

THE

PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER,

OR ORIGINAL SERMONS BY LIVING MINISTERS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

ON

THE IMPORTANT DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY,

**PRESENTED IN A CLEAR AND COMPREHENSIVE MANNER, FOR THE
INSTRUCTION OF THE PRESENT AGE, AND IN DEFENCE
OF THE TRUTH.**

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.—PSALMS.

EDITED BY REV. S. C. JENNINGS.

VOLUME II.



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SERMON XVI

BY JOHN M. MILLAN,* D. D.
OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, PA.

**THE MORAL LAW ESTABLISHED BY FAITH IN
THE GOSPEL.**

ROMANS 3: 31. *Do we then make void the law through faith?
God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*

To understand the harmony that subsists between the *law* and the *gospel*, and how the one confirms and establishes the authority and glorious holiness of the other, is of great importance, and is that to which the passage before us directly leads. In the preceding verses of this chapter the apostle had been teaching the doctrine of justification freely by grace, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and yet the justifier of him which believeth on Jesus." And yet by this doctrine God is glorified; all boasting being excluded from the creature, he can plead no merit or righteousness of his own, as though by his own good works he had obtained the favor of God, for by the deeds of law no flesh shall be justified in his sight. Mankind have lost all the power to yield that obedience to the divine law which is necessary in order to their obtaining life thereby: therefore he concludes that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law: and then proceeds to show that this privilege belongs not to the Jews only, to whom the law was given, but to the Gentiles also: for, says he, "is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? yea, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision

* The author of the following discourse is in the 81st year of his age, and in the 59th of his ministry.

through faith." The apostle foreseeing how prone the Jews, and with them every unrenewed person, would be to reject this precious doctrine, as if it did nullify the law, which they knew came from God; in order to prevent this, in the words of our text, he states their objection, and rejects it with abhorrence. The objection is, that this doctrine of justification by faith alone without the deeds of the law, renders the holy law of God void and of none effect, and destroys all obligation to yield obedience thereunto. To this he answers "God forbid" that we should say any thing dishonorable of the holy law of God; no, it is a perfect and perpetual rule of righteousness, and though we deny it a power to justify us, yet so far are we from saying that it was given in vain, or that it is now made void, that by this doctrine of faith we establish the law and maintain its honor.

By the law here, is certainly meant the *moral law*, which alone can be established by this doctrine of justification by faith in Christ; for the ceremonial law, which consisted entirely in types of of things to come, when Christ the great antitype appeared, of consequence ceased, and became void, and of none effect.

When the moral law was first delivered to man in innocence, it was both as a rule of life enforced with a penalty, and as a covenant having a promise of eternal life annexed, upon condition of perfect obedience being yielded thereunto. But as soon as sin entered, the law was broken, and as a covenant had no more power to justify; it became weak through our default: this the same apostle plainly teaches, in Rom. 8:3, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," that is, it became unable to justify us because we, by reason of our depravity, are incapable to yield that complete and perpetual obedience to it which it requires. In this sense, therefore, it is made void, as appears from Rom. 7:4, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." And again, verse 6, "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held." Wherefore it must be as a rule whereby to order our lives and conversations before God, that in our text he affirms it to be *established*, made to stand more firmly, and its honor maintained by faith. From the scope of the apostle's reasoning in this place, it seems evident that by faith here is meant the doctrine of *justification by faith*, of which he had been treating in the foregoing verses; but if it be taken to mean the grace of faith, simply, yet in this sense also it establishes the law, as shall be shown hereafter. The words plainly contain the following doctrinal proposition.

THAT BY THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH, THE MORAL LAW, AS A RULE OF LIFE, IS SO FAR FROM BEING MADE VOID, THAT IT IS FARTHER ESTABLISHED.

In treating this subject, I shall, I. Endeavor to show that the *moral law, as a rule of life, is perpetually binding, and can never be made void.*

II. *Show how this doctrine of faith establishes the law.*

1. In order to show that the moral law, as a rule of life, is perpetually binding, and can never be made void, I shall offer the following arguments.

1. To suppose that the moral law is changeable, and might be made void, would be to say that God might either not have given a law to his rational creatures, or might have commanded the contrary things, both of which are absurd. For although God was under no necessity to create rational creatures capable of, and fitted for moral government, it was an act of his mere good pleasure; yet when once they were created, it was impossible that he should lay aside all care of them, and leave them to themselves; one free act may lay an obligation to the performance of another. Thus if God promises absolutely, he is bound to fulfil his promise; if he governs, he must govern justly; if he will have subjects endued with reason, he cannot but be their Lawgiver: so rational creatures being created, it is necessary that God give them a law by which they may be bound to obey and worship him. For rational creatures to exist, and not be subject to God their Creator and Preserver; or be subject to him and not to be ruled by him; or to be governed by him, and not under a law, and that law most holy and righteous, are all equally absurd and impossible. But if the moral law is *mutable*, then he might not only not have enjoined it upon them to obey, love, and worship him, which is his due, and their most reasonable service, as he is the Chief Good, and their Creator, in whom they "live, move, and have their being," Acts 17: 28; and from whom they have received all their powers and faculties, and to whom they are indebted for every good thing which they enjoy; but have commanded them to hate God, to disobey their Creator, to worship idols, or even the devil himself; to commit all manner of uncleanness, and obey their own lusts and vicious appetites. Thus blasphemy, idolatry, uncleanness, and the worst of crimes would change their natures, and become virtues, because commanded, which is monstrous and absurd: God cannot command such things without denying himself; he is holy and righteous, and can never command that which is unholy and unjust, without contradicting his own nature. And indeed, if the moral law which is founded on the nature of God, and the reason of things, *may be changed*; then it follows that there is no natural and essential difference between virtue and vice; but the same temper which we now call vicious, might become virtuous; and that there is no intrinsic excellence in any thing, but as God commands or forbids it: but this certainly unhinges all our notions of the Supreme Excellence, and destroys the moral character even of God himself. It would not have any meaning then to say that he is infinitely holy, just or good.

2. The *sum* of the moral law is love to God and our neighbor. As our Saviour observes, Mat. 22: 37, 40. Jesus said

unto him, "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." To love the Lord supremely, and our neighbor sincerely, for God's sake, is the end to which every precept of the law tends; which certainly discovers much of its excellency and perfection, and ought to induce us highly to honor and magnify it as a rule of duty. Besides, it cannot be imagined that a law enjoining this, should ever be made void, neither can it be thought that God, who himself is love. 1 John 4:8. should ever by any succeeding dispensation disannul a law enjoining that which is so agreeable to his own nature, so reasonable and just, and every way conducive to the greatest good of mankind. What can be more reasonable than that rational creatures should love their Creator and Preserver, who more just than that they should be found in the constant practice of all those duties of love and equity, both towards God and their fellow-men, which the law requires? Surely a law enjoining those things, so manifestly tending to promote God's glory, and our own benefit, that our chief happiness consists in a perfect conformity to it in every bent of the heart, can never be made void, but its obligation, as a rule must forever continue.

3. The *moral law being the same in substance with the law of nature*, which is immutable, and founded on the rational nature of man, must also be unchangeable, and of perpetual obligation. By the law of nature is generally meant those common practical notions of good and evil, (or the light and dictates of natural conscience,) which God has impressed upon the nature of every man, pointing out to him what is his duty and what his sin, and enabling him to discern between moral good and evil. While man continued in a state of innocency this law was perfect and sufficient to answer all the purposes for which it was given; but when sin entered the mind of man became blind, his will perverse, and his affections inordinate, and set on wrong objects. So that this law was much broken, and obliterated, and as we were, *only remains* thereof are now to be found in the hearts of all, insomuch that it became necessary that God should give a new edition of it, that the law of nature might be more confirmed, its defects supplied, and its corruptions rectified. But that there is such a law still remaining, though much enfeebled and darkened by reason of sin, is manifest from Rom. 2:14,15. "For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another." From this passage, it is plain that the Gentiles, the heathen nations, though they had not the written law of Moses, yet they had the

which was like to it; they had that which directed them what to choose, and what to refuse by the light of nature. By the force of their natural notions, and the dictates of their consciences, they apprehended a clear and vast difference between good and evil: they did by nature the things contained in the law." The light of nature taught them, that God should be worshiped, and their parents honored, that virtue should be practised and vice hated and avoided; and so they became "a law unto themselves:" and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another," according as they observed or violated these natural dictates, their consciences did either acquit or condemn them. All which shows that they were not without law, but had that which was to them instead of a written law, which could be no other than the law of nature impressed upon their hearts. Now the moral law, as to its substance, is the *same* with this law of nature, the same duties are commanded, and the same sins forbidden; the sum of the moral law, as was before observed, is love to God and our neighbor, and this is plainly impressed on the nature of man. The precepts of the moral law may be partially learned from the light of nature, they all perfectly agree to sound reason, and pertain to all nations, at all times, and are absolutely necessary to human nature to obtain its proper end; wherefore its obligation ought to be perpetual. Since human nature is always the same, and like itself, that which is founded thereon must be so also.

4. That the moral law still remains in force, as a rule of life, is manifest from several *passages of scripture*, particularly from Mat. 5:17,18, where our Saviour in his sermon on the mount, when he was about to clear the law of the false and carnal interpretations of the Scribes and Pharisees, and open it up in its extent and spirituality, plainly asserts the continual obligation thereof. "Think not," says he "that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. 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. Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." From whence it is clear that the law was not abolished by Christ, but fulfilled; so neither is it abolished and become useless to us who live under the dispensation which he instituted. Had our Saviour intended that it should be of no more use to his people, he would certainly have told them so, and left it on record, but so far is he from that, that in Luke 16:29. he says, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them;" and if we hear them, we must obey their commands, else hearing would be in vain. And as Christ has not, so neither have his apostles destroyed the law, but rather confirmed, and commanded it to all to be observed and honored. Rom. 13:8,9. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that

oveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Again, love, which is the sum of the law, is called by the apostle John, 1 John 2:7,8. both an old and a new commandment. I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which you had from the beginning. Again a new commandment I write unto you. It was old with respect to its first promulgation under the *old* testament dispensation, but that it might appear to be still in force under the *new* testament, he calls it a new commandment. And in our text it is expressly affirmed that the law is not made void, but still farther established by the gospel dispensation. Besides the moral law, or the law of nature which is the same, being the rule whereby God will judge the world at the last day, and according to which every one will receive their final doom, Rom. 2:12, &c. must likewise be the perpetual rule of man's obedience, else how could the equity of God's proceedings in judgment be vindicated, and made manifest before men and angels at the great day.

II. I come now to the second thing proposed, which was to *show how faith, or the doctrine of justification by faith, establishes the law.*

If by faith in the text we understand that grace which unites us to Christ, and gives us a right to his person and all his benefits, then it establishes the law in the following respects. 1. *By conviction*, which is antecedent to believing; where conviction, or a faith of the law goes not before, no justifying faith can follow. The Spirit first convicts of sin, then of righteousness, John 16:8. Conviction of sin principally consists in an inward feeling of our lost and miserable estate by nature, and of our exposedness to the everlasting wrath and curse of God denounced in his law, as the just demerit of our aggravated guilt. The divine law is brought home to the conscience, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, which is hereby awakened out of its slumbers, and made to speak for God, against the sinner, in a more faithful and awful manner than ever heretofore. Conscience being God's deputy in the soul, takes account of things which are done against the law of God, and when the Spirit comes to awaken the sinner, it opens these awful records, and brings in clear, full, and terrible accusations against the poor trembling creature. *Secret*, as well as *open* transgressions, with all their aggravations, are brought in, and set in order before him, and they come with such clear and full evidence that he can no longer defend himself. Conscience is instead of a thousand witnesses against him, he becomes self-convinced and speechless, like the man that was found without the wedding garment. Mat. 22:12. The soul being thus accused and convinced of aggravated guilt, conscience

pronounces the sentence of condemnation against him, "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Gal. 3:10. The soul now stands trembling and condemned before God, and in effect acknowledges that all the precepts of his law are just and righteous, and owns the equity of its condemnatory sentence. Else, whence arises that horror which seizes the soul, and these awful self-reflections that are found in convinced sinners; they know that they are guilty before God, that they have broken an holy and righteous law, and deserve the punishment therein threatened. Therefore their mouths are shut, and all their pleas are silenced, they have nothing to say in their own vindication. Moreover the moral law is the ordinary means of conviction of the need of a Saviour, for by it "is the knowledge of sin." Rom. 3:20.

2. The very nature of faith confirms and establishes the moral law: For the very essence of saving faith is the soul's receiving or accepting Christ as he is offered in the gospel entirely and undividedly, as clothed with all his offices, priestly, prophetic and kingly: this is plainly implied in John 1:12. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name." As many as received him, that is his person, as he is clothed with his offices, and *not only* his benefits and privileges; to as many as thus received him, "to them gave he power to become the sons of God." And since faith receives Christ as a King, it must also receive and submit to the moral law, which is his rule of government. Faith accepts of Christ as a complete Saviour, to free not only from the guilt, but also from the power and pollution of sin, which to every true believer is an heavy, loathsome burden, under which he often groans, earnestly longing for deliverance. The renewed soul breathes as earnestly for holiness as for pardon. And faith embraces Christ, who came both by water and by blood, 1 John 5:6. not only for righteousness, but for sanctification also, 1. Cor. 1:30. Therefore, faith in its very nature implies a love for, and a willingness to yield obedience to *the moral law, the rule of holiness.*

3. The effect of faith also establishes the law; I shall instance in a few particulars.

1. *Deep sorrow for sin,* and evangelical meltings of heart under the apprehensions of grace and mercy, are fruits and effects of true justifying faith. The scripture often makes mention of this, and sets it forth in the strongest expressions: in Ezek. 7:16. it is said, "all of them shall mourn, every one for his iniquity." Zech. 12:10. And "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born." When believers through faith

are enabled to see who it is that they pierced by their sins, how great! how glorious! how wonderful a person he was, that was so humbled, abased and laid in the grave for such wretches as they are; when they see him who is the beauty of heaven, the express image of his Father, the prince of life, hang dead upon a tree, pierced by their sins, and bearing the infinite wrath of God, which was due to them, in their room; this cannot but affect them deeply, make them to hate their sins, those crucifiers of their dear Redeemer, and cause them to mourn in bitterness of soul, as one that mourneth for an only son, or for a first born. Now, since faith in a crucified Saviour inclines the soul thus to mourn over sin which is a transgression of the law, it hereby puts honor on the law, acknowledges its equity, and the soul's obligation to be obedient thereunto.

2. *Love* to God, his ways, and people, is another effect of faith, Gal. 5:6. Faith worketh by love, wherever it is in truth it is a working grace; it always sets the soul to work, not to pay its debt; this it knows if ever it be done, must be by another; but the main spring of its obedience is to love God, and the great Redeemer. Faith represents the love of God to the soul, and makes use of this as an argument to constrain it to all acts of obedience, wherein it may testify the reality of its love to God and Christ: this the apostle intimates when he says, "the love of Christ constraineth us." 2 Cor. 5:14. Believers are bound by the strongest bonds of love, and feel themselves under the sweetest constraints to honor and glorify God: hence it becomes their chief joy and study to do that which is pleasing in his sight, therefore they choose his law as a rule to direct their ways, and would not be freed from their obligation thereunto, but would rejoice, were it in their power perfectly to obey it, not that they would hope, or even desire to be saved thereby, that is not the motive of their obedience: but they obey it out of love to God, because it is his law, the transcript of his nature and purity, and contains his will to them: and because that thereby they will avoid much sin, that abominable thing which God hates, and bring much glory to Christ their Saviour.

3. The last effect of faith which I shall mention is *heart purity*, Acts 15:9. purifying their hearts by faith. The heart is never purified until faith be implanted; other principles may lop off the branches, and restrain from gross external acts of impiety, but this alone strikes at the root, and aims at nothing less than the entire destruction and rooting out of sin: for where true faith is, there is also a real and deep rooted hatred of all sin, both of heart and life, secret as well as open, no sin is favored but all devoted to destruction; the soul can say with the Psalmist, Ps. 119:104. "I hate every false way:" and endeavors through the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body, Rom. 8:13. Now since faith thus engages the soul, and sets it on work to mortify all those impetuous lusts and corruptions which would

excite it to break God's law, and cast away the cords of his commandments; it certainly hereby establishes its authority, and glorious holiness, and brings the soul into willing subjection thereunto.

But if by faith in the text we are to understand the doctrine of *justification by faith*, then it establishes the law in the following respects.

1. Hereby the *honor* of the divine law is maintained, in that a righteousness is provided equal to all its demands. None can be justified until God receive full satisfaction for all the violations of his law: but this no creature can give. If he set himself to work out a righteousness of his own by obeying the law, he shall find that instead of atoning for his former guilt, he is continually contracting more: the law requires *perfect* obedience, but this he cannot give, being an imperfect creature, under the power of sin: his corruptions are too strong to be restrained by all the dreadful curses and threatenings denounced in the law; he is altogether as an unclean thing, and all his righteousness is as filthy rags. Isa. 64:6. Every work, how good soever it may seem to be, is tainted with sin, as it proceeds from a corrupt, sinful heart; while the fountain is polluted, the streams issuing thence will be so also. The righteousness therefore which is equal to the demands of the law, in which we may stand justified before an holy God, cannot be found in us, nor wrought out by us. But that the honor of the law might be maintained, and sinners saved, the eternal son of God came into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh, Rom. 8:3. "made of a woman, made under the law," Gal. 4:4. and in our nature, in obedience to the law, wrought out a perfect and complete righteousness, and gave full satisfaction for all our breaches thereof: he became our surety, our debt was demanded of him, and he answered for it. Hereby the law, was magnified, and made honorable, more than it could have been by the perfect obedience or endless sufferings of all the human race, as these are but *finite* creatures: but hereby an *infinite* Being, the eternal, co-equal Son of God, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead, was brought before its bar; and at one full payment satisfied all its demands, and made a complete atonement for its breaches. Hereby, it received more than it simply required, all it demanded of mankind was a perfection of obedience; but Christ yielded an obedience thereunto, which was not only perfect but had infinity stamped thereon, arising from the infinite glory and dignity of the person obeying.

2. By this doctrine not only the *honor* of the divine law is maintained, but its *holiness* and *equity* are also established, and openly proclaimed before men and angels. No where does the dreadful evil of violating the law of God appear in such a striking light as in the sufferings of the Lord Jesus; which were sharp and universal; no member of his body was free from torture, and every particular sense was afflicted. He had not a moment's ease by any

cessation of his pains, not a drop of comfort from heaven or earth to support him under all his agonies; his cruel persecutors reviled and mocked him, and his Father's wrath lay heavy on his soul, without the least degree of sparing mercy. Rom. 8:32. Thus was the beloved Son of God bruised for sin, even he, who from eternity had been his Father's delight, Prov. 8:30. and whom he loved with a perfect love, even as he loved himself. Surely then, if the precious blood of Christ was that alone which could satisfy God for our violations of his law, there must not only be an infinite malignity in sin, since it could not be expiated but by an infinite satisfaction; but the law itself must be holy and righteous, since God stands upon full satisfaction for every breach thereof, and without it will not be reconciled to any. Now the righteousness on which faith relies for justification, and which God accepts as though it had been performed by the believer himself, is no other than that which the Lord Jesus wrought out by obeying the law, and enduring its penalties, in our room; by both which its honor is maintained and its holiness and excellency established.

3. Lastly. The free grace and boundless favors which God bestows on believers, cannot but powerfully constrain them to live to his glory, and fill their hearts with love and gratitude to so bountiful a Benefactor. Being redeemed with such a price, even with the price of the blood of the son of God, surely gratitude must constrain them to glorify him with their bodies and spirits which are his. Cor. 6:20. But this cannot be done without sincere and active obedience to the divine law, and avoiding and detesting every thing that is forbidden thereby. Christ by his death and sufferings has purchased heaven and eternal life for us, so that we may now obtain it, not whether we will or no, or however we live, but only in case we be willing upon the terms he has proposed, that we live in obedience to his revealed will, and strive earnestly to obtain it; we must put our hands to the plough and sincerely labor for it with all our might. He redeemed us, but not so as to encourage us in sloth and disobedience to his law, which is a sin, and which therefore he can never be the author of; no, he did not so absolutely redeem us, as that we cannot miss of heaven act how we will, for then unclean things might enter there, which is plainly contrary to the scriptures, which expressly declare that no unclean thing shall enter into the mansions above, or have any inheritance with God and Christ in glory. But he redeemed us from that incapacity of inheriting, which by our fall we had brought upon ourselves, to a power or right of enjoyment upon the terms of holiness, without which no man, (think what he will) shall ever see the Lord in mercy. Heb. 12:14. Surely the dying love of a crucified Saviour, who redeemed sinners from the depth of misery, and opened a way whereby they may obtain an inheritance of eternal bliss and glory with himself in heaven,—all title to which they had abso-

lately lost by sin,—and the consideration of their bodies being members of Christ's mystical body, and temples of the holy Ghost, are certainly powerful motives to cause them to detest every transgression of God's holy law, and to abound more and more in the duties of holy obedience. Faith opens to our view at once the amazing treasures of divine love, and the dreadful glories of divine justice in the bitter sufferings of our great Redeemer, which ought to awake our love, and alarm our fear, to procure our obedience to God's law, and excite in us an holy reverence of his divine majesty, I shall now conclude with a brief application of what has been said.

1st. Are the precepts of the moral law indispensable, and perpetually binding? Hence, see the abominable nature of Popery! The Pope, being that lawless one, that “opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God,” and worshipped, 2 Thess. 2: 4; that not only opposeth the divine authority, but exalts himself above it, in demanding greater regard to his commands, than to the commands of God, and assumes a power to dispense with God's most holy law to others. But this man of sin “shall the Lord consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” ver. 8.

2d. Mankind being under a law, and that law indispensable, holy, and righteous, they die not as the beasts do,—which are not subjects of law, which are not capable of moral government,—but must expect to be accountable to God, the great Lawgiver, for all their actions. It is appointed for all men once to die, but after this the judgment, Heb. 9: 27. Let none think that because the penalties of the law are not speedily executed, they will therefore pass unpunished. God will maintain the honor of his law, though Christ himself should suffer to repair its breaches; and if he spared not his own Son when he stood in our room, to answer for our offences; how can we expect to escape, if we continue to slight his holy law, and walk contrary to his commandments? Though our actions in themselves are transient, yet their consequences are eternal. A word is soon spoken, a thought soon passes, an act is soon done; but when once spoken, thought, or done, it is placed to account, and that account remains against us, according to which all will at last be judged, and receive their final doom.

3d. Hence we see that the Gospel dispensation, or the law of faith, though it delivers believers from the curse and condemnation of the moral law, which, while out of Christ they were under, yet its obligation as a rule whereby to regulate our hearts and lives, still continues, and ever will remain in full force: and whatever doctrine is contrary to this, favoring the corrupt lusts of men, and licentiousness in practice, that gives any countenance to sin, or in the least opens a door to practical immoralities, cannot be from God, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity, Hab. 1: 13. Accordingly, the idea that

under the gospel dispensation we are free from obligation to observe the fourth commandment, to keep the Sabbath "*holy*," is founded in a *mistake*, or, has arisen from a *desire* to disregard its requirements. The "faith" of the gospel has not made the fourth commandment "void," no more than either of the others in the decalogue. From a variety of reasons, drawn from the practice of the apostles, and from the nature of the Saviour's work and kingdom, it may be plainly inferred, that a change in *sacred* time was intended, but a change in the *time* of observing a law, expressed as the fourth commandment is—"the seventh day is the sabbath,"—does not repeal the law itself.*

4. From what has been said let us examine ourselves whether our faith be such as establishes the law, and excites us to all the duties of holy obedience. This is the only justifying faith, and wheresoever it is not found to have these effects, it is but a dead faith. For faith without works is dead, saith the apostle. Jam. 2:20. Persons that have not had an effectual work of the spirit upon their souls, make their faith to serve as a pillow for spiritual sloth; they will not watch, and war, and work as they ought, but secretly maintain a truce with all or some of their corruptions: they will not be at the pains to purify their hearts and mortify their lusts; which yet they must do, or die in them and for them. Rom. 8:13. For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die. Now what is the foundation of their peace? They trust in Christ, as they say, and this quiets them: God is merciful, and they hope will not be strict to mark against them their iniquities: the best of saints have their infirmities, and none are altogether perfect in this life; therefore they rest at peace, and press not forward, earnestly longing for perfect freedom from all sin, which every true believer doth, but are content with just so much religion as will carry them to heaven, and desire no more. But these are not the effects of a true justifying faith. "Every man that hath this hope in him, (which arises from a lively faith,) purifieth himself, even as he is pure." 1 John 3:3.

5. Let all who profess themselves to be the followers of the Lord Jesus, be careful to imitate his example, and manifest to the world, the truth of their faith and piety by strict holiness and obedience to the law of God in all respects: this is the way to glorify God in the world, and bring true peace and comfort to the soul. Then, saith the Psalmist, shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments. Psal. 119:6. Then can the soul draw nigh to God with a holy boldness, when it is conscious of its own integrity, and the sincerity of its endeavors to obey the Lord in all things; then the soul enjoys great peace and comfort; conscience is at peace with him, God is reconciled to him, and the sweet smiles of his countenance rest upon him. If, therefore, we have any regard to our own peace and comfort,

*See note at the end.

or for the glory of God, which ought always to be dear unto us, let us carefully maintain an holy walk with God, and cheerfully obey all his commandments, from a true, evangelical principle of faith, and love unfeigned.

6. Let all such hearers of the gospel as are not zealous to maintain good works, be convinced that they are destitute of an interest in the divine favor, and are still under the condemning sentence of God's righteous law. Let them acknowledge their guilt before God; and earnestly endeavor, without delay, to obtain an interest in Christ, and his justifying righteousness, by a living faith: let them work as though they could gain heaven and eternal life by their works, and after they have done all, to remember that they are but unprofitable servants, and can merit no good at the hand of God by all they can do or suffer: let them not depend on their own works, but on the righteousness of a crucified Saviour, received by faith; thus shall they obtain the favor of God, and be at last admitted to dwell with him in everlasting glory.

NOTE.

Here we take the liberty to add a short section from the excellent little work of "DR. HUMPHREY, ON THE SABBATH," as peculiarly appropriate in connection with this discourse; and calculated to do much good to those who think the fourth commandment is repealed, or its observance left optional.

"It is a settled principle, in all governments, that there are but two ways in which any law can cease to be binding upon the people. It may expire by its own limitations, or it may be repealed by the same authority which enacted it; and in the latter case, the repealing act must be as explicit as the law itself: Now, we have it in proof, that the Sabbath was instituted by the infinite Lawgiver in paradise. In priority of time, it stands at the head of all his enactments. It is the very first statute, in that code of laws, which he has promulgated in the Bible. Of course, it has an authority entirely independent of the Jewish ritual, and is no more a part of that system, which has "waxed old and vanished away," than the sixth commandment is.

"The law of the Sabbath can never expire by its own limitations; and for the plainest of all reasons, that it has no limitations. *And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that in it, he had rested from all his work, which God created and made.* Now if this solemn act made the Sabbath binding upon mankind at all, it made the obligation universal and perpetual, as no limitation, or exemption, is hinted at. If the divine consecration of one seventh part of time, made it the duty of our first parents to keep it holy, it clearly imposes the same duty upon their posterity. The law, then, still remains in force, and must remain to the end of time, unless God himself has seen fit, or shall hereafter see fit, to repeal it, there being no other authority in the universe that can strike out a letter of it.

“Has God abrogated the law? If he has, the place can easily be found by our opponents; and let them point it out to us; for we confess, that we have never yet been able to find it. The chapter and verse must be pointed out, in which the original sabbatical law is *expressly repealed*. Nothing else will satisfy a candid inquirer.

“If the repealing act is any where recorded in the Bible it is either in Rom. 14: 5,6; or in Col. 2: 16,17: No one, we believe, pretends to place much stress upon any other passage. Let these then be carefully examined, not as independent texts, but in connection with the obvious design and scope of the apostle’s reasoning. The text in Romans is this: *One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it.* Does the apostle here mean to say, that under the new, or Christian dispensation, it is a matter of indifference which day of the week is kept as a Sabbath, or whether any Sabbath at all is kept? Surely those who thus construe his meaning, ‘do greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures.’

“Every attentive reader of the New Testament, must have observed, that for some years after the resurrection of Christ, the Jewish and Christian dispensations were, in practice, blended together; the former being gradually abolished, and the latter as gradually brought in to take its place. Hence arose many of those unhappy disputes, which disturbed the harmony of the primitive churches. Many of the Jewish converts, not only adhered strenuously themselves to their ancient ritual, but insisted upon the conformity of Gentile converts;—while these last as strenuously maintained, that since the ceremonial law was abolished, no further regard to its prescription of meats, days, &c. was either necessary, or even allowable. To settle these disputes, and inspire the parties with mutual charity and forbearance, the apostle took up the question *in form*, and disposed of it in the following wise and catholic manner. ‘Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye; but not to doubtful disputation. For one believeth that he may eat all things. Another, that is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth; for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth; yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand. *One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord. And he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks, and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.*’

“Now, it is plain, from every word of this quotation, that the inspired umpire refers expressly to the existing controversy, respecting the ceremonial law; and not at all to the question, whether the original Sabbath was abolished, or not. Indeed, it seems extremely doubtful, whether the passage contains the slightest reference to the *weekly Sabbath*. The religious observance of many other days, was strictly enjoined in the Levitical code. All that can fairly be gathered, therefore, from this quotation, is, that Christians in the early part of the apostolic age, might, or might not, keep those feast days;—that is, might act according to the dictates of their own consciences. If one man thought that he was bound to observe any particular day, let him observe it; but without censuring his brother who might be of a different opinion. *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*, and act accordingly. The law of the Sabbath then is not repealed here.

“Is it repealed in Col. 2:16,17, to which we have also referred? *Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.* ‘Here then,’ some have triumphantly alleged, “is the repealing act; and the Sabbath, as a divine institution, is no more!” Wo to the world if it be so. But to this construction, which strikes at the foundation of all Christian institutions, three distinct answers are ready.

“In the first place, it takes for granted the very thing to be proved;—viz. that the apostle is here speaking of the *weekly Sabbath*; when it is all but certain, we think, that he has no allusion to it. The plural form *Sabbath days*, which is here adopted, rarely if ever occurs in Scripture, when the original institution is intended. But there were other Sabbaths which the Jews were required to keep: as for example, the first day of the seventh month, and also the tenth day of the same, throughout their generations. See Lev. 33. ‘And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto the children of Israel, saying, in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, shall ye have a *Sabbath*, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein. Also on the tenth day of this seventh month, there shall be an atonement. It shall be unto you a *Sabbath* of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls.’ That these ceremonial Sabbaths, and not the holy rest of paradise, are referred to, in the passage above quoted is made nearly, if not quite certain, by the fact, that all the other specifications, such as *meat, drink, the new moon, &c.* are ceremonial. At any rate, the contrary can never be proved. To assert, therefore, that the repealing act is found here, is, we repeat, a mere begging of the question. This is our first answer.

“Secondly, allowing for argument’s sake, that the apostle had the Jewish seventh day Sabbath in his eye, and meant to release the Christian church from keeping that particular day, what does it amount to? To an abrogation of the Sabbath itself or merely

to a change of the day, which, however, in the twilight of the Gospel dispensation, was not authoritatively enjoined? The latter, (if the apostle alludes to the original institution at all,) we take to be the true meaning. A conscientious Jew who still adhered to the seventh day of the week, would be accepted, as well as the converted Gentile, who kept the first day. This is our second answer.

“The third, may be given chiefly in the words of an able foreign writer. ‘It is evident from the context,’ he observes, ‘that the apostle was speaking of the ordinances of the ceremonial law for the neglect of which, no Christian was to be condemned. *Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or drink, &c. —or of the Sabbath days.* In this passage, the apostle is clearly speaking of burdensome ordinances; of something that was against them, and contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. But can any pious person conceive, that the spending one day in seven in spiritual services, could be ranked by the holy apostle, among the things which were against Christianity, and contrary to it? Was that institution which the people of God had been commanded to call ‘a delight, the holy of the Lord and honorable,’ now to be esteemed of so carnal a nature, as to be ranked amongst the things which Christ took out of the way, nailing it to his cross? Were those holy persons who had been accustomed to adopt the language of the Psalmist, ‘I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord,’ now taught to esteem a day spent in such services, as a part of that yoke, which neither the apostle, nor their fathers were able to bear? We must destroy all just ideas of the effects which the preaching of the Gospel was intended to produce, before we can adopt such an interpretation of the apostle’s words.’

“Where then is the repealing act? for surely it is not contained in either of the passages which we have examined. Let those who deny the perpetuity of the Sabbath, tell us where. But they cannot find the abrogation which they so anxiously seek. Here we might take our final stand in defence of the sacred institution; for God consecrated the Sabbath by his own authority and example, as soon as he had built the world, and breathed into man the breath of life. The law has no limitations, and, therefore, can never expire. It has never been repealed; and as the sacred canon is full and complete, we are certain it never will be. It is, therefore, binding upon every one of us at this moment; and will be upon all future generations. No human authority may expunge a single word from the statutes of Jehovah. It were infinitely less daring, for the meanest subject of the mightiest earthly potentate, to declare the fundamental laws of the empire null and void, than for man, who is a worm, to set aside the institutions of his Maker.”