SERMONS

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TRANSLATED FROM THE DUTCH.

AND PREFACED BY

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WITH AN

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II.

The Way of God with His People in the Sanctuary.

"ALL the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies." Ps. 25:10.

Of all the promises made by Jehovah to his people, that is by no means the least which we find, Isa. 65:24, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking I will hear." By both these forms of speech is expressed the readiness of God to hear the prayers of his people. "Before they call I will answer." This may be understood of the desires of the heart which are found in the soul, before there is a word upon the tongue. Since, now, God is he who searches the hearts and the reins, who knows the desires, he frequently answers them by a gracious hearing ere they are yet expressed. "While they are yet speaking I will hear;" which hearing and answering of the prayers of the pious occurs, on the one hand, by an assurance imparted to them that their desires shall be fulfilled; and on the other hand, by the actual fulfillment of them; to wit, by an averting of the evil with which
they were threatened, and the bestowment of the desired good. The assurance of the hearing of their prayers is produced by the Holy Spirit, who first excites desires in the children of God, which desires are of God, according to the will of God, and becoming the character of God. Thus, the Holy Spirit imparts the assurance that such desires shall not be in vain; for, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry;" "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles." (Ps. 34:15, 17.) Would we behold a striking instance and evidence of this, we have it in the goodly Psalmist, who had but just prayed, in the 2d verse: "O my God, I trust in thee;" when he added, verse 3, his assurance that prayer would not be in vain. Therefore, in the sequel, he presents a threefold petition: 1. For a knowledge of the Lord's ways, verse 4; 2. For guidance in the same, verse 5; 3. For the experience of the divine mercy, verses 6, 7. But scarcely have the words proceeded from his lips before the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, assures him of a hearing of all those petitions: of the first, verse 8, "Good and upright is the Lord; therefore will he teach sinners in the way;" of the second, verse 9: "The meek will he guide in judgment: the meek will he teach his way," (upon which we last dwelt;) of the third, in the words of our text: "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies;" for he prayed in verses 6, 7, "Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy loving kindnesses; for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my trans-
gressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness' sake, O Lord.” The words naturally divide themselves into three parts.

I. That which is spoken of: “The paths of the Lord.”

II. That which is affirmed of it: “are mercy and truth.”

III. The persons of whom the prophet speaks: “unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.”

“All the paths of the Lord.” This word has come under notice in treating the 4th verse of this Psalm, where we are to understand by it, the commands and laws of God; but here, by the paths of the Lord are to be understood the works of God and his mode of operation: 1st, His eternal decrees and purposes. Prov. 8:22, “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old;” otherwise his counsel; also ways, Isa. 55:8, 9. 2d, It is also employed to signify his works, both of nature—Job 26:14, “Lo, these are parts of his ways,” and 40:14—and of grace, Ps. 67:1, 2, “God be merciful unto us, that thy way may be known upon earth.” 3d and lastly, By the paths of the Lord are to be understood his method of acting and dealing with men, that is, his direction of affairs. Thus, we read: Nebuchadnezzar said, “Now I praise and honor the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment,” and Ps. 77:13, “Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary.” Man also has his purposes, plans and counsels; but in contradistinction to those the Psalmist speaks of the paths of the Lord, (Jehovah,) which name has special reference to the eternal and gracious purposes
of God, and their fulfillment; for he declares in the second portion of our text, that "all the paths of the Lord are mercy;" with which word we have just met in verse 6, being the same as grace, and in God, his effectual purpose and powerful inclination to do good to man; and which is manifested in, and accomplished through Christ.

"Truth." Here the word is significant of the faithfulness of God, and the fulfilment of his gracious promises to his children.

When, now, the Psalmist says that "all the paths of Jehovah are mercy and truth," we are taught, that God has from eternity purposed to show his loving-kindness, grace and mercy, through the Son of his love; that all his dealings tend to this end; that he has made promises to this effect to his people, in the performance of which he is faithful and true, and that this is discovered by all his methods in relation to his Church, even when to outward appearance it might be difficult. This mercy and truth of God are spoken of more at length, Ps. 89:1, 2, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens;" and verse 14, "Justice and judgment are the habitations of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face;" and Ps. 145:8, 17, "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." There are theological expositors who are of opinion that there is here an allusion
to Ex. 34: 6, 7; for Moses prayed, Ex. 33: 13, "If I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way;" to which the Lord said, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee," which name was, "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and in truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." But truly, though all the ways of God are mercy and truth, they are by no means such to ungodly and hardened sinners. To these, the ways of God are judgment and justice. (Deut. 32: 4.) To them his way is in the whirlwind and in the storm: "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies," Nah. 1: 2, 3; but all his ways are mercy and truth to such as keep his covenant and his testimonies; as is taught in our third division.

III. Upon the covenant of God with the elect we shall not at present enlarge: we only observe, that by the covenant must here be understood the conditions and requirements of the covenant: the laws by which those in covenant with God are bound, and to which they say, yea and amen when they give their assent to the covenant of God. Thus we read, Deut. 4: 13, "And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commandeth you to perform, even ten
commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone." This appears from the explanatory clause immediately following:

"And his testimonies."

By testimonies is to be understood the word of God, as being the infallible and only credible testimony of God, and as relating to things which without his revelation could not be known: things, namely, relating to himself, his ways and works; especially the duty of sinners to him, which they are required to perform; but especially is it here expressive of that which God testifies in his word in regard to the duties of those in covenant with him, as appears from the word.

"Keep" or observe. This mode of speech is not uncommon, and stands opposed to the annulling or transgressing the commands of God. This keeping or observing the testimonies of God, comprehends the hearing of them with pleasure, reading, searching, understanding, remembering, loving, obeying them. That now, all the ways of God are not only merciful and true, but mercy and truth themselves, to all such as keep his covenant and his testimonies, abundantly appears from the word of God; for they are the object of God's eternal election, and heirs of the blessings of the covenant of grace, and in time are called into covenant with God, and yield to it their assent; whence flows the confidence of a good conscience, to expect from God all things that pertain to life and godliness; among which are forgiveness of sins, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. That all the ways of God are mercy and truth to such is self-evident; for never can God deal otherwise
with the objects of his favor than is correspondent with his eternal promises. Sometimes, indeed, it appears as if he dealt differently with them; but even then, their afflictions and judgments are sanctified to their souls, and that this is the privilege only of such as keep his testimonies appears hence, that they only are the objects of God's eternal choice—that they only are in covenant with God, and consequently also the objects of his regard, and therefore privileged to assure themselves of his mercy.

All this finds its confirmation in the word of God; namely, that the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth to those who are in covenant with him; that is, upright, believing persons who keep his commandments. This appears from the whole tenor of the sacred Scriptures: as Ps. 32:10, "Mercy shall compass him about." (Ps. 36:7, 10.) And this applies to all the ways of God to his people; for "all things work together for their good," Rom. 8:28; even chastisements are a token of the love of God. (Heb. 12:6, 7.) But that this is the privilege only of those who keep his covenant and his testimonies, appears from Isa. 3:10, 11; and the Lord Jesus says, John 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him;" and Ps. 103:17, 18, "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

Herein is also included an answer to the prayer of
the supplicant; for verse 6, he had prayed, "Remember O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy loving kindnesses." This is answered by the assurance that all the ways of Jehovah are mercy and truth; and had he prayed in particular that God would not remember the sins of his youth, he could infer the certainty of an answer from the "mercy" and truth of God.

This appears sufficiently from Ex. 34:6, 7. Therefore Moses prayed, "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, Num. 14:19; see also Neh. 13:22, "Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy; and Ps. 51:1, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions."

And, therefore, the forgiveness of sins is deduced from the loving kindness and truth of God, as in Ps. 103:3, 4, 8, 9, 11. Surely, even when God visits the sins of his children by afflictions, he yet remains to them a forgiving God; and his ways with and towards them are mercy and truth. "My mercy will I keep for him for evermore." (Ps. 89:28.) "If his children forsake my law," etc., verse 30, "Then will I visit their transgression with the rod. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him." (Verses 32, 33.) But when it is here said that all the paths of the Lord are mercy, and that this is a consequence of the forgiveness of sins, and is true only of such as keep his covenant and his testimonies to do them. We are taught that God is indeed ready to forgive sins, but only those of the penitent and believ-
ing, who turn to him. (Ps. 30:4.) Such is the import of the oracle, Isa. 55:6, 7, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” But when men continue in their sins, God refuses to forgive. (Jer. 2:9.) When, however, they repent they obtain forgiveness. (Matt. 1:4, 15; Luke 24:47; Acts 5:31.) Therefore Peter exhorted the Jews, Acts 3:19, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” Read also Acts 8:22. It is as if the Psalmist had said, “Although your sins and departures from God in your youth, as well as your numerous other transgressions, are an object of his aversion, and he could therefore justly deny you his favor, there is no anger with him, provided only you lay hold upon his strength.” On the contrary, it is a consequence of his name and his eternal purposes, and in accordance with his ordinary method of dealing with his children, graciously to forgive their sins, and grant them the tokens of his love and faithfulness, when they but come to him to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need, with the confession of their sins; with hatred of, and a turning from them; with a fleeing for refuge to the grace of God in Christ Jesus; and together with a cordial, believing assent to the covenant of God, not only as to its promises, but also its requirements; approving them, and desiring sincerely to observe and faithfully to fulfill them. And having the testimony of a good conscience that such
are your feelings, why should you not confidently con-
clude that Jehovah will not remember your sins, but
will remember you according to the greatness of his
mercy for his goodness' sake?

Truly hearers, God is good, even to the evil and un-
thankful; but that is but a common goodness, extend-
ing to all creatures. "He is good to all, and his tender
mercies are over all his works." But this is not so as
to afford them real consolation. There is a special
goodness having for its object only the people of God.
Hence, we should examine whether we are partakers
of that special goodness. God himself has accordingly
in his word proposed various evidences, of which we
shall adduce a few.

We find one stated Ps. 73:1, "Truly God is good
to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." Ex-
amine then hearers, whether you are clean in heart.
Have you ever been so sensible of the impurity of your
hearts, as to be affected with loathing, grief, and de-
testation, on account of it? Have you ever been so
desirous of purity of heart, as with the man after God's
own heart much to pray, "Create within me a clean
heart, O God?" Have you hence ever betaken your-
self for refuge to the Lord Jesus, that fountain opened
to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jeru-
usalem?

A second mark of an interest in the divine favor we
find in Ps. 36:7, "How excellent is thy loving kind-
ness O God! therefore the children of men put their
trust under the shadow of thy wings." Hence exami-
ne, whether you have fled for refuge to the grace of
God in Christ. Have you ever fled to Jesus, as your
priest, regarding yourself as, not only by reason of gross transgression, but also in view of your best works condemned and helpless, seeking your righteousness and salvation only in Christ; as your prophet, with renunciation of your own wisdom to be instructed by him; as your king, to be in subjection to him on? Do you desire the sanctifying, as well as justifying grace or mercy of God? Have you uprightly betaken yourself to communion with God, desiring it as your highest good?

The third and last characteristic which we shall specify is found in the words of our text, “Such as observe (or keep) his covenant and his testimonies.” The same is recorded Ps. 103: 17, 18. Therefore examine whether by experience you know what it is to enter into covenant with God. Have you broken your covenant with sin, death, and hell? Are you by experience acquainted with covenant dealings with God? Have you actually entered into covenant? Baptism and the Lord’s supper introduce no one into the covenant, but are seals for those only who are in covenant. Have you an experimental acquaintance with those special, secret, heartfelt dealings between the Lord and your soul, by which forsaking all things you surrendered yourself wholly, and for ever, and not once only, to God and his service, daily reviewing that surrender? They who have engaged in these dealings well understand the language and meaning of Joshua 24: 15, “As for me and my house we will serve the Lord;” of Asaph, Ps. 73: 25, 26, 28, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God
is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever. But it is good for me to draw near to God, I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works;" of David, Ps. 89:15, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk O Lord in the light of thy countenance;" and of the bride, Cant. 2:16, "My beloved is mine and I am his;" and of Isaiah, 44:5, "One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel;" and also of Paul, Acts 27:23, "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve." Are you experimentally acquainted with the import of these inspired declarations? Do you esteem all the commandments of God, without exception, good? Do you choose his commandments to do them? Do you keep his testimonies? Do you observe his requirements? Do you examine and inquire what the Lord will have you to do, with Paul, Acts 9:6, and with Samuel, 1 Sam. 3:10?

When now you behold yourself in this glass, what do you find to be the case with you? How many are there who do not possess these characteristics—who have never been affected by the impurity of their souls, but still retain their old and corrupt hearts, being impure in heart and life—who have never betaken themselves to that purifying fountain, "opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem," Zech. 13:1, but with Moab have always been at ease and unconcerned from their youth, Jer. 48:11; who do not know what it is to enter into covenant
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with God; have no acquaintance with covenant dealings, or have engaged in them only outwardly, and hence hypocritically, with the Israelites, Ps. 78:36, 37, "Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues, for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant"—who do not keep God's testimonies or commandments, but do that which the flesh, the world, and Satan suggest. Do you not now perceive that you are not a partaker of this special goodness?

Know ungodly, unconverted persons, that all the ways of God are indignation and wrath to every soul that doeth evil—that all your sins are and remain unpardoned, and are treasured up to the aggravation of your condemnation. Woe unto you! To you are God's ways judgment and justice, and the truth and faithfulness of God are a reason for terror; for he will verify to you all the threatenings of his word. Therefore, friends, of what avail will it be to you to experience much of the goodness of God, (it is but for this life,) if in the meantime, by the riches of God's goodness, long suffering, and forbearance you be not led to repentance? for thus you will treasure up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. (Rom. 2:4, 5.) Oh! that you were partakers of that special goodness! having betaken yourselves for refuge to the free grace of God in Christ, etc. But that the paths of God are goodness and truth should also serve as an encouragement to the concerned, and support to the despondent.

Thou who art convinced of thy wretched state, and
wouldst fain be reconciled to God, be not I pray thee, deterred from coming to him. If thou be but weary of sin, if thou be sincerely desirous of drawing near to God in the right way, which is only through Christ, then come. The Lord is not unmerciful, cruel, or inexorable, but "good," as he proclaims his name. (Ex. 34:5.) He, as it were, runs to meet such, as we learn from the parable of the prodigal son. (Luke 15.) Thus does the unchangeable God still to all who purpose to turn to him. He calls, he invites, he knocks, he presents himself to you, he promises that "those who come to him he will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37.) Remain not then, through fear, at a distance!

But these words are a source of consolation and invigoration to you, upright believers and dear people of God. The mercy and truth of God are the foundation upon which, after your falls and wanderings, you may continually summon courage to return to the Lord. (Hos. 3:5; Ps. 13:5.) The Lord is therefore denominated the God of their mercy; and therefore or what injustice are you guilty towards God, when you regard him as evil, uncompassionate, unwilling to listen to your supplications, and always angry, if he do not immediately deliver you from affliction, threatened or actually endured, and grant your desire, and afford an answer to your prayers!

Shame! thou dishonorest God with such thoughts. No; God is merciful and true; nay, "his ways are mercy and truth." Acknowledge these perfections, and glorify him for them. Have you sinned? Are you in affliction? impress it upon your mind that God
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is merciful and faithful. Humble yourself before him like David, "as a little child." (Ps. 131:2.)

But methinks I hear a poor soul say: How can I believe that the Lord's paths to me are mercy and truth? I am called to suffer so many afflictions, both in soul and body, that the ways of God to me appears indignation and wrath! Answer: I admit that it appears so to you, but it is only in appearance. Afterward, thou shalt perceive that all things have worked together for your good, Rom. 8:28; that God remembers mercy in the midst of wrath; that he keeps not anger for ever, but delights in mercy, Jer. 13:12; chastising those whom he loves, Heb. 12; for his wrath endureth for a moment, but there is a life in his favor: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. (Ps. 30:6.)

Also is the truth or faithfulness of Him who is God, Amen, a source of special consolation to you, O dear children of God, since you can thus assure yourselves that he will never forsake you, but verify to you all his promises. Let this serve as an encouragement to you; for although we be unfaithful, God remains faithful: he can not deny himself, saith the Apostle. (2 Tim. 2:13.)

But I imagine I hear a weak believer lamenting and saying: How should I be able to comfort myself with the faithfulness of God? I experience no fulfillment of the promises; I ask but do not receive. Answer: Thou must not limit the Holy One of Israel, as did the wicked Jews. (Ps. 78:41.) He has his own time: if he tarry, wait for him. Wait upon the Lord
and keep his way; "because he will surely come, he will not tarry." (Hab. 2:3.)

Howsoever strange and mysterious the paths of God to you may appear, you shall once upon reflection find that all have been to you mercy and truth; when you shall have occasion with the Psalmist in whose words we conclude, to say: "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever; with my mouth will I make known thy truth to all generations: for I have said, mercy shall be built up together: thy faithfulness shall thou establish in the very Heavens." Amen.
X.

The Soul Covenanting with God.

"And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses."—Josh. 24:23.

Beloved communicants, this day have ye renewed your covenant with God, and chosen God as your portion, promising that you will be his servants and handmaidens, that you will walk in his ways, and keep his commandments. To this you are witnesses. In point, then, are the words of our text; and although I am not Joshua, I may yet adopt his words, and say to you, ye are witnesses concerning yourselves that ye have chosen the Lord to serve him. Follow, then, the example of the people of Israel, and say, "We are witnesses."

In this our chapter, we have a recital of Joshua's last address, in which he in a moving manner renewed the covenant made with Israel at Sinai, and sought to impress upon their minds the obligations which they had assumed to acknowledge the Lord their God, as
their God, and to serve and fear him: "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve," verse 15. It appears that there were among the children of Israel a promiscuous multitude, who had not come to a conclusion whom they would serve. Joshua, perceiving the evil of this, said to them, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve;" no longer defer your determination; I propose it this day for your decision, whom you will serve, whether the God of your fathers, or the gods of the Amorites. Do as seems good to you, knowing that it will be at the peril of your present and future happiness, that you make an improper choice. Would you know my choice? I announce it to you: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," verse 15. Joshua was not indifferent, (the same was the case with the people of Israel in the days of Elijah; when the people would not resolve whom they would serve, "how long," was the language of the prophet, "halt ye between two opinions?" 1 Kings 18:21. Come, I pray you, to a conclusion whom ye will serve.) The people chose the true God, repeatedly promising uprightly to persevere in his service; "we will serve the Lord," verse 21. This he now reviews, this he recalls to their minds, urging it upon their choice in the words of our text; "And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses," etc.

Two things are here to be noticed:

1. The interrogatory proposal of Joshua to the people of Israel: "Joshua said to the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him."
II. The assent of the people by way of response; "And they said, We are witnesses."

The distinguished person here spoken of is the pious Joshua, the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim—Moses' minister, who, after his death, conducted the people into the promised land; a man of whom it is said, that he was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him, (Deut. 34:9;) so that the spirit of Moses came upon him; in a word, he is that godly and excellent man upon whom the Lord bestowed the honor of being the governor of the people of Israel—of introducing them into the sacred land which the Lord God of their fathers had promised to give them as a pledge of heaven, a type of Christ, and hence called Jesus in the New Testament. (Acts. 7:45. Heb. 4:8.)

Joshua was first called Oshea, but Moses called him Jehoshua, Num. 13:16; that is, the Saviour of the Lord, because ordained by the Lord as an instrument in conferring great benefits upon his people, and delivering them out of the hands of the Canaanites, their enemies; but especially because in achieving this deliverance, he would be an illustrious type of him who with the greatest emphasis would be denominated Jehoshua, or Jesus. (Matt. 1:21; Heb. 4:8.)

Joshua here exhorts the people to serve the true God only. The people promise to do so. Joshua renews the covenant, and appeals to their engagement and assent: "Ye are witnesses concerning yourselves."

We find that men of God, prophets and apostles,
sometimes not only appeal to heaven and earth, but also to men themselves; and rightly, since they possess a conscience, (conjunct knowledge or feeling,) and thus are conscious of their own acts.

In what precedes, they had chosen the Lord: this he here recalls to their thoughts and reminds them of, saying, "Ye have chosen the Lord to serve him." That God who had led them forth from Egypt; the God of Abram, Isaac, and Jacob, who had solemnly made a covenant with them and proffered himself to them as their God—him they had

"Chosen:" hereby is expressed a covenant transaction in which are to be recognized two parties.

The first is the Lord God, as the all-sufficient one, entering into a covenant with man, who is destitute of all things; as good: "The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him," Lam. 3:25; as almighty, "I am the Almighty God," Gen. 17:1; as faithful: "Which keepeth truth for ever," Ps. 146:6; as true and unchangeable, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." (Mal. 3:6.)

The second party are the elect, viewed as miserable, condemned, helpless. (Ezek. 16.)

Unequal parties truly, and yet, oh, wonder! these enter into covenant with each other! On the side of God is the demand, the proffer, and the promise: "Thou shalt be to me a people; serve me only; observe my ways, commandments, statutes, ordinances, and I will be a God to thee." On the sinner's side, are the assent and surrender: he receives God as his God and highest good; chooses him, as we find it
here; engages and yields himself to him. It is as if the Lord said, "Seek my face:" he that enters into covenant with him says, "Thy face, O Lord, I seek," Ps. 27:8; he solemnly declares that he will be the Lord's, pledges himself to him, Isa. 42:5; in a word, he saith, "Behold, here are we, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." This is distinctly represented to us, Deut. 26:17, "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice;" and verse 18, "The Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people." In the covenant the believer chooses God as his portion, the Lord Jesus as his Prophet, Priest, and King; this is the mutual agreement which constitutes the essence of the covenant. But for what purpose had they chosen the Lord?

"To serve him." A service is spoken of as belonging to God. To serve one sometimes signifies to perform that for him to which he is himself incompetent. This, however, can not here apply; for God who made the world and all things that are in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, is not worshipped with men's hands as though he needed any thing; seeing he giveth to all life, breath, and all things. (Acts 17:24, 25.) In this sense we can do God no service. Eliphaz therefore so earnestly inquired, "Can a man be profitable unto God"? (Job 22:2.) Sometimes, it signifies to do that which is acceptable to him; also to do that which we owe and are under obligation to do. These two significations are here included. God
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can and must be served by honest endeavors to perform all that is pleasing to him, and therefore man, as a rational creature, and still more as one who stands in a covenant relation to him, is in the most powerful manner bound to obey the Lord God, and keep his commandments. We hence read of serving God acceptably, (Heb. 12:28,) and of serving the Lord, obeying his voice, and not rebelling against his commandment. (1 Sam. 12:14.)

This they had chosen—to serve the true God, to do his will, to prefer his worship. This Joshua summons to their remembrance, for the people answer and give their assent in our second part.

"We are witnesses"—we have chosen the Lord; we will never forsake him.

There were doubtless many in Israel who did this only in an outward and feigned manner, according to Psalm 78:36, 37; or who rested too much on their own strength; and therefore Joshua warned them with respect to the nature of the service which God requires: "Ye can not serve the Lord; for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God." (Verse 19.)

The words of the text might now readily be employed for the discovery of the multitude of those who are strangers to the covenant, and also to denounce upon them divine threatenings, and inspire them with terror. But I shall assume a different tone, and rather avail myself of the present opportunity to invite and constrain you; the more so for having read of a Scotch divine who, preaching upon the words, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve," besought his hearers with tears; nay, declared to them that he
could not descend from his place until they had without delay complied with the divine requirement. Although I can not profess that I am characterized by the zeal of that worthy man, I desire to follow him, if not with equal steps, yet at a distance.

Attend, then, my hearers, whoever ye be, while I set before you, this day, life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life that both thou and thy seed may live. (Deut. 30:19.) Choose! Here are two masters; whom will ye serve? Many will say, I will do that hereafter; but few, I will do it immediately. There are two masters in the world, but ye can not serve both. Each one has his kingdom; they are mortal enemies. The one is the Lord Christ; the other the devil. There is not a third, and you, whosoever ye may be, make a resolute choice. Whose servants and handmaidens will ye be? Whom do ye receive as your master and ruler? Do ye choose Satan, the god of this world, to do his will, to live in your lusts? Enjoy then your portion to the full: “Rejoice in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes.” Love the world and all that is in the world, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” and as you are marked by the deed, be not ashamed to permit it to be known. Acknowledge and profess the devil to be your lord and master. But no; you will say that is too gross; it may not be; we are Christ’s; Christ is our Lord and King, although we live to ourselves, although we do the will of Satan, although we live a wicked, carnal life, the devil is not our king; Christ
is our King. I reply, he is not; hear it from the mouth of Paul: "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin, unto death, or of obedience, unto righteousness?" Will ye not have Satan for your master and king; and not have your portion in outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth? Renounce then your allegiance to him; forsake his kingdom; abandon his service; pass over into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus, choosing God for your master to serve him; receiving the Lord Jesus as your sovereign King, upon his own terms. Expressly, formally, and devoutly, must you enter into covenant with him. As to this, we have commands and instances in the word of God: "And because of all this, we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our Levites and priests seal unto it. (Neh. 9 : 38.) "One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." (Isa. 44 : 5.) The making of such personal covenants is practised in the Church of Scotland, in addition to the national covenant which nobles and common people, ministers and hearers, have solemnly pledged themselves to observe. A form of the personal covenant we find in "The Christian's Great Interest," by W. Guthrie, to be entered into especially on occasion of the observance of the Lord's Supper. It runs as follows: "I am here, O Lord, this day, to engage in a highly important transaction, for which I have of myself no sufficiency: I therefore beseech thy help. The business in which I
THE SOUL COVENANTING WITH GOD.

would engage is to enter into a covenant with thee; and I pray thee, O Lord, kindly to be a party in the engagement. Say not to me, as in Ps. 50:16, 'What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?' But although thou shouldst, thou art righteous; but I plead thine own word, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Matt. 11:28. O Lord, naught so afflicts me as thine absence, and knowing naught but sin, that can restrain thee from entering into covenant with me, I desire with one of old to say, 'That which I know not, teach thou me. If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.' Job 34:32. O Lord, I have thy promise, and come in thy mercy, and pray that my sins may be blotted out for Christ's sake, and let me approach to thy sacred table to obtain the fulfillment of my strong desires. I call heaven and earth to witness that I prefer thee to all the riches of the world. Help me this day in my preparation to enter into covenant with thee; for of myself I am insufficient for this great undertaking. Thou hast said in thy word that thou wilt receive all that are willing to come unto thee. Now, O Lord, I pray thee that in thy kindness thou wilt be gracious to me, and let not this fast-day be observed in vain; but take to thyself the honor, and be not angry that I make this record, since it is intended to manifest my willingness to enter into covenant. O Lord, I beseech thee not to come unto me at thy table in anger, but in thy mercy manifest unto me thy favor. But rather than thou shouldst be absent, come unto me with chastisements, if but it be not in thy hot dis-
pleasure. I can not express my insufficiency for an approach to thy table; but like Queen Esther, when about to go into the presence of the king, I cast myself upon thy mercy, and say, 'I will go, and if I perish, I perish' at thy feet." Esth. 4:16.

Communicants, have you ever thus entered into covenant with God? Hearers, I this day call heaven and earth to witness that I have sought to incline you. I take the holy angels and yourselves to witness. "Yourselves are witnesses." I take the pious who are here present to witness. I take this book, this New Testament, this pulpit in which I stand, this house in which we are at present assembled, to witness. Let it not appear strange to you that such inanimate objects are appealed to as witnesses, for we see the same was afterward done by Joshua. "And he took a great stone and set it up under an oak, and Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us; it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God." (Verses 26, 27.) Thus also say I: This book, this pulpit, this edifice, this house of God, shall be witness. But if all this be of no avail, then shall I, to my grief, at that great day, be compelled to witness against you.

But ye, true believers, who fear the Lord, and who have so often chosen the Lord for your God, to-day has it been your privilege to renew your covenant with him. Let it hereafter, then, be your great care, that you trample under foot and forsake the world, 1 John 2:15, 16, "Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the
world, the love of the Father is not in him.” This is included in the covenant into which you have entered, and which this day has been sealed to you. Be “God all my delight, my rest, my joy, my fear, the object of my service,” your motto. Seek henceforth also more zealously to serve the Lord, and in all things to live acceptably to him. “Serve him with fear, and rejoice with trembling.” (Ps. 2.) For this purpose have you been delivered out of the hands of your enemies, that you should serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of your life. Let your service henceforth be more spiritual, more fervent, and more upright. We beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, Rom 12:1; and let the partaking of the Lord’s Supper lead you with a pious soul to say: “I have this day partaken of the sacrament and engaged to be the Lord’s. O Lord, make me a faithful servant, (or handmaid,) and suffer not Satan to entice me into sin, for thou art my God, and I am thy servant, (or handmaiden,) solemnly con- secrated to thee. Make me faithful, and help me to do all things in the strength of the Lord Jesus; for with- out him I can do nothing. Amen.