

## KEEPING THE LORD'S COMMANDMENTS

THE Law given to Israel at Mount Sinai and summarized in the Ten Commandments was not given to any other nation or people. It is upon the Jew still, and is a bondage only because it was made a part of God's contract with that nation. If they would keep that Law perfectly they were to have certain special and exclusive blessings. If they failed to keep it, certain penalties were to result. But since that Law was the measure of a perfect man's ability, and since no Israelite, any more than others of the world of mankind, was perfect, therefore none of them could keep that Divine Law. None of them could get the blessings which it promised. All of them did get more or less of the curse, or punishment, which failure to keep the Law threatened. Thus Jesus said, "None of you keepeth the Law" (John 7:19); and St. Paul wrote, "By the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified in His sight." – Romans 3:20.

Nevertheless, the endeavor to keep that Law proved a great blessing to the people of Israel, and some of those Ancient Worthies who strove so faithfully and loyally, the Apostle assures us, will yet get a rich reward therefor. (Hebrews 11:38-40.) Messiah, after setting up His spiritual Kingdom, will constitute these Ancient Worthies princes and rulers in all the earth – under and subject to Himself and His Elect Church on the spirit plane.

Jesus, although a member of our race according to the flesh, had an unimpaired life, transferred from the spirit plane to His virgin mother's womb. Thus He did not inherit either sin or its condemnation, but was born "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." (Hebrews 7:26.) Because of this perfection Jesus was able to do what no other member of the human family ever did or could do. He was able to keep the Law fully and completely in its every detail. And He did more than keep the Law. He sacrificed

earthly rights and privileges which the Law declared He had a right to. Thus Jesus has a merit – a right to earthly life aside from the life which He now has on the spirit plane, and which was a reward from the Father for His obedience unto death, "even the death of the Cross." – Philippians 2:8.

It is that earthly life which forms the basis for the New Covenant arrangement that God has promised to establish through the glorified Messiah. In due time He will appropriate the merit of His sacrifice – His right to human life – as the full satisfaction for Father Adam's disobedience and his death penalty. Thus purchasing the **[R5947 : page 259]** race, by giving a corresponding price, the great Redeemer will take over His purchased possession – man and his earthly home – and for a thousand years will exercise His privilege of assisting all the members of Adam's family who are willing to rise up out of sin, imperfection and death-conditions to human perfection and everlasting life. Those blessings could not come under the Law Covenant, because mankind could not keep the Law Covenant; but they will come to the willing and obedient under the gracious terms of the New Covenant, which promises mercy and forgiveness, and the taking away of the stony heart and the giving instead the heart of flesh and the renewing of a right spirit in all of those who will be rightly exercised by the corrections and glorious privileges of Messiah's Kingdom.

## **CHRISTIANS HAVE THREE COMMANDMENTS**

Christians – disciples or followers of Jesus – from amongst the Gentiles never were under the Mosaic Law given at Mount Sinai. They are received into God's family as sons under a different Covenant – the one which reads: "Gather My saints together unto Me," saith the Lord, "those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." (Psalm 50:5.) Jesus, after keeping fully all the conditions and requirements of the Law Covenant, under which He was born, was permitted to respond to this Covenant of Sacrifice. He was first,

the Chief, the Head of the Household of Saints who entered into this Covenant of Sacrifice with God – agreeing to sacrifice His earthly life and all its rights in the doing of the Father's will even unto death. It was His faithfulness in this that gained for Him the better resurrection to glory, honor and immortality – the Divine nature.

During this Gospel Age, some saintly ones have responded to the Lord's invitation to walk in Jesus' steps. Through the merit of His sacrifice, Jesus was privileged to be the Advocate with the Father on behalf of all this company called to be His Bride class and joint-heirs. He has imputed His merit to their sacrifice, thus making it complete and acceptable in the Father's sight. Each one of the followers of Jesus, energized by His spirit of devotion, not only *makes* the covenant, but *fulfils* it, with the assistance of his glorious Redeemer. Thus eventually they will come off through Him "more than conquerors," and be joint-heirs in the Kingdom.

To these the Apostle writes, "Ye are not under the Law, but under grace." These are not under the Law Covenant, requiring of them absolute and perfect obedience to every item of the Jewish Law. They are under grace, or Divine favor, which does not require the fulfilment of the whole of the Law by them – a requirement which they could not fulfil. Instead, as the Apostle tells us, "the righteousness of the Law [its real requirement, **[R5947 : page 260]** the spirit of its requirement] is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." (Romans 8:4.) Thus, although not under the Law Covenant, the will of God, which was the spirit of the Jewish Law, is binding upon every Christian in proportion to his knowledge of it.

## **THE CHRISTIAN'S FIRST AND SECOND COMMANDS**

Speaking of the spirit of the Law, applicable to angels, to the world of mankind and to Christians, Jesus declared it to be briefly comprehended in two commandments. The first of these is, "Thou

shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, being and strength." The second is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Every Christian and every angel recognizes that Law and feels a responsibility to it to the extent of his ability; but neither angels nor Christians are under the Law Covenant – that covenant was made only with the nation of Israel.

Every follower of Jesus should realize that if he has enlisted under the banner of Divine righteousness and truth he has pledged his very life in this service as a soldier of the Cross. How then could he do less than his very best in loving and serving his Heavenly Father with all his mind, being and strength? How could he decline the Divine requirement to love his neighbor as himself – to be kind, generous, not selfish? True, the New Creature may find difficulty in devoting all of his mind and strength to the Lord and in dealing in perfect fairness with all his fellow-creatures. But this is the New Creature's desire and intention, and to accomplish which he must strive daily, and war a good warfare against the natural inherited weaknesses of his old nature – his flesh. In proportion to his love for the Lord will be his zeal in this warfare; and proportionate also will be the reward that will be given him in the end by the Heavenly Father.

But what an unseen warfare is being waged amongst the followers of the Lord wherever they are! The world sees not and knows not of this conflict; but it is very real, and the Lord takes note of the loyalty and faithfulness of these covenantors – these who have made a covenant with the Lord by sacrifice – consecrating their little all of time, talent, influence, prospects. Having consecrated, they are to maintain this attitude of consecration daily, hourly – presenting their bodies "living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God, and their reasonable service." – Rom. 12:1.

If weak or fallen according to the flesh, these are to remember that they are no longer fleshly or human beings, and that the

weaknesses are not theirs; for they are now New Creatures in Christ Jesus, to whom old things have passed away and all things have become new. They have new ambitions, new ideals, and new relationship with God. They do not love sin, but love righteousness. They hate sin. They have enlisted to death to war a warfare against sin, especially in their own flesh. They have the satisfaction of knowing that while fellowmen might not see their battlings, might not know of the courageous effort they put forth in opposition to sin, yet the Lord looketh not at the outward man, but at the heart, and His judgment is not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit – the mind, the intention, the endeavor. Thus there are some great, valiant soldiers of the Cross, whom the world knows not; but all of these will eventually be crowned and have a share with Jesus in His Kingdom.

### **THE CHRISTIAN'S THIRD COMMANDMENT**

At first it would appear that these two commandments itemized by Jesus would include everything that could be required by justice; and so they do. Justice requires nothing more than what these two commands include. Why then did Jesus give another command – a third one – a new one, over and above anything that the Divine Law required? We reply that this third commandment is not applicable to any except those who become the disciples of Jesus. This third commandment the Father did not put upon Jesus; He voluntarily put this regulation upon Himself, and laid down His life sacrificially – a thing which no law could justly demand. The Father did not require that Jesus should do this in the sense of commanding Him to do it; but He did require it in the sense that He promised glory, honor, immortality, the Divine nature and the Messianic Kingdom to the saintly One who would enter the Covenant of Sacrifice.

Jesus, therefore, in entering this Covenant of Sacrifice, did *more* than what the Law given to Israel required. Therefore, when pointing out to His disciples the conditions upon which He would be

their Advocate, and the conditions upon which He would guarantee to them a share with Himself in the Heavenly things, He specified the importance of this third commandment. "A new commandment I give unto you – that ye love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12.) St. Paul points out that Christ loved us to the extent of dying for us, and that all of the true followers of Jesus, possessed of His Spirit, should likewise count it a joy to be permitted to lay down their lives in the service of the brethren. "We ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Gradually the eyes of our understanding have been opening wider and wider to see the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the love of God; and as a result we have been striving more and more to love and to serve our God with all our heart, mind, being, strength. More and more, also, we have learned to appreciate the necessity for dealing justly and kindly with the members of our families, with our neighbors, with all mankind – loving our neighbors as ourselves. We may have congratulated ourselves on the progress we have been making, and surely we all need some encouragements while battling with the old nature!

### **THE SOURCE OF OUR SEVEREST TRIALS**

But now, behold the New Commandment, requiring a *still greater* devotion to the will of our Father and to the leadership of our Savior! The rule of righteousness is to be observed toward our Heavenly Father and toward all our neighbors; but toward the brethren of the Household of Faith we are to do *more* than the right – we are to *suffer*, we are to *sacrifice* on their behalf, in their interests. "We ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren." Oh, what a searching proposition this Covenant of Sacrifice is! How strange that it should be on behalf of the *brethren* that we should be expected to sacrifice, to lay down our lives!

At first some one might say, "To sacrifice will be a very easy matter when it is done in the interests of the brethren, more so than

if done for the world." However, experience shows that many of God's dear people, striving to keep the first two commandments, find it more easy to sacrifice time, influence and strength in the service of the *world* than in the service of the *brethren*. Somehow we are inclined to expect more from the brethren than from others, and inclined to make less allowance for weaknesses in the brethren than in others. There seems to be no condition in which God's people are more tried as respects their spiritual graces than by one another, with [R5948 : page 260] one another. It is not merely *theory*; it *proves itself out*.

All over the world there are Class troubles. Truly we read, "the Lord will judge His people," and again, "the Lord your God proveth you"! Testings and siftings are coming on and many of the dear saints of the Lord who [R5948 : page 261] have made a Covenant of Sacrifice with Him do not seem to realize that these Class troubles amongst the brethren are means which the Lord permits to test and to demonstrate the characters of His people – their love for Him, His Word, His will, their justice to all men, doing unto others as they would that they should do to them, and, finally, their spirit of self-sacrifice in respect to what they will do for or bear from the brethren in laying down their lives for them.

## **EXHORTATIONS TO BROTHERLY LOVE**

We fear greatly that some of the Lord's saints, failing to appreciate the situation, are failing to be overcomers in these matters; and that their place in the Royal Priesthood may thus be endangered. We are not rebuking any; we are not finding fault with any. But we encourage all to remember the Covenant of Sacrifice into which we have entered as represented in the Third Commandment – that we love one another as the Master loved us – even to the extent of dying for us.

If this matter could be rightly appreciated, if more loving sympathy could be felt one for the other, we would not be inclined



to impute evil motives to each other's words and conduct. Rather we would be glad to assume that they were sincere, whether we could agree fully with all their doings and proposals or not. And being full of love for the brethren, our refusal to join with them in what we consider unwise or unscriptural arrangements would be presented in such kind and considerate, sympathetic and gentle terms as would be helpful to them.

Therefore, let us each strive to judge himself, and not to condemn one another. Let us each scrutinize our motives in respect to every *action*, every *word* of life, and especially in all of our *dealings* with the brethren. Let us each assume that the others of the class are as loving and as loyal to the Lord as ourself. Let us each remember that it is a privilege to sacrifice our own preferences and conveniences in favor of the preferences and conveniences of others of the brethren, wherever positive principles would not thereby be infringed; and we may even sacrifice positive principles of justice as respects *our own* interests, if thereby the peace, fellowship and prosperity of the brethren will be conserved.

And even if, despite our every endeavor to the contrary, it should finally seem necessary for a class to divide, nevertheless *love for the brethren* ought to be the blessed tie that binds, no matter how much the conveniences of the class or other reasons might make it necessary for us to subdivide. "Love as brethren" ought to love. "Be kind, considerate, gentle, one toward another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." – Ephesians 4:32.

### **"HEREBY WE MAY KNOW"**

It seems remarkable that the Apostle, in pointing out one of the surest signs by which the Lord's people may know positively that they have been begotten of the Holy Spirit, says: "Hereby we know that we have passed from death unto life, *because we love the brethren.*" (1 John 3:14.) How strange that love of the brethren should be the crucial test, as we have already pointed out in the



STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES – and as we may seriously fear will be more and more manifest as we come down toward the consummation of our hope!

As the Apostle has said, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3:18.) This is a *personal matter*. Each one of us is under this testing. If not yet, sooner or later, *undoubtedly*, this willingness to sacrifice in the interests of the brethren will *prove each one of us* either *loyal, faithful* to our covenant, or *contrariwise* – unfaithful. Let us make this matter of love for the brethren and laying down of our lives for the brethren a matter of personal study and of practical application to our own hearts, minds, thoughts, words, actions. And let us pray for one another, as well as exhort one another along these lines, striving to be filled with our Master's Spirit.

