

a condition of life to sinners; the closer we come to the exclusion of all hope, of all love, of all motives to holy obedience. When acceptance with God appears difficult, it becomes also in a corresponding degree uncertain; and when the goodness of God is narrowed, and reconciliation appears extremely doubtful, the spring of love is frozen in the heart, and the whole work of obedience in the heart becomes a bondage of slavish anxiety and irksome toil. Those paths, which are in themselves pleasantness and peace, become ways of disquiet and heaviness. Obedience is exacted, and yet the source of obedience is unsupplied. God requires much, and yet gives but small encouragement, and presents feeble inducements, and thus appears a hard and severe task-master, "reaping where He has not sown, and gathering where He has not strawed."

On the other hand, let us consider the influence of that opposite and much more common view entertained with regard to the law of God; according to which it is so greatly moderated and relaxed as to impose nothing that is burdensome or difficult in the sinner; which represents God as all mercy, and frees men almost from all fear. There can be no doubt but this exhibits God and His law in a light much more calculated to conciliate and inspire confidence in the minds of offenders. There may be felt, even by a sinner, much satisfaction and complacency in the character of a God who is all indulgence to sin, who is satisfied with easy services, and not strict in punishing transgressions. This conception of God is indeed the foundation of all the complacency which the natural man ever entertains towards God, and gives rise to emotions of spurious love, from the experience of which he takes occasion to contradict the scriptural declaration, that the "carnal mind is enmity against God." But it is obvious that such a view of the law virtually does away with the great principle of the law,—"this do and thou shalt live." It gives up the law as a way of obtaining life; it is *salvation by indulgence to sin*, not by the works of obedience. Or rather, it unites the bad tendencies of both principles; and while it teaches the sinner to depend for the pardon of his sins on God's indulgence to sin, permits him to glory before God in the midst of his supposed virtues; laying a foundation at once for licentiousness and self-righteousness.

These, then, are the defects of the several extremes. But is there no medium, at which they may correct each other—at which there may exist enough of the strictness of the law to provide for holy endeavour—and enough of mercy to afford a sufficiency of motive and encouragement? This is the general notion of all who oppose the freedom of divine grace. They endeavour to effect a compromise between the law and the gospel, by adjusting some medium in which the justice of God may meet and accept the obedience, such as it is, which the sinner is supposed capable of rendering to the precepts of the law. This we have only to consider for a moment in order to discover the radical defect which adheres to this scheme in all its modifications. The truth is, that we are utterly incapable of fixing any medium in the scale of human doings, at which law and mercy may meet, and both operate for the sanctification of the sinner. There is no individual who can say—"when I have done so much in obedience to the divine will, I have divine forgiveness and favour secured to me." This uncertainty remains, therefore, in whatever shape this scheme presents itself.

Again, some speak of *imperfect but sincere obedience* being available for obtaining favour. Here the same difficulty recurs. Obedience must be *sincere* in order to its being obedience at all; so that we must leave this part of the expression out of account in determining the

amount of this scheme—and this leaves us exactly where we were before, with *imperfect obedience* as the ground of acceptance in the sight of God; and then the same question returns without having been settled—what is the amount of imperfection which may be allowed? What is the degree of obedience which is required?

Such is the tendency of the doctrine of salvation by the works of the law, in all its forms, and in all the modifications by which men mix it with the gospel.

Turn we now to the other view of the case, and look upon the words "Ye are not under the law, but under grace," as a *reason* for the promise—"sin shall not have dominion over you"—in other words, to the doctrine of *salvation by the free grace of God, without the deeds of the law*.

This all-important doctrine is very fully unfolded and enforced by the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, and established in opposition to the former. The opposition between the two relates to the ground of acceptance with God appointed for guilty man. And the point of view in which the doctrine of grace places the law is to *remove it from having anything to do with the justification of the sinner in the sight of God*. Man has sinned—he has broken the holy law under which he was placed. There has, therefore, arisen a controversy between him and God: the question is, how shall a sinner be pardoned and accepted? The gospel of the grace of God professes to settle this grand question, and to reconcile God and man. Now, it does this by declaring, first of all, that the *law* can have nothing to do with the reconciliation. It commenced the controversy—it cannot end it. It is, therefore, first of all, set aside, for "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." And the next thing it declares is, that the controversy is settled by an *act of free forgiveness on the part of God*,—that while man was guilty and deserved only condemnation, God has interposed out of sovereign mercy, and proclaimed pardon without a price from man. At the same time, he has done this in a particular way for the honour of His own law and government. He has appointed a justifying righteousness—He has provided a propitiation for sin, and has exalted the blessed Mediator, who rendered it, a Prince and a Saviour to bestow the repentance and remission of sins, which it was His will to communicate to the guilty.

To all who own His appointment, and accept the way of granting mercy which God has provided, justification, pardon, and acceptance are freely bestowed;—"being justified by faith we have peace with God." The essential difference of the gospel, then, is, that in it, obedience is not rendered *in order to obtain acceptance*, but *in consequence of having obtained it*. The sinner is first justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and being justified and accepted, he then renders obedience as required by God, and as the service which love prompts him to yield. On the former scheme, there is no full and all-sufficient righteousness provided for salvation; the sinner himself has to work out his righteousness, and it depends upon his success whether he shall be saved or not. Here, therefore, anxiety and constraint, and doubt enter from the very first; and they continue to the very last. When sin has been committed, so much of the ground of hope is taken away, so much fear of God introduced, so much of the irksome necessity of making up failure by new and more laborious effort. In the gospel, the grace of God meets man with an offer of unconditional forgiveness—it shows the great atonement, and shows it sufficient. This generosity of mercy sets the sinner at liberty—it touches his affections—and as obedience is still

as positively required as ever, it is gratefully given. During the whole course of obedience there is the same display of mercy exhibited as a security against despair, and as an incentive to love. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

J. B. L.

Weston.

ADDRESS TO A PASTOR.

The following Address was delivered by the Rev. John McLauchlan, of Acton, on the occasion of the induction of the Rev. J. A. Thomson, of Erin

My dear Brother and fellow labourer in the Gospel.—It is now my duty, in the name of the Presbytery and in the great name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to address you in connection with the solemn work of this day, and your being entrusted with the pastoral charge of this Congregation. Bear with me then for a little, while, with all humility, I address you in the words of an inspired Apostle, peculiarly applicable to your present position—Col. iv. 17.—"And say unto Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which, &c." Allow me to remind you from these words that the office of the Gospel Ministry is the most sacred and most responsible, as well as the most arduous office with which any human—any created being can be entrusted; an office so sacred and blessed that the loftiest angels in heaven might feel themselves highly honoured in being entrusted with it; an office so great and responsible, that inspired Prophets and Apostles might well sink under an overwhelming sense of its weight and responsibility, were they not strengthened with all might in the inner man, and were they not graciously sustained by the promised presence of their divine Lord and Master, whose promise is "Lo I am with you always," "yea an office with which the Son of God Himself was entrusted during the course of His ministry here on earth, when "He went about continually doing good, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven." This, dear Sir, is the great and sacred office with which you are entrusted; and I doubt not, were you to give utterance to the emotions of your heart, you would do so in some such language as this "Who is sufficient for these things? What am I, or what is my Father's house that I should be so highly honoured, and should be entrusted with this great work?"

I need not remind you, dear brother, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious King of Zion, is the Author and Founder of the Gospel Ministry. It bears His royal seal and signature. It derives its origin and efficacy from Him alone. He it was who gave the high commission unto His Apostles,—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." He it was who gave some Apostles, some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors, and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, and for the work of the Ministry. He it is who holdeth the stars in His right hand.

Take heed, therefore, to this ministry which thou hast received of the Lord Jesus. Endeavour to realise the fact that the Lord of Glory hath put you into the ministry, entrusting you with the administration of gospel ordinances, and with the charge of precious souls—to whom you will be either a saviour of life unto life, or a saviour of death unto death. Realise the fact that it is from the Lord Himself you have received this ministry, and to Him you are accountable for the discharge of its sacred duties. He is Lord of all and Head of His body the Church—you are His highly