**“Exposition of 2 Corinthians 3:7-11” The Signs of the Times, 17, 1.**

E. J. Waggoner

Several questions have of late been asked us upon 2 Corinthians 3:7-11. As that is a passage which those who are striving to teach the law often find difficult to explain, and which enemies of truth use with great confidence as being opposed to the law, we will try to give a simple scriptural exposition of it. The fifth and sixth verses of the chapter read as follows:— {SITI January 5, 1891, p. 2.1}

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” {SITI January 5, 1891, p. 2.2}

It will be noticed that the last clause of verse 5 is an answer to the question, “Who is sufficient for these things?” asked in verse 16 of the preceding chapter. The subject which is under consideration is the Christian ministry, as is seen by verse 6 and the first verse of chapter 4. The apostle is showing its excellence, and in so doing contrasts it with the ministry of the old covenant. The word “testament” in verse 6 means “covenant,” and the statement is that we are made ministers of the new covenant; “not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” Many people seem to have the idea that in this verse Paul is contrasting the two testaments or covenants. The old covenant they call the letter, and the new covenant the spirit. But one who reads the verse carefully cannot fail to see that this is an error. The old covenant is not referred to till we reach the seventh verse. Paul’s statement is simply to the effect that he and his associates were ministers of the spirit of the new covenant, and not of its letter, for the new covenant has its letter as well as the old. On this point Dr. Clarke makes the following pertinent comment:— {SITI January 5, 1891, p. 2.3}

Every institution has its letter as well as its spirit; as every word must refer to something of which it is the sign or significator. The gospel has both its letter and its spirit, and multitudes of professing Christians, by resting in the letter, receive not the life which it is calculated to impart. Water, in baptism, is the letter that points out the purification of the soul; they who rest in this letter are without this purification; and dying in that state, they die eternally. Bread and wine in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper are the letter; the atoning efficacy of the death of Jesus, and the grace communicated by this to the soul of the believer, are the spirit. Multitudes rest in this letter, simply receiving these symbols without reference to the atonement or to their guilt; and thus lose the benefit of the atonement and the salvation of their souls.... It may be safely asserted that the Jews in no period of their history ever rested more in the letter of their law than the vast majority of Christians are doing in the letter of their gospel. Unto multitudes of Christians Christ may truly say, Ye are not come unto me that ye may have life. {SITI January 5, 1891, p. 2.4}

In the above quotation it is shown that the letter of the new covenant kills; but the reason why it kills will be made more plain after we have made a brief comparison of the two covenants. These two covenants with their ministrations are brought to view in contrast in verses 7 and 8, which read thus:— {SITI January 5, 1891, p. 2.5}

“But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?” {SITI January 5, 1891, p. 2.6}

In this verse the old covenant is called the “ministration of death.” Why it was so called is very apparent to one who understands what the old covenant was. We will state it briefly. Before the Lord gave the ten commandments from Mount Sinai, he said to the Jews:— {SITI January 5, 1891, p. 2.7}

“Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” Exodus 19:4-6. {SITI January 5, 1891, p. 2.8}

On the third day after this, the Lord spoke the ten commandments in the hearing of all the people; “and he added no more; and he wrote them on two tables of stone.” Deuteronomy 5:22. Then Moses went up to the Lord in the mount, and the Lord gave to him precepts growing out of the ten commandments. See Exodus 21, 22, and 23. The confirmation of the covenant, the preliminaries of which are given in Exodus 19:5-8, is related in Exodus 24:3-8. There we learn that— {SITI January 5, 1891, p. 2.9}

“Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.” {SITI January 5, 1891, p. 2.10}

After this “Moses wrote all the words of the Lord;” and after he had built an altar and offered sacrifices unto the Lord, “he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people; and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.” Then “Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you *concerning all these words*.” Thus was the covenant confirmed. We learn from this that the old covenant was simply an agreement between God and the children of Israel, *concerning the commandments of God*. The people on their part promised faithfully to keep the commandments, and the Lord promised to make of them a great nation. {SITI January 5, 1891, p. 2.11}

In connection with this covenant there were “ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.” Hebrews 9:1. This sanctuary is described in Exodus 25:26, 27, and 30, and the principal “ordinances of divine service” are described in Exodus 29:38-42, and Leviticus, chapters 4 and 16. With these facts before us, we may understand why the ministration of the first covenant was called a “ministration of death.” {SITI January 5, 1891, p. 2.12}

(1) In this covenant the people had made an explicit agreement to keep the law of God. (2) By this law is the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20), “for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). (3) The “ordinances of divine service” connected with the first covenant were for sin; but Paul tells us (Hebrews 10:4) that “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” Those “ordinances of divine service” were only “a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things,” and therefore the sacrifices which the people offered had no power to make them perfect. Therefore (4) all who had to do with the old covenant alone were condemned to death; “for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23); “and the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). There was in the old covenant no provision for the forgiveness of sins; therefore the ministration of that old covenant, which was performed by earthly priests, was, so far as their work extended, the ministration of death. Only the perfect can have life, and their ministration made nothing perfect. {SITI January 5, 1891, p. 2.13}

It is true that during the time of the ministration of the old covenant, sins were forgiven (Leviticus 4:26, 31, 35), and this forgiveness was real, but it was obtained solely by virtue of faith in the promised sacrifice of Christ, and not because of anything in the old covenant. Paul says of Christ, in Hebrews 9:15, that he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, *for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament*, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” Thus we see that when sins committed under the first covenants were forgiven, they were forgiven by virtue of the second covenant. E. J. W. {SITI January 5, 1891, p. 3.1}

(*Concluded next week.*)

**“Exposition of 2 Corinthians 3:7-11. (Concluded.)” The Signs of the Times, 17, 2.**

E. J. Waggoner

Some stumble over the first clause of 2 Corinthians 3:7. “The ministration of death, written and engraven in stones,” but the Scriptures furnish means for the complete exposition of this. Paul cannot mean that the *ministration* was written and engraven in stones, for that would be impossible, because the *ministration* was the service of the priests. Then it must be that he means that *death* was written and engraven in stones. But some will say, “This makes nonsense of the text.” Let us see. It is very easy to ascertain what was written and engraven in stone. Exodus 31:18 says that the Lord “gave to Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.” “And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand. The tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and one the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.” Exodus 32:15, 16. These two tables were broken, and after Moses had, by the command of the Lord, made two other tables, he said, “And he [the Lord] wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the Lord spake unto you in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, in the day of the assembly.” Deuteronomy 10:4. These texts show that it was the ten commandments, and the ten commandments alone, that were written and engraven in stones; and therefore by the word “death,” in 2 Corinthians 3:7, Paul must refer to the ten commandments. {SITI January 12, 1891, p. 3.2}

But is it allowable to speak of the ten commandments as “death”? Are they death to anybody? It certainly is allowable, for they are death to all men, because all have sinned, and the wages of sin is death.” The law is the cause of death to every sinner that shall perish, and so by metonymy it is called death. In like manner the sons of the prophets said of the poisonous gourds, “There is death [*i.e*., a cause of death] in the pot.” 2 Kings 4:40; and the Lord said that “the tree of the field is man’s life” (sustainer of life). Deuteronomy 20:19. So when Paul describes his conviction as a sinner, he says of the law, “And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.” Romans 7:10. {SITI January 12, 1891, p. 3.3}

Thus we find that in every sense of the word the ministration of the old covenant was “the ministration of death.” We have found, then (1) that the law, which was the basis of the covenant, was death to all, and (2) that the ministration concerning that violated law offered no relief, but in itself tended to death. {SITI January 12, 1891, p. 3.4}

Notwithstanding all this, there was a wonderful glory connected with the old covenant and its service. The giving of the law was attended with glory the like of which has never been seen on earth before or since, and will not be until the Lord shall come in the glory of his Father with all his angels. When Moses returned from the mount, his face was so glorified that the people could not look at it; and the glory of the Lord was present in the sanctuary to so great a degree that the priests were forced to obscure it with a cloud of incense, lest they should lie. {SITI January 12, 1891, p. 3.5}

Now let us briefly outline the new covenant. Paul says that this was established upon “better promises.” Its terms are found in Hebrews 8:8-12, which reads thus:— {SITI January 12, 1891, p. 3.6}

“For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” {SITI January 12, 1891, p. 3.7}

We find here the same condition as in the old covenant,—the people are to obey the law of God. But this covenant is established on “better promises” than the first, in that the Lord promises to forgive their sins, to write the law in their hearts, and to remember their iniquities no more. These things are all accomplished by virtue of Christ, who is the mediator of the new covenant. Hebrews 8:9; 9:15. “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7), by securing the remission of past sins (Romans 3:24, 25), and enabling us to walk in harmony with the law (Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:10; Hebrews 13:20, 21). {SITI January 12, 1891, p. 3.8}

The law, then, is the basis of both covenants; hence it could not be done away with the old covenant, else there could be no new covenant. The terms of the new covenant leave no doubt on this point, and Christ’s connection with it brings the fact out still more clearly. Thus Christ is the minister of this new covenant (Hebrews 8:1, 2), and is now performing the ministration in the true sanctuary in heaven (Hebrews 9:24). His ministration has reference to the law, for he came to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15), and he is offering his blood to save men from sin (Romans 3:24; 1 John 1:7; Matthew 1:21). This redemption we get through faith (Romans 3:24) and faith establishes the law (Romans 3:31). The law itself, having been violated, brings death; Christ redeems us from its curse (Galatians 3:13), and thus becomes our life (Colossians 3:4). {SITI January 12, 1891, p. 3.9}

Now note the contrast between the two covenants. The first had the ministration of death, because everything connected with it tended to death; the violated law was death to the sinner, and the earthly ministration freed no one from that condemnation. The second covenant has the ministration of the Spirit, because “the Lord is that Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:17), and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty and life (Galatians 6:8). But although there is no death in the second covenant, there is in the rejection of it, for the law is still death to sinners, and all who are opposed to Christ are sinners, and condemned to death; so Paul says that the letter of the new covenant kills. The reason is that holding the mere letter of the new covenant,—the performance of the gospel ordinances while not receiving Christ in the heart,—is really a rejection of Christ. Of the Lord’s Supper, Paul says that he who does not discern the Lord’s body, eats and drinks damnation to himself. 1 Corinthians 11:29. He is in the same condition as though he had never heard of the new covenant. But in every case, whether of the sinner under the old covenant, or of one who rejects the new, it is the law that causes his death. {SITI January 12, 1891, p. 3.10}

In the text under consideration, Paul contrasts the two ministrations as to glory. If the ministration which could not cleanse from sin was glorious, the ministration of the Spirit, which gives freedom from sin, must be more glorious. “If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.” And so much more glorious is the ministration of the second covenant than that of the first that in comparison the first covenant seems to have had no glory. Why the ministration of the second covenant should be so much more glorious than that of the first, is because it is established upon “better promises,” and Christ is its minister. {SITI January 12, 1891, p. 11.1}

“For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.” 2 Corinthians 3:11. Now what was done away? The answer must be that it is that which was glorious. Verse 9states that it was the *ministration* of condemnation that was glorious. Then it must be the *ministration* of condemnation that was done away; that which remains is the ministration of the Spirit. By no possibility can verse 11 be made to refer to the law, because it contrasts something done away with something that remains. And we have found that the law is the basis of both covenants, and therefore it cannot have been done away, but the ministration of the old covenant, as well as the covenant itself, was done away, as was indicated by the fading glory upon the countenance of Moses. But it needs no abstract reasoning to show that it is the tabernacle service, and that alone, to which the apostle refers in verse 11 as being “done away,” for he says. “If that which is done away was glorious,” showing by the “if” that he had before called attention to something glorious; and the only thing which he has so designated in this connection, is the *ministration* of death. Verse 7. {SITI January 12, 1891, p. 11.2}

We think that any reader who carefully follows this brief exposition will be able to see for himself, on reading 2 Corinthians 3:7-11, that the apostle is simply contrasting the glory of the *service* of the two covenants, and that the law of God is not under consideration at all, except by an incidental allusion, which goes to show its permanent character. E. J. W. {SITI January 12, 1891, p. 11.3}

 **“Candid but Humiliating Admissions” The Signs of the Times, 17, 3.**

E. J. Waggoner

Possibly it is not generally understood that the Sunday-law movement, and the movement to force the Bible into the public schools, are identical in spirit, and that the success of either one logically carries with is the whole National Reform scheme. This fact is so well shown, together with the utter selfishness that prompts the so-called religious reformation, in an article by J. H. Ecob, D.D., of Albany, in the New York *Independent* of December 11, that we reprint a large portion of the article. As will be seen from the article, the *Independent* itself does not favor the scheme. Here it is:— {SITI January 19, 1891, p. 11.4}

Within a few weeks, the *Independent* has again spoken its mind on this subject, quoting with approbation certain Chicago preachers who asked that the Bible be forbidden in our public schools as a matter of justice to the tax-paying Jews and infidels. If I remember correctly, this is the only argument, it certainly is the chief argument, advanced by the aforesaid preachers and by the *Independent*. This position has an air of breadth and fairness which is captivating. It certainly does seem not quite “on the square” to take the money of Jews and infidels to support an institution, compel them to send their children to that institution, then to read to those children a book abhorrent to the parents. Not a few of our religious papers and teachers are demanding on this ground that the Bible be excluded from our public schools. {SITI January 19, 1891, p. 11.5}

This is a demand that our public schools shall be entirely godless. We have no right to mention with reverence there the name of Christ, on account of the children of the tax-paying Jews. We have no right to pray, even silently, there, because the tax-paying infidel would not have his child’s mind perverted by deism. There must be no recognition of deity whatever in the public school, this great nursery of the nation’s citizens. On the same ground the moralities should be excluded, because tax-payers differ as to the basis of morals, and the extent of the moral code. On the same ground Christian teachers should be excluded; for it is undoubtedly a grievous wrong to the Jew and the infidel to compel him to place his children under a teacher who can no more restrain his Christian influence, if he be a true child of God, than he can restrain his breathing. I suppose the State should seek teachers as the court seeks jurors. If possible, select men and women who have heard next to nothing about God and Christ, and have no yet made up their minds whether or not there be a God and a Saviour of men. {SITI January 19, 1891, p. 11.6}

But we must consider the full scope of this argument. If our public schools must be godless in justice to unbelieving tax-payers, so must all other public institutions supported by the taxes of the people. Our entire system of chaplains in prisons and reformatories, in military schools, in the army and navy, in State Legislatures, and in the National Congress, involves the same injustice. What right have we to take the Catholic, the Jew, the infidel, to support our military schools, then compel his boy to come under the influence of a Christian Protestant chaplain, who not only reads the Bible to him, but prays before him and for him, and, if possible, with him: who; reaches to him in public and labors with him in private, striving by all means to make a Christian man of him? What right have we to tax the Catholic, the Jew, the infidel, to support the State Legislature, elect him to that body, then compel him every morning to submit to the praying of a Christian Protestant? I have spent the eighteen years of my ministry in two capital cities, and have never yet known either a Catholic, or Jew, or infidel to be invited to officiate as chaplain. What right have we to open our great presidential conventions with prayer, our world’s fairs, in short, every great and serious undertaking? What right have our executive officers to issue Thanksgiving and fast-day proclamations? What right have they to take the oath of office? What right has our government to stamp upon our very dollars with which we pay our taxes, the words, “*In God we trust*”? What right have we to compel the infidel to handle such money, when we know it is supposed to burn his pockets, and harrow up his soul to be in possession of such poisonous stuff? He has a right to the clean, cold silver. {SITI January 19, 1891, p. 11.7}

This argument in behalf of the unbelieving tax-payer would also demand a revision of our Christian statute-books. What place is there for Sunday legislation? Consider what a burden we put upon the Jew. We practically compel him to observe two days in the week as rest-days. His religious scruples hold him to the seventh day, our Christian statutes hold him to the first. Even if some slight concessions are made for his conscience’ sake, the result is practically the same, for no man can work when all the world is resting, neither can he rest much when all the world is at work, as every minister in the land, with his miserable, half-and-half Mondays, can testify. Such a burden has this become that the Jews are agitating the question of adopting the Christian Sunday. {SITI January 19, 1891, p. 19.1}

Then, too, what right have we to tax the infidel to sustain our vast and complicated police machinery throughout the State, and then on Sunday convert the whole system to our Christian use, to obtain a quiet, orderly day in which the Christians may read a book and worship a God in whom the infidel tax-payer does not believe? He and his infidel brethren tax-payers {SITI January 19, 1891, p. 19.2}

*“Cannot work and cannot play
On this, the Christian’s holy day.” {SITI January 19, 1891, p. 19.3}*

Our Christian churches and institutions are exempt from taxation, the Jew and infidel are compelled to shoulder their proportion of this burden. In fact, this little proposition to render the public school godless for the sake of the unbelieving Jew and infidel, is like the genius escaping from the bottle-it rises and rises till it fills the heavens like a cloud. It is a proposition to render the entire State and national government godless to accommodate that same Jew and infidel. {SITI January 19, 1891, p. 19.4}

It would seem that a few articles like that ought to be sufficient, if well circulated, to show how little of the gospel and how much of the spirit of despotism there is in the demand for the Bible in the schools. The claim that the exclusion of the Bible from the public schools will make them entirely godless has been exploded many times, and need not be noticed here. But we hope that every reader will give careful and candid consideration to the questions which Mr. Ecob asks. {SITI January 19, 1891, p. 19.5}

“What right have we to tax the Catholic, the Jew, the infidel, to support our military schools, then compel his boy to come under the influence of a Christian Protestant chaplain, who not only reads the Bible to him, but prays before him, and for him, and, if possible, with him?” What right, to be sure? We don’t believe that the military chaplain does or attempts to do very much praying with the young men, for he is there as a military officer, whose dignity would be compromised by associating on equal terms with a common soldier; but is there any just reason why the State should assume this role of the tithing-man, to *compel* people to go to church? If the churches wish to do missionary labor in the State institutions, let them do so at their own expense, and let the people be as free to attend or to stay away as they would be if not Government employés. {SITI January 19, 1891, p. 19.6}

Mr. Ecob says that if the Bible is to be excluded from the schools on the ground that men must not be taxed to support a religion in which they do no believe, then we should not tax them to support chaplains in our Legislatures. A very just conclusion. That farce should be ended, not simply in the interest of justice, but for the honor of religion. {SITI January 19, 1891, p. 19.7}

“What right,” he asks, “has our government to stamp upon our very dollars with which we pay our taxes the words, “*In God we trust*”? We confess that we cannot answer the question. We are sure that the government does not trust in God, and that the falsehood which it stamps upon its coins is a taking in vain of the name of God. Still, as everybody knows that it means nothing, and few ever stop to read it, but receive and pay out their money without considering what is on it, there is not so much in it that tends to degrade religion to a mere form as there is in the enforced mechanical reading of the Scriptures. {SITI January 19, 1891, p. 19.8}

Mr. Ecob has a wonderfully clear perception of the unity and fitness of things. He sees that if it is not just to enforce one religious act, then it is not right to enforce another. If men should not be compelled to pay taxes to support some other people’s form of worship, then they should not be compelled to support men to enforce Sunday laws. {SITI January 19, 1891, p. 19.9}

But the admission in the last paragraph but one shows conclusively that Sunday laws are, and are considered by their upholders to be, the bond of union between Church and State. “Then, too, what right have we to tax the infidel to sustain our vast and complicated police machinery throughout the State, and then on Sunday convert the whole system to our Christian use, to obtain a quiet, orderly day?” This is well worth considering, not merely by the infidel, but by the true Christian. Is the disciple above his Lord? Shall Christ’s followers do in his service that which he condemned? Is it not misdirected and unholy ambition, which would seek to advance religion by means that the Master would not use? Do men in this century know how the cause of Christ should be carried on, better than Christ himself did? Do those who love the Lord Jesus as the head of the body, the church, and who believe that the true body of Christ will have within it all the power of its divine Head, wish to acknowledge the absence of that power by turning the State into a “Christian” machine to supply that lack? Is the work that was begun by Christ and his apostles to be perfected by ungodly policemen? Should not a people seek unto their God? Would that all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, by whatever name they are called, might see in these admissions the insult that is offered to Christ in his own house, and the necessity for a true reformation. E. J. W. {SITI January 19, 1891, p. 19.10}

**“Peace with God” The Signs of the Times, 17, 4.**

E. J. Waggoner

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:1. {SITI January 26, 1891, p. 19.11}

The preceding chapters set before us man’s lost condition, in rebellion against God, the standard of righteousness, and the only way by which it can be obtained. The necessity and the fact of justification by faith are very clearly set forth in chapter three, and in chapter four Abraham is cited as an example. Those who have light upon God’s law, as did the Jews, are in danger of trusting to their own works for salvation; therefore the apostle shows that Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, was not righteous by his own works, but by faith. This is the only way that men can become righteous. {SITI January 26, 1891, p. 19.12}

“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” To be justified is to be accounted righteous. Peace is the inevitable result of such a condition. Sin is rebellion; it is warfare against God. When a rebel lays down his arms, peace must result. Peace is the absence of war. The warfare has been all on our side, God does not fight against man, but man is fighting against God. “Not that we loved God, but that he loved us.” In such a case it is clear that when we cease to fight against God, when we surrender, peace must be the result. {SITI January 26, 1891, p. 19.13}

The trouble with too many is that they look for peace without surrendering. They expect God to give them peace while they are still in arms against him. This would be an impossibility. If he were fighting against us, then he could give us peace, by ceasing to fight us. But since the fighting is all on our part, the matter of peace rests with us. God has opened the way for us to surrender; our part is to lay hold of the peace which he offers us. Peace is ours whenever we will cease our rebellion. {SITI January 26, 1891, p. 19.14}

This peace which comes to the justified soul is no common peace. Says the Saviour: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” John 14:27. And the apostle Paul declares that the peace of God “passeth all understanding.” Philippians 4:7. It has power, too, for he declares that it will keep us, and he exhorts us to let the peace of God rule in our hearts. Colossians 3:15. {SITI January 26, 1891, p. 19.15}

Since man’s rebellion against God consists in violating his law (Isaiah 30:9) it is evident that peace is found only in obedience. “Great peace have they which love thy law,” says the psalmist, “and nothing shall offend them,” or cause them to stumble. Psalm 119:165. The Lord says, “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.” Isaiah 48:18. “There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.” Verse 22. It is dangerous for a person to seek for peace while living in the commission of known sin; for Satan may give him a fictitious peace, a satisfied feeling that passes for peace. What the sinner should seek for is forgiveness and reconciliation with God; he should make a complete surrender, because his rebellion is displeasing to God, and then he will have true peace. {SITI January 26, 1891, p. 19.16}

Peace is rest. It is the same that the Saviour offers, when he says, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28. A restless spirit, unholy ambition, and unsatisfied longings, are not compatible with the peace that God bestows. The peace of God keeps the mind and heart. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.” Isaiah 26:3. The mind that is fixed on Christ is not wavering, not easily distracted, even though cares and troubles press. It is not diverted by frivolity. “Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.” Proverbs 16:3. How many students complain of inability to concentrate their minds on one subject. If they would but commit their ways to the Lord, they would find that “godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” 1 Timothy 4:8. {SITI January 26, 1891, p. 19.17}

A man cannot have peace with God, and be at enmity with his neighbor. “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” 1 John 4:20. The peace of God is the result of obedience to his commandments, and one of the great commandments is, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Love is the fulfilling of the law; and love “suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.” 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5. A disposition to find fault, to criticise harshly, to envy, to complain, to speak bitter, cutting words, is a sure evidence that one has not the peace of God ruling in his heart; and if he has not the peace of God in his heart, then he is a sinner, and condemned. {SITI January 26, 1891, p. 26.1}

Christ is our peace. Ephesians 2:14. He has made peace through the blood of his cross. Colossians 1:20. He is our peace because in him we are made the righteousness of God. Christ and the Father work together for peace among men. The angels announced at the birth of Christ, “On earth peace, good-will toward men.” Luke 2:14. And since Christ himself is peace, it follows that all who are Christ’s will be at peace. “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated.” James 3:17. Purity, righteousness, comes alone through faith in Christ, and peace naturally follows, as stated in our text. All who are really Christ’s will heed the inspired injunction:— {SITI January 26, 1891, p. 26.2}

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” Ephesians 4:31, 32. E. J. W. {SITI January 26, 1891, p. 26.3}