

THE TWO COVENANTS

FROM A BOOK ENTITLED

THE PRIMITIVE PREACHER

BY

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THE TWO COVENANTS

1. “For these are the two covenants;” (Ga 4:24)

The apostle introduces this chapter by telling us that the heir, so long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, that we were all under the law, and under its curse, until Christ came and freed us from the law and its curse, so that we were no longer its servants. In this connection Paul is evidently laboring to clearly and fully show the difference between the true believer in Christ, who trusts him alone for salvation and justification, and those Judaizers who trusted in the works of the law, and were bewitching them, and leading them away from Christ. He wonders that they are bewitched and led away from Christ by these Judaizing teachers, and asks them the question, “Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” He would then let them know that those Judaizers did not understand the law, nor the condition of those who were trusting in the works of the law; for he tells them that, “As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse.” He then addresses those Judaizers, and all who desire to be under the law, or a system of works and human instrumentalities for salvation and justification, and says, “Do ye not hear the law? For it is written, That Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondwoman, the other by a free woman.” He evidently presents this case to show them that the children of the flesh, or the children of Abraham according to the laws of nature, are not the children of God; (Ro 9:7-8). “The elder shall serve the younger.” So the promised seed was in Jacob, and not in Esau. As these Judaizers

were so very fond of being under the law, and a conditional system, he would refer them to what was written; “And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called;” (Ge 21:12) The son of the bondwoman was cast out, and not to be the heir, although he was the son of Abraham according to the flesh; but “in Isaac the seed should be called,” which is Christ, the promised seed. It is said of the birth of Ishmael that, “Abram went in unto Agar, and she conceived and bare Abram a son, and Abram called his name Ishmael.” But of Isaac it is said, “And the Lord visited Sarah, as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken: for Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age; at the set time, which God had spoken to him.” The birth of Ishmael was a birth according to the laws of nature; but the birth of Isaac was a miraculous birth, and effected by the power of God; and as was Isaac, so are we the children of promise, and are made such by the direct work of God in our souls, and manifested as such in the second birth, as born of God. Now, you Judaizers who are building your hopes of salvation and justification by the works of the law, or works of righteousness which you can do, deny this supernatural work of God in the heart of the sinner when he is born of God, and made a believer in Jesus Christ, and by faith made manifest as Abraham’s seed, and blessed with him.

Those Judaizers, and all who expect justification by the works of the law, are of the bondwoman, the children of the flesh, and as such, can never inherit the promised blessings. Thus the apostle points them to the history of Ishmael, and that they, like him, are children of the flesh, and know nothing about any birth, but a

fleshly birth, and as such, can never inherit the promise. The apostle then gives the history of Isaac and his birth, and shows that his birth was a miraculous one, and not according to the flesh, or any human possibilities or probabilities, but was the direct work of God, and according to his promise. So, as Isaac was, are we the children of the promise, and are made manifest as such in a second birth; born of God. This birth is not after the order of a fleshly birth, by and through instrumentalities; but it is the direct work of God, independent of any agencies whatever, and not subordinate to any, except the power of God himself. Sarah was a free woman, and the lawful wife of Abraham, but according to nature she could never be the mother of children; nothing short of God's power could make her a mother, and give her an heir; and this the Lord did for her, when he visited her according to his promise. The apostle then tells why he has used these two women, and given the history of them and their sons, and the use he intends to make of them: "These things are an allegory" which teach us more than is contained in the literal and historical meaning of the words. God designed in these two women to teach a great and glorious spiritual lesson, and to forever shut the mouth of all Judaizers, and teachers of salvation from sin by the works of the law, or upon a conditional system, where the conditions had to be performed by the sinner. "For," says the apostle, "these are the two covenants."

In discussing this subject, we must try to keep in our minds the points the apostle was using as illustrations, and the things of which he makes them figurative. Mount Sinai was called Agar by the Arabians, and thus the apostle uses her as figurative of the law given the Jews from Sinai. I will now try to show, first; how Hagar and her son were figurative of the law and those under it. Hagar

signifies a stranger, or one that fears; and she may well represent the fear that filled the minds of the Jews when the law was given; for the words were so terrible that they could not bear them; “which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more;” and they could not endure that which was commanded; and a beast, touching the mountain, was stoned or thrust through with a dart. “And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.” And it is to this mountain, that has not one comforting word for the sinner, but speaks in the voice of thunder its curse upon his guilty soul, that these Judaizing teachers would lead you. The law has no righteousness to impart to the guilty sinner; no cleansing fountain to wash away his guilt; no sweet words of pardon to whisper in his ears; but in a voice that must fill with despair the guilty criminal, says, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

Again, Agar was an Egyptian woman, and not of the seed of Abraham, but of a different nation, of the people under whom the descendants of Abraham were in bondage; and when the law was given, the Israelites were traveling in a strange country, fleeing from their former master, and seeking the country which the Lord had by promise given to Abraham and his seed according to the flesh. Thus Agar may denote the law given to Israel after they had left Egypt, and were traveling through the wilderness to reach and possess the land of promise. The Jews were not allowed to cross the Jordan, and enter and possess the promised land under the leadership of Moses, by whom the law, or this covenant of works was given. This should teach us that the law can never bring us into gospel blessings, or make us heirs to the blessing of Abraham’s promised seed, and that freedom could never come by the law. Again, Agar was not Abraham’s wife, but the servant of

his wife; and she was given to him by his wife, after the promise was made concerning his seed through Sarah. But the giving of Agar to Abraham, and her bearing him a son, could not prevent the fulfillment of the promise, that Sarah should have a son. This clearly denotes that the law, which was given four hundred and thirty years after the promise, or gospel was preached unto Abraham, could not make the promise of none effect; for it was confirmed by the oath of him who will not repent, or change from his oath, and cannot lie. Again, Agar with her son was cast out when Sarah had brought forth her son according to promise; and as Agar was a figure of the law, she showed that the law should pass away or end when the promised seed should come, which is Christ.

The son of Agar was a figure under the law, or the natural seed of Abraham who were born after the flesh; for Ishmael was the natural offspring of Abraham, and was his son according to the flesh; but not the son by promise; which shows that the natural birth can never make any heirs to the promised blessing, which Paul calls the gospel. Ishmael was not Abraham's heir; for it was declared that he should not be heir with the son of the free woman. This shows that it is not they that are born under the law, or that do the works of the law, that are heirs of the promise; but they who are born by promise are made believers in Jesus Christ, by the power of him who raised up Jesus from the dead, who are heirs of the promise and the seed of Abraham, although they never existed in his loins as a natural seed, but were given to him, and embraced in the promise, that in his seed all nations should be blessed.

This shows conclusively that it was not because of a seminal pre-existence in Christ that we are his seed; but it is by covenant

promise God has given him a seed, chosen out of all nations, and in his will or covenant has blessed them with all spiritual blessings in Christ. The heirship is not based upon the natural descent, or birth according to the flesh; but as we sing,

Sons we are by God's election,
Who in Jesus Christ believe.

And this is according to his eternal purpose and grace, as arranged in that covenant which is in all things ordered and sure.

The name Ishmael signifies, "God who hears;" and it denotes the attention God paid to the Jews under that conditional, faulty covenant, which was their political or national constitution or charter. Whenever they transgressed, and were suffering the penalty, if they repented, and humbly returned to the Lord, and to the law he had given them, he would hear them, and by his mighty power deliver them from their afflictions. Ishmael, the son born after the flesh, persecuted Isaac, the son of promise; which denotes that the natural seed of Abraham, and all who have never experienced any birth but a natural, fleshly birth, and are under the law, building their hopes of justification by the deeds of the law and works of righteousness which they can do, will persecute the promised seed, or those who are born heirs to the blessings promised to that seed. The casting out of Ishmael and his mother soon after the birth of Isaac, may denote the casting out and dispersion of the Jews soon after the promised seed had come; and as Ishmael was cast out because he laughed at Isaac, and persecuted him, so the Jews were cast out because they mocked, hated, and persecuted Christ the promised seed, and all who believed in him. Ishmael was nothing but a natural son, and denotes that the law could bestow nothing but temporal or natural blessings, a land of milk and honey, fertile fields, fruitful

vineyards, and national prosperity. Thus the bondwoman and her son denote the law of bondage, and those born under it are of a natural birth.

Second; I propose to show wherein Sarah and her son were figures of the new covenant, and those under it. She was a figure of the new covenant in her name, Sarah, which signifies lady, princess, princess of the multitude; and this name was given her because the blessing of God was upon her; and in the seed born of her, nations and peoples should be blessed, showing that the new covenant and its blessings were not confined to any one nation, but its children and the heirs of its promises are of all nations, who are to be born again, of incorruptible seed, born of God. Sarah was the mother of Isaac; so this covenant was the mother of the promised seed, and from its breasts of consolation, or precious promises, they draw all their food, strength, and comforts. Sarah was Abraham's companion, and ruler in his house, so when she ordered the bondwoman and her son to be cast out, God told Abraham it is right; let it be as she says. From this we learn that all humanly devised systems, not commanded in this covenant, are to be cast out, as belonging to the world, or to the bondwoman and her son, who is not to be heir, nor live in fellowship with the children of the free woman, the new covenant.

In the first covenant God gave Moses a house or people, over which he was ruler or lawgiver; and in the new covenant he gave Christ, the promised seed, a house or people, over which he should reign and rule, and that they should hear him in all things.

Paul says to the Hebrew Christians, "Whose house are we." And to the Son we owe obedience, and it is rebellion in us to teach or practice what he has not commanded. Sarah lived in Abraham's affections long before Isaac was born, which shows that this

covenant was the good will of God towards his people who existed in his mind or purpose long before the promise was made to Abraham, or the seed was born in whom the blessings were given.

Again; there was a set time for Sarah to bring forth the promised son; so it was in the fullness of the time that Christ the promised seed was “made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.” “The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” And the law was added because of sin, and was to continue only until the promised seed should come; and when the fullness of time had come, a virgin conceived, and bear a son, and he was called the “Son of God,” “Immanuel,” “God with us.” He was the promised seed, and the “Mediator of the new covenant.” Sarah brought forth a promised seed, when, according to nature, she could not bear children; which shows the miraculous birth of Christ, the promised seed. And Isaac being a promised son, and born of a woman past age, and by the direct power of God who visited Sarah shows that the heirs of this covenant are not born by instrumentalities, but of God. As Isaac was a child of promise, so the heirs of this covenant are children of promise, given to Christ as a seed that should serve him. As Isaac was persecuted, so are the children of the covenant persecuted by all the Ishmaelites and Judaizing teachers; but they are to be cast out; and the glory of the law, which they preach, shall disappear and vanish away under the superior glory of the new covenant, which brings liberty to the captive, righteousness to the unrighteous, and brings forth its sons and daughters of the Gentiles, who have been born of God, and sanctified in his will as heirs of the promise. For these two women are the two covenants.

Third; we shall now try to ascertain why these are called the two

covenants. The margin, instead of covenants, renders it testaments; and I believe that the learned agree that the word here translated covenant, means covenant, testament, or will; and I think that the reader of the Bible, if he will exercise a little common sense, will see that the words are used synonymously, as expressing the same idea, and are never used as a bargain and contract entered into between contracting parties. And to show why these are called two covenants, I will first speak of the law, and why it was called a covenant.

The law is called a covenant because it was appointed to Israel as a constitution, by which they, as a nation, should be governed until the promised seed should come; and again, because it was delivered in the form of a testament, bequeathing certain blessings to them as its heirs. I shall not take up and discuss the different opinions of men upon this subject; I believe it to be a constitution for Israel, forming them into a distinct nation, and conferring upon them certain privileges and blessings, which, as his chosen nation, God had given them. In attending to this subject, it will be necessary to pay some attention to the covenant of circumcision, which was established soon after the birth of Isaac, and intended to distinguish the natural family of Abraham from all the rest of the world, until the promise made to him thirty years before should be fulfilled. It was called a covenant in their flesh, and was to be placed on them at eight days old in order to prevent them from mingling with other nations; that thereby the seed of Abraham might be traced with ease. This covenant was respecting temporal things, such as a mark in the flesh of all the males at eight days old, a numerous offspring, a temporal country for their possession, and an abundance of good things, as the production of that fruitful land. God would rule over them, and be their King

and Father, and they should enjoy the blessings of a bountiful providence, and victory over their enemies.

But all those promises were conditional: “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but the uncircumcised man-child hath broken my covenant.” Thus the covenant of circumcision was conditional; for it could be broken, and its blessings depended on the willingness and obedience of its subjects. Under this covenant the descendants of Abraham were distinguished from all other nations, for about four hundred years, while they lived among other nations, and sometimes in sore oppression and slavery; but they multiplied greatly, so that in time they had increased to the number of six hundred thousand men of war, besides women and children. Now, the set time for them to possess the land God had promised them being come, God, by a special act of his providence, raised up Moses, and prepared and qualified him for that purpose; and by his rod of wonders, and working miracles, he leads the family of Abraham out of the house of bondage, and through the Red Sea.

And “in the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.”

This was the spot God had selected to constitute Israel into a nation, and give them a national form of government; and when he had separated them from all nations, and brought them into the wilderness, and camped them before the mount, he called Moses, their leader, and gave him directions how to place them in order to receive their national constitution; and after all the preparations were made, the law was delivered to Moses, and by him brought

to the people on two tables of stone.

In the covenant of circumcision the Lord their God had promised them a land, and now on the two tables of stone he gives them a constitution or law, under which they are to live as a distinct nation. These Ten Commandments are the covenant; and although they had many other laws, these only are called the covenant; (Ex 34:28); “And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.” These tables the apostle calls the tables of the covenant; (Heb 9:4). For the safe keeping of the covenant, the tables were deposited in the ark, and it was then called the “ark of the covenant.” The covenant of circumcision was to distinguish Abraham and his family from all other nations. It may perhaps, with propriety, be said, that the Sinai covenant was a larger edition of the covenant of circumcision. This covenant of all Israel, or the Sinai covenant, was, like the covenant of circumcision, conditional, beginning with an if. “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenants, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me, above all people: for all the earth is mine;” Ex 19:5

God gave this covenant from Sinai, attended with an awful display of his majesty, to impress upon the minds of Israel the majesty and authority of its Author, and the danger of transgressing its commands. In it the duty of the subjects were taught, and the temporal blessing it promised guaranteed, upon the condition of their obeying its commands. Under this constitution there were many laws given for them to observe, and especially to rule them in their worship; and at length the law respecting the mitre in the house of Levi, and the sceptre in the house of Judah. These were both called covenants; because the one constituted or appointed the tribe of Levi to the priestly office,

and the other the tribe of Judah to the kingly office. With respect to the first of these it is said, “And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation and wash them with water; and thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office. And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats: and thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest’s office; for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generation;” (Ex 40:12-15). It was said unto Phinehas, the son of Eleazer, the son of Aaron, the priest, “Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace; and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel;” (Nu 25:12-13).

The words everlasting priesthood express only that the priesthood was to continue parallel with the Jewish nation, and the covenant under which they were constituted as such. The same may be said of the kingly office established later in the house of David, as Nathan spoke to David: “And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee; and thy house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever;” (2Sa 7:12-16). David evidently had this in mind when he said, “I have made a

covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, thy seed will I establish, and build up thy throne from generation to generation.” And again, to show that this covenant with David is unconditional, and not to be broken, it is said, “If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be any day and night in their season, then shall also my covenant with David, my servant, be broken;” (Jer 33:20-21). This may be considered a digression; but it shows conclusively that the idea that a covenant, in the Bible sense, is a bargain or contract, has its foundation in the false reasoning of men, and not in the word of the Lord.

The Sinai covenant was a constitution of the Jewish nation as such, given to them by the Lord, and it is properly called a covenant; but being conditional, it made nothing perfect.

I shall speak of the new covenant, which was confirmed, in respect to Christ, four hundred and thirty years before the giving of the law. The promise made to Abraham, constituting him the father of the promised seed, was confirmed to him in the year of the world about two thousand and eighty-three; and about four hundred and twenty-seven years after the flood; and four hundred and thirty years before the giving of the law on Sinai; and thirty years before giving the law on circumcision; and it is called the gospel preached unto Abraham. The covenant of circumcision was designed to distinguish Abraham’s natural seed or family; the law given from Sinai was to distinguish them as a nation, until the promised seed should come, and publish the covenant or constitution that should distinguish and separate the promised seed from the world. This covenant is called new, because God hath made the other old and ready to vanish away; new, because its subjects are to be born of God, made new creatures, made

spiritual, so that they are prepared to receive the spiritual blessings given in it; new, because given by a different mediator. The law was given by Moses, who was faithful in his house as a servant, and figuratively represented by Agar and Ishmael, who were servants in Abraham's house. The new covenant was in the hands of a Mediator who is the Son of God, and heir of all things; and Isaac, the son of Sarah, was a figure of him and she was a figure of this covenant. Thus we see the superiority of the Mediator of the new covenant over the mediator of the old covenant; the last was a faithful and obedient servant in his house; the first was the Son and heir, in whom God declared himself well pleased.

I shall now attempt to contrast these two covenants, and show the superiority of the new over the old, in its design, ministration, and guarantees. We have already seen that the first covenant was given to distinguish Abraham's natural family from the rest of the world, until Christ should come. The new covenant was a constitution that should distinguish and separate the promised seed from the rest of the world, from Christ's first coming till his second coming. The first covenant was designed to teach us man's duties to man, and the duties of all men to God. This being a natural, temporal covenant, they could all learn it; and it was made their duty to teach it to their children, that it might be obeyed by them. But the new covenant reveals the only medium through which any of our services can be acceptable to God; that we must be born of the Spirit; for to serve God acceptably, we must worship him in spirit and in truth. The first covenant was called the ministration of death; but the second, of righteousness and peace. The first covenant was given from mount Sinai, that might be touched, and burned with fire, amidst blackness, and darkness,

and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, which voice they that heard entreated that the words should not be spoken any more. (For they could not endure that which was commanded.) And if so much as a beast touched the mountain, it should be stoned, or thrust through with a dart. So terrible was the sight that Moses said, “I exceedingly fear and quake.” And the afrightened Israelites, repulsed with horror, fled back from the thundering mount. Thus the law reveals the wrath of God against all unrighteousness, and ungodliness of men, without one hint of mercy, or way of deliverance from that wrath. But the new covenant was ministered at mount Calvary, or mount Zion, when Jesus poured out his blood for the redemption of his people; and it falls with gentle strains and soothing accents of love and mercy on the ears of its subjects, proclaiming peace by the blood of the covenant to them that are afar off, and to them that are nigh; while the promised seed of Abraham, allured by its grace and glory, and drawn by loving kindness, with gladdened hearts, and heavenly and immortal prospects, repair “unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel;” (Heb 12:22-24).

The first covenant was conditional, and all the promises and blessings of it were suspended upon conditions to be performed by the people to whom it was given; for it said, “If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar people unto me above all people; for all the earth is

mine.” For them to fail to keep one of the conditions, they forfeited their claim to all the temporal blessings promised them in the law which they transgressed, and God said, “I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest.” Being a conditional covenant, it made nothing perfect, and gave no certain warrant that the heir ever should enter into his inheritance, or keep it if he did. The new covenant was to remedy all the defects of the old, and make something sure to the heirs of promise. Seeing the defects of the old, God says, “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 unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more;” (Heb 8:8-12).

This covenant is unconditional, and its first clause declares that God will put his laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts. The first covenant was written on tables of stone, and they were to teach it one to another; for it was all temporal, and could be taught and comprehended by the natural mind; but when taught, it might be forgotten, and could not be written in their hearts or the affections of their souls by them who taught it; and they rebelled and transgressed, and God regarded them not. But this

new covenant shall be written upon the fleshly tables of their hearts by the Spirit of the living God. The negative clause of this covenant is, that they shall not teach every man his neighbor, saying, know the Lord; for that knowledge can only come by direct revelation, and all who have it have eternal life. This life God gives them through Jesus Christ our Lord; and he gives us his Spirit, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God; 1Co 2:12

In the next article in the new covenant God says, “I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” They are environed and kept by omnipotent power through faith unto salvation; for he holds them in his hand, and there is no power that can take them out of his hand. In this covenant or will God has given such assurance to the heirs of promise, that all doubts and fears should be dispelled forever. Paul, in presenting this subject, says, “Wherein God, willing more abundantly,” (than any earthly testator,) “to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us;” (Heb 6:17-18). It is no strange thing that Paul, having this covenant written in his heart by the Spirit of the living God, should say, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord;” Ro 8:38-39 “I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” O how sweetly these words fall upon the ear of the heir of promise, when tossed upon angry billows, or overwhelmed with sorrows, temptations, and fears!

This is his strong tower of safety.

You may have your conditional covenant, that makes nothing sure; it has no comfort for me; but give me the covenant that is unconditional, and established in the wills, and shalls, and oath of him that sware, and will not repent; in it I can trust, and fear not in the midst of the storm, or in the furnace of affliction; it gives me courage, and makes me sing,

That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake.

The last and sweetest article in the new covenant, to the poor sinner, sinking down under a load of guilt and dark despair is, "I'll be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

The old covenant has no mercy in it, no door of hope for the guilty sinner; but a fearful looking for the fiery indignation and wrath of God; for under it the soul that sins must die. For the law says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." No sweet word of pardon; for he that sins under Moses must die without mercy. The new covenant is a covenant of grace, and its Mediator, who is full of grace and truth, is exalted a Prince and Savior, to give repentance and the remission of sins.

My soul, no more attempt to draw,
Thy hope and comfort from the law;
Fly to the hope the gospel gives,
The soul who trusts the promise lives.

The new covenant is then the better covenant, and its promises are better promises; for they meet the condition of the poor, helpless sinner, that has no power or means to satisfy the law, nor hope nor comfort can from it draw. When, by the regenerating,

quickenings, and life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, he is brought to see and realize his true condition, he soon sees that the law, of which he once thought he could perform the conditions and so obtain eternal life, has no life to give; but it is the administration of death, and under it every hope of life and salvation that he ever had dies; for the law is just, but I am carnal, sold under sin. But, when God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines in the heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and writes in the heart this law: "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," then the burden is gone, and this unconditional article in the covenant fills the soul with joy inexpressible and full of glory.

Dear, dying Lamb, thy precious blood,
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God,
Be saved to sin no more.

The apostle shows the superiority of Christ, as mediator of this better testament or covenant, over angels, who were commanded to worship him; over Abraham, who was the friend of God, and to whom the promise was made; over Moses, who was faithful to his house as a servant; and over the priesthood of the law, who were made such without an oath.

Under the law there were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death, and their priesthood changed from father to son; but Christ, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. "The law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore." The offerings and atonements made under the law by

their priests could never put away sin, or purge the conscience, for they had to be repeated every year, showing their imperfection, and that sin was not put away, or the worshipers cleansed. The superiority of the sanctuary, the ordinances, and the priesthood of Christ is thus described by the apostle: "Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick and the table and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all: which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priest went, away, into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God: but into the second went the high priest alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people; the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure for the time present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the

unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”

Thus the excellency of the New Testament over the old is clearly shown; and while the old is the administration of condemnation and death, and holds its subjects in bondage; the new is the administration of righteousness and life, and makes its subjects free, so that they can receive its promise of an eternal inheritance. For Christ, the Mediator of the New Testament, has fulfilled all the conditions of the law: he is the end of the law for righteousness, and has freed the heirs of promise from its curse, so that they are no longer under the law, but under grace. By the body of Christ they are dead to the law, their first husband, and are now free to be married to another, even to Christ. Their redemption is complete and eternal, and in Christ they are freely justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. The promise is now made sure to all the seed, or heirs of the new covenant; for the means appointed for their redemption and deliverance from under the curse and bondage of the first covenant had all the power and virtue to accomplish all that was designed; for unless it did possess this power and virtue it never could be efficient means; for means without power and virtue in itself to effect the end designed is no means. But the apostle shows that in Christ and his blood were all the power and virtue required to obtain the eternal redemption, justification, and

salvation of all the heirs of promise.

Thus preached the primitive Paul, and thus preach the legitimate descendants of that primitive order today. Some of our commentators, who are not willing to give up the old covenant with its terms and conditions, say that there was grace in it, but not to the same extent that it is in the new covenant. But I can find no grace in the law; “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” and not by Moses or the law. Conditions and terms destroy the idea of grace; for, to receive the promised blessing the condition must be performed, and the terms complied with; it is, therefore, of works, and whatever is of works is not of grace; and whatever reward is received of works, or of the performing of conditions or complying with terms, is not of grace, but of debt. Hence, there was no grace in the law, nor can there be in any conditional system where the conditions are a prerequisite to the receiving of the reward. For preaching this doctrine Paul and the primitive Christians were persecuted by the Judaizers and disciples of Moses, who were still under the vail; and by the same class are primitive Christians and their preachers persecuted, and slandered, and falsely accused today. These false accusers and persecutors belong to Agar and Ishmael, and hate the heirs of promise; the covenant they trust in has passed away, is cast out, and by it they can never inherit the blessings of the new covenant, or be heirs with the promised seed. From the days of the apostles to the present time, a class of Judaizers, preaching a conditional salvation, using the law unlawfully perverting the gospel and blending them together, draw the vail of Moses over the face of Christ to hide the glory of his grace, and the spiritual blessings of the new, absolute, and unconditional covenant, under the dusky shades of the old, conditional one, and thereby making the

fulfillment of the conditions of the old covenant an indispensable prerequisite to a participation in the promises of the new one. Then attaching the curses of the old one to the graces of the new, as its counterpart, they thunder them both against saint and sinner, Jews and Gentiles, who do not fulfill the conditions of the gospel; (for this unholy mixture of two covenants is called gospel, by these Judaizers;) and thus they build up the self-righteous Pharisee, and drive, if it were possible, the saint, and the quickened, awakened sinner, into despair; for these know that they cannot fulfill the conditions of the law, and of course, despair of ever enjoying the promises of the gospel. But when the old covenant is placed in its proper place, it is good to show the malignity of sin, and the penalty annexed to it; but the new covenant alone can reveal the pardoning mercy of that God, “who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” So the apostle contrasts the two covenants, and shows that the glory of the new far excels the glory of the old. “But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious. For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious;” 2Co 3:6-11

From this contrast of the old and the new covenants, it clearly appears that the old disappears, vanishes away, and loses its glory

at the bursting forth of the superior glory of the new covenant; and Moses, the mediator of the old, put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished. Now Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, which fulfills every condition of the old covenant; and when it, (the old covenant,) shall turn to him, the vail shall be taken away; the end of the glory of the old covenant shall be clearly seen; the heirs of promise, both Jews and Gentiles, shall look into the new covenant, and see its unspeakable glories beaming in the face of Christ Jesus its Mediator. “We, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Thus the new covenant, like a glass, reveals the glorious face of its everliving Mediator with eternal life in him for all the promised heirs, the bread of life for the hungry, the water of life for the thirsty, rest for the weary and heavy laden, a garment of righteousness for the naked, and grace, free, sovereign, absolute, unconditional grace for the unworthy and impoverished sinner, that has nothing with which to buy, or means to obtain it.

To such comes forth the soothing promise from his lips without an if, or a discouraging condition to crush the poor, disconsolate mourner; and while the glad words of peace and free pardon are falling from his lips, with unstopped ears and enlightened eyes he beholds the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and beholding with joy and gladness the smiles of his unveiled countenance, his soul is fired with love, and filled with peace, while he sees the sceptre presented, filled with pardon for rebels, and hears the sweet, soul-comforting, approbating voice of God, saying, “Touch and live.” While the blood of the new covenant presents his justification, faith lays hold of it and bears its evidence to the

soul of its heirship to the rich inheritance, unconditionally bequeathed in the will of God to all the heirs of promise, and hope anchors the soul both sure and steadfast into that within the veil. Then the thundering, and smoke, and terrible words of Sinai all pass away; the discouraging conditions that filled the soul with despair are fulfilled in Christ; the soul is free; there is therefore now no condemnation to his soul, for it is no more under the law, but under grace. The Judaizers and preachers of the old, conditional covenant, may try with all their sophistry and cunning craftiness, whereby they lay in wait to deceive, to make them satisfied to take the galling yoke of the old, conditional covenant on their necks again, but they cannot; for they experience in the new covenant the rest remaining for the people of God, and those that have ceased from their own work and have entered into that rest. All their duties have become their choicest privileges, and are not conditions of their eternal salvation.

But the objector and Judaizing teacher will say, "If the new covenant is without conditions, we will never do any good works, but take our fill of sin." Poor, deluded soul! you are still in nature's night, a stranger to God and your own condition; for no Christian, who has been killed to sin, and made alive to righteousness, will so talk; for he has had his fill of sin, and mourns because he still finds it in his flesh, warring against his soul, and bringing him into trouble and sore distress. The one born of God, and taught by his Spirit, has the very principles of obedience implanted in him, and serves God of choice; for it is as his meat and drink to do the will of his heavenly Father; and no other services are acceptable to God.

Others will say, "If there are no conditions in the new covenant, there is no encouragement for the seeking, mourning sinner." But

this conclusion is false and unreasonable; for there is no condition that can be performed which can give comfort to the helpless, blind, and condemned sinner, who has no power or means to do or fulfill the condition. No conditional word or promise could bring such comfort or joy to his soul as the unconditional promise of the new covenant, saying, “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” This is grace; this is mercy that meets the condition of the despairing soul; and like a beam of light and love shining from the throne above it fills the soul with joy inexpressible and full of glory.

Others suppose that if there were no conditions in the new covenant, and the wicked could be convinced of it, they would rest easy and unconcerned; but this is both unreasonable and contrary to experience.

Suppose I should tell you, “This house is on fire; but all the doors and windows are open, and you can escape at leisure, and here is a pile of gold that will make you all rich that you can have;” your love of gold would make you stay to gather it, feeling that you have power to escape, if the danger should increase. But suppose another should call out with earnestness, “The flames are all around you; escape is impossible;” and you were to look and see that it was true, you would lose all the desire for the gold, and your despairing cries would rise in heart-rending accents. O, thoughtless, guilty sinner, this is your true condition, and you know it not; and these blind guides are doing all they can to keep you in your ignorance of your true condition.

So we see that the unconditional covenant is better than the conditional one, and comes with delivering, saving power, when all other powers fail, and raises the poor, helpless, despairing

sinner up out of the pit, and turns his despairing cries into songs of praise. If we could all see the excellencies and superior glories of the new covenant, we would never attempt to suck life and comfort from the breasts of Hagar, but would cast the bondwoman and her child away from us; like Isaac, we would suck the breast of Sarah, which flows with the sincere, unconditional milk, which will never be exhausted, and will satisfy all the hungerings and desirings of the soul. For these two women are an allegory, and are the two covenants.

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