Tuesday's Touch #50

...from Pastor Ed ...January 05, 2010

The Children Are Free!

*When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?" He said, "Yes." And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?" Peter said to Him, "From strangers." Jesus said to him, "**Then the children are free**." Matthew 17:24-26*

*Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. **For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar**— for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children— but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. **…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 4:21-30*

Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. ...Now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. Romans 7:4-6

Peter, no doubt, meant well when he responded to the temple tax collectors. This was not a civil tax, but a tax that was rooted in the old testament law (Ex 30:13-14; 2Chrin 24:6, 9). Whether it had been perverted or misapplied is not at all the issue here. Peter assumes it was required and that Jesus would certainly comply. Our Lord does not take issue with the validity of the tax, but questions whether the children of a king are legally obligated to pay tax to their father. In our Lord's response he clearly intends to represent *his* Father as King and he as the Son; but he speaks not only of himself for he uses the plural – "***the children*** *(lit. sons)* ***are free***," and, "*lest* ***we*** *offend them…*". This was no benign assertion. It was eschatologically earth-shaking. Though born under the law (Gal 4:4), and always obedient, he declares that he and the children the Father had given him (John 17:2-3; 6; 9-12; 24) were legally free from the demands and condemnation of the old covenant law.

As the New Testament unfolds, this truth is not only fully revealed, but becomes paramount to our understanding of this new covenant. We are no longer *under law* <u>because</u> we are *in Christ*. He is the reality of which the law was only a faint shadow and type (Coloss 2:17; Heb 8:4-5; 10:1). He is greater than the temple (Matt 12:6), Lord of the Sabbath (Matt 12:8), the absolute revelation and standard of righteousness (John 16:10; Rom 10:4). He is the eternal Son of God who by one sacrifice has perfected forever those who are sanctified in him (Heb 10:12-14). **He is our covenant** (Isaiah 42:6; 49:8). In him we are free (John 8:36)!

Paul presses this home often in his writings. We are dead to the law that we might be married to Christ and bear fruit *(from within!)*. We are delivered from the law that we might serve in newness of the Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter (Romans 7:4-6). The letter kills, but the Spirit is life-giving (2Corinth 3:6). What the law could not do, Christ has done (Romans 8:3-4). The law was of the old covenant, a bondwoman to put us into bondage. Now we are commanded in Christ, our New Covenant, to *cast out the bondwoman and her son*, and to *stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage (Galatians 4:21–5:1)*.

The *written Word* has now been transformed for us by the *Living Word*. It once could only command and condemn and increase our bondage to sin. It is now a conduit of living water for *free-born children* by which the Spirit nourishes and teaches of Christ. It was once a mirror to reveal our

ugliness. It is now a looking-glass by which we behold Christ's beauty, and beholding him we are changed (2Corinth 3:18). The Righteousness to which the written law pointed now dwells within us by his Spirit, restraining the flesh and bearing the fruit of righteousness through faith and love, mercy and truth.

In Christ we are re-created to love the Father and his holiness. We rejoice in truth, and hunger and thirst after his righteousness. But we must never allow our godly love, passion and zeal to be enslaved again by law, and to degenerate into fleshly works and deadly "will-worship" (Coloss 2:23). To be sure, the natural man cannot possibly see the difference (1Corinth 2:14). The distinction to him is all semantics, double speak, and foolishness. But *that which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered into the hearts of men* **is revealed** to us by his Spirit, and by his Spirit alone (1Corinth 2:9-10). *Now the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty (2Corinth 3:17).* If Christ *shall make you free you shall be free indeed (John 8:36).* His yoke is easy and his burden light (Matt 11:30). His rest is glorious (Isaiah 11:10). Let us give diligence unto the assurance that we have entered into *that* rest, for He truly *is* our Sabbath (Heb 4:9-11).

Christ, Our Covenant,

May the veil be lifted for many who have your "religion" but do not have you (2Corinth 3:14-17); who have a form of godliness but do not know the power thereof (2Tim 3:5). Please deliver us all from the deception of legalism in all of its varied forms. Teach us anew that, having begun in the Spirit, we cannot be made perfect by the flesh (Gal 3:3). Lord make us perfect in love (1John 4:18) and adorn us in the beauty of your holiness (Ps 90:17 *NKJV*).

Complete in You,

Amen.

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