

THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL.

"Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying....Repent ye and believe the gospel." – Mark 1:14,15.

When Moses came as the messenger of God, his message was the law of God, that the man which doeth these things shall live by them. (Rom. 10:5; Lev. 18:5.) But though it promised life on just and righteous conditions, yet because of man's inability to comply with the conditions, that law which was ordained unto life was found to be the messenger of death. (Rom. 7:10.) Its sentence was, therefore, condemnation to death to every one who was under it, except the one man Christ Jesus, the only one able to keep it. And because Jesus did keep it perfectly, and therefore justly merited its reward of lasting life, and then freely gave that life a ransom for ours, the good news, the gospel now is, that though it is impossible for sinners to merit life by the keeping of the law, we may now have life as the *gift* of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who purchased us with his own precious blood, and will in due time deliver all his purchased possession from the bondage and prison of death.

It was a precious gospel of salvation through a Redeemer and Saviour, that Jesus came preaching, and which he commissioned his disciples to preach. And yet, strange to say, though Israel had for centuries proved their inability to gain life by keeping the law, they were unbelieving and unwilling to accept of the favor of life purchased by the Redeemer. And what seems stranger still, is to find even to-day the professed disciples of Christ and teachers of the people, forgetful of the real commission to preach the glorious gospel and referring the people back to the law promising them life for the keeping of it. Yet they do not refer them to the law in its purity, but to the law degraded and dishonored by their traditions in an endeavor to bring it down to the capacity and tastes of fallen men.

Yes, they say, Love God and keep his commandments; remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, etc. True, the law says the seventh day, but the first day will do just as well, because our traditions give that liberty. You may do all manner of work on the seventh day, but on the first day put on your fine clothes and deck yourself with jewels and go to church. True, the law prescribed rest, not only for yourself and family and the strangers within your gates, but also for your laboring beasts; but no matter, hitch up your span of fine horses and drive them as far as you please to church. True, the law says you must not do any work, not even kindle a fire on the Sabbath day; but no matter, let your servant stay at home, kindle as large a fire as she likes, and prepare a first-class dinner. Yes, be sure to remember the *Sabbath day* (?) to keep it *holy* (?)

Then honor thy father and thy mother; do not kill; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not bear false witness; do not covet, etc. But do not stop to look too deeply into the spirit of this law as magnified and explained by Jesus. (Matt. 5:20-48.) Take its meaning as conformed to popular ideas – its surface meaning – *Morality*. And "he that doeth these things *shall live.*" Yes that is what the Word says, but we will add a little more – he shall go to heaven when he dies, no matter if Jesus did say that "no man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man" (John 3:13); and if the Scriptures do declare that the dead know not anything until the morning of the resurrection. (Ecccl. 9:5, John 5:28.) These are not "our views."

And so the glorious law of God, in reality so high that only a perfect man could possibly measure up to its requirements, is trailed in the dust by irreverent hands, and mixed with and made void by the traditions of men, until it is made to express merely the world's crude ideas of morality, and then it is *called* the "Gospel" and "Christianity," and men are taught to hope for salvation in it. Along with it is borne the epitomized gospel that Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9); but not one in a thousand sees what that has to do with it. The principle thing when a man comes to die is to make it out a clear case that he was good (moral) enough to go to heaven. And

this is the secret of the general habit of extolling, and often greatly overestimating the commendable traits of character of the deceased.

Thus the world's crude idea of outward morality, is made to take the place of Christianity; works to take the place of faith; and the law, defiled and degraded to take the place of the glorious gospel of redemption from the curse – a gift of God.

From the pulpit of the Nominal Church to-day the preaching of the cross-redemption through the precious blood of Christ and salvation through faith in his blood, and the reward of those who faithfully take up the cross and follow him – is almost entirely eliminated, especially in the cities where the worldly element more largely predominates, and worldly ideas are more thoroughly engrafted. The pulpits of to-day are given almost entirely to the discussion of popular subjects in which the world at large is interested, and that too from the world's standpoint, and never from the standpoint of prophecy and the outworking of God's great plan of the ages. The troubles between Capital and Labor are discussed from no other than a human standpoint, so also the temperance question, the Chinese question, the kind of amusements suitable for young people, and various flippant sensational topics calculated to allure and attract the multitudes and imprison them in a grand temple of fashion, to hear a miserable hash of mingled tradition and nonsense, on the only day of the week in which they are granted a little immunity from toil and care, and might otherwise enjoy God's free fresh air, and draw some precious lessons from his great book of nature.

All these are called "live topics," and this, "practical preaching:" but is it the gospel which Jesus and the Apostles preached? Is it the gospel for which the devout and faithful Stephen was stoned to death? for which Paul suffered stripes, imprisonment, shipwreck, and finally a martyr's death? for which John was exiled to the isle of Patmos? for which the saints have suffered martyrdom? for which Luther went at the risk of life to the diet at Worms singing, "A strong fortress is our God," was it for preaching a gospel of good works and morality that he

suffered? Ah no! the preaching of the cross is to the worldly wise of to-day foolishness, and is coming to seem more and more so every year.

There is a wide difference between the mere moralist and the Christian. A Christian is, of course, moral, but he is more; his every-day life is a continuous effort to pattern after the character of his Lord, not only outwardly, but in the molding and fashioning of the thoughts; his one business of life which takes precedence of all others, is the preaching of the coming kingdom of God, and the redemption of all through the precious blood of Christ. He will not be able, under present inherited disabilities and disadvantages, to make his walk an absolutely exact facsimile of that of his Lord, but his constant effort to do so will be apparent.

Mere morality bears no such distinguishing features, yet it is good to whatsoever extent it exists, except when used **[R887 : page 8]** as sheep's clothing for a wolf character; and the sooner such characters are unmasked the better. Morality is always a part of the Christian character, though the heathen world outside of the influence of Christianity is not without its moral, philanthropic and benevolent characters. And wherever these exist apart from the influence of Christianity they are traces of the original perfection and glory of humanity not yet effaced, and the results of commendable individual striving against the downward current of the fallen nature, even though many such have blindly striven in the dark.

Realizing the present dearth of truth, and seeing that the waters of truth in the channels where most generally expected, are well nigh dried up, the duty and privilege of those who hold the precious treasure becomes more and more apparent. Let your light shine and keep it constantly trimmed and brightly burning. Proclaim the glorious gospel of freedom from the curse of the law, from which all are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ who gave his life a ransom, a corresponding price for all, to be testified to all in due time. Show how the law was not set aside and ignored, but magnified and made honorable **[R888 : page**

8] by having its claims and its penalty fully satisfied by the obedience and sacrifice of Christ Jesus before one of the fallen race could be liberated from its curse. And then on this sure (because just and righteous) foundation, show how the everlasting kingdom of God is to be established in the earth, in which the law of God will be forever honored and obeyed by the whole redeemed race. This is the gospel of great joy to all people. R. W.

