

KEEPING THE LAW.

The Law is a great measuring line which God has let down to humanity. In the pride of the natural heart, many lay hold of it and think they measure pretty nearly what God wants. The Jew thus took the letter of the law and found it a difficult matter to commend himself to God even by that, but when the great teacher, Jesus, showed us the spirit of the Law, all who understood his teaching, saw that they were far too imperfect ever to measure themselves with it. According to Jesus' definition, it is murder to hate a brother, and adultery to desire. In a word, "The Law," as Jesus defined it, is the full measure of a perfect man's ability. And as since sin entered the world, all men are under its penalty, "There is none righteous, no, not one." Then, since all are imperfect, surely none can keep the perfect law, and so Jesus declared: "None of you keepeth the Law;" and Paul says that if the law could have been kept, Christ would not have died. Gal. 2:21. Again: "That no man is justified by the law is evident." Gal. 3:11. None can keep it, because sin has blemished all whom it has touched; all are imperfect.

Does some one say that he can keep the Law? Come with me to Palestine and see perhaps a copy of yourself. A certain young man came to Jesus, saying: "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus takes advantage of the words "Good Master," to show him that he has acknowledged His authority, so that when he should afterward tell him what to do, he could not make the excuse that he doubted his authority to so instruct. Jesus then said to him: "Thou knowest the commandments" – That is to say, you know that God has arranged and promised that those who keep the commandments may live forever. "They that do those things shall live by them." This young man evidently had expected this answer, for with joy he replied: "All these have I kept from my youth up."

He was indeed an exemplary man. "And Jesus beholding him loved him." And he answered him, "One thing thou lackest." He was almost perfect says some one. He almost kept the whole law. No, we think not; the one thing he lacked, was, in Jesus' estimation, the chief commandment of all; – viz: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength." This chief commandment he had not kept. Instead of loving the Lord with all his powers, he was loving his wealth with a part of his heart; and with a larger part too, it would seem, since he was willing rather to cling to it than to obtain eternal life. His heart divided its attention between God and earthly riches, and Jesus gave him such a command as would most quickly show him where his heart's affection centered. Another might have no riches to divide his heart, but he might have instead, a good name, or worldly fame, and either of these might be sharer of much of the love of the heart so as to prevent his loving the Lord with all his strength. This young man concluded that the Law, as Jesus interpreted it, was more than he could keep. Let any one who thinks he is keeping the whole law, begin with this first commandment, repeat it slowly and apply it to himself. – "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." A perfect man can do no more; an imperfect or sinful man cannot live up to this perfect standard of love and obedience. A man even on the upper rounds of the ladder, and nearest perfect, could not keep this perfect law, to say nothing of the poor degraded beings pushed by sin down to the lowest round.

No, there is but one who ever kept it or could keep it. Think you, was he a perfect man, or a degraded one on the lowest round of the ladder as some have claimed? O, he was the perfect one of whom the all wise Father could, and did say: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And as we scan his words, his acts, his character, we exclaim,

"Fairer is he than all the fair
Among the sons of men."
