

The Law Written on the Heart

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

Bast 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." 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." 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. 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

*See No. 1685, entitled "God's Non-remembrance of Sin."

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. 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 commands 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. 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. So terrible was the sight of God manifesting himself on Sinai that even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." 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, 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." 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." 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." 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.

I. First, I invite your attention to 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; 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," 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." 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: they feel every expression of it, but they speedily go their way and forget what manner of men they are. 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." 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; 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. 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.

II. 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 write 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 my law 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 show the work of the law written in their hearts.” 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. 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, 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; 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 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 forever. 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, 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, 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. 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.

III. 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 indite 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.

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 writ-

ten 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." 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"? Blessed be God for those immortal principles which forbid the child of God to sin.

IV. 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 will write my law 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.

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." 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." 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; 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. 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. 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 as-

sociate 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; 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. 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, we shall enter at once into the joy of our Lord.

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

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