

by which we merit eternal life. This is impossible, for we are sinners and have forfeited the favour of Jehovah, and "present for past could ne'er atone"—even had it been possible for us perfectly to keep the commandments of God. We are not in the same condition as Adam was in his primeval state; we do not start where he started. To him it was said,— "Do this, and thou shalt live." But Adam fell from his original righteousness, and the law provided for no failure on his part. What the law aimed at, it could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, through the depravity of human nature. Men sinned, and they became unrighteous in fact, and were treated as unrighteous by the government of God. They were brought into condemnation and they felt an impassable gulf between them and their Maker. The law could do nothing for them; it could neither rectify their errors nor reconcile them to God. Its bright flashes reveal to them their wickedness, and its rumbling thunders prophesy to them their doom. The more profoundly they felt their condition, the more profoundly they felt that by the deeds of the law no flesh living could be justified before God. Such is our condition as sinners in relation to law. "The likeliest thing to it in human experience is," says Dr. Chalmers, "when a decree of bankruptcy without a discharge has come forth on the man who has long struggled with his difficulties, and is now irrevocably sunk under the weight of them. There is an effectual drag laid upon this man's activity. The hand of diligence is forthwith slackened when all the fruits of diligence are thus liable to be seized upon, and that by a rightful claim of such magnitude as no possible strenuousness can meet or satisfy. The processes of business come to a stand, or are suspended when others are standing by ready to devour the proceeds

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