

SERMON XVI

THE TWO COVENANTS OF GRACE

Tobias Crisp

"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." {Heb.8:6}

This Epistle to the Hebrews, as it notably illustrates and invincibly maintains the transcendent excellences of Christ; so the Apostle, {that he might the more prevalently win the Jews,} carries the whole discourse of Christ in the way they were best acquainted with; comparing him, all along, to such things as were usual among them, and were in greatest request and of highest esteem with them; as first he compares him to angels, then to Moses, and so goes along. Now, because he knew that the priesthood among the Jews, and the privileges belonging to it were their oracle and chiefest refuge in cases of greatest moment and consequence; he mainly sets himself about this, to show the incomparable excellency of Christ's personal Priesthood above the most glorious excellences the priesthood of the Jews had.

It is very true, as it shall appear by-and-by; that the things of greatest moment were wrapped up in the privileges of their priesthood; there they had their remission of sins, their peace of conscience, their immunities and security from danger, such as it was; so that if the Apostle could but make it good, that there was more excellency to be found in Christ than in their greatest privileges, there was great hope that he might be a minister of reconciliation to them; and for this cause you shall find, beloved, that he spends four whole chapters about nothing else but to show what transcendent excellencies were to be had from Christ himself, above the greatest privileges this most glorious ordinance of theirs could bring unto them. The 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th chapters of this Epistle contain a comparison between Christ and the privileges his priestly office brings, with those priests, and the privileges their offices brought; and, in the comparison, most clearly show an unsearchable difference between the best of theirs, and those Christ brings, which were not before in the administration of their priesthood.

And, however, for the present, a discourse on this subject may seem impertinent, I doubt not, beloved, but, before I have done, I shall make it appear, that it is of as great consequence to the true members of Christ as any that can be delivered, I shall endeavour, all the way as I go along, to make sure work, that I may not leave occasion of dispute or contradiction.

In chapter 7, the Apostle begins with the order of Christ's priesthood, to show the excellencies of that above the order of their priesthood; he was a priest after the order of Melchisedec, they after the order of Aaron. In chapter 8, 9 & 10, he passes from the order, and comes to the business whereabouts their several offices were employed; and, concerning their several employments, he finds so large a difference, that although it be true, there was some remission of sins, some peace of conscience in the administration of their priestly office; yet, so far the glory of Christ's office goes beyond theirs, that he sticks not to call their service and administration, when it was at the best, but the very shadow of Christ's; that he doth in the words before my text, and also in chapter 10. Nay, he goes further, he finds so great a difference between them, that he doth not stick to make the business of those priests, and of Christ, two distinct covenants, one to succeed in the room of the other. Though Christ be the subject matter, in general, of both, and remission of sins the fruit of both, yet, such a vast difference is between them, that he makes them two several covenants; and the consequence of this truth is of so much moment, that, until there be a right understanding of it, there

never will be any absolute settlement of peace of conscience; but there will still arise some objections to charge sin upon the soul, which it shall never be able to answer.

To come to the words of my text, they are the sum of the whole discourse through all those four chapters; here the apostle begins to make his application of the comparison. Before he had showed what was the employment of those priests of the old law; now he comes to show wherein Christ excels them; "but now he hath obtained a more excellent ministry," &c.

There are three things considerable in the words. The apostle's main conclusion; his application and illustration of it; and his confirmation of the truth of it.

I. The main conclusion in these words; "but now he hath obtained a more excellent ministry;" wherein there are these particulars very considerable: 1. The apostle limits the office of Christ, what it is, he calls it a ministry. 2. He shows the quality of this office; for, though the term of ministry may seem to be somewhat coarse and low for such a one as Christ, yet, he shows, it is not sordid or mean, but an excellent ministry. 3. He proceeds to the degree of excellency of it, and that by comparing it with the ministry of the priests of the old law; it is "a more excellent ministry," that is, than theirs. 4. He shows how Christ comes by this ministry; "he hath obtained it;" and, {Hebrews 7} it is more fully expressed; he was made a priest by an oath; he was called thereunto by God. 5. Finally, he sets out the time of Christ's exercising this ministry of his, when it began to be on foot; "but now hath he obtained;" intimating, that it is such a one as comes in the place of the other, and begins when that ends.

II. The illustration of this conclusion is in the next words; "by how much he is the Mediator of a better covenant;" where you shall find the apostle explaining and opening his conclusion in these particular branches. 1. He explains what the ministry is he speaks of; for he calls it a mediator-ship; he is a minister; that is, he is a mediator. 2. He further explains this ministry, by setting forth the subject-matter about which he is employed; Christ is the mediator of a covenant. 3. He explains wherein this mediator-ship of Christ excels that of the old priests; for he said before only, it is more excellent; here he shows wherein it is, namely, "by how much he is the mediator of a better covenant." 4. He intimates to us, that there is a distinct covenant, whereof Christ is the mediator, differing from that whereof the priest was the mediator; he doth not say, he is the mediator of better things in the same covenant, but of a better covenant; a better and a worse covenant must be two several covenants; better and worse qualities may be in one and the same; but for the covenant itself to be called better than another, is a manifest argument of a double covenant; but of this more anon.

III. The apostle's confirmation of this conclusion is in the last words of the text, "which was established upon better promises;" where you may note. 1. That these covenants he speaks of have promises for their foundation; better promises in the second, argue good in the first; for the word better is comparative, and comparative unto a positive, which signifies good; promises then are the foundation of both these covenants; and this is worth the observation, when we shall come to consider what they are. 2. He proves that Christ is the mediator of a better covenant by two arguments. 1. Though both are founded upon promises, yet that which Christ is mediator of, is founded upon better, and therefore must be a better covenant. 2. Though their covenant was founded upon promises, yet was it not established upon them, much less upon better promises; but, saith the apostle, here the covenant that Christ mediated was better, in that it was established upon better promises. They were sweet promises whereupon their covenant was confirmed, but they were not so durable; but that the covenant itself was to sink, and did sink to the ground; that was not established, it was not firm and unchangeable; but the covenant that Christ mediated is better; it is an established one, a covenant that never shall be changed or altered, as theirs was. Here are heads enough, I confess, to take up a great deal more time than is fit to trouble your patience with; I shall not presume so far upon you.

But, that I may, as near as may be, confine myself within some limits, I shall reduce the main principles of all these heads unto two things, and confine my discourse to them.

I. What those covenants are, namely, that whereof Christ himself is said to be mediator, and that other which is opposed unto it.

II. Wherein the covenant whereof Christ himself is mediator, is better than that which those priests did administer. It may be you may see some things in the resolution of these that may be some satisfaction to your spirits.

What these covenants are, and how distinct. I will not meddle with particular covenants, which God made with some special persons that came not within this compass; there are certain general covenants that God made with men; usually they are reduced to two heads; the first is commonly called the covenant of works, first made in innocency; the terms thereof are of a double nature, "do this and live;" and "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them;" life upon doing, a curse upon not doing; in sum, the covenant of works stands upon these terms, that in perfect obedience there should be life; at the first failing therein, no remedy, no admittance of remission of sins upon any terms in the world; Christ cannot come in, nor be heard upon the terms of the covenant of works. There is a second general covenant, and that is usually called, a new covenant, or a covenant of grace; and this, in opposition to the other, stands only in matter of grace without works through Christ. This, as far as I can find, is generally received to be the right distribution of the covenants of God; the covenant of grace being most commonly taken for one entire covenant from first to last; now to draw it to our purpose; if this distribution be good, the issue at length must be this; seeing there are two covenants spoken of here by the apostle, which we shall make good by-and-by, they must needs be referred to that distribution of those two heads, and so the sum must be this; the covenant of grace being better than the covenant of works, Christ must be the mediator of it; and then there remains no other, whereof those priests were mediators, but that of works.

For my own part, beloved, I shall not take upon me to censure any man's judgment; only I shall desire to propose something to the consideration of the wise, who, upon deliberate advice, may see something worth their meditation; to me it seems most plain, that the opposition the apostle here makes, is not between the covenant of works and that of grace; and that he, in all this discourse, hath not the least glance upon the covenant of works at all, nor doth he meddle with it. You know, beloved, that the articles of that covenant are drawn up in the Decalogue of the moral law; and in all this discourse, from Hebrews 7:1 to the end of Hebrews 10 the apostle doth not so much as take notice of the moral law, nor hath he to do one jot with any clause of it; all the opposition here is not between Christ and Moses, but between priest and priest, office and office; Christ is a priest after the order of Melchisedec, they priests after the order of Aaron; Christ is the minister of a perfect covenant, they of an imperfect one; now, if it were between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, then he should have gone on with the covenant of works, and the articles of that, and set them in opposition unto Christ, which he doth not.

But it may be, some will say, if there be a distinct difference between covenants, surely then they can be no other but those two of grace and works, and therefore the opposition must needs be between them.

Beloved, give me leave to answer freely, the whole administration of that covenant, which the priests had to manage, was wholly and only matter of grace; and though it were a covenant of grace, yet it is opposed to that which Christ in his own person mediated; therefore the opposition which stands here, is not between the covenant of works, and of grace; but it is between the covenant of grace weak, imperfect, unprofitable, disannulled; and another covenant of grace that is perfect, established, and makes the corners thereunto perfect.

So that indeed, though Christ be the subject matter of the covenant of grace, whether old or new, and though there be remission of sins in both; {for I call the priests' covenant now the old, and that I will make good presently,} yet, I say, there is such a difference between these two, that they are two distinct covenants one from the other.

That it may appeal to you, that they are both covenants of grace, and yet two distinct ones also, consider briefly these particulars.

1. It is granted to all men, that in the covenant of works, there is no remission of sin, no notice of Christ; but the whole employment of the priests of the old law was altogether about

remission of sins, and the exhibiting Christ in their fashion unto the people. In Numbers 15:28, {I will give you but one instance,} you shall plainly see that the administration of the priestly office had remission of sins as the main end of it. "And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him." See, the main end is administering forgiveness of sins.

And that Christ was the main subject of their ministry is plain, because the apostle saith in the verse before my text, that all that administration was but a shadow of him, and a figure for the present to represent him, as he expresses it in Hebrews 9; and the truth is, the usual gospel that all the Jews had, was in their sacrifices and priestly observations; it is true, the prophets prophesied of a glorious gospel, but mostly you shall find that the most excellent gospel they preached, was always preached with reference to the future. The prophet Jeremiah hath an excellent passage in chapter 50:20, "in those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve." The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; but mark it, it is in those days, and at that time, it shall be sought for, and not found; he doth not speak this of the present, but of future times; therefore St. Peter observes, that when they prophesied concerning the fullness of grace, they did not prophesy unto themselves but unto us, the main gospel they had was to be fetched out of those trivial observations, ceremonies, sacrifices, and gifts which they were to attend upon, whence they were to fetch their pardon through Christ. "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." {I Pet.1:20}

So that it is plain, the administration of their covenant was an administration of grace, absolutely distinct from that of the covenant of works. That Christ's covenant was a covenant of grace, I will not stand to prove; I know no man questions it that professes himself a Christian; but now though these two as it appears plainly, are covenants of grace; so it shall appear as fully to you that they are two distinct covenants of grace; they are not one and the same covenant diversely administered, but they are two distinct covenants.¹

To make it good, because I know some may think much of this that I deliver, I shall desire you to receive nothing, but as the plain scripture will make it evident unto you; for this purpose first consult Hebrews 8:7. There are, if I mistake not, three arguments in those few words, to prove that they are two divers {more than one, and of various types} covenants. "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second;" where observe, that having spoken before in the text of a better covenant, whereof Christ is the minister and mediator; he saith in opposition to this, if "the first had been faultless."

Again, here you see the apostle expressly calls these the first and the second; "if the first had been faultless, there should have been no place for the second." Now that it should be affirmed of one and the same covenant, that this is the first, and that this is the second, and yet these two should be both one, is strange; "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit;" it is true, the divine essence is ONE; but consider as there are three persons, they are not

¹ {Note: Notwithstanding all the worthy Doctor has said, these don't appear to be two covenants essentially distinct; since he himself owns, that Christ is the subject-matter both, and remission of sins is in them both; and though called first and second, and the latter coming in the place of the former, this may be said of one form of administration of the covenant succeeding another. Mr. Lancaster, Vindication of the Gospel, thinks the controversy may be compromised by distinguishing the old covenant into the promise veiled, the same in substance with that in the new testament, and the veil itself done away; which is giving up the point, since that is no other than the ceremonial law, the outward form of administering the covenant of grace under the former dispensation, and was a shadow of good things to come by Christ, clearly revealed under the present administration; however, this is a matter of no very great importance; and the Doctor has excellently shown the difference between these two, be they called what they will; and indeed, properly speaking, the covenant of grace, as made, was before them both, even from eternity. Gill.}

one; so if you will consider anything as they are two, they are not one; now these covenants are called first and second, therefore they cannot be both one.

Again, the apostle speaks of a second coming in the place of the first; we cannot say of one and the self-same covenant, that it comes in place of itself; when one thing comes in the place of another, these two must needs be distinct. Can you say of the one and the same thing, that it is disannulled, and that it is not; that it vanishes, and yet that it is come in the place of itself when it vanishes? In Hebrews 7:18, you shall find plainly that the apostle, speaking of the covenant under the priesthood, calls it "the commandment that went before;" and says, it was disannulled in that it was weak and unprofitable. And in Hebrews 10:9, he tells us, that "he takes away {speaking of Christ} the first, that he may establish the second;" so that here you may plainly see, that these two covenants, one is not only called first, and the other second; but the one is so the first, and the other so the second, that the first must be taken away, that the second may come in place; and that the second doth not come till the first be disannulled; but all the question will be, whether, when the apostle speaks thus of first and second, of old and new, of better and worse, of disannulling and coming in place; whether he means the covenant of grace, under which the Jews were, and under which we are in Christ, or some other.

For clearing this, I beseech you, consider what he speaks for the illustrating his own mind. In Hebrews 8:8,9, having made a distinction of better and faulty, of first and second, see how he proves what he speaks, that they are distinct. For finding fault with them, he saith, "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;" {and, as Jeremiah adds, for he takes all this out of Jeremiah, chapter 31,} "although I was a husband to them;" and in the close of all, "your sins and iniquities will I remember no more." You see the apostle, from Jeremiah, brings a direct distinction of two covenants; "I will make a new covenant, not according to the covenant I made with their fathers." Here are two covenants; a new one, and one made with their fathers. Some may think it was the covenant of works at the promulgation of the moral law; but mark well that expression of Jeremiah, and you shall see it was the covenant of grace; "for, {saith he,} not according to the covenant I made with their fathers, although I was an husband unto them." How can God be considered as a husband to a people under a covenant of works, which was broken by man in innocency, and so became disannulled? The covenant of works runs thus; "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law;" and, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Man had sinned before God took him by the hand to lead him out of the land of Egypt, and sin had separated man from God; how then can he be called a husband in the covenant of works? The covenant, therefore, was not a covenant of works, but such a one as the Lord became a husband in, and that must be a covenant of grace; and yet, saith he, "I will make a new covenant, not according to the covenant I made with their fathers," &c. In the close of this chapter, see how the apostle sums up the matter; "in that he saith a new, {saith he,} the first is waxed old, and so is ready to vanish away;" here you see again, how he makes this distinction between the covenants, old and new; one being new, is fresh; and the other, being old, is ready to vanish away. Again, consider, in Hebrews 9 he goes on, as with main strength, to make good the thing, that there are two distinct covenants; "the first covenant verily, {saith he,} had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary." What is this first covenant? The apostle reckons up all the implements of it; he speaks of their candlestick, table, and gifts, and so he goes along; but mark in verse 15, what opposition he makes; and for this cause Christ, {saith he,} "is the mediator of the new testament." Wherefore, upon what terms is this? In that first covenant, there was but blood of bulls and goats, which could never perfect the comers thereunto, as pertaining to the conscience; but when Christ comes with his own blood he obtained eternal redemption, and so purged the conscience from dead works; so that by this you may perceive that he makes absolute distinction between the first, which did consist in those rites, and that whereof Christ is the mediator; in a word, in Hebrews 10, he renews the distinction once more; the law consisted in burnt sacrifices, offerings, &c., "which could never make the comers thereunto perfect,"

{vs.1,} but there was a remembrance of sin once every year; therefore, saith the apostle, {speaking of the Lord,} "sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not," then "said I, {that is Christ,} Lo, I come {in the volume of the book it is written of me,} to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first that he may establish the second." {Heb.10:1-10} If all this be not a sufficient evidence to clear this, that they are distinct covenants; and so distinct that though both be covenants of grace, yet the one must be disannulled before the other can be established, I know nothing that can be proved by scripture.

But to come to the main thing; there being two distinct covenants, let us see wherein that which Christ administered is better than that the priests did; and this will be of very great concern to the settling of spirits; the differences are marvelous; the apostle expresses them in such language, that, I dare be bold to say, if any man should utter it, and not have his warrant from him, he would go nigh to be censured.

That first covenant, though it was a covenant of grace, yet he spares not to say, that it was not faultless; that is, it was not without fault; he goes further, he saith it was unprofitable, yea, weak; nay, which is marvelous to consider, he calls the administration of that covenant, beggarly rudiments; whereas, on the other side, in the covenant Christ manages, he says, "by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." {Heb.10:14} The difference then stands in these two things.

The covenant which the priests administered was a very imperfect one; that Christ manages, is most absolute, complete, and perfect. There was a necessity of adding many things unto their covenant; but that which Christ managed, is so complete, that nothing in the world can be added to it; if any will stumble at the word faulty, you must understand, beloved, that there is a twofold faultiness in things; it may be either sinful, or imperfect; the covenant was not sinfully faulty, for it was of God's own making that cannot sin; but you will say, being so, it cannot be imperfect.

You must distinguish perfection, which is twofold; a thing may be said to be perfect, in respect of the end for which it was ordained, or to compass higher ends than it was ordained to; as for that first covenant of grace, it was not imperfect for that end that God appointed; for it did all that he purposed should be done by it; but it was imperfect to do so much as Christ himself did. This is the main thing I would prosecute, to let you see wherein the covenant that Christ managed excels the covenant which the priests managed; there are three things principally wherein they differ. I will pass by many ordinary differences.

1. Christ's covenant is better in respect of the remission of sins. 2. In respect of peace of conscience. 3. In respect of freedom from punishment and wrath as the desert of sin.

I have showed before, that some remission of sins was under the Jews' covenant of grace; I shall now endeavor to let you see wherein that was imperfect, in comparison of what Christ hath now brought by his own offering himself once for all. It may be, this may seem somewhat strange, that I should affirm, that their remission of sins was imperfect; but, beloved, the apostle speaks fully to the point, and saith expressly, that there was "remembrance of sins again every year." {Heb.10:3} But, to handle things distinctly and particularly.

I. Their remission of sins was imperfect in comparison of what Christ by his own person hath wrought; they had not in their covenant a plenary remission of all sorts of sins; they could not tell whither to go to find pardon for some.² This is plain in Numbers 15:28-30, where, Moses speaking of one sinning by ignorance, a she-goat being brought, there might be an atonement made for him, and the sin might be forgiven; "and the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him;" here is a sacrifice for sins of ignorance, but mark what follows, "the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people;" no sacrifice for that. So again, Genesis 17:14, you shall find, that there was no sacrifice to be had for uncircumcision; "the uncircumcised

²{Note: Not but the saints under the old testament had full forgiveness by looking to the blood and sacrifice of Christ, which cleansed from all sin then, as now, but not by legal sacrifices, or in the Mosaic administration. Gill.}

man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant;" no other remedy, no appeal to other sacrifices; here was no sparing him by any means; no sacrifice to expiate his transgression. In Exodus 31:14, also you shall see that there was no pardon to be met with for the profanation of the Sabbath, but that soul must be cut off; "every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people;" and so, whosoever ate of the sacrifice, and had uncleanness upon him, must be cut off, "but the soul that eateth of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, that pertain unto the LORD, having his uncleanness upon him, even that soul shall be cut off from his people." {Lev.7:20} I might instance in many other particulars; but certainly there was a variety of sins for which no sacrifice could be admitted, and consequently no pardon obtained, nor sued out for them; for pardon of sin was sued out upon those sacrifices God required.³ But now mark the difference; herein is the covenant, whereof Christ was the mediator, infinitely better than that other, in the large extent of pardon which it brought along with it. For this purpose, look into I John 1:7, where he saith, "the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Observe it, I pray you, "from all sin;" see the extent of it; you cannot name the sin which a person would be willing to cast off, and have a pardon for, but the blood of Christ cleanseth from it. If the Jews would have given all their estates, that they might have been admitted to bring sacrifice for such and such a sin, it could not be; "but the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

But you will say, in Hebrews 10:26, the apostle seems to intimate, as if there were some sins for which we can have no remission; his words are these; "for if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." Here, some may say, it seems that if a person shall happen to sin willfully, after he hath received the knowledge of the truth, there is no sacrifice for sin.

I beseech you give me leave to open to you the meaning of the apostle, and his plain drift. I find thousands of persons are mightily mistaken in it, and so the text comes to be a very fearful burden upon their spirits; but that you may understand the scope of it aright, know, that there he is closing all the former discourse, which stands mainly in these two things; that there is now one perfect sacrifice once offered by Christ himself, that perfectly doth all things to be done, and, therefore, must be offered no more; and that all the sacrifices that were to be offered, are now vanished; and, in the interim, he comes to this conclusion; now that you have received the knowledge of this truth, that all sacrifices must now cease, if you sin willfully, that is, if you will reject this truth I have delivered unto you; if you think that this one sacrifice is not enough to serve your turn, but you will look to others, there remains no more sacrifice for your sin; as if he should say, you will but deceive yourselves to look in any other way for pardon; you may think such and such services, confessions, prayers, fastings, &c., will do something towards the remission of sins; but deceive not yourselves in this, there remains no more sacrifice for sin. Christ was but once offered; if you will not conclude to adhere to that one sacrifice once offered; nor have that to bring perfect remission of sins, you will certainly miscarry; there will be no other remedy, but indignation and wrath will fall upon you; everything else will fail; that is the first. I beseech you have patience, and let me but open myself, lest I leave both myself and the truth to scandal.

II. The covenant he brings, is more perfect, in that though there was remission of sins in it, and so it differs from the covenant of works; yet mark it, and you shall find, that their covenant, though it was a covenant of grace, did not administer grace, but upon antecedent conditions to be performed, before there could be any participation of the grace of it.⁴ I say, there must be many things done first, before a pardon could be heard of; whereas, under the covenant of grace, which

³ {Note: Pardon of sin might be sued out by faith then, upon the blood and sacrifice of Christ; but not upon legal sacrifices, which for some sins were not admitted, and yet were pardoned through Christ, as David and others. Gill.}

⁴ {Note: That is, in the Mosaic way, or according to the administration of the covenant of grace in that way; otherwise saints then, as now, had the pardon of their sins freely, looking to the grace of God and blood of Christ, and were justified as freely, and saved by the free grace of God, even as we are. Gill.}

Christ brings, there is no antecedent condition at all; but the whole grace is communicated before ever the person doth anything towards it. In that covenant they must be at the cost of sacrifices, must bring them to the tabernacle, must confess their sins to the priest; and, {for ought I know,} in cases of extremity, must fast too, before they could obtain pardon of sin, and removal of judgment; but the covenant that Christ brings into the world himself, is such, that before ever the person could be able to do any one thing in the world that is good, the whole grace of it is made his, and we need not be at the cost of sacrifice, Christ is at that himself; we need not bring a Christ, he brings himself; we need not offer him, he offers himself; nay, our confession or sin is not antecedent to the forgiveness of it; remission doth not depend upon that, but only upon the grace of God. "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not; I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." {Is.65:1}

Do but mark, beloved, how the terms of the covenant of grace by Christ run; even while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the blood of Christ; {Rom.5:10;} there could be no good thing done before our reconciliation, when we were considered simply and only as enemies; and so in Ezekiel 16:6 & 8, "and when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live;" {vs.6;} "now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine;" {vs.8;} when? "When thou wast in thy blood;" there is no antecedent doing, before the participation of the covenant; nay, the covenant is sworn, even when in blood. The apostle, in Romans 4:5, tells us, "but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Christ considers men under no other notion but ungodly, when he confers the grace of his covenant upon them; you shall never hear, in all the old covenant, pardon bestowed, before works of bringing, and offering sacrifice; but under the covenant of grace, there is no respect of good works to the participation of it; even true faith itself is no condition of this covenant, neither is it required as an antecedent to it, or to forgiveness. True faith, indeed, is the evidence of things not seen; we know not that sin is pardoned, till we believe, because it is hid in the breast of God, or rather veiled in the gospel, under general terms, until Christ gives faith unto his people; whereby, they see their sins, as well as other believers, are forgiven; but simply to the conveyance of the pardon itself, there is nothing in the world but grace. You know, beloved, a prince sometimes looks upon a condemned person in pity, and considering him as a dying man, out of grace gives him, his pardon; and thus did the Lord by Christ in a new covenant; he looks upon such and such, as he sees good, going to execution, and merely out of pity cast upon them in this deplorable condition, sends Christ with pardon to them; not calling upon them to change their persons, to come thus and thus handsome, and then he will say something unto them; but as they are condemned malefactors, and come to execution, so he gives his pardon.

III. Though there was pardon under the old covenant, yet know, that what they had, was but by degrees and successively, as they offered sacrifice; it was not continued and successive, but it had interims and stops; in plain language, the covenant of the Jews reached out pardon of sin only so far forth as it was committed before such and such a sacrifice was offered; if a man had sinned ignorantly, till he had brought a sacrifice, his sin lay upon him; when he did bring it, it took away but that sin; it did not, neither could it, extend to future sins. Here presently is a succession of sin, and this must lie, till there come a second sacrifice to take away that; and when that is gone, a third sin lies again upon the heart; and that is not gone, till there comes a new sacrifice for it; and the reason the apostle saith, "there is a remembrance again of sin;" is because, "the comers thereto could not be perfect;" that is, they indeed had pardon by drops, now for one sin, then for another; it may be a week, a month's distance between, before they could have it; and still they had it, as their sacrifice was offered; mark the inconvenience of this; so long as any sin lay upon their spirits, these were under the burden of their own transgressions; this is the reason you have often among the Jews so many complaints; "my sins are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear;" and of the exceeding

bitterness of their spirits. No marvel, beloved, they were to bear their own sins; till the sacrifice came there was no discharge; so that, in the interim, sin lay upon their consciences; but mark how the covenant that Christ brought was better than that they had. "By one sacrifice once offered, hath he perfected forever them that are sanctified;" {Heb.10:14;} as much as to say, those that are under this, are not put to these stops and interims for pardon, and are not to wait the time of the sacrifice, that so they may receive it from such a sacrifice; nor after they have some testimony of it, do they now lie under the weight of a sin new committed; but Christ did so perfectly go through the work of redemption, and taking away sin, that by one sacrifice he took it away at once forever. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." {Dan.9:24} Here, beloved, lies one of the chiefest comforts of the whole gospel of Christ, to see that in him, sins past, present, and to come, are all at once wrapped up in this one sacrifice of his; there is an expiation beforehand for sin that shall be committed; there is not an expectation of a future expiation; a sacrifice is already offered of value sufficient to take away the sins that afterward are committed; the value of this sacrifice went both upward and downward; upward to Adam, for the full pardon of all the sins of the elect, until Christ came; and it goes downward since he came, for the pardon of all the sins or every elect person until the end of the world; so that in consideration of sin committed since he offered himself, there is not some new thing to be done; but herein stands the perfection of what Christ did, it serves fully and completely for every purpose that could possibly happen afterwards.

There is but one particular more, and that is this, they had pardon {it is true} but as I may so say, that covenant though it did sweep, yet it left a great deal of dust behind; I mean this, though their daily and occasional sacrifices did take away sin, yet they did not take it away clean, but left some scattering of it behind, and this is plain by this, the apostle saith, that there were in these sacrifices a remembrance of sin again every year; that is, there must be an annual sacrifice to sweep away those relics of the dust of sin, which their daily sacrifice did leave behind; so that they were glad of the coming of the yearly sacrifice to take away sin, to make a clean riddance after these sacrifices, which could not do it; when these were offered, though there was something of remission of sins, yet certainly there remained something of sin behind, and that till a year came about, or else that sacrifice once a year was in vain. Why could not their daily sacrifices do it? God would not, that they should make a clear riddance; and even that yearly sacrifice did not do it; for there must come another yearly sacrifice after that; and another after that; but now there remains no sacrifice for sin; no yearly, no daily, no occasional sacrifices for the taking away of sin. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." {Heb.9:28} "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." {I Pet.3:18}

But, you will say, will you take away all manner of duties and services under the gospel? I answer; I take not away the duty, no, by no means, but the end; there is no duty we perform that is now a sacrifice to take away sin; nothing but the blood of Christ only, takes away sin; as for the services of Christians, there are many other purposes for which they are required; as to express obedience to the will of God, the serving our generation, the setting forth the praise of the glory of God's free grace; these are the ends of our services; but to expect, by any service we do, to obtain pardon of sin is absolutely Jewish, a new sacrifice upon commission of new sins; and directly overthrows all the fullness and sufficiency of that one sacrifice, offered by Christ himself.

Secondly; the difference between these two covenants stands in quieting the conscience; this follows necessarily upon the former. As there remains something of sin in that covenant of the Jews, so there must remain something of terror and trouble upon their conscience; a tender and well enlightened conscience, always sees and feels sin where it is; if there be any, a tender conscience feels it, and the gripe and gird of it; now, in that, there were sometimes some sins upon their persons no marvel that there were pain in their consciences for sin, for the apostle saith expressly, "that those gifts and sacrifices could not take away sin, as pertaining to the conscience;" that is, they could not take it away, that the conscience should be eased; for still there would be new sins committed that

would disquiet it; hence it is that they cry, out of the bitterness of their spirits, that sin did lie upon them. But, beloved, that which Christ brought is better than this, in that "the blood of Christ purges the conscience from dead works;" for which cause he is called "the mediator of a new testament;" because his blood obtained a complete redemption, purged the conscience, not only from the foul acting of things, but from those sins, which, while they remain, lie as a weight to torment the spirit. Christ takes away all the sins of his people; either you must say, Christ's sacrifice doth not take away all, or that there is not a sin left, after Christ hath cleansed the conscience of a believer.

In a word, to close up all, the covenant that Christ brought was better, in regard of wrath and judgment for sin. Justice you know follows sin at the heels; where it finds sin, there it executes' justice finding sin now and then upon the Jews, under that covenant, as it met with them so gave them a lash for them; hence you have those many complaints of God's justice plaguing them always; it was justice, because there was sin, which was their own, and was charged upon themselves, till the sacrifice came, and therefore their judgment was just; but Christ is the mediator of a better covenant, in that as he hath taken away all sin, so he hath taken away all the desert of it; though it be true under the gospel, the Lord chastises his people as a father with his rod; yet he never pours out indignation and wrath as their desert; he never looks to satisfy himself with any punishment of any member of Christ; for he beheld the travail of Christ, and was satisfied with that, {Isa.53:11;} and when God is once satisfied, he will never demand another satisfaction. If Christ hath worn out the rod of wrath to the stumps, and cast it into the fire, certainly there is no more of it to be remembered; the apostle is full to this, speaking of the Jews, he saith that they were under a schoolmaster; that is, a scourge, until Christ; for so are the words in the original; "the law, {saith he,} was a schoolmaster until Christ; but when faith was come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." {Gal.3:24-25} They indeed were fit, to be scourged, because they were in a state subject to sin, guilt, and faults, until Christ came; but when faith, that is, Christ himself was come, they were no longer under a schoolmaster; therefore, in Galatians 4:1-2, the apostle calls them heirs indeed, because at length they did attain salvation; but in respect of the weight and burden of the rod upon them, he saith, that for the present they differed nothing from servants; "the heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a servant though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors, until the appointed time of the father;" that is, till Christ came; "but when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son." {vs.4} I know it may be well interpreted of delivering persons in general, Jews and Gentiles, from under the slavery of sin; but doubtless the apostle hath an eye to this; namely, in respect of the imperfection of taking sin from them, they did bear indignation and wrath for so much sin as was upon them; whereas Christ takes away all wrath and indignation from us, as it is the desert of sin.

Use I. In all this you may see the glorious liberty "wherewith Christ hath made you free," wherein stand fast, "and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." {Gal.5:1}

Use II. By keeping these truths, you shall be able to answer satisfactorily to the knottiest objections that are or can be made against the free grace of God in Christ, especially from examples and actions under the old covenant.