

# THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL

SERMON –Preached on Sunday Morning April, 1st 1866, by

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“Even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.”—Psalm lxxviii. 8.

SINAI represents also the Jewish nation; a truth that will interweave itself, as it were, in our discourse this morning. And, indeed, it can easily be proved that Sinai represents the whole world, for all are by nature under the law and its curse. But what I have to notice this morning, then, is, first, the transition; and, secondly, the relation, — “The God of Israel.”

First, the transition, from Sinai, or from that which is moved, unto that which cannot be moved. Moses is very beautiful upon this when he says, “The Lord came from Sinai.” So, it is by the righteousness of Jesus Christ that God comes from Sinai, and meets us by the mercy-seat; it is by what Jesus Christ hath done that he comes from Sinai, and meets us in the riches of his grace, called in the New Testament the throne of grace. Hence it is said, “The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir.” Then comes the dawn of the Sun of righteousness, — “He shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of his saints.” Let us be careful here as we go along, for every clause is well worthy of our attention in this solemn matter; because as there will at the last day be but two classes, the saved and the lost, just so now we must either be under the law or under the gospel; we certainly are either under the one or the other. Now it is there said in that verse he came from Sinai, with ten thousands of saints. I suppose that is a form of speech which seems to mean some, but doth in reality mean all. Now the Christian will understand what is meant by this. You must remember that there is a people chosen to eternal salvation, and they are called saints in that choice, because election made saints of them. Hence, we read that they are blessed with all spiritual blessings, according as they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world; and again, “Sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Christ Jesus.” So, then I think we may there mystically take the saints to mean the whole election of grace, constituted saints by election; the Lord in that transaction imputing their sins to his dear Son, and imputing his righteousness unto them; so that God thus came from Sinai, and his people virtually came from Sinai with him. And the next clause is a very remarkable one in this matter. It is said, “From his right hand went a fiery law for them.” The fiery law there being for them I think must be understood in a twofold sense. First, “the law was added because of transgression;” and they shall all be brought to see and to know that this law is a fiery law, that it has nothing in it whatever but the fiery consequence of sin; that the law as a violated law has nothing in it but the eternal indignation of the Most High. It is therefore a fiery law, and those who will cleave to it will thereby come ultimately into the fire of hell; “for what the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law.” Now, then, as we observed last Lord’s day morning, the Lord doth give those whom he intends to save to see that that law that stands against them is a fiery law, and that it must be met; there is no such thing as failing; not one jot nor tittle of those fiery words can fail; it must be met either by ourselves coming under its dreadful penalties, or else a substitute must meet it for us. Now Jesus Christ has done

this; he has met this fiery law for us, and given us a way from this fiery law to that Zion where there flows the river of peace and plenty from the throne of God and the Lamb. But there is another sense, I think, in which the fiery law is for them; that the fiery law there stands to denote God's fiery rule in their favor; so that from age to age the Lord hath hedged his people round with a fiery rule to defend them. He is a wall of fire round about them, so that they who would hurt them must be dealt with by this fiery law. How many instances there are in the Scriptures of this! Not that we as Christians can for one moment wish any judgment of God to fall upon our fellow-creatures; nevertheless, there is a fiery law that defends the saints of God; it has done so, and it will do so; — "Will not God avenge his own elect?" And I make these remarks only just to remind ourselves of the greatness of the mercy of being brought out of that ignorance and enmity in which we all by nature are, into reconciliation to God. Also, I make these remarks to show what care the Lord takes of his people. He not only dwells among them by the mercy-seat, by the High Priest, eternal and sacrificial perfection; but hath a fiery rule by which to defend them also; so that "let them rejoice, because thou defendest them." And the more we can enter into this great truth of the Lord being on our side, I am sure the more "calm amidst tempestuous motion" we shall be, and the more quiet we shall be amidst the various adversities and oppositions we may meet with, because "if God be for us, who then can be against us?" An apprehension of the character of this law, then, will lead us to fly from that to God. And now mark the next clause, "Yea, he loved the people." So, then, in order to fly from the curse and from the wrath to come, we must not only have a knowledge of the character of the law, and that that law must be met either by ourselves or by a substitute for us—and Christ hath met that law, — but we must also have some acquaintance with the love of God. "Yea, he loved the people." Now that will bring us into that that cannot be moved, in contrast to that that is moved. "Yea, he loved the people." Now where do we see this? Where do we learn this? Where do we get at this? And what evidence have we of interest in it? It stands thus: —we see this love to the people in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the expression of that love. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is love. We love him because he first loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. We here see, then, that the Lord Jesus Christ in thus being the end of the law for righteousness, bringing in everlasting life, having swallowed up death in victory, having accomplished the warfare and established pardon, and having received in his own person grace for us here, and glory hereafter—here we see the love of God. So, then this love is that that cannot be moved. God will never be moved from his love; we become settled down in his love as manifested in and by Jesus Christ. He will never be moved, I say, from that love; he rests in his love. And you know the testimony of the apostle, and it is worth, I was going to say, a thousand worlds, — "Not anything shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus." Then comes the safety of this people, — "All his saints are in thy hand." You know what the New Testament says of this, that none can pluck them out of the Savior's hand, that none can pluck them out of the Father's hand. Here, then, is their safety. This is coming away from Sinai, and coming to Zion by faith—it is all by faith in Christ; here is the love of God, and here is the safety, that none shall pluck us out of his hands. And, bless the Lord! none can pluck his truth out of our hands. I believe the Christian is favored to take such a hold of God's truth, that whatever else they may pluck out of his hands, they cannot pluck the truth of God out of his hands; that is to say, they cannot make him disbelieve it. You hold the truth by faith, and as long as you believe it you hold it fast; but when you disbelieve it, that is letting it go. Now that is what the Christian never does. The Christian may, indeed, in much distress of mind disbelieve his interest in the truth, but he cannot disbelieve the truth. No, he says, whether I am saved or not, I still believe in God's salvation; whether I am cleansed or not, I still believe the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin; and whether I am justified or not, I still believe that the righteousness of Jesus Christ justifies from all things; and whether I go to heaven or not, I still believe that God hath a people, and that he has by an immutable oath secured them. See the beautiful mutuality here; that as-the people cannot be plucked out of his hand, so the truth cannot be plucked out of our hands; that is to say, we cannot be made to disbelieve it. Attacks we may

have upon the very truth of the Bible itself, but such attacks are always temporary; attacks we may have upon some essential part of God's truth, but those attacks are only partial and temporary; they never can be such as to turn the true believer into an unbeliever; they never can be such as to stop the Holy Spirit from carrying on his work, or to destroy the testimony given that Jesus Christ is the author and the finisher of our faith. Thus, then, in the place of wrath we have love, in the place of danger we have in our Father's hands safety, everlasting safety. Then again comes submission, — "And they sat down at thy feet." Now that conveys the idea, I think, of entire submission. Lord, we are nothing; dispose of us as seems good in thy sight; in mercy speak unto us; we would sit down at thy feet as little children, and would recognize more and more of the blessedness of the Savior's words, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find" that that includes everything. I do not believe that any of you can think of a blessing that is not included in that one promise, "Ye shall find rest unto your souls." You may meditate upon it, and you will perceive that that promise is more extensive than at first sight appears, because whatever there is unpleasant, whether it be bodily affliction, or affliction of mind, or trouble in the family, or in business, or in the world, let it be what it may; whether it be doubts, fears, losses, or crosses, let it be what it may, it is all swept away in that promise, or else the promise would not be true. There is a paradisiacal blessedness in that promise, a completeness in it; because as long as there is one thing to disturb you, your rest is not complete. "Ye shall find rest unto your souls." That means complete relief, it means complete satisfaction, it means to be brought into a state wherein you are as to blessedness entirely unrivalled. "Ye shall find rest unto your souls." I do not know a term in all the Bible more sweeping than that is; it seems to come in and sweep away every trouble; because if you have nothing to disturb you, nothing to make you uncomfortable, then you may be said to have found rest. And yet this shall result, this complete rest, from being thus brought to sit down at the dear Savior's feet. "Everyone shall receive of thy words;" every one of them. Thus, the love of God cannot be moved; their standing is safe, they are in his hand, they cannot be moved; and the words which they receive cannot be moved; "Heaven and earth may pass away, but my word shall not pass away."

But again, Sinai being moved represents not only Jesus Christ overcoming the curse, putting away sin, swallowing up death in victory; but Sinai also represents the Jewish dispensation—that that should be moved, and that the saints receive something in contrast to that which is moved— something that cannot be moved. Let us hear the word of the Lord upon this part. You see, friends, what a book of wisdom the Bible is. This one word Sinai represents many things, —our state by nature, its being moved; it represents Jesus Christ as coming and meeting the curse, putting away the curse, and bringing the people from it, and settling us down in the love, and truth, and power, and mercy of God; and then it represents the Jewish dispensation; or, in other words, the same thing, it represents the Jews in their apostate state. "This Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." Now it is not so much what men profess, the question is where they are in reality. The Jews had apostatized from God's truth, but they did not know that they were in bondage. They ridiculed the Savior when he talked of making them free, and said they were never in bondage to any man. They did not know that they were under the law, they did not know that they were bond children, for they all boasted of their freedom. Therefore, while they professed to be people of God, yet, being one with Satan in falsehood and enmity against God and his truth, they, unknown to themselves, were in that bondage that must bring destruction. Hence that dispensation, in more than one Scripture, is called "heaven," "earth," "sea," "dryland;" all of which I have now to notice. The apostle Paul knew the tendency of men to slight the certainties of the gospel; he knew the ignorance of men of that covenant that binds everything together, even the sure mercies of David; he knew the constant tendency of men to turn away from what they call high doctrine, from what they call uncharitable doctrine, from what they call a little-minded gospel—this certain gospel; therefore, mark his words, — the Lord help us to follow them carefully. In the twelfth of

Hebrews, after describing the immovability into which they who were taught of God were settled, perceiving among some of them a tendency to bring in something of the creature, he says, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." You hear what he said, that "ye are" professionally, as though he should say, Come to "Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel." So that God speaks from heaven by this new covenant, by this Mediator of the new covenant, by this blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel; the very things that delight those who are taught of God. Oh, the joy and rejoicing in our hearts when God speaks to us as he did to Abraham, "In blessing I will bless thee, in multiplying I will multiply thee, and thy seed shall be as the stars of the sky; and I am" — not merely will be, it is decided and settled, no alteration about it— "I am thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward." See, then, that you love these truths, see that you have a circumcised ear to drink in these heavenly testimonies. While you profess to be believers in Christ, let it be the true Christ, let it be the true gospel, let it be the true Spirit of the true God, and not an imitation. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth," who apostatized from the old covenant, and substituted human inventions into the place of that covenant. They forsook that covenant, threw down God's altars—that is the natural consequence,—in order to put something else into the place of them, and slew his prophets: first they forsook the covenant, then they threw down the altars and lowered the sacrifices, then they killed the men that preached the truth, — "If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape " if we turn away from the only sacrifice, the only covenant, the only Mediator, the only hope. Ah, says one, why, this is all needless to me; I turn away! my nature is bad enough for anything, but God is my witness that this blessed gospel, this order of things, is my only hope. God knows I have no other hope, and he knows I admire him and love him, and that I would knowingly hear no other gospel, and that I would run from sabbath to sabbath, and week-day too when I can do so, to hear the same blessed, blessed tidings. I have no desire to turn away. Now, then, if the remarks may seem in one respect needless, in another respect they are not; they stir up your minds in a way of remembrance of what God hath done for you. "See," then, "that ye refuse not him that speaketh." My soul drinks in these yea and amen truths. No thirsty land (and I am sure you can say the same, those of you that know what experience is), —no thirsty land drinks in water, and no dry ground drinks in the rain of heaven with more willingness than my soul drinks in these eternal truths. "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." "If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." Now he is here speaking of professors professing to love these truths. "Whose voice then shook the earth," —the mountain quaked greatly, as sinners will have to do at the last; "but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." I take the heaven there to mean the Jewish heaven, the Jewish dispensation—judgment; I take it in that light. And I think the apostle's explanation is very beautiful; "This word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken." How did they shake their covenant? By apostatizing from it. How did they shake their standing with the priesthood? By corrupting it. How did they shake their standing with their royalty? By their kings patronizing idols, and letting in other gods than the true God. How did they shake their standing with the mercy-seat? By turning the temple into a den of thieves, robbing God of his glory, and mating it a house merely of worldly aggrandizement. How did they shake their standing with the land? By giving up the truth; that is how that was brought about. "This word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken." So, the priesthood was removed, and the royalty removed, the temple removed, not a stone left one upon the other; the city destroyed, the land desolated. Thus, the Lord shook the Jewish heavens, and removed all the things that made up those heavens. "That those things"—oh, look at it, look at it, those of you that love the truth, — "that those things which cannot be shaken"—who can shake God's everlasting love? Who can shake the omnipotent grasp of eternal election? Who can shake his great decrees to eternal life? Who can shake the Bock of Ages?

“Is he a rock? How firm he proves!  
The Rock of Ages never moves.”

Hath he not said, “Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”? Who can shake the promises of his word? Who can shake the foundations of the city of God? Who can shake her jasper walls, who can move her bulwarks, overturn her battlements, lower her towers, or run away with one of her citizens? “This God is our God for ever and forever, and will be our guide even unto death.” “That those things which cannot be shaken may remain.” And Isaiah says, “As the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.” You will never get a bad name there, because you are named after Jesus Christ, and your name will always be as good as his name, because his name is your name. “This is the name wherewith ye shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness.” What is the inference? Perhaps some well-meaning but sadly ill-taught persons may say, Ah, well, if things are as certain as this, we may do just as we like; it does not matter how we go on. Ah, that is your inference. Yes, well, you differ very much from the apostle Paul, then; you would not like to differ from him, would you? No. Well, then, may the Lord open your eyes, and give you to see that you do differ from him. He draws an inference of quite an opposite kind; he makes the certainty of truth the ground of safety, not of danger, and a mighty motive of action. “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace;” “hold fast grace,” that is, hold fast the gospel of his grace; “continue in the faith, hold fast grace.” Mark the language, — “hold fast grace for that is the way the margin reads it; that we may by his grace “serve God acceptably.” If I am justified freely by his grace, if I am saved by his grace, and if I believe through his grace, and if—

“From his abounding grace I daily draw supply,”

then I can serve the Lord acceptably, “with reverence;” and if there be one thing in the whole range of existence the Christian reveres, it is the solemn, the delightful yea and amen truth of God. No Christian could be touched in so tender a part as in relation to his covenant God. There is the deepest reverence. If my conscience were to charge me with one act, or word, or even thought, willfully against that covenant, against that immutable God, I could never forgive myself. “Serve God acceptably,” carrying with us a deep sense of our utter unworthiness of the least of the goodness, the truth, the mercy, of the blessed God; carrying with us from day to day a full assurance that it is of the Lord’s mercy we are not consumed. “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably accepted in Christ, living stones, a holy priesthood, that we should offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ. Under the Old Testament dispensation there were lame sacrifices, and some that had other faults, that were accepted not as sin offerings, but as free-will offerings. I suppose some of you never heard of that, perhaps, before. Why, I think that is a very kind representation, friends. How lame are all my services, and how lame is your hearing, and how lame is your praying! and yet your will is good: I would preach better if I could, you would hear better if you could, you would pray better if you could, you would serve God better if you could, you would honor him more if you could. So that these humble services are the free-will, that is, the voluntary offerings of the soul, and are accepted of God, not as the ground of our acceptance, but as the evidence that he hath accepted us. I believe that Abel mingled some of his personal infirmities with his sacrifice, yet the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering, not because he was better in his nature than Cain, but because he was a believer, and received God’s truth; for “without faith it is impossible to please God.” Thus, then, here is the transition from Sinai into the love of God, and the power of God, and the truth of God, contrasting the things that were shaken and removed with the things that cannot be moved.

I should like to have another witness now to help me out with this matter; and so we find another witness upon this same subject beautifully setting forth this same thing, namely, Haggai. The Lord, by Haggai, said, "Yet once, it is a little while" —only four or five hundred years now, won't be long, soon roll away, —and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land." I do not take the sea and the dry land there literally; I take all that sort of cosmopolitan terms to denote the Jewish universe, and that that Jewish universe—for it was a kind of universe in itself—should be shaken in every part; its sea should be dried up, its land should be ruined, its sun should set, its moon should turn into darkness, its stars should fall from heaven, and the whole scene should become void. "And I will shake all nations;" so he did. These men. Well, what of these men? what have you to say against them? Why, they turn the world upside down. And a good thing too. But they are come hither also. Of course, they are. As the Duke of Wellington said, their marching orders were to go into all the world. When he was requested to stop the missionaries from preaching, the duke said, "I must look into their credentials, and see what their marching orders are, and if they are not out of order, shall be out of order if I attempt to stop them." He looked into their marching orders. "Why," he said, "their orders are to go into all the world, and India is a part of the world for it was in India. So, the duke said to his officers, You must not stop them; they are marching on, and you must not stop them. My marching order is to conquer India and so he did; "their marching orders are to go into all the world." "I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." But he did not become the desire of all nations till God shook them, though: he shook them first; and when a sinner is shaken by the thunders of Sinai—by a conviction of what he is—then Christ for the first time is discovered in his beauty, and the soul begins to desire him. "I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory." Historically that referred to the second temple, but ultimately it refers to the church of God, that that church shall be filled with God's glory. "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts." What says another witness? Why, that the law, the Jewish dispensation, had no glory, by reason of the glory that excels. The Lord says, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine and therefore whatever is needed in that department I will take care to supply it. "And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts and Christ is that peace. Thus, then, Sinai was met by the Savior; Sinai secondly represents, I say, Jerusalem, together with the whole apostate professing world; while the saints of God shall come out not only from under the law, but shall stand apart from Babylon, from an apostate world, and stand fast in the immoveabilities of the everlasting gospel.

Now I must have just one word more upon the next part. I meant to have said four or five things, but time does not permit. Here, then, is the relation— "the God of Israel." Sinai was moved by the presence of Christ, and Jesus Christ appeared as a judge to the Jewish world, and that was moved, that mystic Sinai, at his presence; and at the last day he will appear as a judge to the whole world, and they will be moved from all hope and help into everlasting woe. Now just a word upon the relation— "the God of Israel." The first thing here is that of sovereignty. He chose Israel, and he willed to become the God of Israel. Divine sovereignty, friends, is essential to your salvation. I could easily show, though my time is too far gone to dwell upon that now, and I trust most of you see it and feel it in your own souls, that if your eternal salvation, or if the salvation of any man or woman under the sun, rested in whole or in part upon anything to be done by the creature, not a soul could be saved—not a soul. Such is our state. Therefore, in order that we might be saved, the Lord was pleased in the freeness of his mercy to undertake the whole of it himself; he has taken the whole into his own hands. If he therefore had not been pleased as an act of sovereignty to have mercy upon you, you never could have obtained it. Secondly, he is called the God of Israel to distinguish him from other gods. They were powerless gods; but our God knows no limit to his power. Men do by their feasible, at the same time false logic, put the Most High under certain restraints and limits, but it is all in vain ever to attempt to limit the Holy One of Israel, who lives in his own entity, his own underived existence, his own infinity, his own freedom, and doeth just as he pleases; only such is his integrity, that if he tells you what he will do, he will do it. He told the disciples that he would be with

them always, unto the end of the world; he always was and always will be as good as his word. Here, then, is sovereignty and power. And I need not say provision. See how he was beforehand in all his dealings with the people of old in making provision for them. If the Israelites could have known beforehand (though the right-minded did trust in the Lord) how everything was provided for them, they would not have done as they did. Oh dear, here is Pharaoh pursuing, and I do not know what all. Well, but the Lord has contrived a plan for you. But I do not see it yet. He has, though. And when they got into the wilderness, Oh, dear, we are all going to die. No, you are not; there is the provision for you. I do not see it yet. Well, the Lord does; it will come by-and-bye. Ah, there, now, just as we were going to cross the Jordan to reach the promised land, never saw anything like it—that Jordan is just now overflowing its banks. I am sure the Lord always does everything wrong—calls upon us to cross the Jordan just at the worst time. Ah, if the river had been low. Then you think you could have managed it in part without the Lord, I suppose; that is about it. So, the Lord determined it should be the worst time, that their mouths should be shut, that his power should be displayed, and that they should all know that the excellency of the power was not of man, but of God.