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Selections.

The Law as Given at Sinai.

The manner in which the Law was given to the Israelites was wonderful. It was in a time of wonders. Probably within a year three miracles had been wrought in the sight of Moses to prepare him for his mission to Egypt; three had been wrought by him in the presence of the elders of Israel to convince them that the God of their fathers had sent him to be their deliverer, and three had been wrought in the sight of Pharaoh to convince him that Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, had sent his ambassador with the demand: "Let my people go, that they may serve me." To enforce this demand, ten destructive judgments were poured upon Egypt. Immediately afterwards arose the pillar of cloud by day for a covering and of fire by night for guidance. The Red Sea divided for Israel's escape, and in its returning waves the flower of the Egyptian army perished. Bitter waters were made sweet. Manna and quails were sent. The rock was smitten for water. And the Amalekites were defeated. All these things occurred shortly before the giving of the Law.

From the death of Egypt's first-born, the night of Israel's redemption, there were but fifty days till the people came to Mt. Sinai. The scene there, like much that had been, was grand and terrific; the mountains all wrapped in smoke—thunders peeling, lightnings flashing, earth quaking, trumpet sounding, people trembling—all because Jehovah had descended upon the mountain in fire.

The Law could have been given to Moses privately as were directions about the Passover, to be by him delivered to the people. But the occasion demanded the circumstances of grandeur and awe in which Jehovah was then pleased to appear. The mass or the people were grossly ignorant and amazingly stupid. Many of them had been idolaters in Egypt and were still so to this day. While they recognized Jehovah, who had brought them out of Egypt, as a mighty God, they were far from being convinced that He was God alone. While they did, no doubt, feel that gratitude and honor and glory were due to him; yet they certainly regarded it as a dictate of prudence to sacrifice to other gods, also, whose existence they believed and whose displeasure they dreaded. There was, therefore, in that sublime and awful display of adaptation, the best we can imagine, to impress the minds of that people, and instruct them as to the character of their God, and thus to prepare them for heartily adopting the sentiment:

"Jehovah is our God—Jehovah alone." But it should not be imagined that because the Law was then proclaimed so grandly, it had never existed in the earth before. For where there is no Law there is no transgression. Yet, before this transaction at Sinai the Old World had been drowned for transgressions; interference had been fearfully punished in the family of Noah, and for impurity Sodom and Gomorrah had been destroyed. Jacob, when summoned to Bethel to fulfill his vow, commanded his household to put away all strange gods. And in the earnest debates between Job and his friends there is a reference directly or indirectly to every precept in the Decalogue. That any of them ever saw the book of Exodus is vastly improbable. They never used the memorial name, JEHOVAH—while Moses and all subsequent Hebrew writers use it more frequently than all other terms. Also the compiler of those debates, whose style is much like Moses, both in introducing the speakers and in the sequel of the book, uses exclusively the memorial name. These facts about the use of that name, overlooked until lately, are strong proof for the great antiquity of Job's speeches in addition to that given by the learned long ago. They were prior to the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai, and show how much of the Law was previously known and regarded by the sons of God. How they came to know the existence of such a Law, is to us, a question of far less importance than the fact that they did know it. But that they did not use it as a covenant of works for life we have the highest authority for affirming. For they obtained a good report through faith.

Now, viewing the Law from this point, the presumption is reasonable that the Law was given to the Israelites for the same purpose as that for which it was made known, in whatever way, to the patriarchal worthies who had preceded them. Whatever then may be the formal appearance of the Law, and however august the occasion on which it was given at Sinai, these things are not to be construed into proof that it was given to the Israelites as a covenant of works for life. The ground on which their obedience was always claimed was, that Jehovah, this God, had brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. The giving of the Law, therefore, stood related to that redemption precisely as the exhortations in the epistles stated related to the doctrine of redemption through Christ. In the latter case, a consideration of what He has done is urged as the powerful motive for heeding the exhortations; so, also, a consideration of what God had done in Egypt, at the Red Sea and in the way through the wilderness was to be the powerful motive for observing the commandments. If it should be objected that in the Old Testament the blessing of life is formally suspended on obedience to the Law; then, it may be replied that the same is true in the New Testament: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you . . . for I was a hungered and ye gave me meat." To any mind thoroughly evangelized there is nothing hazardous in the thought that in the Epistles it is taught that whoever observes their exhortations will assuredly be saved. For such is the nature of man and such the nature of the things required, that no one will ever have the inclination and strength to obey without obtaining them from Christ through a connection with Him by faith. So, also, there was nothing hazardous in suspending life, formally, on obedience to the Law. Because the Israelite would, for the inclination and strength to obey, have to "remember the years of the works of Jehovah, his wonders of old." Now, as the exhortations of the New Testament should never be severed from Christ; so, also, the commandments of the Old should never have been discovered from the redemption from Egypt. And every reader of the Bible will easily recollect the frequency and earnestness with which the Israelites were reminded that they had been bondmen in Egypt, and that Jehovah had delivered them. True, the Law was given in such a form that it could be misunderstood, and could be perverted into a covenant of works for life; and this was actually done by many who were bent upon establishing their own righteousness. But if any should be troubled by the seeming force of this objection, let them, if they can, imagine any definite form in which the Law could have been given, and yet not been liable to such perversion. Besides, are not the exhortations of the New Testament liable to the same abuse? Is there not reason to fear that they are so abused?

But while the Law was thus given as a rule of life, and enforced by the preceding redemption to which it stood so closely related, it also bore a prophetic import. Few, if any, deny that the redemption, while an actual present benefit, also promised something better. One Scripture: "Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us," settles this point. But as then God descended on the fiftieth day after the Passover redemption, in fire upon Mt. Sinai, to inaugurate a glorious dispensation of Law; so, also, on the fiftieth day after the sacrifice of Christ, our Passover, the Holy Spirit descended on Mt. Zion in cloven tongues of fire to inaugurate a dispensation of the Spirit still more glorious. These are certainly striking circumstances that can not with any propriety be classed under the head of "undesignated." "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." The nature and the times of both type and anti-type were all pre-arranged by infinite wisdom.

The style of the Scriptures is worthy of our closest attention. To an unreflecting reader it may seem that until the giving of the Law there was no Law in the world. But a closer examination reveals the fact that the Law did always exist. So, also, from the great account which the Scriptures make of the outpouring of the Spirit after the ascension of

our Lord the unreflecting might infer that there were no presence and work of the Spirit previously. But no such inference is justified. From the beginning down until the deliverance from Egypt both the Law and the Spirit were in the world. Traces of them are to be found in the Scriptures. But during that period no such prominence was given to either as to occasion that time to be regarded as a dispensation of either. But when the dispensation of Law was so gloriously inaugurated the Spirit was not thereby banished from the world. His presence and power was still necessary. If any rendered to the Law the obedience required, it was by the grace of the Spirit. So, also, when the dispensation of the Spirit was inaugurated still more gloriously than that of the Law had been, the Law did not then vanish from the world. For it is with the Law that the Spirit convicts sinners, and with the Law He guides the saints.—A. R. Presbyteria.

The Everlasting Righteousness.

He who made the soul in his own image and who has done all to redeem it says—"the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Who, but him, can know it? Fearful to say, the human soul is able to be religious, while unregenerate; to hold, in some measure, every truth, and to imitate every grace of the new creation in Christ Jesus, wearing for itself a perfect form of godliness without its power! All this may co-exist with a kind of great sincerity and earnestness; not a few "zealously labor to build up their own righteousness and cause it to stand firm."—Rom. x: 4. It has been said, with apparent truth, that nine-tenths of all the visible church know nothing of the life of Christ in the soul; they may have every kind of religion but that of the conscience purified by the blood of the Lamb. If that proportion seem too great, let us remember that the ancient Saviour, full of all compassion, declared that three portions out of the four who hear the Word do not receive it into good and honest hearts. Inadequate conviction of sin, or refusal to surrender the will in obedience to some plain command, or unwillingness to believe God's message of free grace and to walk in his way of peace—these are the principal causes why so many stop short of Christ and fall of the grace of God. At some stage or other in their spiritual history, it may be said of any of these classes. "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." That is the crisis of the new birth, "submission to the righteousness of God."

Receiving Christ and his salvation as a free gift, we are delivered at once from the guilt and the dominion of sin and enter upon the liberty of free-born sons of God. "Our fathers saw that this truth was the basis of all real spiritual life. That which was superficial, and morbid, and puny and second-rate, might do with some less deep, less broad foundation." But all that is freed from the spirit of bondage and of fear; whatsoever belongs to a sound mind, and is animated by divine power and love, must rest here. "The just shall live by faith." "Religion is fashionable in our age. But is it that which sprang up after centuries of darkness among our fathers in Europe. Is it that of apostles and prophets? Is it the calm yet thorough religion which did such great deeds in other days? Has it gone deep into the conscience? Has it filled the heart? Has it pervaded the man? Or has it left the conscience unpacified, the heart unsoftened, the man unchanged, save with some external fig leaves of religiousness, which leave him hollow as before? There is at this moment many an aching spirit bitterly conscious of this hollowness. The doctrine, the profession, the good report of others, the bustle of work, will not fill the soul. God himself must be there, with his covering righteousness, his cleansing blood, his quickening spirit. Without this, religion is but a shell; holy services are dull and irksome, joy in God, which is the soul and essence of worship, is unknown. Sacraments, prayer meetings, religious services, labors of charity, will not make up for the living God.

"How much of morality there may be in the religious life of our age, it

is for each individual to determine for himself, that he may not be deceived, nor lose his reward. One who knows the "religious world" well, and passed through the hollowiness, thus writes:—"It is just two years since he came in a way as certainly miraculous as ever he spoke with a voice to Paul or any other, and ran his plough through my heart, breaking up and tearing into shreds my old christianity and professor life, showing me death, death amidst all, and leading me, though with terrible struggles and opposition from the old, heart and its pride, into something like a knowledge of himself, the living personal Jesus; though, alas, how feeble, how dark, how slow has been the progress! Before that, I was in a condition in which I very believe (though it may seem unkind and morbid to say so) the great part of the professing church is at the present day, both ministers and people. I know the kind of intercourse I had with many who pass for as good christians as are to be found; and I know this, that very many who could talk hotly about doctrine, who would laugh and make merry, and smile at my foolish jesting, showed no inclination whatever to join in speaking of the personal living Lord himself, after he came by his strong arm of power, and made me wish more to speak of him.

"I think it is well that you should be told such things. Cry aloud and spare not; show to the house of Israel their sin. There is far too much assuming even on the part of the faithful ones, that many of their flock are only in a low state, and that the mere calling them to go out of the world is enough. No! While there may be an isolated one of this sort, I believe that where wickedness and inconsistency are so widespread as they are, where so many are known only by profession and by no other single mark or fruit of the Lord's people, it tells of something worse. The ploughshare must be sent deeper. It must bring up earth which

number are awakened and interested in youth, who by and by find a sort of peace, through some kind of wrong preaching or dabbling with unprepared mortar, along with the blindness of their own hearts. Such peace is not founded on personal contact with the living One; and when business, or advancing years, or worldly entanglements comes in, their vessel will not hold in. What have they to fall back upon? They do not like to abandon their profession; nay, there hangs about them a sort of spurious and galvanic life which binds them. But they know not the Lord of life. The good Lord help you to deal with such souls; and may he anoint you afresh, and give you his own wisdom and discernment to speak so as to draw souls, and call them to new life in the Lord.

"All unreason is weakness and irksomeness; and the sooner we are stripped of unreason the better for peace and usefulness. The men of robust spiritual health are they who like Luther have made sure of their filial relationship with God. They do the great things in the church, others do the little. They shrink from no battle, nor succumb to any toil.

"We do not war after the flesh (2 Cor. x: 3) and our weapons are not carnal (x: 4). Our battle is not fought in the way that the world would have us to fight it. It is the 'fight of faith' (1 Tim. vi: 12). It is not by doubting, but by believing that we are saved; it is not by doubting but by believing that we overcome. Faith leads us first of all to Abo's 'more excellent sacrifice' (Heb. xi: 4). By faith we quit Ur and Egypt and Babylon, setting our face to the eternal city (Heb. xi: 16). By faith we offer up our Isaacs, and worship, 'leaning on the top of our staff,' and give 'commandment concerning our bones.'

By faith we choose affliction with the people of God, and despise Egypt's treasures. By faith we keep our passover; pass through the Red Sea; overthrow Jericho; subdue kingdoms; work righteousness; stop the mouths of lions; quench the violence of fire; turn to flight the armies of the aliens, and refuse deliverance in the day of trial, that we may obtain a better resurrection (Heb. xi: 35). It is 'believing from first to last.' We begin, we go on, we end in faith. The faith that justifies is the faith that overcometh (1 Joh. v: 4); for this is the victory that overcometh the world ever our faith. By faith we obtain the 'good report' both with God and man. By

faith we receive forgiveness; we live by faith; by faith we work, and endure, and suffer; we win by faith the crown—a crown of righteousness, which shall be ours in the day of the appearing of him who is our righteousness.—South-Western Presbyteria.

Helpfulness.

Men are dependent upon one another. We are all parts of a great whole. No one can live by himself and for himself. The simplest wants we feel can not be gratified without help from others. Every mouthful of bread we eat, teach us this. The sowing of the seed, the ploughing of the field, the gathering of the harvest, the threshing and sifting, the grinding at the mill, the shipping to market, the labeling and selling and account-keeping, and kneading and mixing and baking, show us, that all classes of men, both sexes, the labor of food and hand and brain and machine have a part in every loaf of bread. No human life can be imagined to exist without social dependence.

And this is true, not only as shown by the fact, that we need others' service to produce for us. We must perish unless we contribute something to the welfare of others. For this the law of work, by which we earn our daily bread. It is the discovery, that we have strength and faculties and members, the end of which is not in themselves, but for the material and moral good of others, that enables us to make a living. So trades and professions spring up. So commerce studs the sea. So business prospers. It is because of the law of mutual dependence.

If then we are so dependent upon one another, we ought to carry whatever gifts we have, for the happiness of others, and make whatever power we possess, a service to others. And God has provided for our so doing, by endowing all in need, will bring to the Kingdom of Helpfulness.

Some have the gift of cheerfulness. It is born in them as a part of their being. Let them put it in their face and carriage like a light, and let it kindle hope and encouragement and joy for others. Of the many helps which we can carry to men, few are more welcome and more efficient in this careworn, anxious world, than a cheerful disposition and habit, seen in the sparkling eye, heard in the ringing laugh, felt in the buoyant life.

Some have the gift of beauty. It is not the highest prize in the world, by any means. Yet if it be held not as a vanity, but as a vessel, and if it be consecrated, as it may be, it is not to be despised as an agency for blessing and helping men. Many can recognize goodness only as it is fair and sweet, and duty and virtue, taught by beauty, will often pierce through the rough life and the vicious heart, when, if presented in any other form, they would be mocked. Let those who have beauty consecrate it in whatever way it may be shown to them, that by it men will be drawn from evil or helped in trouble.

Some have the gift of entertaining. They can talk well. They have stores of reading to draw from. They have memories of travel to recall. They have the knack of knowing what to say. They can bring themselves into acquaintance with every class of persons, young and old, rich and poor.

Let them help men by carrying this power so as to add to the information of those who have not their opportunities, so as to break down the petty barriers of caste, so as put confidence in the diffident, and give amusement to the children, and sympathy to the isolated.

Some have the gift of song. Let them use it for the good of others, for there is nothing that so lifts men above their burdens as the power of music. One who has the musical talent carries a great means of blessing. Instead of wanting a great deal of persuasion when asked to sing, instead of being ashamed to use their power, because it is not cultivated to an equal extent with that of a prima donna, let them sing as God has given them grace to sing, and consecrate their gift gladly to the pleasure of men.

Some have the gift of taste. Everything they touch assumes beauty of form and arrangement. They have a genius for converting the homeliest things into ornaments,

and of making a place look pretty and comfortable with the meanest materials. Let them exercise this gift, not only for their own sake, but for others. Let them put their flowers where others may see them and enjoy them. Let them keep the windows of their parlors open, that the passers-by may catch a glimpse of the comfort within. Let them give a look of home to the bare room where the sick one lies in poverty, by a few touches of their deft fingers, and a few gifts from their overflowing treasury. It will teach men that some persons are not shut off from them by the wall of selfishness. It will do good to them by destroying some of the dross out of their lives.

There are many, many gifts, which men and women hold, that might bless others like a baptism if sent out in ministrations of kindness and love. All that is necessary, is to feel that whatever God has given us, is not only for our benefit, but is by us to be sent further, and made to increase the happiness of the great whole of the human family. Then we will find that there are a hundred ways of doing good to others, and making their burdens of life the easier to carry.

Let us make our own, what Sidney Smith is said to have made his motto: "When you rise in the morning form a resolution to make the day a happy one to some fellow-creature." If we are young it will tell when we are old, and if we are old it will make our last days bright with the coming reward.—Sower and Gospel Field.

The More Excellent Way.

How many christians are there in these days, who, like the children of Israel, are never satisfied, never contented! They seem lost in a wilderness of desire and complaint; neither the manna from heaven nor the fowls of the wilderness satisfy them. They may be surrounded with all that is considered desirable, yet the "flesh" in their imaginations, and destroy all their present peace and happiness.

This spirit of complaining and repining illy becomes one out of the church, much less one of its members. He who has taken upon himself the name of Christ is expected to "bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things." What a sermon does the christian daily preach to the world, who goes about the duties of life with a meek and lowly spirit, seeking opportunity to do good to all men, uncomplaining, resigned, submissive, meek, "doth not behave himself unseemly, seeketh not his own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil," "prays without ceasing, and in everything gives thanks." Many christians of old, over-anxious of the morrow, neglecting the duties and privileges of to-day in gathering the manna for to-morrow's use, heeding not the command, "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." A lesson in faith can be learned from this incident, that may be applied to daily life. The Israelites that doubted God's Word, fearful that food would not be furnished on the morrow, as promised, were careful to provide more than their daily need, contrary to the command of God, and the result was, "it bred worms, and stank."

This being careful overmuch pleased not the Lord.—The part Mary chose that of sitting at the feet of Jesus, was the better part; "But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her." What is this better portion all christians should seek? Abiding in Christ. "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not." "He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."

"If ye abide in me, and my words in you, ye ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." The one great practical question of importance is how to abide. This can only be by faith. "Efforts will not hide you in Christ, works will not, neither resolutions nor prayers can take you there." Faith alone is the entrance to him. Faith alone can take that mighty step out of self and into Christ, and faith alone can keep you

there. It is the same sort of faith as that which at the first gave you the forgiveness of sins and made you a child of God. So long as the christian is in Christ he will walk by faith, speak by faith, live by faith, do everything by faith; and whatsoever is done by faith is done to the glory of God. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." To abide in Christ is truly to choose the better portion. While we abide in Christ, it matters not whether we have manna or flesh to eat, so that we can only be with Jesus. He who has the spirit of Jesus in his heart can afford to be charitable in all things. There are members in every church whose constitutional weakness seems to be that of continual fault-finding; nothing pleases them; the preacher either talks too loud or not loud enough; the singing is too fast or not fast enough; the class leader favors some of his members more than others. And, not satisfied with being in this state themselves, these afflicted ones do all in their power to have everybody else take their malady. O, if they would only choose "the more excellent way," and go to the Great Physician who heals all diseases, and by stepping into the pool, have "their hearts cleansed from all unrighteousness" and "their garments washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb," then their complainings, with their diseases, would take wings of the morning and vanish away; then would the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians assume new beauties to their understanding, love and charity to all would sparkle, whisper and sing in every line, "Love would drive their chariot wheels," and a little child would lead them.

What God Blesses.

God blesses very slender things to the conversion of souls. It is very humbling, sometimes, to a preacher who thinks, "Well, I did preach a pretty fair sermon that time," to find him of this sermon, and who, when he made in the street, which he hardly thought was of any value whatever, was what God has blessed—that when he thought he had succeeded best, he had done nothing, and when he thought he had succeeded worst, then God blessed him. Many a soul has had his eyes opened by an instrumentality which never dreamed of being useful; and, indeed, the whole way of salvation is in itself extremely simple, so as to be well compared to the clay and spittle which the Saviour used. I do not find many souls converted by bodies of divinity. We have received a great many into the church, but never received one who became converted by a profound theological discussion. We very seldom hear of any great number of conversions under very eloquent preachers—very seldom indeed. We appreciate eloquence, and have not a word to say against it by itself, but evidently it has no power spiritually to enlighten the understanding, nor does it please God to use the excellency of words for conversion. When Paul laid aside human wisdom and said he would not use the excellency of speech, he only laid aside what would not have been of much service to him. When David put off Saul's armor, and took the sling and the stone, he slew the giant; and giants are not to be conquered to-day any more than they were then by champions arrayed in armor of brass.

HINTS TO YOUNG CHRISTIANS.

1. Never neglect daily private prayer; and remember that God hears your prayers.
2. Never neglect daily private Bible reading; and remember that God is speaking to you, and you are to believe and act upon what he says.
3. Never let a day pass without aiming to do something for Jesus; every morning reflecting on what Jesus has done for you.
4. If you are ever in doubt as to a thing being right or wrong, consider whether you can do it in the name of Jesus, and ask God's blessing upon it.
5. Never take your christianity from christians, but ask yourself, "How would the Lord have me act?" and follow him.
6. Never trust your feelings, or the opinions of men, if they contradict God's word.
7. In deciding questions of truth and duty, remember that the wrong side has a crafty and powerful advocate in your own heart.