

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 66 – INSTRUCTIONS IN HOLINESS]

We have been looking at the subject of the law in relation to the development of spiritual maturity in God's holy people.

- ◆ The last two sessions have focused on five reasons why the New Covenant instituted with Christ's blood is so much more effective in producing the character and nature of God in His people than the Mosaic Covenant or Torah.
- ◆ The main reason for bringing about this dramatic change is the coming of the Holy Spirit who takes up residence in God's holy people.
- ◆ In order for what Christ has achieved on our behalf to become a reality in our lives, the Holy Spirit by taking up residence in our hearts and mind is the means by which God now produces His holy nature and character in our lives.

Let's briefly summarise the five points we have covered so far on why the New Covenant of grace is so much better at producing a holy people for God than the Old Covenant of law.

- ◆ 1) With our conversion we are given a new nature that wants to please God.
- ◆ This new nature is the fulfilment of Jeremiah 31:33 where God says, ***"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts."***
- ◆ This new nature is none other than the Holy Spirit Himself taking up residence in our lives imparting to us the very nature and character of God Himself.
- ◆ This change of heart is a massive transformation from the past and should not be underestimated.
- ◆ 2) We have been set free from the condemnation of the law as the demanding righteous requirements of the law have been fulfilled in us by Christ (Romans 8:3-4).
- ◆ This simply allows grace to be grace.
- ◆ The beauty of grace is we are accepted and continue to be accepted regardless of how far we fall short of the perfection demanded of the law.
- ◆ God knows this and this is why He does not put unrealistic expectations on us now that we live under His grace.
- ◆ Christians, far too often, continue to place themselves under the uncompromising demands of the law when there is no need to.
- ◆ 3) The law that condemns and brings death only applies to the old sinful nature of Adam, not the new nature.
- ◆ ***1 Timothy 1:9-10 We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers,¹⁰ for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine.***
- ◆ As mentioned above, the law is great for bringing sinners to repentance, but once it has done its job, it no longer applies to believers who are now under grace and are now ***slaves to righteousness*** under the direction of the Holy Spirit who now works with our new nature to develop spiritual maturity in God's holy people.
- ◆ So when we try to control believers through the old rules and regulations of the law, we are not taking into consideration the reality of the Holy Spirit and our new nature.
- ◆ The new nature is under the control and direction of God's Holy Spirit who gives us the "mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16).
- ◆ 4) The motivation for achieving holiness under the Old Covenant was "fear," while the motivation for being holy under the New Covenant is "gratitude."
- ◆ This too is a remarkable transition. Under the old legal way of operating, a sinner received condemnation and death for his disobedience.
- ◆ The motivation for being good under this old system was "fear."
- ◆ But now under the New Covenant instituted with Christ's blood, we not only receive mercy and forgiveness, but also the promise of eternal life through the life-giving Spirit.
- ◆ And this is granted to us simply because we "believe."
- ◆ Now when we grasp the magnitude of what has transpired here, one can only fall down in deep gratitude in recognition of the grace God has extended to us.
- ◆ 5) As we have been welcomed back into the "presence" of God, the New Covenant is again based on a relationship rather than a list of "do's" and "don'ts."

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 66 – INSTRUCTIONS IN HOLINESS]

- ◆ Adam and Eve enjoyed a remarkable relationship with God prior to their disobedience.
- ◆ Sin is much more damaging than simply breaking the law. It is much more than an affront to our holy God as it threatens the whole concept of what God stands for, intimate relationships based on His love.
- ◆ Ultimately, this is why He is so opposed to sin and He wants us to understand this as well.
- ◆ Sin destroys relationships.
- ◆ Unfortunately, all too often God is regarded as a policeman of the law rather than a merciful loving Father who wants an intimate relationship with us.
- ◆ This false concept of God being regarded as a policeman is only magnified by those preoccupied with living under the law.
- ◆ God does not want to relate to us through the legal paradigm of the law. He wants to relate to us via the godly relationship that is love.
- ◆ And through the New Covenant of grace, He has set in motion the means to achieve this as the Holy Spirit is the master of relationships (2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 John 1:3).

Now we continue with our sixth point on why the New Covenant instituted with Christ's blood is so much more effective in producing the character and nature of God in His people than the Mosaic Covenant or Torah

- ◆ 6) Believers are no longer under the law, but that does not mean we are not given what I am going to term "instructions in holiness" for the purpose of developing spiritual maturity.
- ◆ We have purposely spent a great deal of time talking about the superiority of the New Covenant over the Mosaic Covenant in bringing about spiritual maturity in God's holy people before moving to this point.
- ◆ The reason we have done so is to make sure we have the right perspective on what we are about to cover now as we are going to make a very important distinction between "law" and "instruction."
- ◆ This is not a subtle attempt to sneak the law in via the back door, where the emphasis for salvation was based on one's works or obedience to the law rather than Christ's works.
- ◆ Instead, "instructions in holiness" are a means to aid God's people to develop the holiness that reflects their heavenly Father.
- ◆ In an earlier session we talked about the confusion and conflict regarding the law in the age of the New Covenant.
- ◆ This confusion was magnified in those areas where there was a mixture of both Jew and Gentile converts in the congregation.
- ◆ The apostle Paul, as the apostle to the Gentiles, was the one who had to manage the transition from the Old to the New Covenant.
- ◆ However, as mentioned earlier, there are times where Paul himself speaks positively about the law and times when he speaks negatively about it.
- ◆ On the negative side, to be under the law was to be in slavery (Romans 7:22-23; Galatians 4:21-31); it brought death and condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:7-9); it is powerless to save us (Romans 8:3); those that promote the law are the enemies of Christ (Galatians 5:12); it came to an end with the introduction of the New Covenant (Romans 10:4; Galatians 5:18); and it produced self-righteousness rather than godly righteousness (Romans 10:3).
- ◆ On the positive side, Paul calls the law "holy, righteous and good" (Romans 7:12); faith does not nullify the law but upholds it (Romans 3:31); and although circumcision is out, keeping the commandments of God is not (1 Corinthians 7:19).
- ◆ We now need to address these seeming conflicts.
- ◆ We saw back in point three the law only applies to unbelievers with the old nature, while believers with their new nature are no longer under the law but under grace.

However, God's ultimate goal of salvation is to make us in His image and conform us to the likeness of Jesus Christ (Genesis 1:26; Romans 8:29).

- ◆ We have seen through this series how God has taken the initiative in redeeming us from our sins.
- ◆ First of all, God sent His Son to do for us what we could not achieve for ourselves under the law. His righteousness has been imputed to us, and He has paid the death penalty we deserved for our sins.
- ◆ Second, Jesus sends the Spirit to do what the law could not do in regard to developing holiness in His people.

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 66 – INSTRUCTIONS IN HOLINESS]

- ◆ The coming of the Holy Spirit is God's answer to addressing the question of developing holiness in God's people now that the law has been terminated and replaced by the New Covenant.
- ◆ We have already seen how the Holy Spirit dwelling in a believer has replaced the law as the new way of identifying God's holy people (Romans 8:9,14).
- ◆ We have also learned how God, as part of the new creation, has given us a new nature under the direction of the Holy Spirit who gives us the mind of Christ.
- ◆ Our first five points leading up to this sixth point is to show the superiority of the role the Holy Spirit plays in developing spiritual maturity in God's holy people over the ineffectiveness of the law.

However, to these wonderful gifts, under the New Covenant we are given another wonderful gift and this is what we will term "instructions in holiness."

- ◆ Back in Romans 8:1-2 we learned that ***through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.***
- ◆ This new law or covenant of the Spirit who gives life also includes within it, "instructions in holiness."
- ◆ But we need to make a very important distinction between these "instructions in holiness" of the New Covenant and the "laws of sin and death" of the Mosaic Covenant.
- ◆ As mentioned, the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant were designed and applied to those still ruled by the fallen nature of sin with the intention of bringing them to repentance and providing a certain amount of stability in a fallen world.
- ◆ In contrast, the "instructions in holiness" of the New Covenant are designed for believers with the new nature to aid them in developing the holy nature and character of God.
- ◆ Because of a lack of understanding of the inherent power of the New Covenant, many Christians tenaciously hang onto the laws of the Old Covenant, especially the Ten Commandments, either because they somehow believe we have to obey them in order to be saved, or there will be anarchy if they are rejected.
- ◆ Hopefully, we have already shown we are already accepted based on Christ's works, not ours; and our new nature is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who gives us the mind of Christ.
- ◆ Those genuinely guided by the Holy Spirit who have the mind of Christ will not allow their lives to descend into anarchy.
- ◆ So both of these fears are unwarranted.

But the goal is to conform us to the likeness of Jesus Christ, and again this is a process, a process the Holy Spirit will lead us through.

- ◆ ***Colossians 1:9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives*** (Also Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 1:17).
- ◆ But the Holy Spirit has already started this process of leading us to spiritual maturity when He inspired the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ The promise Jesus made to His disciples was He would send the same Holy Spirit that guided Him as a human to His followers (John 14:16-18).
- ◆ So by studying the life and teachings of Jesus Christ we get a very clear picture into the mind of God, a picture that is so much more revealing than the Old Mosaic Covenant.
- ◆ Remember, all they had was the law to point them to God. In contrast, the New Covenant reveals the lawgiver, Jesus Christ (John 5:39-40).
- ◆ Jesus as both the mediator of the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:6) and the one commissioned to reveal the Father to us (John 1:18; John 14:9) is the perfect example for believers to imitate as the Holy Spirit leads us in the process of making us in God's image and conforming us to the likeness of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ In addition to the life and teaching of Jesus, the early New Testament writers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit have left us a rich resource that further reveals the mind of God.
- ◆ Foremost of these is the apostle Paul who understood this transition from the Old Covenant to the New better than anyone as he was reluctantly forced to make this painful transition by God's own hand (Galatians 1:13-16).

So when we read Paul's seemingly conflicting views about commandments and the law, we need to bear the following points in mind.

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 66 – INSTRUCTIONS IN HOLINESS]

- ◆ We will pick this up next time.