

## CHAPTER 11

### THE SUBJECT APPLIED IN SELF-EXAMINATION.

THUS have I, reader, given thee a brief discourse touching the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, also of the nature of the one, together with the nature of the other. I have also in this discourse endeavored to show you the condition of them that are under the Law, how sad it is, both from the nature of the covenant they are under, and also by the carriage of God unto them by that covenant. And now, because I would bring all into as little a compass as I can, I shall begin with the use and application of the whole in as brief a way as I can, desiring the Lord to bless it to thee.

*First.* And, first of all, let us here begin to examine a little touching the covenant you stand before God in, whether it be the Covenant of Works or the Covenant of Grace; [The first use is a use of examination]. and for the right doing of this, I shall lay down this proposition — namely, that all men naturally come into the world under the first of these, which is called the old covenant, or the Covenant of Works, which is the Law; “And were all by nature the children of wrath, even as others;” which they could not be, had they not been under the law; for there are none that are under the other covenant that are still the children of wrath, but the children of faith, the children of the promise, the accepted children, the children not of the bond-woman, but of the free (<sup>ROM</sup>Galatians 4:28-31).

Now here lieth the question. Which of these two covenants art thou under, soul?

*Answer.* I hope I am under the Covenant of Grace.

*Question.* But what ground hast thou to think that thou art under that blessed covenant, and not rather under the Covenant of Works, that strict, that soul-damning covenant?

*Answer.* What ground? Why, I hope I am.

**Question.** But what ground hast thou for this thy hope? for a hope without a ground is like a castle built in the air, that will never be able to do thee any good, but will prove like unto that spoken of in <sup><R00></sup>Job 8, “Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be” like “a spider’s web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast,” as thou wouldst thy hope, it is like, “but it shall not endure” (<sup><R00></sup>Job 8:13-15).

**Answer.** My hope is grounded upon the promises; what else should it be grounded upon?

**Reply.** Indeed, to build my hope upon Christ Jesus, upon God in Christ, through the promise, and to have this hope rightly, by the shedding abroad of the love of God in the heart, it is a right-grounded hope (<sup><R00></sup>Romans 5:1-7).

**Question.** But what promises in the Scripture do you find your hope built upon? and how do you know whether you do build your hope upon the promises in the Gospel, the promises of the new covenant, and not rather on the promises of the old covenant, for there are promises in that as well as in the other?

**Answer.** I hope that if I do well I shall be accepted; because God hath said I shall (<sup><R00></sup>Genesis 4:7).

**Reply.** O soul, if thy hope be grounded there, thy hope is not grounded upon the Gospel promises, or the new covenant, but verily upon the old; for these words were spoken to Cain, a son of the old covenant; and they themselves are the tenor and scope of that; for that runs thus: “Do this, and thou shalt live. The man that doth these things shall live by them. If thou do well, thou shalt be accepted” (<sup><R00></sup>Leviticus 18:5; <sup><R00></sup>Ezekiel 20:11; <sup><R00></sup>Romans 10:5; <sup><R00></sup>Galatians 3:12; <sup><R00></sup>Genesis 4:7).

**Reply.** Why, truly, if a man’s doing well, and living well, and his striving to serve God as well as he can, will not help him to Christ, I do not know what will; I am sure sinning against God will not.

**Question.** Did you never read that Scripture which saith,

“Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness”? (<sup>493</sup>Romans 9:30-32).

**Objection.** But doth not the Scripture say,

“Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life”? (<sup>624</sup>Revelation 22:14).

**Answer.** There is first, therefore, to be inquired into, whether to keep His commandments be to strive to keep the Law as it is a Covenant of Works, or whether it be meant of the great commandments of the New Testament which are cited in <sup>612</sup>1 John 3:22, 23 — “And whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” But what do you mean, John? Do you mean the covenant of the Law, or the covenant to the Gospel? Why, “this is His commandment,” saith he, “That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another,” as the fruits of this faith, “as He gave us commandment.” If it be of the old covenant, as a Covenant of Works, then the Gospel is but a lost thing. If it were of works, then no more of grace; therefore it is not the old covenant, as the old covenant.

**Question.** But what do you mean by these words — the old covenant as the old covenant? Explain your meaning.

**Answer.** My meaning is, that the Law is not to be looked upon for life, so as it was handed out from Mount Sinai, if ever thou wouldst indeed be saved; though after thou hast faith in Christ, thou mayest and must solace thyself in it, and take pleasure therein, to express thy love to Him who hath already saved thee by His own blood, without thy obedience to the law, either from Sinai or elsewhere.

**Question.** Do you think that I do mean that my righteousness will save me without Christ? If so, you mistake me, for I think not so; but this I say, I will Labor to do what I can; and what I cannot do, Christ will do for me.

**Answer.** Ah, poor soul, this is the wrong way too; for this is to make Christ but a piece of a Savior; thou wilt do something, and Christ shall do the rest; thou wilt set thy own things in the first place, and if thou wantest at last, then thou wilt borrow of Christ; thou art such an one that dost

Christ the greatest injury of all. First, in that thou dost undervalue His merits by preferring of thy own works before His; and, secondly, by mingling of thy works thy dirty, ragged righteousness with His.

**Question.** Why, would you have us do nothing? Would you have us make Christ such a drudge as to do all, while we sit idling still?

**Answer.** Poor soul, thou mistakest Jesus Christ in saying thou makest Him a drudge in letting Him do all; I tell thee, He counts it a great glory to do all for thee, and it is a great dishonor unto Him for thee so much as to think otherwise. And this the saints of God that have experienced the work of grace upon their souls do count it also the same —

“Saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof” (<sup><668></sup>Revelation 5:9).

“Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing” (<sup><682></sup>Revelation 5:12). And why so? read again in <sup><689></sup>Revelation 5:9, “For Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy” own “blood” (See also <sup><406></sup>Ephesians 1:6, 7). “To the praise of the glory of His grace — in whom we have redemption through His blood.”

**Reply.** All this we confess, that Jesus Christ died for us; but he that thinks to be saved by Christ, and liveth in his sins, shall never be saved.

**Answer.** I grant that. But this I say again, a man must not make his good doings the lowest round of the ladder by which he goeth to Heaven — that is, he that will and shall go to Heaven, must, wholly and alone, without any of his own things, venture his precious soul upon Jesus Christ and His merits.

**Question.** What, and come to Christ as a sinner?

**Answer.** Yea, with all thy sins upon thee, even as filthy as ever thou canst.

**Question.** But is not this the way to make Christ to loath us? You know when children fall down in the dirt, they do usually before they go home make their clothes as clean as they can, for fear their parents should chide them; and so I think should we.

*Answer.* This comparison is wrongly applied, if you bring it to show us how we must do when we come to Christ. He that can make himself clean hath no need of Christ; for the whole, the clean, and righteous have no need of Christ, but those that are foul and sick. Physicians, you know, if they love to be honored, they will not bid the patients first make themselves whole, and then come to them; no, but bid them come with their sores all running on them, as the woman with her bloody issue (~~400~~ Mark 5). And as Mary Magdalene with her belly full of devils, and the lepers all scabbed; and that is the right coming to Jesus Christ.

*Reply.* Well, I hope that Christ will save me, for His promises and mercy are very large; and as long as He hath promised to give us life, I fear my state the less.

*Answer.* It is very true, Christ's promises are very large, blessed be the Lord for ever; and also so is His mercy; but notwithstanding all that, there are many go in at the broad gate; and therefore I say, your business is seriously to inquire whether you are under the first or second covenant; for unless you are under the second, you will never be regarded of the Lord, forasmuch as you are a sinner (~~500~~ Hebrews 8:9). And the rather, because if God should be so good to you as to give you a share in the second, you shall have all your sins pardoned, and for certain have eternal life, though you have been a great sinner. But do not expect that thou shalt have any part or share in the large promises and mercy of God, for the benefit and comfort of thy poor soul, whilst thou art under the old covenant; because so long thou art out of Christ, through whom God conveyeth His mercy, grace, and love to sinners. "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen." Indeed, His mercy, grace, and love are very great, but they are treasured up in Him, "given forth in Him, through Him." "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us — that He might show the exceeding riches of His grace" — but which way? — "in His kindness towards us through Jesus Christ." But out of Christ thou shalt find God a just God, a sin-avenging God, a God that will by no means spare the guilty; and be sure that every one that is found out of Jesus Christ will be found guilty in the judgment-day, upon whom the wrath of God shall smoke to their eternal ruin.

Now, therefore, consider of it, and take the counsel of the Apostle, in <sup>413</sup>2 Corinthians 13:5, which is, to examine thyself whether thou art “in the faith,” and to prove thy ownself whether thou hast received the Spirit of Christ into thy soul, whether thou hast been converted, whether thou hast been born again, and made a new creature, whether thou hast had thy sins washed away in the blood of Christ, whether thou hast been brought from under the old covenant into the new; and do not make a slight examination, for thou hast a precious soul either to be saved or damned.

And that thou mayest not be deceived, consider that it is one thing to be convinced, and another to be converted; one thing to be wounded, and another to be killed, and so to be made alive again by the faith of Jesus Christ. When men are killed, they are killed to all things they lived to before, both sin and righteousness, as all their old faith and supposed grace that they thought they had. Indeed, the old covenant will show thee that thou art a sinner, and that a great one too; but the old covenant, the Law, will not show thee, without the help of the Spirit, that thou are without all grace by nature; no; but in the midst of thy troubles thou wilt keep thyself from coming to Christ by persuading thy soul that thou art come already, and hast some grace already. O, therefore, be earnest in begging the Spirit, that thy soul may be enlightened, and the wickedness of thy heart discovered, that thou mayest see the miserable state that thou art in by reason of sin and unbelief, which is the great condemning sin; and so in a sight and sense of thy sad condition, if God should deal with thee in severity according to thy deservings. Do thou [now] cry to God for faith in a crucified Christ, that thou mayest have all thy sins washed away in His blood, and such a right work of grace wrought in thy soul that may stand in the judgment-day. Again,

**Second.** In the next place, you know I told you that a man might go a great way in a profession, and have many excellent gifts, so as to do many wondrous works, and yet be but under the Law; from hence you may learn not to judge yourselves to be the children of God, because you may have some gifts of knowledge or understanding more than others: no, for thou mayest be the knowingest man in all the country as to head-knowledge, and yet be but under the law, and so consequently under the curse, notwithstanding that, <sup>413</sup>1 Corinthians 13.

Now, seeing it is so, that men may have all this and yet perish, then what will become of those that do no good at all, and have no understanding, neither of their own sadness, nor of Christ's mercy? O, sad! Read with understanding, <sup><2711></sup>Isaiah 27:11, "Therefore He that made them will not have mercy on them, and He that formed them will show them no favor" (See also <sup><3008></sup>2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9).

Now there is one thing which, for want of, most people do miscarry in a very sad manner, and that is, because they are not able to distinguish between the nature of the Law and the Gospel. O, people, people, your being blinded here as to the knowledge of this is one great cause of the ruining of many. As Paul saith, "While Moses is read," or while the law is discovered, "the veil is upon their heart" (<sup><4015></sup>2 Corinthians 3:15) that is, the veil of ignorance is still upon their hearts, so that they cannot discern either the nature of the law or the nature of the Gospel, they being so dark and blind in their minds, as you may see, if you compare it with <sup><4018></sup>2 Corinthians 4:3, 4. And truly I am confident, that were you but well examined, I doubt many of you would be found so ignorant that you would not be able to give a word of right answer concerning either the Law or the Gospel. Nay, my friends, set the case, one should ask you what time you spend, what pains you take, to the end you may understand the nature and difference of these two covenants, would you not say, if you should speak the truth, that you did not so much as regard whether there were two or more? Would you not say, I did not think of covenants, or study the nature of them? I thought that if I had lived honestly, and did as well as I could, that God would accept of me, and have mercy upon me, as He had on others. Ah, friends, this is the cause of the ruin of thousands; for if they are blinded to this, both the right use of the law, and also of the Gospel, is hid from their eyes, and so for certain they will be in danger of perishing most miserably, poor souls that they are, unless God, of His mere mercy and love, doth rend the veil from off their hearts, the veil of ignorance, for that is it which doth keep these poor souls in this besotted and blindfolded condition, in which if they die they may be lamented for, but not helped; they may be pitied, but not preserved from the stoke of God's everlasting vengeance.

**Thirdly.** In the next place, if you would indeed be delivered from the first into the second covenant, I do admonish you to the observing of these following particulars.

**First.** Have a care that you do not content yourselves, though you do good works — that is, which in themselves are good. Secondly. In and with a legal spirit, which are done these ways as followeth.

1. If you do anything commanded in Scripture, and your doing of it do think that God is well pleased therewith, because you, as you are religious men, do do the same. Upon this mistake was Paul himself in danger of being destroyed; for he thought, because he was zealous, and one of the strictest sects for religion, therefore God would have been good unto him, and have accepted his doings, as it is clear, for he counted them his gain (<sup>318</sup>Philippians 3:4-8). Now this is done thus — When a man doth think that because he thinks he is more sincere, more liberal, with more difficulty, or to the weakening of his estate; I say, if a man, because of this doth think that God accepteth his Labor, it is done from an old-covenant spirit.

Again; some men think that they shall be heard because they have prayer in their families, because they can pray long, and speak excellent expressions, or express themselves excellently in prayer, that because they have great enlargements in prayer, I say, that therefore to think that God doth delight in their doings, and accept their works, this is from a legal spirit.

Again; some men think that because their parents have been religious before them, and have been indeed the people of God, they think if they also do as to the outward observing of that which they learned from their forerunners, that therefore God doth accept them; but this also is from a wrong spirit; and yet how many are there in England at this day that think the better of themselves merely upon that account; ay, and think the people of God ought to think so too, not understanding that it is ordinary for an Eli to have a Hophni and a Phinehas, both sons of Belial; also a good Samuel to have a perverse offspring; likewise David an Absalom. I say, their being ignorant of, or else negligent in regarding this, they do think that because they do spring from such and such, as the Jews in their generation did, that therefore they have a privilege with God more than others, when

there is no such thing; but for certain, if the same faith be not in them which was in their forerunners, to lay hold of the Christ of God in the same spirit as they did, they must utterly perish, for all their high conceits that they have of themselves (<sup><B></sup>John 8:33-35; <sup><B></sup>Matthew 3:7-9).

**Second.** When people come into the presence of God without having their eye upon the Divine Majesty, through the flesh and blood of the Son of Mary, the Son of God, then also do they come before God, and do whatsoever they do from a legal spirit, an old-covenant spirit. As, for instance, you have some people, it is true, they will go to prayer, in appearance very fervently, and will plead very hard with God that He would grant them their desires, pleading their want, and the abundance thereof; they will also plead with God His great mercy, and also His free promises; but yet they neglecting the aforesaid body or Person of Christ, the righteous Lamb of God, to appear before Him in, I say, in thus doing they do not appear before the Lord no otherwise than in an old-covenant spirit; for they go to God as a merciful Creator, and they themselves as His creatures; not as He is, their Father in the Son, and they His children by regeneration through the Lord Jesus. Ay, and though they may call God their Father, in the notion — not knowing what they say, only having learned such things by tradition — as the Pharisees did, yet Christ will have His time to say to them, even to their faces, as He did once to the Jews, Your father, for all this your profession, is the devil, to their own grief and everlasting misery (<sup><B></sup>John 8:44).

**Third.** The third thing that is to be observed, if we would not be under the Law, or do things in a legal spirit, is this — to have a care that we do none of the works of the holy Law of God for life, or acceptance with Him; no, nor of the Gospel neither. To do the works of the law to the end we may be accepted of God, or that we may please Him, and to have our desires of Him, is to do things from a legal or old-covenant spirit, and that is expressly laid down where it is said, “To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt;” that is, he appears before God through the Law, and his obedience to it (<sup><B></sup>Romans 4:4, 5). And again, though they be in themselves Gospel-ordinances, as baptism, breaking of bread, hearing, praying, meditating, or the like; yet, I say, if they be not done in the right spirit, they are thereby used as a hand by the devil to pull thee under the Covenant of Works, as in former times he used circumcision,

which was no part of the Covenant of Works, the Ten Commands, but a seal of the righteousness of faith; yet, I say, they being done in a legal spirit, the soul was thereby brought under the Covenant of Works, and so most miserably destroyed unawares to itself, and that because there was not a right understanding of the nature and terms of the said covenants. And so it is now; souls being ignorant of the nature of the old covenant, do even by their subjecting to several Gospel ordinances, run themselves under the old covenant, and fly off from Christ, even when they think they are coming closer to him. O, miserable! If you would know when or how this is done, whether in one particular or more, I shall show you as followeth.

**1.** That man doth bring himself under the Covenant of Works, by Gospel ordinances, when he cannot be persuaded that God will have mercy upon him except he do yield obedience to such or such a particular thing commanded in the Word. This is the very same spirit that was in the false brethren (spoken of Acts 15; Galatians, the whole Epistle), whose judgment was, that unless such and such things were done, “they could not be saved.” As now-a-days we have also some that say, Unless your infants be baptized they cannot be saved; <sup>fa23</sup> and others say, unless you be rightly baptized, you have no ground to be assured that you are believers, or members of churches; which is so far off from being so good as a legal spirit, that it is the spirit of blasphemy, as is evident, because they do reckon that the Spirit, righteousness, and faith of Jesus, and the confession thereof, is not sufficient to declare men to be members of the Lord Jesus; when, on the other side, though they be rank hypocrites, yet if they do yield an outward subjection to this or that, they are counted presently communicable members, which doth clearly discover that there is not so much honor given to the putting on the righteousness of the Son of God as there is given to that which a man may do, and yet go to Hell within an hour after; nay, in the very doing of it doth shut himself for ever from Jesus Christ.

**2.** Men may do things from a legal or old-covenant spirit when they content themselves with their doing of such and such a thing, as prayers, reading, hearing, baptism, breaking of bread, or the like; I say, when they can content themselves with the thing done, and sit down at ease and content because the thing is done. As, for instance, some men being persuaded that such and such a thing is their duty, and that unless they do

do it, God will not be pleased with them, nor suffer them to be heirs of His kingdom, they from this spirit do rush into and do the thing, which being done, they are content, as being persuaded that now they are without doubt in a happy condition, because they have done such things, like unto the Pharisee, who, because he had done this and the other thing, said therefore, in a bragging way, “Lord, I thank thee that I am not as this publican;” for I have done thus and thus; when, alas! the Lord give him never a good word for his Labor, but rather a reproof.

**3.** That man doth act from a legal spirit who maketh the strictness of his walking the ground of his assurance for eternal life. Some men, all the ground they have to believe that they shall be saved, it is because they walk not so loose as their neighbors, they are not so bad as others are, and therefore they question not but that they shall do well. Now this is a false ground, and a thing that is verily legal, and savors only of some slight and shallow apprehensions of the old covenant. I call them shallow apprehensions, because they are not right and sound, and are such as will do the soul no good, but beguile it, in that the knowledge of the nature of this covenant doth not appear to the soul, only some commanding power it hath on the soul, which the soul endeavoring to give up itself unto, it doth find some peace and content, and especially if it find itself to be pretty willing to yield itself to its commands. And is not this the very ground of thy hoping that God will save thee from the wrath to come? If one should ask thee what ground thou hast to think thou shalt be saved, wouldst thou not say, Truly, because I have left my sins, and because I am more inclinable to do good, [Do not think that I am against the order of the Gospel]. and to learn, and get more knowledge; I endeavor to walk in church order, as they call it, and therefore I hope God hath done a good work for me, and I hope will save my soul. Alas, alas! this is a very trick of the devil to make souls build the ground of their salvation upon this their strictness, and abstaining from the wickedness of their former lives, and because they desire to be stricter and stricter. Now, if you would know such a man or woman, you shall find them in this frame — namely, when they think their hearts are good, then they think also that Christ will have mercy upon them; but when their corruption’s work, then they doubt and scruple until again they have their hearts more ready to do the things contained in the law and ordinances of the Gospel. Again, such men

do commonly cheer up their hearts, and encourage themselves still to hope all shall be well, and that because they are not so bad as the rest, but more inclinable than they, saying, I am glad I am not as this publican, but better than he, more righteous than he (<sup>☞</sup>Luke 18:11).

**4.** This is a legal and old-covenant spirit that secretly persuades the soul that if ever it will be saved by Christ, it must be fitted for Christ by its getting of a good heart and good intentions to do this and that for Christ; I say, that the soul when it comes to Christ may not be rejected or turned off; when in deed and in truth this is the very way for the soul to turn itself from Jesus Christ, instead of turning to Him; for such a soul looks upon Christ rather to be a painted Savior or a cypher than a very and real Savior. Friend, if thou canst fit thyself, what need hast thou of Christ? If thou canst get qualifications to carry to Christ that thou mightst be accepted, thou dost not look to be accepted in the Beloved. Shall I tell thee? Thou art as if a man should say, I will make myself clean, and then I will go to Christ that He may wash me; or like a man possessed, that will first cast the devils out of himself, and then come to Christ for cure from Him. Thou, must, therefore, if thou wilt so lay hold of Christ as not to be rejected by Him; I say, thou must come to Him as the basest in the world, more fit to be damned, if thou hadst thy right, than to have the least smile, hope, or comfort from Him. Come with the fire of Hell in thy conscience, come with thy heart hard, dead, cold, full of wickedness and madness against thy own salvation; come as renouncing all thy tears, prayers, watchings, fastings; come as a blood-red sinner; do not stay from Christ till thou hast a greater sense of thy own misery, nor of the reality of God's mercy; do not stay while thy heart is softer and thy spirit in a better frame, but go against thy mind, and against the mind of the devil and sin, throw thyself down at the foot of Christ, with a halter about thy neck, and say, Lord Jesus, hear a sinner, a hard-hearted sinner, a sinner that deserveth to be damned, to be cast into Hell; and resolve never to return, or to give over crying unto Him, till thou do find that He hath washed thy conscience from dead works with His blood virtually, and clothed thee with His own righteousness, and make thee complete in Himself; this is the way to come to Christ.