

Original Contributions.

"Ye Are Not Under Law, But Under Grace."

NUMBER II.

A recent ethical writer says: "The idea that people can be made good by statutory law, is an old one, and it will probably not die entirely out of the human breast, for many a generation to come, despite its repeated failures. This belief is inseparable from the nature of a very large number of estimable people, that to infuse into the human heart a principle of right-doing, is to prohibit wrong-doing by the power of law. But the whole history of man as well as the very philosophy of moral action shows this to be a mistaken notion."

In our moral and spiritual relations with God, and the family of Christ, the preparation and union are both in the heart. This preparation and abiding union, "the law could not do." For that purpose "it was weak," and not adapted to the object desired. Christianity must be either a spiritual kingdom, or an earthly one. It must either be a spiritual house, temple or church; or a fleshly or carnal one. It must either be all grace, or it is all law. Under it we are either of "the bond woman," or we are of "the free woman." We are either "servants" and under "the bondage of law," or we are "children" and "free," and in the "liberty of Christ." If we are "servants," we are under law; but if we are "sons" and "children," then we are under grace. Christianity or "the building of God," is not and cannot be typified by the great image of Nebuchadnezzar, for it is not part gold and silver, and part iron and mud. But it is typified by the "sanctuary" or "holy place" in whose symbolic furniture there was not one word of law deposited or found. "Thus signifying," may I not say, that the members of the "true tabernacle" were to be "children" and "free" and "not under law, but under grace." If we are under law, then we are "servants" and "in bondage;" but if we are "children" (then heirs) then we are "free," and in "liberty of Christ."

But a very strange and mistaken notion still prevails among some "foolish Galatians," that Christ transferred and reenacted (with certain modifications) some of "Moses' law" into his true tabernacle,

or spiritual house, not stopping to think that what was "weak and beggarly," or "dead" under Moses, must be equally dead, and weak and beggarly under the Gospel. Reason, with the angel, would say, "Why seek ye the living [or life] among the dead? it is not there!"

It is true that Christ was born, lived and taught under the law of Moses; under the statutory and commandatory law that was given to transgressors; and "because of transgressions," and is true that Christ endeavored to restrain the loose practices of that gross and hard-hearted people. To illustrate Christ told that "people whose ears were dull of hearing, and whose hearts had waxed gross," that "on account of the hardness of your hearts," Moses had said, (Deut. 24: 1), "When a man hath taken a wife, and it come to pass, that she find no favor in his eyes, then let him write her a bill of divorcement and give it in her hand and send her out of his house." Now it is hardly necessary to say that this "permission" of Moses, was a gross departure from the "fleshly commandment" or civil law regulating marriage "from the beginning."

In order to correct such loose practices, and such a gross outrage upon the wife, Christ modifies that "law" by saying that a man should not put away his wife under that law, save for the one cause of adultery. Now to say that Christians are under even that modification of that law is to say that Christianity is but a modification of Judaism, or of "Moses' law." It is to teach and practice, that "for the cause of adultery" you can "write her a bill of divorcement, give it into her hand, and send her out of your house," and then go and "marry another." Need I say that in the kingdom of God it is not so, for we are under no such law. Just as well might we say to a man who is healed of a malady, "go and make the offering that Moses commanded." Or, to tell one who asks what he must do to inherit eternal life, "to keep the [ten] commandments," or to "keep the Sabbath day." As well might I tell the "anxious inquirer" to follow the "apostolic precedent," and "take a vow, and shave his head."

How long will it be, before we learn and understand that the Christian religion, consists in principles of action, "written in our hearts" and "in our minds," and is not a system of statutory law, or

of "fleshly commandments." I am very sure that in this sense, there is not a single "law" or "commandment," in the "true tabernacle," the "spiritual house of God."

In trying to explain the spiritual principles of his kingdom to the gross and fleshly disciples, Christ, by antithesis, or opposition, said, "if you love me keep my commandments," and "a new commandment I give unto you that you love one another." So by the same principle of antithesis, in contrast with "the law of sin and death" Paul calls the ministration of the Spirit; "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." But "the law of the Spirit" and the "commandments" of Christ, are as far from being of the commandatory or statutory character as they are of hearing the latter penalties of "stones," "swords," prisons and gallowses. They are as much unlike, as the first tabernacle was unlike the "true tabernacle;" or as "Solomon's temple" was unlike the "temple of God."

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Salem, Or., Aug. 12, 1882.

The Church at Ephesus.

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NUMBER IV.

The epistle of Paul to the church at Ephesus was written from Rome in the early part of his imprisonment, and before it became so rigorous. From Acts 28: 16, we learn that Paul was kept by a single soldier. There is, however, positive evidence that he was "bound with a chain." (See verse 20, also Eph. 3: 1; 4: 1; 6: 20). It was, likely, about 62. The church, doubtless, was aware of his appeal from the tribunal of Felix to the courts of Caesar at Rome, and had sent messengers and means to aid the apostle; they yet remember his labors among them, and, in his absence, they have stood a tower of strength upon Christ the Rock, with God and the word of his grace building them up and preparing them for their final eternal home. They had many reasons to remember the great apostle; and his long perilous voyage and his imprisonment would tend to excite in them intense anxiety. But they were already taught to rely upon the power and mercy of him who is both Lord and Christ. "Though sundered far by faith they met around one common mercy seat." The apostle left it for the messenger Tychicus to tell them of his

temporal situation.

1. In his letter he earnestly and pathetically evokes the blessing of God upon the faithful, and then burst forth in praise to God for the whole Gospel blessing through Christ who had given all spiritual blessing and brought men together in heavenly things. That to this end God had made choice of his ambassadors before the ages, and made their mission such as renders them holy and without fault, but in love before him. That it is according to the good pleasure of his will that these chosen ambassadors should be more than servants, even adopted children in Christ. That in their mission and work and for the glory of God he had accepted them and granted them redemption through his blood, according to his rich grace. Thus chosen as messengers and adopted as children, for the purpose of the former, God abounded toward them in all wisdom and prudence. He revealed to his chosen apostles and prophets the "mystery" of salvation to all; to Gentile as well as Jew. (See chap. 3: 3, 4). This great scheme through Christ is all-sufficient to gather into one body the whole family of man. These messengers, having been chosen according to the counsel and will of God, and called to the work, they obtain "an inheritance." To the praise of the glory of God they were the first to trust in Christ.

2. Having now before the mind of those addressed the scope and plan of the great God, the apostle turns to the object and consequence of its effectual work at Ephesus. The church was not chosen as ambassadors. They were not in the line of the predestination; but the result of the efficacy of that Gospel of their salvation, which they had heard from the inspired apostle, who proclaimed the words of truth, by which they were also led to trust in Christ, among whom, after their faith, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, and upon this all must rest until the purchased possession is redeemed to the praise and glory of God. On the part of God this arrangement is infallible. If men are faithful to their truth all is sure and safe. Therefore, the apostle further rejoices to have heard of their faith, or continuance of faith, in the Lord, and their affection for all the saints, especially remembering them in his prayers to God; that through the goodness of God they obtain the