

## Christian Retirement

By [Thomas Reade](#)

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### ON THE TWO COVENANTS

The covenant of WORKS, in the order of time, was proclaimed to Adam before the covenant of GRACE. But, the covenant of grace, called in Scripture the everlasting covenant, was entered into by the divine people in the Godhead, before the world was made. While contemplating this dispensation of mercy, our views must stretch themselves into eternity. We must pass beyond the origin of earth, and enter into those revelations which record the purposes of God before time began. And how wonderful are the counsels of infinite love, wisdom, and power!

Jesus, in the volume of inspired truth, is declared to be "the Lamb of God, who was foreordained before the foundation of the world," (1 Peter 1:20). "Slain from the foundation of the world," (Rev. 13:8). His redeemed ones were "chosen in him before the foundation of the world," (Eph. 1:4). "From the beginning chosen to salvation," 2 (Thess. 2:13). "According to his own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began," (2 Tim. 1:9). "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," (1 Peter 1:2). Predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will," (Eph. 1:11).

From these glorious passages, and many others of similar import, it is evident that the whole economy of human redemption was devised and planned in the eternal counsels of Jehovah before the earth or man was formed. Hence we are taught that the covenant of grace originated in the everlasting love of God. But with respect to us finite creatures, who can know nothing of the purposes of God, but as he is pleased to reveal them, it may aptly be called a NEW Covenant.

When Adam was created in the image of God, the Lord placed him in a garden of delights, surrounded with everything that could gratify his pure and innocent desires. In the midst, however, of this garden, was placed the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as a reasonable test of his obedience; for God created man in righteousness and true holiness, with powers and faculties to know and serve him. In the garden was also placed the tree of life, as a pledge of immortality. Of this tree he might freely eat, while he continued obedient to the divine command. But man, alas! ate of the forbidden fruit through the subtle temptations of the

serpent, and thus the covenant of works was broken, and death entered into the world by sin. His whole posterity are involved in the dreadful consequences of the fall; for the Scriptures declare, "In Adam all die." All die spiritually; for "we are conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity." "We are by nature the children of wrath."

All die naturally. The sentence, "Dust you are, and unto dust you shall return," extends to all the children of Adam. "It is appointed unto men once to die." "By man came death." "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

All die eternally, if left in righteous judgment to the awful consequences of transgression: "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." "The soul that sins, it shall die;" "He that believes not, shall be damned."

In this wretched, lost, and sinful condition, when he was without strength and without hope, Adam heard the voice of mercy. The 'seed of the woman' was proclaimed and promised. Jehovah spoke the word of life, at the very moment when justice was lifting up the sword of vengeance, as if determined to magnify his mercy. Oh what encouragement is this to trust in him, whose love outstripped his justice, or rather provided a satisfaction to it, that mercy might have free course, and be glorified in the salvation of a ruined world!

The new covenant was then made known to Adam; and (may we not hope?) more delightful to his guilty, trembling soul, than all the sweet harmony of birds which had regaled his ear in the lovely groves of Eden. At the voice of pardoning grace, hope revives, love rekindles, and joyful admiration holds the mind in wondering meditation on the goodness of our justly offended Creator!

The covenant of works made with Adam being broken, all hope of happiness from that covenant is done away forever. But the covenant of grace made with Christ, the second Adam, is immutable and everlasting. Jesus, in our nature, fulfilled all the conditions, performed all the requirements, and answered all the demands of the broken covenant of works. By his unsinning obedience and meritorious death; he brought in everlasting righteousness; and thus became the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey him. So that now, all the blessings of the covenant of grace are made over to every fallen son and daughter of Adam who truly believes in Jesus.

Here, then, is the spring of the believer's hope, and peace, and joy. Here he finds security and stability. Here he reposes his soul, and smiles at every storm. Oh how rich, how full, how sovereign is the covenant of grace! This covenant, as we have seen from the pages of eternal truth, was made before the world began—made from eternity. What a wide expanse for the mind to range in! But we need a guide, or else our minds will soon be lost in wandering mazes and dangerous speculations.

This guide is the Bible, read with prayer in a spirit of humility and faith, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Where the line of revelation stops, there we must stop; or rather, where it enters into the unfathomable depths of eternal wisdom, there we must pause, and wonder, and adore. We must not dare to tread within the veil, or curiously to pry into those hidden mysteries, which God has wisely concealed from mortal eyes. "You know not now, but you shall know hereafter," will quiet and satisfy every humble, loving, obedient, grateful follower of the Lamb.

What personally concerns every believer is this: have I the spirit and character of those who are interested in the covenant of grace? If not, what will all its glories and blessings avail me? I shall only resemble a person looking over the title-deeds of a vast estate, in which he has no interest.

How plain and express is the word of God, in describing the character of the redeemed! Here is no ambiguity—no darkness—no mystery. It is a faithful mirror, held up to all mankind. Happy indeed are they, who 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!

The character of God's peculiar people is thus portrayed by the pen of unerring truth:

They are "chosen in Christ, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love." "Chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." "They are saved, and called with a holy calling, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace." "They are elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." "They are predestinated unto the adoption of children." "Predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son." "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has foreordained that they should walk in them." "They are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that they should show forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." "He gave himself for them, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."

Such is the spirit and character of those happy souls who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before them in the Gospel; the character of all who truly believe in Jesus. To them all the promises of God in Christ Jesus are yes and amen; sure and abiding. To them the most affectionate exhortations are addressed. "Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, affections of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, patience; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another: if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do you." "Be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." "Be therefore

followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savor." "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts." "Put on charity" and "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." "Be clothed with humility." "Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world." "Seek those things which are above." "Set your affection on things above." "Let your speech be always with grace." "Rejoice evermore—pray without ceasing." "Abstain from all appearance of evil." "Fight the good fight of faith." "Be faithful unto death."

These beautiful exhortations contain a lively portrait of the true believer. How different from the worldling, the nominal Christian, the cold-hearted adherer to the Gospel, the double-minded professor! With the true believer, all is life and energy. Here, all is spirit, unction, and power, Here, we see "the workmanship of God" "the new creation in Christ Jesus." Where these lineaments are found, there grace is begun; where they are lacking, all pretensions to religion, all hope of final salvation, all self-appropriation of the promises, is delusion—a device of Satan, to lull the soul to sleep on the lap of carnal security, until it drop into the flames of hell. "Lord, open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of your law. Change my heart by the powerful influence of your Holy Spirit. Fill my soul with humility, love, and purity. May Christ be formed in me the hope of glory. May Christ dwell in my heart by faith. May love and every grace abound within me, until I am brought by sovereign mercy to the general assembly of the church of the first-born; whose names are written in heaven."

How free the love, how rich the grace,  
A pardoning God bestows;  
To Adam's vile apostate race  
In boundless streams it flows.

What joy arises in the heart  
When Jesus' cross appears—  
Salvation to my soul impart,  
Subdue my guilty fears.

Blessed Savior, speak the healing word,  
Bid all my sorrows cease;  
Be you my great atoning Lord,  
My righteousness and peace.

Oh, let your precious blood divine  
Wash all my sins away!  
Then will my soul resplendent shine,  
Through heaven's eternal day.

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