



In earlier devotions, I have often mentioned the maiden, Hagar, and the calamities wrought by her mistress, Sarai (later, Sarah), in trying to satisfy the letter of God's Counsel in providing a seed for Abram (later, Abraham). God is perfectly capable of fulfilling His every promise without any support whatsoever from His created beings. The promise of God to Abraham was to be miraculously fulfilled as a matter of course in satisfying God's intentions of the greater Seed of Abraham to come in the Lord Jesus Christ. The son of Hagar did not meet that standard of the seed which God had promised – Ishmael having being born out of the benefits of marriage. God intended the son of Abraham to be born of the wife whom He had given Abraham – Sarah! Even if God delays in granting His promises, we must wait upon the Lord's time for its fruition. *Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.* (Psalm 37:7)

Sarah waited for a time, but not long enough. When she reached the age of child-bearing impossibility, she surrendered to a lapse in faith and rigged the outcome according to the will of the flesh and not the will of God. I believe we all have committed the same mistake in some way or other in life.

Isaac came by miraculous intervention to a woman of advanced age who was well beyond the age for bearing children. He came by miracle (as was the virgin birth of Christ). He was offered by his father to be sacrificed on the same Mt. Moriah upon which our Lord was sacrificed. He bore the wood for his own sacrifice, as did our Lord, up the mountain to be offered up. Before ascending the slopes of Mt. Moriah, Isaac inquired of his father: *And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.*

If you miss the depth of meaning of Abraham's response, you will miss the beauty and meaning of the entire event. Abraham, perhaps unwittingly, revealed that God would

provide HIMSELF as the lamb for the offering. In other words, God would never ask man to do the impossible in offering up his own only begotten son as a sacrifice for sin. So, when Abraham drew back the knife to sacrifice Isaac, his hand was stopped by the Angel of the Lord and Abraham turned and saw a ram whose head was caught in the thorns of a bush for the sacrifice. Perhaps these thorns were the same type that pierced the head of our dear Savior at His own sacrifice at Mt. Calvary (Moriah). God is the Sovereign of His own work of salvation for man. Man can have no role in it for the thoughts of the hearts of men is continually wicked without the moderating and endearing Spirit of Love with which his heart is imbued at the moment of salvation. *And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* (Genesis 6:5) Such a heart is incapable of making righteous decisions without the supernatural drawing of the Holy Spirit. *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* (Romans 3:23) (see also Romans 3:10 & 6:23).

Surely, the life of the Christian must be marked by the evidence of good works emanating from a divine love that is not his own. The love we bear in our hearts has a divine source. All love descends from God as the morning dew to the rose petal. *We love him, because he first loved us.* (1 John 4:19) *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* (1 John 4:10)

It should be remembered that there remains one divine attribute that covers ALL sin. What is that attribute? It is the immense love of God that compelled Him to send His own Only Begotten Son to die on the cross as a covering for our sins. *Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.* (Proverbs 10:12) Please observe the immense depth of meaning of this last text. How could love cover all sin? The simplicity of the statement shrouds the depth of meaning which is profound.

In explaining the matter of complete obedience to God with my sister yesterday, she wanted to know how we could keep, inviolate, all of the Commandments of God. In fact, Christ came because man cannot be perfect as was Christ. But we can, in a spiritual sense, keep all of God's Ten Commandments through the utility of LOVE. My sister has two little dogs with which she is consumed with love. If she did not love these dogs, she may not sacrifice to feed and shelter them. She will never lift her hand to commit harm or injury to either of them. She obeys the divine law of compassion and kindness in caring for these two little gifts of God. She does so because her heart is motivated by the love she has for the two little creatures.

When the love of God is spread abroad in our hearts, we must necessarily love others – and even the creatures God has made. We cannot love God without loving our fellow man. It is the element of love that empowers us to keep the law of God in our hearts and in our actions. There are two views of the Law of God. The first is that we must keep the Law of God implicitly without fail. If we could have done this, our Lord would not have suffered on the cross for us. The second view is that the Law of God has been done away and no longer bears upon the responsibility of Christians to obey (antinomianism). There is great error in the latter, and some usual misunderstanding of the former. God's Law has in no sense been annulled. It is just as constraining as the day it was thundered from atop Mt. Sinai. But the manner in which we view our means of obedience to the Commandments has definitely changed.

If you are familiar with the Reformed worship of the traditional Anglican Prayer Book, you will be well aware of the term, Summary of the Law, proclaimed at the beginning of each observance of the Holy Communion (or Lord's Supper). What is the summary of the Law, and does it ameliorate the binding nature of the Ten Commandments? Here is the summary of the Law as given in the Old Testament as well as by Christ Himself: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it,*

*Thou shalt lovethy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* (Matthew 22:37-40) I have heard well-meaning ministers misinterpret this to mean that the Ten Commandments are no longer binding. This is a fatal mistake. This Summary of the Law reinforces the obligation to keep the Commandments and even makes them more stringent, but in a different way. What is the catalyst that enables the Christian to keep the Law of God? The summary clearly establishes the element of LOVE as that catalyst. What one truly loves, one cannot hurt or harm. The Ten Commandments hang upon the love that enables us to keep BOTH tables of the Law.

In the day our Lord walked upon this earth, no one knew the Law better than the Scribes and Pharisees; and no one was more lost to God than these men. They kept careful record of their own behavior and that of others with a stone-cold and impersonal view of the Commandments of God. They lacked the very element necessary to enable them to keep those Commandments (Love). What was the difference in the Law of Moses and that which Christ proclaimed?

*Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.* (2 Corinthians 3:3) when the Law of God is written with the red ink of love on the soft sinews and in the deep chambers of our hearts, they are no longer a foreboding list of 'do's' and 'don't's' – they are made desirable for us to obey out of the love we bear for their Author. The Tables of Stone of the Pharisees are done away!

*Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar (helenized for Hagar). For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.* (Galatians 4:21-31)

Can you see how Sarah's approach, and that of the Pharisees, to satisfy God's demands defers from that of free Jerusalem which above? Man-enforced obedience to God always results in sorrow and bondage. When we surrender our supposed 'free wills' (or self-wills) to God, and take into our hearts His will for us, then only are we free indeed!