It will bring a pest into the house if you do. Burn it all; get rid of it all. So, let every rag of self-righteousness be destroyed. You cannot take hold of the covenant of grace till you have, once for all, loosed your hold of the covenant of works.

"Well," you say, "when this is done, how am I to take hold of the covenant?" We'll, the main plan is by believing in Christ Jesus unto the salvation of thy soul. Say, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; I am a sinner, Lord, and I lay hold on thee, and trust thee to save me. I know that thou biddest burdened souls to come to thee, and I am a burdened soul; so, Lord, I come, and I hang upon that gracious invitation of thine, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

"But may I lay hold on Christ," asks someone, "and trust him thus?" You had better ask me whether you may refuse to do so, and I will answer you in his own words, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Now, if Christ pronounces condemnation upon the man who believeth not, it is clear that you may believe in him. Oh, dare to do it! Dare to do it! There never was one person yet who believed in Jesus Christ by mistake, — never one to whom Christ said, "You had no right to believe in me." He could not say so, for he has said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Make a dash at it, then, man; lay hold on Christ, and say, "If I perish, I will perish trusting in his merit and his blood;" and you shall never perish so, for he who has laid hold on Christ has laid hold on God's covenant, and that covenant shall stand secure when earth's huge columns bow. There is no fear of the covenant failing, even when heaven and earth shall pass away.

This is the way to lay hold on the covenant by faith in Jesus. But I have known those laying hold on the covenant begin in different ways. Some have laid hold upon it by a confession of sin; and you know that the Lord has said, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." I earnestly advise any of you, who are longing for salvation, to say, "I will confess my sin, and forsake it, for God has said that then I shall have mercy." You know that, if you get hold of the covenant anywhere, you have got hold of it, and you shall be saved.

Do but confess your sin, and forsake it, looking to Christ alone as your Savior, and then you have secured a grip of the covenant. Another way of laying hold of it is, by seeking the Lord in prayer. It is written, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Say, “Lord, I seek thy face; I cry to thee, through Jesus Christ, for mercy. I come to thy mercy-seat, and fall prostrate before thee, crying, — ‘If I perish, I will pray, And perish only there.’”

You have got a hold of the covenant, friend, because you are clinging to God’s promise, and every promise of his is a part of the covenant; so, if you get a grip, by faith, of any one of God’s promises, so that it becomes truly yours, you have laid hold of his covenant, and you shall be saved for ever.

When you have once accepted Christ, I like you to get a hold of the covenant in all sorts of ways. We have only two hands, but there are some creatures that have a great many hands, or feelers, or suckers; and when they want to be quite safe, they seize hold with all their hands. Well, now, Christ has made a covenant with his Church, and I like to lay hold of that covenant by uniting with his people. I read that he loved his Church, and gave himself for it; so I say, “Lord, I will be a part of thy Church. I will, by thy grace, put myself among thy people. If they are laughed at, I will be laughed at with them. If they are a despised people, I will be despised, too, and I will not be ashamed of it. I will share with them now, hoping to share with them hereafter.

*“With them numbered I will be,
Now and through eternity.”*

It will be a great help to you to lay hold of the covenant by availing yourself of all church privileges. That should be your motive for being baptized. You should say, “Lord, I read in thy Word, ‘He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.’ I wish, therefore, having believed, to be baptized, that I may lay hold on that promise. I know that believers, when they are’ baptized in the true Scriptural fashion, are buried with Christ. It is to them a type and symbol of their death to sin, and resurrection to newness of life. They do not trust in the water, but they look at it as an emblem of their being buried to the world; and I wish to be all that. I will take that mark of thy people upon me, and I will not be ashamed of it. I will go where thy people go, and I will follow thee whithersoever thou leadest me for I have got a hold of thy covenant, and I wish everybody to

know that I have. I can truly say, with Paul, 'I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.' The water-mark is on me. I am buried with thee, my Lord and Savior."

That is also the reason why we come to the Lord's table; — not that we have any superstitious reverence for the bread and wine, but we say, "Lord Jesus, thou hast told thy people to do this in remembrance of thee, and thou hast promised to give them a blessing in so doing. I mean to do it, for I am in covenant with thee; and what thou biddest thy servants do, I, thy servant, would do; for 'I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds;' and, be it little, or be it great, I will be obedient to all thy commands so far as I know them, and so will take hold upon thy covenant."

I like to see young believers when they first take hold on Christ. I sometimes think that they do it better than the older ones do, for they just believe what Jesus says, and take him at his word, and so they at once get "joy and peace in believing." But, sometimes, older sinners come, and they say to me, "May we lay hold Christ?" I ask them, "What is to hinder you from doing so?" and they reply, "Because we are such sinners." "Well," I answer, "the Lord Jesus Christ did not come to save anybody but sinners, so you are just the right sort of persons for him to save." "Oh, but!" they say, "there is nothing that is good in us." "But Jesus Christ did not come to call the good; he came to call sinners, so you are just the very ones whom he does call." "Oh, but!" say they, "we do not feel as we ought to feel." "But Jesus Christ came to quicken those who are dead in trespasses and sins; and there' is no feeling while we are dead. He came to give us life, and to give us feeling; so you poor dead creatures are just the right sort for him to bless." So we try to argue with them; but, they still keep on crying, "But, but;" — raising all possible objections against themselves; yet, at last, they just dare to put out their little finger to lay hold of Christ, and the mercy is that even a little finger contact saves. There was one, who only touched the hem of Christ's garment, but she was made perfectly whole.

The right thing for every sinner to say is just this, "The covenant of grace exactly suits my case. Jesus Christ has come to save the guilty and the needy; that is the sort of person I am, so I will lay hold of his covenant. I have got a grip of it, and there I hang. If his gospel be true, I am a saved man. If it is not, I am lost, for I have nothing else to which I can trust. On Christ, and on Christ alone, do I hang forever and ever. Sink or sail, I

commit myself to this one barque which God has built, and furnished, to cross the seas of sin and temptation; and I believe that, if it be but on a single plank or a broken piece of that ship, I shall surely come safely to land, for Christ has said, “He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” Oh, that we might all take hold of the covenant in that blessed way! God help us to do so by his gracious Spirit!

III. Now I want briefly to answer a third question. WHAT IS THERE TO LAY HOLD ON?

I will tell you what I first laid hold on in the covenant of grace. First, I laid hold on an atonement. When I understood the meaning of that blessed word “substitution” — Christ standing in the sinner’s stead, — Christ paying the sinner’s debts that he might have a full discharge, — when I saw God laying my sin on Christ, and I knew that a thing cannot be in two places at one time, — I said to myself, Then, if God laid my sin on Christ, it is no longer upon me. If he took that great mass of guilt, which would have crushed me, and laid it on his Son, there cannot be any reason for me to try to carry it, since he carried it for me. So I first of all laid hold on the covenant in the fashion described in the verse we sang just now, —

*“My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.”*

I believed that Christ died for me. I trusted him, and I found that he died for all who trust him. I knew, therefore, that he died for me; and that, in that death, he slew my sin, and buried it, and that I was forgiven all my transgressions. That is a fine place in which to lay hold of the covenant, — that blood-red spot, — and it just exactly suits the sinner’s crimson-dyed hands.

There is another place where you can lay hold of the covenant, and that is, the mercy-seat. Go and bow before God in prayer, Christ being your Intercessor, plead with God for mercy, through his atoning blood, and then say, “I will never leave off praying till I get the blessing.

*“With thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day;*

“but the blessing I must have, for thou hast promised it. Hast thou not said, Ask, and ye shall receive? I do ask. Hast thou not said, ‘Seek, and ye shall find? I do seek. Hast thou not said, ‘Knock, and it shall be opened unto you’? I do knock, my God; I will knock, and keep on knocking; I will bring the door down sooner than go without the blessing; I will knock, and knock, and knock, till heaven’s high arches ring with the sound of a poor sinner thundering away at the gate of mercy. I will not let thee go except thou bless me.” Ah! you have got a hold of the covenant, and you are sure to be heard and answered. The horns of the altar, and the corners of the ark of the covenant, are your holdfasts upon the covenant of God’s grace.

It is also a grand thing to lay hold of a promise in God’s Word. I should recommend some of you, who say that you have been seeking rest, but that you cannot find it, to turn to some promise that just suits your case; — such as that great one in Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews, “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” Open your Bible, put your finger on that passage, and say, “Lord, I believe that this promise is made to all who believe in Christ. I do believe in Christ; I trust myself wholly with him; so this is a promise which thou hast made to me. Now, do as thou hast said. I am altogether unworthy of such favor, but that does not make thy promise to be of none effect. Thou hast said it, and thou wilt keep thy promise. It is a wonder, O Lord, that thou shouldst ever have said, ‘Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool;’ but thou hast said it, Lord; and thou wilt be true to thy promise.” Hold on to that, and never let it go, for a hold on a promise is a hold on the covenant. As the spokes of a wheel all meet in the axle, so all the promises of God meet in the great center of the covenant of grace made with Christ Jesus on behalf of all his people.

There is one other thing, which you should lay hold of; and that is, an invitation. If a man has an invitation to a feast, and there stands someone at the door, who says to him, “You cannot come he answers, “I beg your pardon, for I can come in.” “But, sir, you cannot come in; all the people, who have hitherto entered, have been good-looking people in evening dress; you are not like them, so you cannot come in.” But the man says, “You will not be able to keep me out, for here is the invitation that I received, asking me to come. There is my name, and there is nothing about good looks, or evening dress, so I mean to come in, for I have been

invited.” I wish, dear friends, you would do just the same with your doubts and fears, and with the devil himself, when he says, “You cannot come to Christ, you must not lay hold of the covenant.” Say to him, “Look here, Satan; Christ has said, once for all, ‘Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ Now, I labor, and I am heavy laden, I have come to him, so I expect to have rest given to me. I have come to Christ because I was invited to come.” Then you can further say, “There is also that gracious word, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Now, I will; God knows how willing and desirous I am to find salvation in Christ. I do will it with all my heart, and Christ’s last invitation is, ‘Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.’” Take any other invitation that you please; there are plenty of them in the Word of God, addressed to just such persons as you are; and when you find one suited to your case, say, “My God, I come to thee at thine own invitation; canst thou cast me out?” If anybody comes to your house by invitation from yourself, you are in honor bound to take him in, and do what you can for him; and when you come to God, at his invitation, you have in effect taken hold of his covenant, for all the invitations of our covenant God are a part of that covenant, and are yea and amen in Christ Jesus.

IV. Now I must close with this last question. WHY SHOULD I NOT LAY HOLD OF GOD’S COVENANT? I put the enquiry to all whom I am now addressing, — Why should not you take hold of God’s covenant?

One reason for doing so is this. Others, who are like yourself, have done so. What sort of person have you been? Self-righteous? So was Saul of Tarsus; but he cast aside his own righteousness, and he laid hold on the covenant, and so he became the great apostle of the Gentiles. Perhaps I must look at you from another point of view. Have you been a thief? We’ll, there was a thief who laid hold on the covenant, and Jesus said to him, “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Are you a sinner fallen from virtue? There was a woman, who was a public sinner, and she took hold of the covenant, and her sins, which were many, were all forgiven her. Whatever you may have been, there is somebody like you in heaven. If you have been a blasphemer, if you have lived to old age in neglect of God, or whatever your sin has been, there has been saved already somebody who was just what you have been, and who took hold of God’s covenant. If I, being a great sinner, see another great sinner come, and take hold of the covenant, why should not you do the same?

Then, next, out of all who have ever come to Christ, there has never been one rejected. "Him that cometh to me," says Christ, "I will in no wise cast out." Perhaps somebody says, "But suppose I am not one of the elect." Christ says, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out;" so election does not stand in the way. "Ah, sir! but when I come to Christ, I come with many doubts and fears." But Christ says, "Him that cometh to me" — however he comes — "I will in no wise cast out." There lives not on earth a sinner that Christ ever cast out, and there is not in hell a soul that ever came to Christ, and Christ cast him out, and there never shall be such an one. If the world should grow grey with age, and the sun should become black as a coal, there never shall be a sinner, who comes to Christ, who shall be cast out. So, come along with you; if you do but come, and take hold of the covenant, that covenant shall save you.

Besides, I am sure you may come, my friend, because you are the very sort of character that is bidden to come. "This man receiveth sinners." Is not that your name? Does not the Lord say, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts"? Is not that you? Well, if it be you, then come to him. He calls you; — you distinctly, for so he describes you; so, surely, you may come to him. I have often said that, if I had read in the Bible, "Charles Spurgeon may come to Christ," there was a time when I should have said, "That must mean somebody else whose name is the same as mine; it is not meant for me." Then I should have wanted to know the address, and if it had been Nightingale Lane, I should have said, "Ah! there was a man of the name of Spurgeon living there, no doubt, years ago, so the promise may have been for him." I should never have felt sure about the matter; but when it says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" — well, the devil is a great liar, but he never tried to make me believe that I was not a sinner. If he did, I should tell him I knew better than that. On the contrary, he is often telling me what a sinner I am, and I am much obliged to him for that; because, the more clearly he makes me out to be a sinner, the more certain I am that I am one of those whom Christ came to save. Martin Luther used to say, "This is true wisdom, to cut off the devil's head with his own sword; when he charges you with guilt, reply, 'It is quite true', I am a sinner; and, therefore, I am one whom Christ came to save." We know that Christ gave himself for our sins, but he never gave himself for our virtues; so we, having sins and iniquities, come to him as guilty sinners, and he saves us from our sins.

The last reason I will give you why you should take hold of the covenant is, that there is nothing else for you to hold to; there is nothing else that you can take hold of but the covenant of God's grace. Here is a man who hopes to get to heaven because he has such blessed feelings. Oh, dear, dear, dear! how many times should I be without any hope of getting to heaven if I had to go by my feelings, for they are just as wretched as wretchedness can be! Here is another man, who thinks he is going to heaven because he has a sound creed, but the more I read the Bible, the more find that I do not know everything, and that there is something more to be learnt; and so, if my knowing everything, and having a perfectly sound creed, must save me, I shall be lost. There are some who are hoping to go to heaven because of this, and some because of that; but, as for you and me, dear friends, we had better end all fancies, and resolve, by God's grace, that we will go there because "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." So, casting everything else away, we lay hold of the covenant, come what may. God bless you, beloved, and enable you to do so, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON,

JEREMIAH 31:31-34; EZEKIEL 36:25-32; AND HEBREWS 8:7-13.

Jeremiah 31:31-33. *Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; an will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

The old covenant was written on tables of stone; but the Lord said, concerning the new covenant, "I will put my law in their inward parts." The old law was hidden from sight when it was written a second time, and placed in the ark of the covenant; and God says of his new law, "I will write it in their hearts." They were always rebelling against God, and

wandering away from him; but in this new, gracious covenant, he says, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

34. *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: God gives to all his people a knowledge of himself. “Whatever else they know or do not know,” saith the Lord, “they shall all know me.”*

Though they differ as to their growth in grace, yet “they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.”

34. *For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. If God has pardoned your sins, you will be sure to know him; there will be no mistake about that point. Men shrink back, and hide away from an angry God punishing sin, for they do not care to know him; but when he comes forth, dressed in the silken robes of love, to bestow free pardons upon the chief of sinners, then they know him. God grant that all of us may have this blessed knowledge!*

Now kindly turn over the leaves of your Bibles until you come to then 36th chapter of the Book of Ezekiel, and the 25th verse, where you can read still further about this same gracious new covenant of Jehovah.

Ezekiel 36:25. *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.*

“You would not cleanse yourselves; you even went back to your idols again, and so defiled yourselves still more; but I will cleanse you. I have a wondrous stream, such as no river or spring on earth can ever produce. It wells up from the heart of Jesus; and this shall cleanse you from all your filthiness, and from all your idols.”

26, 27. *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

The old covenant told us what to do, and commanded us to do it; but the new covenant enables us to do it; yea, it works in us that obedience which we never could have rendered to the old law, but which the new covenant gives to us.

28-31. *And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loth yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.*

How sweetly the mercy of God melts the human heart! How graciously the goodness of God produces repentance! That blessed result was never produced by the terrors of the law; but it is continually being brought forth by the lovingkindness of the Lord as manifested in the covenant of his grace.

32. *Not for your sakes do I this, saith the LORD GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.*

The covenant is all of grace, you see; mercy is shown to the unworthy, — not for their own sakes, but for God's own glory's sake. Oh, how sweet it is to have a share in this blessed covenant!

Now turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews, the 8th chapter, and 7th verse, where you have still more concerning the new covenant.

Hebrews 8:7-13. *For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their an righteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.*

So the old covenant has vanished away, with all its types, and symbols, and sacrifices. As the morning mists dissolve upon the rising of the sun, — as darkness flies away when the light shines, — so has the covenant of works departed for ever; and, in its place, stands out the everlasting covenant of God's unmerited mercy to the most guilty and vile of the sons and daughters of men. May he graciously grant to us the privilege of having an interest in that covenant, for his dear Son's sake. Amen.