BIBLICAL RECORDER.

Volume XXXVII. RALEIGH, N. C. OCTOBER 9, 1872. Number 12.

SERMON BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

WHY AM I THUS?

"I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Romans vii: 22-23.

The passage before us tells a portion of the experience of the Apostle Paul. We all of us concede that he was a most eminent saint. Indeed, we place him in the front rank. For this reason his experience is the most valuable to us. If the greatest saints have their inward struggles, how much more should we expect to have them who have not attained the same degree of grace the apostle did. If he who was not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles yet had to say, "When I would do good evil is present with me," then you and I, who can only take the position of babes in grace, or of ordinary disciples of Jesus Christ, must not be surprised if we have to bear assaults that surprise us and enter into struggles that distress us, and often are fain by stress of emotion to cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

1. It may be said of every true Christian that the ruling power in him delights in the law of God.

The new-born nature of the Christian laboriously desires to keep the holy law according to the mind of God. If it were proposed to any one of us that we should have whatever we would ask for—if in a vision of the night the Lord should appear to us, and say to us as he did to Solomon, 'Ask what I shall give you,' I do not think any of us would hesitate. I can not imagine myself asking for riches or honor, or even for wisdom, unless it were wisdom of a far higher order than is commonly esteemed among the sons of men. But the gift, I feel I should crave beyond every other boon, is holiness, pure and immaculate holiness. Possessing now an interest in Christ, knowing that my sins are forgiven me for his name's sake, the one thing, I desire beyond everything else, is to be perfectly free from sin, and to lead an unblemished life without sin of omission or sin of commission. Now, every christian that has that desire within his soul will never be satisfied until that desire is fulfilled: and this shows that we delight in the law of God after the inward man. Nor is it long ere that desire will be fulfilled. Why, we shall be like him when we shall see him as he is; and until we do see him as he is and are like him, we shall always have restlessness of spirit, and always be crying out for more grace, and laboring against the evil that is in us, if by any means we may subdue it. O yes, beloved, in the fact that this is what we pray for, this is what we fight for, this is what we would be willing to die for, that we might be entirely conformed to the mind and will of God, there is evidence that we see that the law of God is good and delight in it after the inward man.

This, however, is proved in a more practical way to onlookers when the christian shows that the life of God is enabling him to overcome many of the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Oftentimes in striving to be holy he has to put himself to much stern self-denial; but he does it cheerfully. For instance, should it happen in business that by using a very common trick in trade he might gain more profit, he will not do it, if he is a christian; he feels he cannot do this evil and sin against his God. Or should the young convert find that a little divergence from the right path would please the worldly people with whom he is obliged to associate, he may, perhaps, turn aside in his weakness, but the new life within him will never be easy if he does. The inner life, when it is in its vigor, will make him say, 'Though I should lose the good-will of these people, let me serve my Lord and my Master. I must forfeit my situation if it come to that sooner than I can do wrong. I must be put even in peril of my daily bread sooner than I will be found wilfully breaking a commandment of Christ. I cannot do it.' Now, I know many of God's children who have often suffered very severely, and have passed through a great many trials and troubles because they would not flinch from following their Lord. This is one of the proofs that they delight in the law of God after the inner man. When a man is willing to bear reproach, to be scoffed at, to be ridiculed, and taunted as mad for righteousness sake, when he is willing that men should sneer at him as a hypocrite and yelept him a Pharisee, when he braves the cold shoulder from those, whose company he would otherwise have enjoyed, and all because he must and will follow the mind and direction of God's Spirit, I say then it is that the man gives proof that he delights in the law of God. I thank God there are in this church those who have given that proof, and I pray that you and I, all of us who have received the divine nature, may give constant evidence, by using the good art at all hazards, and taking up the cross at all risks, that our soul, even if it cannot be perfect in action, at any rate would be perfect in him, and determined by God's help to cherish a love and desire in all things to do Jehovah's will.

2. Now, secondly, we come to the consideration of the fact that, although there is this delight in the law of God, yet there is another law in the members. So Paul says. He seems to me to speak of it in three different stages. He could see it afar, and then he had to encounter it, and as long as to some extent he was enthralled by it, for he says, 'bringing me into captivity.'

There is in each one of us a law of sin. It may always be seen even when it is not in active operation, if our eyes are vigilant. Whenever I hear a man say he has no propensity to sin, I infer at once that he does not live at home. I should think he must live a long way from home, or else he has never been anywhere except in the front parlor of his house, where he keeps his profession. He cannot have gone through all the chambers and searched them thoroughly or he would somewhere have discovered that there is evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. This is true of the unbeliever, he has to cry out against another nature, and say, 'Help thou mine unbelief.' It is always in the man. Sometimes it is dormant. I do not know whether the Devil ever goes to sleep, but our sinful nature seems for a time to do so, not indeed, that it is any the less sinful when asleep than when it is awake. It is just as bad as it can be. Gunpowder is not always exploding, but it is always explosive. Bring but the spark to it and anon it bursts out, as though it had been ready and waiting to exert its powers of explosion. The viper may be coiled up doing no damage; but it hath a deadly virus beneath its fangs. It is still a viper even when it is not putting forth its poisonous tooth. There is within our nature that which would send the best saint to hell if sovereign grace did not prevent. There is a little hell within the heart of every child of God, and only the great God of heaven can overmaster that mischievous indwelling sin. This sin will crop up, when it is least expected, generally it breaks forth suddenly, taking us by surprise. I have known it to my sorrow. I am not going to stand here and make many confessions with regard to myself. Howbeit I did know a man once who, in attending a prayer meeting, felt his heart much lifted up in the ways of God, drew very near to his heavenly Father, held sweet communion with Christ, and enjoyed much of the fellowship of the Spirit. Little did he think the moment the prayer meeting was over, somebody in the congregation would insult and bitterly affront him. Because he was taken unawares his anger was aroused, and he spake unadvisedly with his tongue. He better have held his peace. Now, I believe that man if he had been at any other time, for he was of a tolerably quiet temper, would have taken the insult without resenting it or making any reply whatever; but he had been unwarned, therefore he was unguarded. The very love shed abroad in his heart caused the animosity he encountered to shock his feelings the more. He had been so near heaven that he expected everybody present had thoughts in harmony with his own; he had not reckoned upon being assailed then. When there is most money in the house, then is the likeliest time for thieves to break in; and when there is most grace in the soul the Devil will try, if he can, to assault it. Pirates were not accustomed to attack vessels, when they went out to fetch gold from the Indies; they always waylaid them when they were coming home, with a view of getting rich spoil worth the capture. If you have enjoyed a sermon, if you have got near to God in prayer, if the Scriptures have been very precious to you, you may expect just then that the dragon that sleeps within will wake up and disturb the peaceful calm of your soul.

"We should expect some danger sigh
When we receive too much delight."

Let us be the more watchful then in seasons of tranquility. This evil nature, you see, will sometimes be excised, as it by jealousy, when we are being refreshed with good. It will certainly be developed when we are exposed to evil. The man who congratulates himself because he feels no sinful proclivities, no unholy thoughts, no impure imaginations, no concerted ideas, no turbulent passions, has need be reminded of that saying of old Rutherford: "When the temptation sleepeth the madman is wise, the harlot is chaste: but when the vessel is pierced out cometh that which is within, be it wine or water." O my soul, thine assurance is not at rest aright, because there was not any exciting cause for it. Put into the company of godly people and the mind boil them with good things continually, the bad resentments may sleep, but cast into other society, it only needs a slight provocation and oh, how soon the evil that always was within manifests itself abundantly. There are weeds in almost every soil. If you throw up the soil from ten or twenty feet deep there will be found the seed from which they grow. Now, those seed cannot germinate until they are put into a convenient place; then let the sunshine and dews fall, and the weeds begin to show themselves. There may be many weeds in our nature, deep down, out of sight, but should they be thrown up by some change of circumstances, we shall find in ourselves evils we never dreamt of. Oh, let no man boast, let no man say, "I should never fall into that particular sin." How knowest thou, my brother? thou mayest never have been in that position in which such a sin would have allured you? Beware, perhaps when thou thinkest thou art from home, and when thou thinkest that the gates are closed with bars of brass it may be but rotten wood. With respect to some of us, even the holiest, is there reason to trust his best faculties, his best desires, his best resolutions, we are utter weakness through and through, and to transgressions prone, notwithstanding all that God's grace has done for us. The sin which is in us as a taint in our constitution, might easily break out as if loath some distemper, spreading over the entire man from head to foot and spoiling all the character. I pray God it never may.

It is remarkable how sin will show itself in the Christian, even in the holiest of his duties. Suppose it is prayer. When you feel that you ought to pray, and would draw near to God, do you not find sometimes an unwillingness as if the knees were stiff and the heart was hard. In prayer, when your soul is lead away with thoughts of things divine, straight across your soul like some carrion crow flying across a landscape, there comes a bad thought and you cannot get rid of it, or perhaps you get through your devotion with much delight in God; but you have not got out of your little room before an alien pleasure steals over your mind, a self-satisfaction that you have prayed so well that you are growing in grace; that you are rising to the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ. Is it so, that you come from the chamber of reverent worship musing on your own importance, meditating your fitness to occupy a place above the common rank and file of the soldiers of Christ—or that you might very well take a lieutenant's rank in the church of God. Perhaps, again, you did not feel any liberty in prayer, and then with a peevish fretful temper you will inwardly murmur, if you do not actually say, you might as well give up praying such prayers as those, there can be no use in them. So do what you may, or leave undone what you may, yet still the evil that is within will rise, it will intrude upon you at some time or other to let you know of its existence. You may bolt the door, and you may fancy that no thief can get in, and begin to take off your clothes and go to rest, while yet the thief is under the bed. So many a man has thought "I have barred the door against those temptations," and lo, they have been hidden in his soul like the images which Rachel took that were concealed under the camel's furniture. Somewhere or other they were secreted where he had not discovered them. Take it for granted, dear friends, and do not doubt it. The Apostle Paul saw it, so you may if you choose to look. He said, "I see another law in my members."

And this law in his members, he goes on to tell us, was warring against the law of his mind. It strives to get the mastery, and the new nature, on the other hand resisted and would not let it get the mastery. The old lusts fight and then the new life fights too, for there must be two sides to a war. Such is the warfare going on within the renewed soul.

I must not linger on this point, but pass on to notice the next. It is a sadder one. The apostle said this warring brought him into captivity to the law of sin. What does he mean by this? I do not think he means he wandered into open, flagrant immoralities. No observer may have noticed any fault in the apostle's character. He could see it in himself, and he saw flaws in his life where we are not able to detect them, and probably that was a habit with the apostle. When I hear a good man lament his faults I know what the world will say, they will take him at his word and think that he is as he says they are, whereas with a very godly man, if you know him and marked his life and conversation, you would be compelled, if you judged him candidly, to say that he was like Job, perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil. Yet that very man would be the first to see spots in himself, because he has more light than others, because he has a higher idea of what holiness is than brothers, and he knows that God is so infinitely holy that the heavens were not pure in his sight, and he charged his angels with folly, therefore, every one into a sense of himself in the sight of that which is infinite, than he stood down before. As Job said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." But behind the apostle has not refraining here to note of great misdemeanor having brought him into captivity so far as to lead him astray, though many who are God's children, yet do sorely sacrifice because the law of sin and death in their members gets the mastery over them sometimes. Oh, watch against this, weep against this. I was about to say breathe sweet blood against this. Brethren, how that have committed great sins, and they have been God's children, though they have been saved as by fire, and if they could tell you how many times they were shattered, how were the cisterns cracked, how their very bones were broken, how the Lord made them sing that he had put all in his own family even more than any where else—could you hear them confess how they lost the light of his countenance, lost enjoyments, lost the sweet savor of the promises, oh, it would make you say, "My God, be pleased not only to save me at the last, but all the journey through. Hold up my footsteps in thy way that they slip not; make me to run in the way of thy commandments. It is a captivity like that of the Israelites in Babylon itself when a child of God is suffered to fall into some great sin. But long before it comes to that pass, and I hope in your case it may never go so far. I think this law of sin brings us into captivity in other respects. While you are fighting and contending against inbred sin, doubts will invade your heart. Am I a child of God? If it be so, why am I thus? I cannot pray as I would. Surely if I were a child of God I should not be hampered in devotion or go out to a place of worship and feel I have no enjoyment while others feast and sing for joy of heart. Oh, what a captivity the soul is brought into when it allows indulgence to cast any doubts upon its safety in Christ. We are saved because we are believers in Christ. Christ, having been all our confidence, is always in us the hope of glory. To as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name. If I have believed on his name, whatever my inward experience may be, or may not be in my own estimation, if I have believed in the name of Jesus I have the privilege to be a child of God. But sometimes doubts will come over us, and so we are brought into captivity. I have known those who were almost driven to despair. The child of God has written bitter things against himself and signed his own death warrant. Thank God, if we sign our own death warrant it does not stand for anything. Nobody can sign that but the King, and he will never sign it for any soul that believes in him, however feeble his love may be. We may be brought into captivity by a sense of sin, a temptation to sin, or a yielding to sin. If we even come to that it will make us weak in serving, cold in prayer, restless when alone, and joyless in the society of the saints, nay we shall feel almost lifeless. Oh, may God save us from it! Oh, may we wrestle hard. May we wrestle every day that we may keep sin down, may divine grace, even that grace which is treasured up in Christ Jesus, secure to us the victory.

3. It is some comfort when we feel war within the soul to remember that it is an interesting phase of Christian experience. Such as are dead in sin have never made proof of any of these things. Time was when we were self-righteous, lost, and ruined, and without the law, and sin was dead in us, so we thought. We were dead in trespasses and sins, though we boasted of our own righteousness. These inward conflicts show that we are alive. There is some life in the soul that hates sin, even though it cannot do as it would. I have known what it is to bless God for the times when my soul has felt inward war, and I would have been glad to feel the war renewed. Rest assured that the strong man of the soul, while he keeps the house will keep it in peace. It is when a stronger than he comes to eject him, that there is a fight within your soul. I would suggest it therefore to you as a cause for consolation and thankfulness. Do not be depressed about it. Say after all, there is some life here. Where there is pain there is life. The best of God's saints have suffered in this very same manner. Your way to heaven is not a bad one. Some I know are not so troubled to any great extent, but the majority of God's saints have to endure fightings without and fears within. You read of Martin Luther. That great bold man became a master of theology by being taught in the school of temptation. Even his last hours were full of sterne conflict. He was a man of war from his youth up. How constantly did he have to contend against himself. We get the same reading from this chapter of the life of Paul. Be not therefore downcast as though some strange thing had happened unto you. Look up yonder to those saints above in their white robes, singing their meeting song? Ask them when their victory came? They will tell you that it did not come to them because they were sinless or perfect in themselves, but through the blood of Jesus.

"Once they were wrestling here below,
And wet their couch with tears of woe;
They were fed with heavenly food I ween,
With sins and doubts and fears between."

The richest consolation comes from the last verse of the chapter. Paul, having asked how he should be delivered, answered the question, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. He shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins, not only from the guilt of their sins, but from the power of their sins. What a mercy it is that the Lord Jesus has struck a deadly blow at our sin. He has broken the head of it. It is a monster and has immense vitality, but it is broken headed monster. There is in it sufficient missing and spitting and writhing, to enable it to do us much mischief, but he that has wounded it will henceforth it again and again, until at last it shall utterly die. Thank God it has not vitality enough to get across the river Jordan. No sinful desire shall ever swim on that stream. They are not molested there with tendencies and propensities to sin, and when they shall be restored to their bodies, and their bodies shall rise again, they shall have bodies not of flesh. Bodies of flesh shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven, neither shall their bodies see corruption, but with bodies fit for celestial minds, they shall be eternally free from their former sin. Let us rejoice that Jesus Christ can do it all. He can save us from all sin. He who has bought us with his blood, he will not cheaply lose that which he has dearly bought. He will deliver us from all sin, and he will bring us into his eternal kingdom and glory without fail. So we fall back upon this sweet consolation. Though the fight may be long and arduous, the result is out of doubt. Remember the text of last Thursday night. That shall settle the point. "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "My Father who gave them me is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of my Father's hand." You will have to get to heaven fighting for every inch of the way, but you will get there. Some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship, they all came safe to land in Paul's shipwreck, and so shall it be with the saints. When the sheep shall pass again under the hand of him that telleth them one by one, there shall not be one missing. They were all so weak that the wolf could have rent them in pieces; they were all so foolish that if left to themselves they would have wandered on the mountains and in the woods, and have been destroyed; but the eternal shepherd makes this a point of honor—"Of all them that thou hast given me, I have lost none. Here am I, and the children that thou hast given me." It ought to make you quite well now to know that you are sure of victory. Oh, by the lilies of the love of Christ, and by the strong right arm that once smote Rahab, and cut the dragons in twain, let every Christian be of good courage. The Omnipotent is with us; the Invincible is for us. Forward to the charge, onward to the conflict, though the fight wax warmer and sterner, still onward ever, onward without fear or a moment's hesitation. "He that hath loved us bears us through, and makes us more than conquerors too." The breaker is come up before them; they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it, and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them." They have put to the route their foes. Thus shall it be spoken of all those that follow under the leadership of Christ; this is the heritage of the saints and their righteousness is of me saith the Lord. God grant us to be victors in this holy war, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Atonement of Christ.

In my last papers, I think I have shown conclusively, that in order to be efficient christians; established "in every good word and work," we must have enlightened scriptural views of the great atonement made for sin. For as the whole christian system rests upon this, so every different face which is presented of it, arises out of the peculiar light in which it is contemplated. The christian world, therefore, will never be able to "keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace," until they can comprehend the teachings of Scripture on this most vital subject.

I have shown in my second paper, that in regard to the Adamic or federal sin, the atonement was general, applying to the race of Adam. That through this gracious provision, the salvation of the infant world was secured on principles of righteousness. This, the Scriptures clearly state, in the passages there refered to, and it is no argument against this view of the subject, that the Scriptures do not more fully explain it. It was only necessary to state it, since there were no limitations to it, no conditions; but being absolute, entailing a legal righteousness, or as Paul expresses it, a "justification of life" as an inheritance, through Christ to the whole race. Just as they had inherited sin from Adam.

But it must be obvious, that had the atonement of Christ extended only to the federal sin, to have been saved, we must have died in infancy. Because, having a sinful nature we "go astray, as soon as we are born." Psalms lviii-3, that is, we sin actually as soon as we are capable of moral actions. To make salvation possible, for actual sinners something more must be done, than simply to cancel the federal guilt. This branch of the atonement of Christ, is contrasted with that which related to the sin of Adam, thus by Paul." But not as the offence (Adam's sin) so is the gift (Christ's atonement.) For if through the offence of one (Adam) many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift of grace which is by one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift. For the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences, unto justification." Rom. v: 15-16. Here the apostle Paul states two distinct points of disparity, between the atonement made for the Adamic sin, and that made for the general sins of mankind. If this branch of the atonement, be limited (otherwise than in its application,) we might reasonably expect to find some allusion to it here, as Paul was treating it with special reference to its extent. So far however from limiting, he is really magnifying the atonement, and showing that the superstructure was properly adjusted to the foundation. That the remedial arrangements of it were in keeping with its first great provision, which seemed clearly, to aim at making salvation possible to all men.

The view here laid down by Paul harmonizes with the teachings both of the Old and New Testaments. The Prophet Zechariah xiii-1, says in that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanliness." And although the prophet limits, or rather may seem to limit this "fountain" to the Jews, it is evident, from the New Testament, that God did not ultimately design so to limit it; but that to the fullness of time, the world should be made to know through his Son, that he made no difference, in the dispensing of his grace through Christ, between the children of David, and the other children of Adam. If it should be replied that this passage describes gospel grace, and not the atonement; I answer that the atonement made for sins must ever limit God's grace to sinners. It can extend no farther than the expiation of sin, or the satisfaction of the divine law extends. The parable of "a great supper," brought forward by our Savior (see Luke xiv. 16-24) to show the nature of the atonement that he was making for sin, carries with it clearly the same idea of a general atonement. Not an atonement made for all men or for any man especially; but a general atonement for sin; so that ample justice has been done to the divine law of God. Such ample amends have been made for all its violations, that God can now "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. iii: 26. This view of the atonement harmonizes with God's command to men every where to repent and believe the gospel, as a means or condition of their salvation. It shows us why the gospel should be preached "to every creature," and lays a foundation for the realization by the church of the brightest visions of the prophets, and the warmest aspirations of christians, in the ultimate conquest of the world through the Gospel of Christ.

But it may be alleged, that the above is not in harmony with the doctrines of election and divine sovereignty, as taught in the Scriptures. If this should turn out to be so, it would be fatal to my theory, as there are certainly no antagonism in God's plan of salvation. We will see.

A. WEAVER.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

As the agent of this institution will, in October, give the Baptists of Louisville the opportunity of subscribing and paying the two hundred thousand dollars, which they are expected to give, it will be, perhaps, well for each subscriber to insert in his bond the conditions, which are, that the Baptists of Kentucky shall raise three hundred thousand dollars, and the Baptists of other states two hundred thousand.

With five hundred thousand dollars in hand the Kentucky Baptists can afford to cripple the Georgetown and Bethel Theological Departments, and throw almost out of use the three or four hundred thousand invested there; but not otherwise.

If only two or three hundred thousand can be raised, it will be better for Greenville, South Carolina, to keep the seminary, and not let it come a partially endowed institution, to add a third to the now existing institutions, each of which is doing a good work in preparing young men for the ministry.

By bringing the seminary to Louisville, without the five hundred thousand, you offer an uncertain advantage for a good thing in actual possession.

It will be useless for Georgetown or Bethel to keep the theological departments open, if the seminary comes to Louisville. Let then the subscriptions in every instance be conditional; let them be valid only when the entire amount shall be subscribed.

On any other basis than this, the removal of the seminary will prove injurious to the best interests of Kentucky Baptists. The Baptists in Louisville are rich, and are well able to build a meeting house for Dr. Helm, one for Brother Weaver, to give two hundred thousand dollars to the Orphans' Home, and and to give five hundred thousand dollars to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Let the money be raised before the seminary comes.—*Western Recorder.*

For the Biblical Recorder.

DEAR RECORDER:—I commenced a meeting of days, at Salem Baptist Church, in Wake County, 13 miles West of Raleigh, Saturday before the fourth Sunday in Sept. last, which continued eleven days. The Lord was pleased to bless the labors of his servants, revive religion in the hearts of his children and convict and convert sinners from the errors of their ways.

I was assisted by my young brethren in the ministry, J. H. Boothe, H. Bennet, H. W. Norris and J. Hillard who did good service. Also, Bro. A. D. Blackwood was with me two days.

At the close of the meeting, I had the pleasure of burying in baptism twenty-nine willing candidates, one of whom was a deaf mute. Several more claimed regeneration, but for reasons known to themselves did not submit to baptism.

Yours in Christ.

J. C. MOORE.