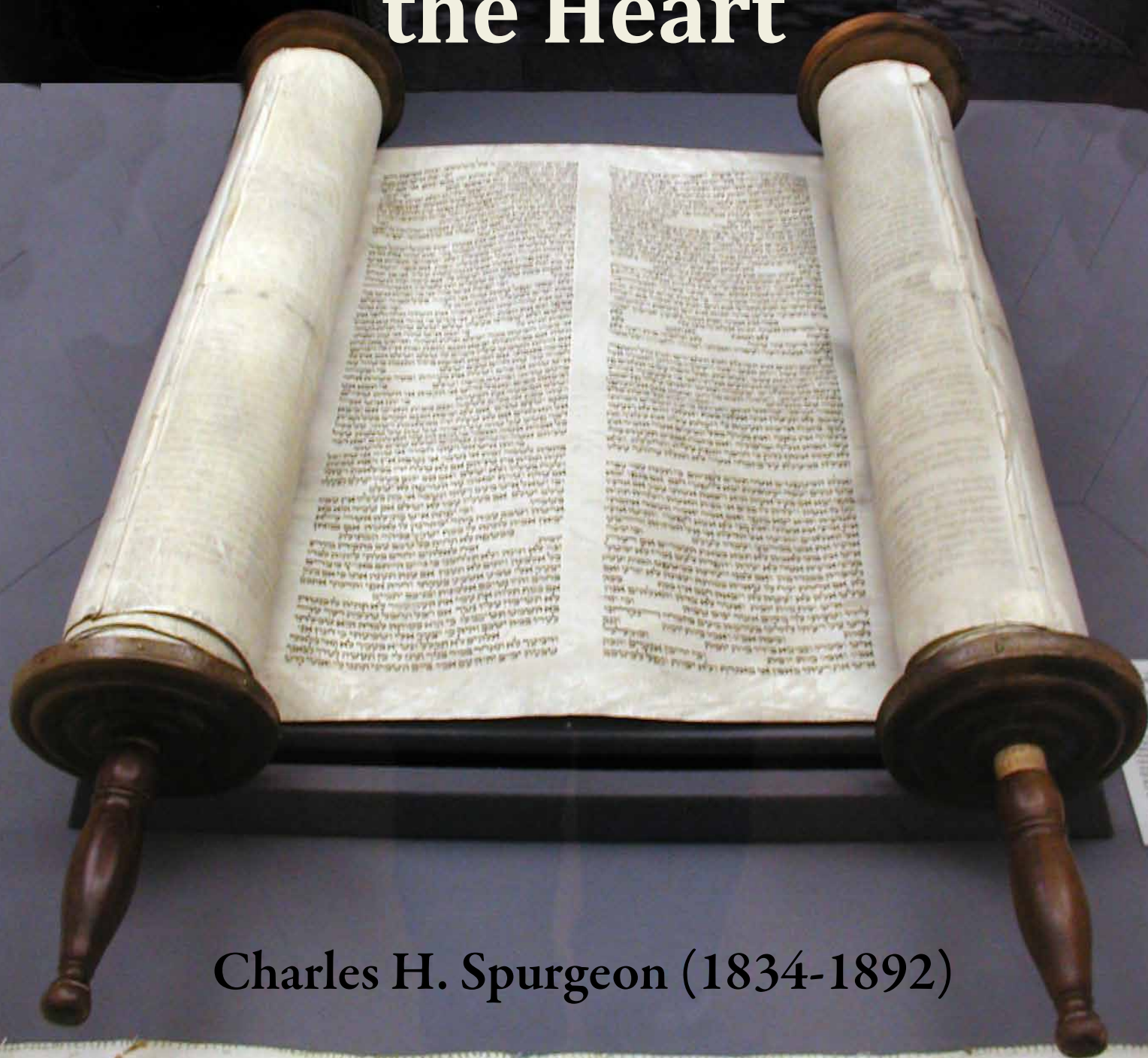


The Perpetuity of the Law & The Law Written on the Heart



Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

THE PERPETUITY OF THE LAW & THE LAW WRITTEN ON THE HEART

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I. The Perpetuity of the Law

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.
—Matthew 5:18

It has been said that he who understands the two covenants is a theologian; and this is, no doubt, true. I may also say that the man who knows the relative positions of the Law and of the gospel has the keys of the situation in the matter of doctrine. The relationship of the Law to myself, and how it condemns me: the relationship of the gospel to myself, and how if I be a believer it justifies me—these are two points which every Christian man should clearly understand. He should not “see men as trees, walking” (Mar 8:24) in this department, or else he may cause himself great sorrow and fall into errors which will be grievous to his heart and injurious to his life. To form a mingle-mangle of Law and gospel is to teach that which is neither Law nor gospel, but the opposite of both. May the Spirit of God be our teacher and the Word of God be our lesson book, and then we shall not err.

Very great mistakes have been made about the Law. Not long ago there were those about us who affirmed that the Law is utterly abrogated and abolished, and they openly taught that believers were not bound to make the Moral Law the rule of their lives. What would have been sin in other men they counted to be no sin in themselves. From such antinomianism as that may God deliver us! We are not under the Law as the method of salvation, but we delight to see the Law in the hand of Christ, and desire to obey the Lord in all things. Others have been met with who have taught that Jesus mitigated and softened down the Law; and they have in effect said that the perfect Law of God was too hard for imperfect beings, and therefore God has given us a milder and easier rule. These tread dangerously upon the verge of terrible error, although we believe that they are little aware of it. Alas, we have met with authors who have gone much further than this, and have railed at the Law. Oh, the hard words that I have sometimes read against the holy Law of God! How very unlike to those which the apostle used when he said, “The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom 7:12). How different from the reverent spirit which made him say, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom 7:22). You know how David loved the Law of God and sang its praises all through the longest of the Psalms. The heart of every real Christian is most reverent towards the Law of the Lord. It is perfect; nay, it is perfection itself. We believe that we shall never have reached perfection till we are perfectly conformed to it. A sanctification which

stops short of perfect conformity to the Law cannot truthfully be called perfect sanctification, for every want of exact conformity to the perfect Law is sin. May the Spirit of God help us while, in imitation of our Lord Jesus, we endeavor to magnify the Law.

I gather from our text two things upon which I shall speak at this time. The first is that *the Law of God is perpetual*: “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.” The meaning is that even in the least point it must abide till all be fulfilled. Secondly, we perceive that the Law must be fulfilled: Not “one jot or one tittle shall...pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” He Who came to bring in the gospel dispensation here asserts that He has not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it.

1. The Law of God Must Be Perpetual.

There is no abrogation of it, nor amendment of it. It is not to be toned down or adjusted to our fallen condition; but every one of the Lord’s righteous judgments abideth forever. I would urge three reasons which will establish this teaching.

In the first place our Lord Jesus declares that He did not come to abolish it. His words are most express: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill” (Mat 5:17). And Paul tells us with regard to the gospel, “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (Rom 3:31). The gospel is the means of the firm establishment and vindication of the Law of God.

Jesus did not come to change the Law, but He came to explain it. And that very fact shows that it remains, for there is no need to explain that which is abrogated. Upon one particular point in which there happened to be a little ceremonialism involved—namely, the keeping of the Sabbath—our Lord enlarged, and showed that the Jewish idea was not the true one. The Pharisees forbade even the doing of works of necessity and mercy, such as rubbing ears of corn to satisfy hunger, and healing the sick. Our Lord Jesus showed that it was not at all according to the mind of God to forbid these things. In straining over the letter, and carrying an outward observance to excess, they had missed the spirit of the Sabbath law, which suggested works of piety such as truly hallow the day. He showed that Sabbatic rest was not mere inaction, and He said, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (Joh 5:17). He pointed to the priests who labored hard at offering sacrifices and said to them, “The priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless” (Mat 12:5). They were doing divine service, and were within the Law. To meet the popular error He took care to do some of His grandest miracles upon the Sabbath day; and though this excited great wrath against Him, as though He were a law-breaker, yet He did it on purpose that they might see that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, and that it is meant to be a day for doing that which honors God and blesses men. Oh, that men knew how to keep the spiritual Sabbath by a ceasing from all servile work,

and from all work done for self! The rest of faith is the true Sabbath, and the service of God is the most acceptable hallowing of the day. Oh, that the day were wholly spent in serving God and doing good! The sum of our Lord's teaching was that works of necessity, works of mercy, and works of piety are lawful on the Sabbath. He did explain the Law in that point and in others, yet that explanation did not alter the command, but only removed the rust of tradition which had settled upon it. By thus explaining the Law He confirmed it; He could not have meant to abolish it, or He would not have needed to expound it.

In addition to explaining it, the Master went further—He pointed out its spiritual character. This the Jews had not observed. They thought, for instance, that the command "Thou shalt not kill" (Exo 20:13) simply forbade murder and manslaughter; but the Savior showed that anger without cause violates the Law, and that hard words and cursing, and all other displays of enmity and malice, are forbidden by the commandment. They knew that they might not commit adultery, but it did not enter into their minds that a lascivious desire would be an offense against the precept till the Savior said, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Mat 5:28). He showed that the thought of evil is sin, that an unclean imagination pollutes the heart, that a wanton wish is guilt in the eyes of the Most High. Assuredly this was no abrogation of Law; it was a wonderful exhibition of its far-reaching sovereignty and of its searching character. The Pharisees fancied that if they kept their hands and their feet and their tongues all was done; but Jesus showed that thought, imagination, desire, memory—everything—must be brought into subjection to the will of God, or else the Law was not fulfilled. What a searching and humbling doctrine is this! If the Law of the Lord reaches to the inward parts, who among us can by nature abide its judgment? "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults" (Psa 19:12).

The Ten Commands are full of meaning—meaning which many seem to ignore. For instance, many a man will allow in and around his house inattention to the rules of health and sanitary precaution; but it does not occur to him that he is trampling on the command, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exo 20:13). Yet this rule forbids our doing anything which may cause injury to our neighbor's health and so deprive him of life. Many a deadly manufactured article, many an ill-ventilated shop, many a business with hours of excessive length, is a standing breach of this command. Shall I say less of drinks, which lead so speedily to disease and death, and crowd our cemeteries with untimely graves? So, too, in reference to another precept: some persons will repeat songs and stories which are suggestive of uncleanness—I wish that this were not so common as it is. Do they not know that an unchaste word, a double meaning, [and] a sly hint of lust all come under the command, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exo 20:14)? It is so according to the teaching of our Lord Jesus.

Oh, talk not to me about our Lord's having brought in a milder law because man could not keep the Decalogue, for He has done nothing of the kind. His "fan is in his

hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor” (Mat 3:12). “Who may abide the day of his coming?...for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap” (Mal 3:2). Let us not dare to dream that God had given us a perfect Law which we poor creatures could not keep, and that therefore He has corrected His legislature, and sent His Son to put us under a relaxed discipline. Nothing of the sort! The Lord Jesus Christ has, on the contrary, shown how intimately the Law surrounds and enters into our inward parts, so as to convict us of sin within even if we seem clear without. Ah me! This Law is high; I cannot attain to it. It everywhere surrounds me; it tracks me to my bed and my board. It follows my steps and marks my ways wherever I may be. No moment does it cease to govern and demand obedience. O God, I am everywhere condemned, for everywhere thy Law reveals to me my serious deviations from the way of righteousness and shows me how far short I come of thy glory. Have thou pity on thy servant, for I fly to the gospel which has done for me what the Law could never do.

*To see the Law by Christ fulfill’d
And hear His pardoning voice,
Changes a slave into a child,
And duty into choice.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in addition to explaining the Law and pointing out its spiritual character, also unveiled its living essence, for when one asked Him, “Which is the great commandment in the law?” (Mat 22:36), He said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Mat 22:37-40). In other words, He has told us, “All the Law is fulfilled in this: thou shalt love.” There is the pith and marrow of it. Does any man say to me, “You see, then, instead of the Ten Commandments we have received the two commandments, and these are much easier.” I answer that this reading of the Law is not in the least easier. Such a remark implies a want of thought and experience. Those two precepts comprehend the ten at their fullest extent, and cannot be regarded as the erasure of a jot or tittle of them. Whatever difficulties surround the Ten Commands are equally found in the two, which are their sum and substance. If you love God with all your heart you must keep the first table; and if you love your neighbor as yourself you must keep the second table.

If any suppose that the law of love is an adaptation of the moral Law to man’s fallen condition, they greatly err. I can only say that the supposed adaptation is no more adapted to us than the original Law. If there could be conceived to be any difference in difficulty, it might be easier to keep the ten than the two; for if we go no deeper than the letter, the two are the more exacting, since they deal with the heart and soul and mind. The Ten Commands mean all that the two express; but if we forget this, and only look at the wording of them, I say, it is harder for a man to love God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength, and his

neighbor as himself than it would be merely to abstain from killing, stealing, and false witness. Christ has not, therefore, abrogated or at all moderated the Law to meet our helplessness; He has left it in all its sublime perfection, as it always must be left, and He has pointed out how deep are its foundations, how elevated are its heights, how measureless are its length and breadth. Like the laws of the Medes and Persians, God's commands cannot be altered; we are saved by another method.

To show that He never meant to abrogate the Law, our Lord Jesus has embodied all its commands in His own life. In His own person there was a nature which was perfectly conformed to the Law of God; and as was His nature such was His life. He could say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (Joh 8:46), and again, "I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (Joh 15:10). I may not say that He was scrupulously careful to keep the Law. I will not put it so, for there was no tendency in Him to do otherwise. He was so perfect and pure, so infinitely good, and so complete in His agreement and communion with the Father, that He in all things carried out the Father's will. The Father said of Him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Mat 17:5). Point out, if you possibly can, any way in which Christ has violated the Law or left it unfulfilled. There was never an unclean thought or rebellious desire in His soul. He had nothing to regret or to retract; it could not be that He should err. He was thrice tempted in the wilderness; and the enemy had the impertinence even to suggest idolatry, but He instantly overthrew the adversary. The prince of this world came to Him, but he found nothing in Him (Joh 14:30).

*My dear Redeemer and my Lord,
I read my duty in thy Word;
But in thy life the Law appears
Drawn out in living characters.*

Now, if that Law had been too high and too hard, Christ would not have exhibited it in His life, but as our exemplar He would have set forth that milder form of law which it is supposed by some theologians He came to introduce. Inasmuch as our leader and exemplar has exhibited to us in His life a perfect obedience to the sacred commands in their undiminished grandeur, I gather that He means it to be the model of our conversation. Our Lord has not taken off a single point or pinnacle from that up-towering alp of perfection. He said at the first, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psa 40:7-8), and well has He justified the writing of the volume of the book. "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal 4:4); and being for our sakes under the Law, He obeyed it to the full, so that now "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom 10:4).

Once more, that the Master did not come to alter the Law is clear, because after having embodied it in His life He willingly gave Himself up to bear its penalty,

though He had never broken it, bearing the penalty for us, even as it is written, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13). “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6). If the Law had demanded more of us than it ought to have done, would the Lord Jesus have rendered to it the penalty which resulted from its too severe demands? I am sure He would not. But because the Law asked only what it ought to ask—namely perfect obedience; and exacted of the transgressor only what it ought to exact, namely, death, as the penalty for sin—death under divine wrath—therefore the Savior went to the tree, and there bore our sins and purged them once for all. He was crushed beneath the load of our guilt and cried, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Mat 26:38), and at last when He had borne—

*All that incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare,*

He bowed His head and said, “It is finished” (Joh 19:30). Our Lord Jesus Christ gave a greater vindication to the Law by dying, because it had been broken, than all the lost in hell can ever give by their miseries; for their suffering is never complete, their debt is never paid. But He has borne all that was due from His people, and the Law is defrauded of nothing. By His death He has vindicated the honor of God’s moral government, and made it just for Him to be merciful. When the lawgiver Himself submits to the Law, when the sovereign Himself bears the extreme penalty of that Law, then is the justice of God set upon such a glorious high throne that all admiring worlds must wonder at it. If therefore it is clearly proven that Jesus was obedient to the Law, even to the extent of death, He certainly did not come to abolish or abrogate it. And if He did not remove it, who can do so? If He declares that He came to establish it, who shall overthrow it?

But, secondly, the Law of God must be perpetual from its very nature, for does it not strike you the moment you think of it that right must always be right, truth must always be true, and purity must always be purity? Before the Ten Commandments were published at Sinai, there was still that same Law of right and wrong laid upon men by the necessity of their being God’s creatures. Right was always right before a single command had been committed to words. When Adam was in the garden, it was always right that he should love his Maker, and it would always have been wrong that he should have been at cross-purposes with his God. And it does not matter what happens in this world, or what changes take place in the universe, it never can be right to lie, or to commit adultery, or murder, or theft, or to worship an idol god. I will not say that the principles of right and wrong are as absolutely self-existent as God; but I do say that I cannot grasp the idea of God Himself as existing apart from His being always holy and always true, so that the very idea of right and wrong seems to me to be necessarily permanent, and cannot possibly be shifted. You cannot bring right down to a lower level; it must be where it always is. Right is right

eternally, and cannot be wrong. You cannot lift up wrong and make it somewhat right; it must be wrong while the world standeth. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not the smallest letter or accent of the moral Law can possibly change. In spirit the Law is eternal.

Suppose for a moment that it were possible to temper and tone down the Law, wherein would it be? I confess I do not know and cannot imagine. If it be perfectly holy, how can it be altered except by being made imperfect? Would you wish for that? Could you worship the God of an imperfect Law? Can it ever be true that God, by way of favoring us, has put us under an imperfect Law? Would that be a blessing or a curse? It is said by some that man cannot keep a perfect Law, and God does not demand that he should. Certain modern theologians have taught this, I hope by inadvertence. Has God issued an imperfect Law? It is the first imperfect thing I ever heard of His making. Does it come to this that, after all, the gospel is a proclamation that God is going to be satisfied with obedience to a mutilated Law? God forbid. I say, better that we perish than that His perfect Law perish. Terrible as it is, it lies at the foundation of the peace of the universe, and must be honored at all hazards. That gone, all goes. When the power of the Holy Ghost convinced me of sin I felt such a solemn awe of the Law of God that I remember well, when I lay crushed beneath it as a condemned sinner, I yet admired and glorified the Law. I could not have wished that perfect Law to be altered for me. Rather did I feel that, if my soul were sent to the lowest hell, yet God was to be extolled for His justice and His Law held in honor for its perfectness. I would not have had it altered even to save my soul. Brethren, the Law of the Lord must stand, for it is perfect and therefore has in it no element of decay or change.

The Law of God is no more than God might most righteously ask of us. If God were about to give us a more tolerant law, it would be an admission on His part that He asked too much at first. Can that be supposed? Was there, after all, some justification for the statement of the wicked and slothful servant when he said, "I feared thee, because thou art an austere man" (Luk 19:21)? It cannot be. For God to alter His Law would be an admission that He made a mistake at first, that He put poor imperfect man (we are often hearing that said) under too rigorous a regime, and therefore He is now prepared to abate His claims and make them more reasonable. It has been said that man's moral inability to keep the perfect Law exempts Him from the duty of doing so. This is very specious,¹ but it is utterly false. Man's inability is not of the kind which removes responsibility; it is moral, not physical. Never fall into the error that moral inability will be an excuse for sin. What, when a man becomes such a liar that he cannot speak the truth, is he thereby exempted from the duty of truthfulness? If your servant owes you a day's labor, is he free from the duty because he has made himself so drunk that he cannot serve you? Is a man freed from a debt by the fact

¹ **specious** – appearing to be true but actually false.

that he has squandered the money, and therefore cannot pay it? Is a lustful man free to indulge his passions because he cannot understand the beauty of chastity? This is dangerous doctrine. The Law is a just one, and man is bound by it though his sin has rendered him incapable of doing so.

The Law moreover demands no more than is good for us. There is not a single commandment of God's Law but what is meant to be a kind of danger signal such as we put up upon the ice when it is too thin to bear. Each commandment does as it were say to us, "Dangerous." It is never for a man's good to do what God forbids him; it is never for man's real and ultimate happiness to leave undone anything that God commands him. The wisest directions for spiritual health, and for the avoidance of evil, are those directions which are given us concerning right and wrong in the Law of God. Therefore it is not possible that there should be any alteration thereof, for it would not be for our good.

I should like to say to any brother who thinks that God has put us under an altered rule: "Which particular part of the Law is it that God has relaxed?" Which precept do you feel free to break? Are you delivered from the command which forbids stealing? My dear sir, you may be a capital theologian, but I should lock up my spoons when you call at my house. Is it the command about adultery which you think is removed? Then I could not recommend your being admitted into any decent society. Is the law as to killing softened down? Then I had rather have your room than your company. Which law is it that God has exempted you from? That law of worshipping Him only? Do you propose to have another god? Do you intend to make graven images? The fact is that when we come to detail we cannot afford to lose a single link of this wonderful golden chain, which is perfect in every part as well as perfect as a whole. The Law is absolutely complete, and you can neither add to it nor take from it. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law" (Jam 2:10-11). If, then, no part of it can be taken down, it must stand, and stand forever.

A third reason I will give why the Law must be perpetual is that to suppose it altered is most dangerous. To take away from the Law its perpetuity is first of all to take away from it its power to convince of sin. Is it so, that I, being an imperfect creature, am not expected to keep a perfect Law? Then it follows that I do not sin when I break the Law; and if all that is required of me is that I am to do according to the best of my knowledge and ability, then I have a very convenient rule indeed, and most men will take care to adjust it so as to give themselves as much latitude as possible. By removing the Law you have done away with sin, "for sin is the transgression of the law," and where there is no Law there is no transgression (1Jo 3:4; Rom 4:15). When you have done away with sin, you may as well have done away with the Savior and with salvation, for they are by no means needful. When you have reduced sin to a

minimum, what need is there of that great and glorious salvation which Jesus Christ has come to bring into the world? Brethren, we must have none of this. It is evidently a way of mischief.

By lowering the Law you weaken its power in the hands of God as a convincer of sin. "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20). It is the looking-glass which shows us our spots, and that is a most useful thing, though nothing but the gospel can wash them away.

*My hopes of heaven were firm and bright,
But since the precept came
With a convincing power and light,
I find how vile I am.
My guilt appear'd but small before,
Till terribly I saw
How perfect, holy, just, and pure
Was thine eternal Law.
Then felt my soul the heavy load;
My sins reviv'd again.
I had provok'd a dreadful God,
And all my hopes were slain.*

It is only a pure and perfect Law that the Holy Spirit can use in order to show to us our depravity and sinfulness. Lower the Law and you dim the light by which man perceives his guilt. This is a very serious loss to the sinner rather than a gain, for it lessens the likelihood of his conviction and conversion.

You have also taken away from the Law its power to shut us up to the faith of Christ. What is the Law of God for? For us to keep in order to be saved by it? Not at all. It is sent in order to show us that we cannot be saved by works, and to shut us up to be saved by grace. But if you make out that the Law is altered so that a man can keep it, you have left him his old legal hope, and he is sure to cling to it. You need a perfect Law that shuts man right up to hopelessness apart from Jesus, puts him into an iron cage and locks him up, and offers him no escape but by faith in Jesus. Then he begins to cry, "Lord, save me by grace, for I perceive that I cannot be saved by my own works." This is how Paul describes it to the Galatians: "The scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal 3:22-24). I say you have deprived the gospel of its ablest auxiliary when you have set aside the Law. You have taken away from it the schoolmaster that is to bring men to Christ. No, it must stand, and stand in all its terrors, to drive men away from self-righteousness and constrain them to fly to Christ. They will never accept grace till they tremble before a

just and holy Law; therefore the Law serves a most necessary and blessed purpose, and it must not be removed from its place.

To alter the Law is to leave us without any Law at all. A sliding-scale of duty is an immoral invention, fatal to the principles of law. If each man is to be accepted because he does his best, we are all doing our best. Is there anybody that is not? If we take their words for it, all our fellow-men are doing as well as they can, considering their imperfect natures. Even the harlot in the streets has some righteousness—she is not quite so far gone as others. Have you never heard of the bandit who committed many murders, but who felt that he had been doing his best because he never killed anybody on a Friday? Self-righteousness builds itself a nest even in the worst character. This is the man's talk: "Really, if you knew me, you would say, I have been a good fellow to do as well as I have. Consider what a poor, fallen creature I am, what strong passions were born in me, what temptations to vice beset me, and you will not blame me much. After all, I dare say God is as satisfied with me as with many who are a great deal better, because I had so few advantages." Yes, you have shifted the standard, and every man will now do that which is right in his own eyes and claim to be doing his best. If you shift the standard pound weight or the bushel measure, you will certainly never get full weight or measurement again. There will be no standard to go by, and each man will do his best with his own pounds and bushels. If the standard be tampered with, you have taken away the foundation upon which trade is conducted; and it is the same in soul matters—abolish the best rule that ever can be, even God's own Law, and there is no rule left worthy of the name.

What a fine opening this leaves for vain glory! No wonder that men talk of perfect sanctification if the Law has been lowered. There is nothing at all remarkable in our getting up to the rule if it is conveniently lowered for us. I believe I shall be perfectly sanctified when I keep God's Law without omission or transgression, but not till then. If any man says that he is perfectly sanctified because he has come up to a modified law of his own, I am glad to know what he means, for I have no longer any discussion with him. I see nothing wonderful in his attainment. Sin is my want of conformity to the Law of God, and until we are perfectly conformed to that Law in all its spiritual length and breadth it is idle for us to talk about perfect sanctification. No man is perfectly clean till he accepts absolute purity as the standard by which he is to be judged. So long as there is in us any coming short of the perfect Law we are not perfect. What a humbling truth this is! The Law shall not pass away, but it must be fulfilled. This truth must be maintained; for if it goes, our tacklings are loose; we cannot well strengthen the mast; the ship goes all to pieces; she becomes a total wreck. The gospel itself would be destroyed could you destroy the Law. To tamper with the Law is to trifle with the gospel. "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Mat 5:18).

2. The Law of God Must Be Fulfilled.

I come to show, secondly, that the Law must be fulfilled. I hope there are some in this place who are saying, "We cannot fulfill it." That is exactly where I want to bring you. Salvation by the works of the Law must be felt to be impossible by every man who would be saved. We must learn that salvation is of grace through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord, and not by our own doings or feelings. But this is a doctrine no one will receive till he has learned the previous truth that salvation by the works of the Law can never come to any man of woman born. Yet the Law must be fulfilled. Many will say with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" (Joh 3:9). I answer, the Law is fulfilled in Christ, and by faith we receive the fruit thereof.

First, as I have already said, the Law is fulfilled in the matchless sacrifice of Jesus Christ. If a man has broken a law, what does the Law do with him? It says, "I must be honored. You have broken my command which was sanctioned by the penalty of death. Inasmuch as you did not honor me by obedience, but dishonored me by transgression, you must die." Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the great covenant representative of His people, their second Adam, stood forward on the behalf of all who are in Him, and presented Himself as a victim to divine justice. Since His people were guilty of death, He, as their covenant head, came under death in their place and stead. It was a glorious thing that such representative death was possible, and it was only so because of the original constitution of the race as springing from a common father, and placed under a single head. Inasmuch as our fall was by one Adam, it was possible for us to be raised by another Adam. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1Co 15:22). It became possible for God, upon the principle of representation, to allow of substitution. Our first Fall was not by our personal fault, but through the failure of our representative; and now in comes our second and grander representative, the Son of God, and He sets us free, not by our honoring the Law, but by His doing so. He came under the Law by His birth, and being found as a man loaded with the guilt of all His people, He was visited with its penalty. The Law lifts its bloody axe, and it smites our glorious Head that we may go free. It is the Son of God that keeps the Law by dying, the just for the unjust (1Pe 3:18). "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Eze 18:4, 20)—there is death demanded; and in Christ death is presented. Life for life is rendered—an infinitely precious life instead of the poor lives of men. Jesus has died; and so the Law has been fulfilled by the endurance of its penalty; and being fulfilled, its power to condemn and punish the believer has passed away.

Secondly, the Law has been fulfilled again for us by Christ in His life. I have already gone over this, but I want to establish you in it. Jesus Christ as our head and representative came into the world for the double purpose of bearing the penalty and at the same time keeping the Law. One of His main designs in coming to earth was to bring in perfect righteousness. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sin-

ners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Rom 5:19). The Law requires a perfect life; and he that believeth in Jesus Christ presents to the Law a perfect life, which he has made his own by faith. It is not his own life, but Christ is made of God unto us righteousness, even to us who are one with Him (1Co 1:30). “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth” (Rom 10:4). That which Jesus did is counted as though we did it, and because He was righteous God sees us in Him and counts us righteous upon the principle of substitution and representation. Oh, how blessed it is to put on this robe and to wear it, and so to stand before the Most High in a better righteousness than ever His Law demanded; for that demanded the perfect righteousness of a creature, but we put on the absolute righteousness of the Creator Himself, and what can the Law ask more? It is written, “In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called—THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer 23:6). “The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness’ sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honorable” (Isa 42:21).

Ay, but that is not all. The Law has to be fulfilled in us personally in a spiritual and gospel sense. “Well,” say you, “but how can that be?” I reply in the words of our apostle: “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh...,” Christ has done and is doing by the Holy Spirit, “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom 8:3, 4). Regeneration is a work by which the Law is fulfilled; for when a man is born again there is placed in him a new nature, which loves the Law of God and is perfectly conformed thereto. The new nature which God implants in every believer at the time he is born again is incapable of sin; it cannot sin, for it is born of God. That new nature is the offspring of the eternal Father, and the Spirit of God dwells in it and with it, and strengthens it. It is light. It is purity. It is according to the Scripture the living and incorruptible seed “which liveth and abideth for ever” (1Pe 1:23). If incorruptible, it is sinless; for sin is corruption, and corrupts everything that it touches. The apostle Paul, when describing his inward conflicts, showed that he himself, his real and best self, did keep the Law; for he says, “So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God” (Rom. 7:25). He consented to the Law that it was good, which showed that he was on the side of the Law. And though sin that dwelt in his members led him into transgression; yet his new nature did not allow it, but hated and loathed it and cried out against it as one in bondage. The newborn soul delights in the Law of the Lord, and there is within it a quenchless life which aspires after absolute perfection and will never rest till it pays to God perfect obedience and comes to be like God Himself.

This which is begun in regeneration is continued and grows till it ultimately arrives at absolute perfection. That will be seen in the world to come; and oh, what a fulfillment of the Law will be there! The Law will admit no man to heaven till he is perfectly conformed to it, but every believer shall be in that perfect condition. Our nature shall be refined from all its dross and be as pure gold. It will be our delight in

heaven to be holy. There will be nothing about us then to kick against a single commandment. We shall there know in our own hearts the glory and excellency of the divine will, and our will shall run in the same channel. We shall not imagine that the precepts are rigorous; they will be our own will as truly as they are God's will. Nothing which God has commanded—however much of self-denial it requires now—will require any self-denial from us then. Holiness will be our element, our delight. Our nature will be entirely conformed to the nature and mind of God as to holiness and goodness; and then the Law will be fulfilled in us, and we shall stand before God, having washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and at the same time being ourselves without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing (Rev 7:14; Eph 5:27). Then shall the Law of the Lord have eternal honor from our immortal being. Oh, how we shall rejoice in it! We delight in it after the inward man now, but then we shall delight in it as to our risen bodies which shall be charmed to be instruments of righteousness unto God forever and ever. No appetite of those risen bodies, no want and no necessity of them, shall then lead the soul astray; but our whole body, soul, and spirit shall be perfectly conformed unto the Divine mind. Let us long and pant for this. We shall never attain it except by believing in Jesus. Perfect holiness will never be reached by the works of the Law; for works cannot change the nature. But by faith in Jesus, and the blessed work of His Holy Spirit, we shall have it; and then I believe it will be among our songs of glory that heaven and earth pass away, but the word of God and the Law of God shall stand fast forever and ever (Isa 40:8; Mat 24:35). Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen.

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II. The Law Written on the Heart

“After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.”
—Jeremiah 31:33

Last Lord’s Day morning we spoke of the first great blessing of the covenant of grace, namely, the full forgiveness of sins. Then we dilated with delight upon that wonderful promise, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 8:12). I hope our consciences were pacified and our hearts filled with wonder as we thought of God’s casting behind His back all the sins of His people, so that we could sing with David, “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities” (Psa 103:1-3). This great blessing of pardoned sin is always connected with the renewal of the heart. It is not given because of the change of heart, but it is always given with the change of heart. If God takes away the guilt of sin, He is sure at the same time to remove the power of sin. If He puts away our offenses against His Law, He also makes us desire in future to obey the Law.

In our text we observe the excellence and dignity of the Law of God. The gospel has not come into the world to set aside the Law. Salvation by grace does not erase a single precept of the Law, nor lower the standard of justice in the smallest degree. On the contrary, as Paul says, we do not “make void the law through faith,” but “we establish the law” (Rom 3:31). The Law is never honored by fallen man till he comes from under its condemning rule and walks by faith and lives under the covenant of grace. When we were under the covenant of works we dishonored the Law, but now we venerate it as a perfect display of moral rectitude. Our Lord Jesus has shown to an assembled universe that the Law is not to be trifled with, and that every transgression and disobedience must receive a just recompense of reward, since the sin which He bore on our account brought upon Him, as our innocent substitute, the doom of suffering and death (Heb 2:2). Our Lord Jesus has testified by His death that, even if sin be pardoned, yet it is not put away without an expiatory sacrifice. The death of Christ rendered more honor to the Law than all the obedience of all who were ever under it could have rendered; and it was a more forcible vindication of eternal justice than if all the redeemed had been cast into hell. When the Holy One smites His own Son, His wrath against sin is evident to all. But this is not enough. The Law is in the gospel not only vindicated by the sacrifice of Christ, but it is honored by the work of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of men. Whereas under the old covenant the com-

mands of the Law excited our evil natures to rebellion, under the covenant of grace we consent unto the Law that it is good; and our prayer is, “Teach me to do thy will, O Lord.” What the Law could not do because of the weakness of the flesh, the gospel has done through the Spirit of God (Rom 8:3). Thus the Law is had in honor among believers; and though they are no more under it as a covenant of works, they are in a measure conformed to it as they see it in the life of Christ Jesus, and they delight in it after the inward man. Things required by the Law are bestowed by the gospel. God demands obedience under the Law; God works obedience under the gospel. Holiness is asked of us by the Law; holiness is wrought in us by the gospel, so that the difference between the economies of Law and gospel is not to be found in any diminution of the demands of the Law, but in the actual giving unto the redeemed that which the Law exacted of them, and in the working in them that which the Law required.

Notice, beloved friends, that under the old covenant the Law of God was given in a most awe-inspiring manner, and yet it did not secure loyal obedience. God came to Sinai, and the mountain “was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly” (Exo 19:18). “So terrible was the sight” of God manifesting Himself on Sinai that even “Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake” (Heb 12:21). Out of the thick darkness which covered the sublime summit there came forth the sound of a trumpet, waxing exceeding loud and long, and a voice proclaimed one by one the ten great statutes and ordinances of the moral Law. I think I see the people at a distance, with bounds set about the mount, crouching with abject fear, and at last entreating that these words might not be spoken to them any more. So terrible was the sound of Jehovah’s voice, even when He was not declaring vengeance, but simply expounding righteousness, that the people could not endure it any longer; and yet no permanent impression was left upon their minds—no obedience was shown in their lives. Men may be cowed by power, but they can only be converted by love. The sword of justice hath less power over human hearts than the scepter of mercy.

Further to preserve that Law, God Himself inscribed it upon two tables of stone, and He gave these tablets into the hands of Moses. What a treasure! Surely no particles of matter had hitherto been so honored as these slabs, which had been touched by the finger of God and bore on them the legible impress of His mind. But these laws on stone were not kept; neither the stones nor the laws were revered. Moses had not long gone up into the mount before the once awe-struck people were bowing before the golden calf, forgetful of Sinai and its solemn voice, and making to themselves the likeness of an ox that eateth grass (Psa 106:20), and bowing before it as the symbol of the Godhead. When Moses came down from the hill with those priceless tablets in his hands, he saw the people wholly given up to base idolatry; and in his indignation he dashed the tablets to the ground and broke them in pieces, as well he

might when he saw how the people had spiritually broken them and violated every word of the Most High.

From all which I gather that the Law is never really obeyed as the result of servile fear. You may preach up the anger of God, and the terrors of the world to come, but these do not melt the heart to loyal obedience. It is needful for other ends that man should know of God's resolve to punish sin, but the heart is not by that fact won to virtue. Man revolts yet more and more; so stubborn is he that the more he is commanded the more he rebels. The Decalogue upon your church walls and in your daily service has its ends, but it can never be operative upon men's lives until it is also written on their hearts. Tables of stone are hard, and men count obedience to God's Law to be a hard thing. The commands are judged to be stony while the heart is stony, and men harden themselves because the way of the precept is hard to their evil minds. Stones are proverbially cold, and the Law seems a cold, chill thing, for which we have no love as long as the appeal is to our fears. Tablets of stone, though apparently durable, can readily enough be broken, and so can God's commands. So are they indeed broken every day by us, and those who have the clearest knowledge of the will of God nevertheless offend against Him. As long as they have nothing to keep them in check but a servile dread of punishment, or a selfish hope of reward, they yield no loyal homage to the statutes of the Lord.

At this time I have to show you the way in which God secures to Himself obedience to His Law in quite another fashion, not by thundering it out from Sinai; nor by engraving it upon tablets of stone; but by coming in gentleness and infinite compassion into the hearts of men, and there, upon fleshy tables, inscribing the commands of His Law in such a manner that they are joyfully obeyed, and men become the willing servants of God.

This is the second great privilege of the covenant—not second in value, but in order—"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases" (Psa 103:3). It is thus described by Ezekiel: "And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Eze 36:27). In the Epistle to the Hebrews we have it in another form, and we read it thus: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Heb 8:8-10). This is so inestimably precious that you who know the Lord are longing for it, and it is your great delight that it is to be wrought in you by the sovereign grace of God.

We shall, first of all, look at the tablets—"I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts"; secondly, at the writing; thirdly, at the writer; and, fourthly, at the results which come of this wondrous writing. Oh, that the Spirit Who is promised to lead us into all truth may illuminate us now!

1. The Tablets upon Which God Writes His Law

"I will put my law in their inward parts." Just as once He put the two tables into the ark of gopher wood, so He will put His holy Law into our inward nature, and enclose it in our thoughts and minds and memories and affections, as a jewel in a casket. Then He adds, "And [I will] write it in their hearts." Just as the holy words were engraven upon stone, so shall they now be written in the heart, in the handwriting of the Lord Himself. Mark that the Law is written not on the heart, but in the heart, in the very texture and constitution of it, so that into the center and core of the soul obedience shall be infused as a vital principle.

Thus, you see, the Lord has selected for His tablets that which is the seat of life. It is in the heart that life is to be found, a wound there is fatal. Where the seat of life is, there the seat of obedience shall be. In the heart, life has its permanent palace and perpetual abode; and God saith that, instead of writing His holy Law on stones which may be left at a distance, He will write it on the heart, which must always be within us. Instead of placing the Law upon phylacteries which can be bound between the eyes but may easily be taken off, He will write it in the heart, where it must always remain. He has bidden His people write His laws upon the posts of their doors and upon their gates (Deut 6:9); but in those conspicuous places they might become so familiar as to be unnoticed. The Lord now Himself writes them where they must always be noted and always produce effect. If men have the precepts written in the abode of their life, they live with the Law and cannot live without it. It is a wonderful thing that God should do this. It displays infinitely greater wisdom than if the Law had been inscribed on slabs of granite or engraven on plates of gold. What wisdom is this which operates upon the original spring of life, so that all that flows forth from man shall come from a sanctified fountain-head!

Observe next, that not only is the heart the seat of life, but it is the governing power. It is from the heart, as from a royal metropolis, that the imperial commands of the man are issued by which hand and foot, and eye and tongue, and all the members are ordered. If the heart be right, then the other powers must yield submission to its sway and become right too. If God writes His Law upon the heart, then the eye will purify its glances, and the tongue will speak according to rule, and the hand will move and the foot will travel as God ordains. When the heart is fully influenced by God's Spirit, then the will and the intellect, the memory and the imagination, and everything else which makes up the inward man comes under cheerful allegiance to the King of kings. God Himself saith, "Give me thine heart" (Prov 23:26); for the

heart is the key of the entire position. Hence the supreme wisdom of the Lord in setting up His Law where it becomes operative upon the entire man.

But before God can write upon man's heart it must be prepared. It is most unfit to be a writing-table for the Lord until it is renewed. The heart must first of all undergo erasures. What is written on the heart already some of us know to our deep regret. Original sin has cut deep lines. Satan has scored his horrible handwriting in black letters, and our evil habits have left their impressions. How can the Lord write there? No one would expect the holy God to inscribe His holy Law upon an unholy mind. The former things must be taken away, that there may be clear space upon which new and better things may be engraven. But who can erase these lines? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jer 13:23). The God Who can take away the spots from the leopard and the blackness from the Ethiopian can also remove the evil lines which now deface the heart.

As the heart must undergo erasure, it must also experience a thorough cleansing, not of the surface only, but of its entire fabric. Truly, brethren, it was far easier for Hercules to purge the Augean stables than for our hearts to be purged; for the sin that lies within us is not an accumulation of external defilement, but an inward, all-pervading corruption. The taint of secret and spiritual evil is in man's natural life; every pulse of his soul is disordered by it. The eggs of all crimes are within our being. The accursed virus, from whose deadly venom every foul design will come, is present in the soul. Not only tendency to sin, but sin itself hath taken possession of the soul and blackened and polluted it through and through, till there is not a fiber of the heart untinged with iniquity. God cannot write His Law in our inward parts till with water and with blood He has purged us. Tables on which the Lord shall write must be clean, therefore the heart on which God is to engrave His Law must be a cleansed heart; and it is a great joy to perceive that from the person of our Lord heart-cleansing blood and water flowed, so that the provision is equal to the necessity. Blessed be the name of our gracious God! He knows how to erase the evil and to cleanse the soul through His Holy Spirit's applying the work of Jesus to us.

In addition to this, the heart needs to be softened; for the heart is naturally hard, and in some men it has become harder than an adamant stone. They have resisted God's love till they are impervious to it. They have stood out obstinately against God's will till they have become desperately set on mischief and nothing can affect them. God must melt the heart and must transform it from granite into flesh; and He has the power to do it. Blessed be His name! According to the covenant of grace, He has promised to work this wonder, and He will.

Nor would the softening be enough, for there are some who have a tenderness of the most deceiving kind. They receive the word with joy (Luk 8:13). They feel every expression of it, but they speedily go their way and forget what manner of men they

are (Jam 1:24). They are as impressible as the water; but the impression is as soon removed, so that another change is needed, namely, to make them retentive of that which is good. Else might you engrave and re-engrave; but, like an inscription upon wax, it would be gone in a moment if exposed to heat. The devil, the world, and the temptations of life would soon erase out of the heart all that God had written there if He did not create it anew with the faculty of holding fast that which is good.

In a word, the heart of man needs to be totally changed, even as Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again" (Joh 3:7). Dear hearers, we preach to you that whosoever believeth in Christ hath everlasting life, and we speak neither more nor less than the truth of God when we say so (Joh 3:36); but yet, believe us, there must be as great a change in the heart as if a man were slain and made alive again. There must be a new creation, a resurrection from the dead. Old things must pass away, and all things must become new (2Co 5:17). God's Law can never be written upon the old natural heart. There must be a new and spiritual nature given; and then, upon the center of that new life, upon the throne of that new power within our life, God will set up the proclamation of His blessed will, and what He commands shall be done. So, then, you see these tablets are not so easily written upon as perhaps at the first we thought. If God is to write the Law upon the heart, the heart must be prepared; and in order to being prepared, it must be entirely renewed by a miracle of mercy, such as can only be wrought by that omnipotent hand which made both heaven and earth.

2. The Writing of the Law on the Heart

Secondly, let us pass on to notice the writing. "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." What is this writing? First, the *matter* of it is the Law of God. God writes upon the hearts of His people that which is already revealed. He inscribes there nothing novel and unrevealed, but His own will which He has already given us in the book of the Law. He writes upon the heart by gracious operation that which He has already written in the Bible by gracious revelation. He writes not philosophy, nor imagination, nor superstition, nor fanaticism, nor idle fancies. If any man says to me, "God has written such and such a thing on my heart," I reply, "Show me it in the Book"; for if it be not according to the other Scriptures it is not a scripture of God. A fancy as to a man's being a prophet, or a prince, or an angel, may be on a man's heart, but God did not write it there, for His own declaration is, "I will put my law...in their hearts," and He speaks not of anything beyond. The nonsense of modern pretenders to prophecy is no writing of God. It would be a dishonor to a sane man to ascribe it to him. How can it be of the Lord? He here promises to write His own Law on the heart, but nothing else. Be you content to have the Law written on your soul, and wander not into vain imaginings lest you receive a strong delusion to believe a lie.

Observe, however, that God says He will write His whole Law on the heart; this is included in the words, “my law.” God’s work is complete in all its parts, and beautifully harmonious. He will not write one command and leave out the rest as so many do in their reforms. They become indignant in their virtue against a particular sin, but they riot in other evils. Drunkenness is to them the most damnable of all transgressions, but covetousness and uncleanness they wink at. They denounce theft, and yet defraud; cry out against pride, and yet indulge envy. Thus they are partial and do the work of the Lord deceitfully. It must not be so. God does not set before us a partial holiness, but the whole moral Law. “I will...write it in their hearts.” Human reforms are generally lopsided, but the Lord’s work of grace is balanced and proportionate. The Lord writes the perfect Law in the hearts of men because He intends to produce perfect men.

Mark, again, that on the heart there is written not the Law toned down and altered, but “my law,” that very same Law which was at first written on the heart of man unfallen. Paul says of natural men that they “shew the work of the law written in their hearts” (Rom 2:15). There is enough of light left on the conscience to condemn men for most of their iniquities. The original record of the Law upon man’s heart at his creation has been injured and almost obliterated by man’s Fall and his subsequent transgressions; but the Lord, in renewing the heart, makes the writing fresh and vivid, even the writing of the first principles of righteousness and truth.

But to come a little closer to the matter, what does the Scripture mean by writing the Law of God in the heart? The writing itself includes a great many things. A man who has the Law of God written on his heart, first of all, knows it. He is instructed in the ordinances and statutes of the Lord. He is an illuminated person, and no longer one of those who know not the Law and are cursed (Joh 7:49). God’s Spirit has taught him what is right and what is wrong. He knows this by heart; and therefore can no longer put darkness for light, and light for darkness. This Law, next, abides upon his memory. When he had it only upon a tablet he must needs go into his house to look at it, but now he carries it about with him in his heart, and knows at once what will be right and what will be wrong. God has given him a touchstone by which he tries things.

He finds that “all is not gold that glitters,” and all is not holy which pretends to that character. He separates the precious from the vile (Jer 15:19), and does this habitually; for his knowledge of God’s Law and his memory of it are attended by a discernment of spirit which God has wrought in him, so that he quickly discerns what is according to the mind of God and what is not. Now this is a great point; for some things are commonly done by men which they will even defend and say that there is no wrong in them, but according to the divine rule they are utterly unjust. God’s people judge these things, and take no pleasure in them. A sacred instinct warns the believer of the approach of sin. Long before public sentiment has proclaimed a hue and cry against questionable practices, the Christian man, even if deluded for a while

by current custom, yet feels a trembling and an uneasiness. Even if he consents outwardly, being overborne by general opinion, a something within protests and leads him to consider whether the matter can be defended. As soon as he detects the evil, he shrinks from it. It is a grand thing to possess a universal detector, so that, go where you may, you are not dependent upon the judgment of others, and therefore are not deceived as multitudes are. This, however, is only a part of the matter, and a very small part comparatively.

The Law is written on a man's heart further than this—when he consents unto the Law that it is good (Rom 7:16); when his conscience, being restored, cries, "Yes, that is so and ought to be so. That command by which God has forbidden a certain course is a proper and prudent command; it ought to be enjoined." It is a hopeful sign when a man no longer wishes that the divine commands were other than they are, but confirms them by the verdict of his judgment. Are there not men who in their anger wish that killing were no murder? Are there not others who do not steal, and yet wish they might take their neighbors' goods? Are there not many who wish that fornication and adultery were not vices? This proves that their hearts are depraved.

But it is not so with the regenerate. They would not have the Law altered on any account. Their vote is with the Law. They regard it as the guardian of society, the basis on which the peace of the universe can alone be built, for only by righteousness can any order of things be established. If we could possess the wisdom of God, we should make just that Law which God has made; for the Law is holy and just and good, and promotes man's highest advantage. It is a great thing when a man gets as far as that.

But, furthermore, there is wrought in the heart by God a love to the Law as well as a consent to it, such a love that the man thanks God that He has given him such a fair and lovely representation of what perfect holiness would be; that He has given such measuring lines, by which he knows how a house is to be builded in which God can dwell. Thus thanking the Lord, his prayer, desire, longing, hungering, and thirsting are after righteousness, that he may in all things be according to the mind of God. It is a glorious thing when the heart delights itself in the Law of the Lord, and finds therein its solace and pleasure. The Law is fully written on the heart when a man takes pleasure in holiness and feels a deep pain whenever sin approaches him. Oh, my dear friend, the Lord has done great things for you when every evil thing is obnoxious to you. Even though you fall into sin through the infirmity of your flesh, yet if it causes you intense agony and sorrow it is because God has written His Law in your heart. Even though you cannot be as holy as you want to be, yet if the ways of holiness are your pleasure, if they are the very element in which you live as much as the fish lives in the sea, then you are the subject of a very wonderful change of heart.

It is not so much what you do as what you delight to do, which becomes the clearest test of your character. Many strictly religious people who go to and fro to church and chapel would be uncommonly glad if they did not feel bound to do so. Is not their public worship a dead formality? A great many people have family prayers and private prayers who wish they could be rid of the nuisance. Is there any religion in bodily exercises which are burdensome to the heart? Nothing is acceptable to God until it is acceptable to yourself. God will not receive your sacrifice unless you offer it willingly. How contrary this is to the notion of many; for they say, "You see, I deny myself by going so many times to a place of worship and by private prayer; therefore I must be truly religious." The very reverse is far nearer the truth. When it becomes a misery to serve God, then indeed the heart is far away from spiritual health; for when the heart is renewed, it delights to worship and serve the Lord. Instead of saying, "I would omit prayer if I could," the regenerate mind cries, "I wish I could be always praying." Instead of saying, "I would keep away from the assembly of God's people if I could," the newborn nature wishes like David to "dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (Psa 23:6). This is a great evidence of the writing of the Law upon the heart, when holiness becomes a pleasure, and sin becomes a sorrow. When this is done, what great things God has done for us!

The main point of the whole is this, that whereas our nature was once contrary to the Law of God, so that whatever God forbade we at once desired, and whatever God commanded we therefore began to dislike, the Holy Spirit comes and changes our nature, and makes it congruous to the Law, so that now whatsoever God forbids we forbid, whatsoever God commands, our will commands. How much better to have the Law written upon the heart than upon tables of stone!

If anybody should inquire how the Lord keeps the writing upon the heart legible, I should like to spend a minute or two in showing the process. How the Holy Ghost first writes the Law on the heart I cannot tell. The outward means are the preaching of the Word and the reading of it; but how the Holy Ghost directly operates on the soul we do not know. It is one of the great mysteries of grace.

This much we know within ourselves, that whereas we were blind now we see (Joh 9:25), and whereas we abhorred the Law of God we now feel an intense delight in it. That the Holy Ghost wrought this change we also know, but how He did it remains unknown. That part of His holy office which we can discern is done according to the usual laws of mental operation. He enlightens by knowledge, convinces by argument, leads by persuasion, strengthens by instruction, and so forth. So far also we know that one way by which the Law is kept written upon a Christian's heart is that there is a sense of God's presence. The believer feels that he could not sin with God looking on. It would need a brazen face for a man to play the traitor in the presence of a king; such things are done "under the rose," as men word it, but not before the monarch's face. So the Christian feels that he dwells in God's sight, and this forbids him to disobey. The eye of the heavenly Father is the best monitor of the child of God.

Next, the Christian has a lively sense within him of the degradation which sin once brought upon him. If there is one thing I never can forget personally, it is the horror of my heart while I was yet under sin. God revealed my state to me. Ah, friends, the old proverb that a burnt child dreads the fire has an intensity of truth about it in the case of one who has ever been burnt by sin so as to be driven to despair by it. He hates it with a perfect hatred, and by that means God writes the Law upon his heart.

But a sense of love is a yet more powerful factor. Let a man know that God loves him. Let him feel sure that God always did love him from before the foundations of the world, and he must try to please God. Let him be assured that the Father loved him so much as to give His only begotten Son to die that he might live through Him (Joh 3:16), and he must love God and hate evil. A sense of pardon, of adoption, and of God's sweet favor both in providence and in grace, must sanctify man. He cannot willfully offend against such love. On the contrary, he feels himself bound to obey God in return for such unsearchable grace; and thus by a sense of love doth God write His Law upon the hearts of His people.

Another very powerful pen with which the Lord writes is to be found in the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we see Jesus spit upon, and scourged, and crucified, we feel that we must hate sin with all the intensity of our nature. Can you count the purple drops of His redeeming blood and then go back to live in the iniquity which cost the Lord so dear? Impossible! The death of Christ writes the Law of God very deeply upon the central heart of man. The cross is the crucifier of sin.

Besides that, God actually establishes His holy Law in the throne of the heart by giving to us a new and heavenly life. There is within a Christian an immortal principle which cannot sin because it is born of God, and cannot die, for it is the living and incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth forever (1Jo 3:9; 1Pe 1:23). In regeneration there is imparted to us a something altogether foreign to our corrupt nature. A divine principle is dropped into the soul which can neither be corrupted nor made to die, and by this means the Law is written on the heart. I do not pretend to explain the process of regeneration, but for certain it involves a divine life implanted of the Holy Spirit.

Once more, the Holy Ghost Himself dwells in believers. I pray you, never forget this marvelous doctrine: that as truly as ever God dwelt in human flesh in the person of the God-man Mediator, so truly doth the Holy Ghost dwell in the bodies of all redeemed men and women who have been born again. And by the force of that indwelling, He keeps the mind forever permeated with holiness, forever subservient to the will of the Most High.

3. The One Who Writes the Law upon the Heart

Now we turn for just a minute to think of the Writer. Who is it that writes the Law upon the heart? It is God Himself. "I will do it," saith He. Note, first, that He has

a right to indite² His Law on the heart. He made the heart; it is His tablet. Let Him write there whatever He wills. As clay in the hands of the potter, so are we in His hands (Jer 18:6).

Note, next, that He alone can write the Law on the heart. It will never be written there by any other hand. The Law of God is not to be written on the heart by human power. Alas, how often have I expounded the Law of God and the gospel of God, but I have got no further than the ear. Only the living God can write upon the living heart. This is noble work; angels themselves cannot attain to it. "This is the finger of God" (Exo 8:19). As God alone can write there and must write there, so He alone shall have the glory of that writing when once it is perfected.

When God writes, He writes perfectly. You and I make blots and errors. There needs to be a list of errata at the end of every human piece of writing; but when God writes, blots or mistakes are out of the question. No holiness can excel the holiness produced by the Holy Spirit when His inward work is fully completed.

Moreover, He writes indelibly. I defy the devil to get a single letter of the Law of God out of a man's heart when God has written it there. When the Holy Ghost has come with all the power of His divinity and rested on our nature and stamped into it the life of holiness, then the devil may come with his black wings and all his unhallowed craftiness, but he can never erase the eternal lines. We bear in our hearts the marks of the Lord God eternal, and we shall bear them eternally. Written rocks bear their inscriptions long, but written hearts bear them forever and ever. Does not the Lord say, "I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me" (Jer 32:40)? Blessed be God for those immortal principles which forbid the child of God to sin!

4. The Results of the Law Written on the Heart

I wish to finish by noticing the results of the Law being thus written in the heart. I hope while I have been preaching about it many of you have been saying, "I hope that the Law will be written in my heart." Remember that this is a gift and privilege of the covenant of grace, and not a work of man. Dear friends, if any of you have said, "I do not find anything good in me; therefore I cannot come to Christ," you talk foolishly. The absence of good is the reason why you should come to Christ to have your needs supplied. "Oh, but if I could write God's Law on my heart, I would come to Christ." Would you? What would you want Christ for? But if the Law is not written on your heart, then come to Jesus to have it so written. The new covenant says, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." Come then to have the Law thus inscribed within. Come just as you are, before a single line has been inscribed. The Lord Jesus loves to prepare His own tablets and write every letter of His own epistles. Come to Him just as you are, that He may do all things for you.

² indite – write.

What are the results of the Law being written on the hearts of men? Frequently the first result is great sorrow. If I have God's Law written on my heart, then I say to myself, "Ah me, that I should have lived a lawbreaker so long! This blessed Law, this lovely Law, why I have not even thought of it, or if I have thought of it, it has provoked me to disobedience. Sin revived, and I died when the commandment came" (Rom 7:9). We wring our hands and cry, "How could we be so wicked as to break so just a Law? How could we be so willful as to go against our own interests? Knew we not that a breach of the commandment is an injury to ourselves?" Thus we are in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for the death of his firstborn. I do not believe God has ever written His Law on your hearts if you have not mourned over sin. One of the earliest signs of grace is a dew upon the eyes because of sin.

The next effect of it is, there comes upon the man a strong and stern resolve that he will not break that Law again, but will keep it with all his might. He cries out with David, "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments" (Psa 119:106). His whole heart says, when reading the precepts of the Lord, "Yes, that is what I ought to be; that is what I wish to be; and that is what I will be, according to the will of God."

That strong resolve soon leads to a fierce conflict; for another law lifts up its head, a law in our members (Rom 7:23). And that other law cries, "Not so quick there. Your new Law which has come into your soul to rule you shall not be obeyed. I will be master." He Who is born within us to be our King finds the old Herod ready to slay the young child (Mat 2:13). The lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, each one of these swears warfare against the new monarch and the fresh power that is come into the heart (1Jo 2:16). Some of you know what this struggle means. It is a very hard fight with some to keep from actual sin. Have you not when troubled with a quick temper had to put your hand to your mouth to stop yourself from saying what you used to say, but what you never wish to say again? Have you not often gone upstairs to get alone, feeling that you would soon slip if the Lord did not hold you up? How wise to get alone with God and cry to Him for help! How prudent to watch day and night against evil!

Certain braggers talk about having got beyond all that. I should be glad to think that there are such brethren; but I should want to keep them in a glass case to show them round, or in an iron safe where thieves could not get at them. I conceive it to be a snare of the devil to imagine that you are beyond the need of daily watchfulness. For my own part, I have not passed beyond conflict and struggle. I bear testimony that the battle grows more stern every day. Those of God's people with whom I associate I find fighting and wrestling still. Sometimes I know the devil does not roar, but I am more afraid of him when he is quiet than when he rages. I would sooner he would roar of the two, for a roaring devil is better than a sleeping devil. Whenever he

gives way, he only gives an inch to take an ell.³ And whenever you begin to say to yourself, “My corruptions are all dead; I have no tendencies to sin now,” you are in awful peril. Poor soul, you do not know what you are talking about. God send you to school, and give you a little light, and you will sing to another tune, I am sure, before long. These are the incidental results when the Lord writes the Law in the heart. Strifes and struggles are common within the man, for holiness strives for the mastery.

But does not something better than this come of the divine heart-writing? Oh, yes. There comes actual obedience. The man not only consents to the Law that it is good, but he obeys it. And if there be anything which Christ commands, no matter what it is, the man seeks to do it—not only wishes to do it, but actually does it. And if there be aught that is wrong, he not only wishes to abstain from it, but he does abstain from it. God helping him, he becomes upright and righteous and sober and godly and loving and Christ-like, for this it is which the Spirit of God works in him. He would be perfect were it not for the old lusts of the flesh which linger even in the hearts of the regenerate. Now the believer feels intense pleasure in everything that is good. If there be anything right and true in the world, he is on the side of it. If there be defeats to truth, he is defeated. But if truth marches on conquering and to conquer, he conquers and takes and divides the spoil with joy. Now he is on God’s side. Now he is on Christ’s side. Now he is on truth’s side. Now he is on holiness’ side; and a man cannot be that without being a happy man. With all his strugglings and all his weepings and all his confessions, he is a happy man because he is on the happy side. God is with him; and he is with God, and he must be blessed.

As this proceeds, the man becomes more and more prepared to dwell in heaven. He is changed into God’s “image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:18). Our fitness for heaven is not a thing that will be clapped upon us in the last few minutes of our life, just as we are going to die. But the children of God have a meetness for heaven as soon as ever they are saved, and that meetness grows and increases till they are ripe. And then, like ripe fruit, they drop from the tree and find themselves in the bosom of their Father God. God will never keep a soul out of heaven half a minute after it is fully prepared to go there; and so, when God has fitted us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col 1:12), we shall enter at once into the joy of our Lord (Mat 25:21).

My brethren, I feel I have talked feebly and prosily about one of the most blessed subjects that ever occupied the thoughts of man—how God’s Law shall be kept, how it shall be honored, how holiness shall come into the world, and we shall no longer be rebellious. Herein let us trust in our Lord Jesus, Who is to us the Surety of that cove-

³ **ell** - a former measure of length (equivalent to six hand breadths) used mainly for textiles, locally variable but typically about 45 inches.

nant of which this is one great promise—"I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." God do so to us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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