

Christ Reformation Church

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Breathing the Fresh Air of Liberty in Jesus Christ

Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

“Spirit-Led Walking (2)”

February 09, 2014

Sermon Text: Galatians 5:16-26

Scripture Reading: Matthew 25:31-46

Introduction-

As we have been hearing the Apostle Paul warn us against the danger of a false works-based gospel here in Galatians, we have necessarily been learning more about the nature and purpose of God's *covenants* with His people. We saw last time that a

covenant is a legal instrument which establishes some kind of relationship between two parties. Like a contract.

God has shown us in His Word that He has established covenants as the basis of His relationship with His people. It is vital that every human being understand:

God sets the terms of our relationship with Him in His covenants. We cannot be in relationship with Him (i.e., we cannot have life in Him or be justified before Him) apart from adherence to His covenants. Thus it is vital that we understand the nature of the Old and the New Covenants. The Old Covenant is ended. To try to relate to God by it will only end in condemnation.

This morning I would like to do three things:

1. Review in more detail God's Old and New Covenants, specifically in regard to their beginning in Abraham.

2. Look further into life in the New Covenant. Specifically, this matter of walking in the Spirit as described in Galatians 5:16ff.
3. Show you an example from the gospels about the mentality of Christ's people in the New Covenant.

Abraham and Two Covenants

A. Covenant #1 - Promise

Genesis 15:1-6 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." (2) But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" (3) And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." (4) And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." (5) And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." (6) And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

B. Covenant #2 - Circumcision

Genesis 17:1-14 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, (2) that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." (3) Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, (4) "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. (5) No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. (6) I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. (7) And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. (8) And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." (9) And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. (10) This is my

covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. (11) You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. (12) He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, (13) both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. (14) Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

Now, I won't go into detail here, but let me just say that the Mosaic Covenant which was given 430 years after this covenant with Abraham (as Galatians tells us), was really just a development of this second covenant of circumcision made with Abraham. How do we know? Because circumcision was still the sign of that covenant.

So God made Abraham the father of two peoples, one of the Spirit, and one

of the flesh. One which is eternal, another which was temporal and ended at the coming of Christ.

Why two "Israels" (an earthly and a spiritual)? Paul has alluded to the reason here in Galatians:

Galatians 3:16-24 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. (17) This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. (18) For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise. (19) **Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made,** and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. (20) Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one. (21) Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. (22) **But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin,** so that

the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. (23) Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. (24) **So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.**

- The Law guarded and preserved the revealed Word of God:

Romans 9:3-8 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, **my kinsmen according to the flesh.** (4) They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, **the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.** (5) To them belong the patriarchs, **and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.** (6) But it is not as though the word of God has failed. **For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, (7) and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."** (8) This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

We will explain these two covenants with Abraham further (Gen 15 and Gen 17) in a moment. But just take notice for now that the reason God made that second, inferior covenant with Abraham (circumcision, the Law) and developed it through Moses, was so that the Law would be a “guardian” until Christ (the Seed) came and enacted the New Covenant (the Promise) in His blood. Think of the purposes of the Law-

- It preserved a physical seed of Abraham (the Jews) as the chosen lineage from which the Seed (Christ) would come. Christ was to be a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and on down through David. That lineage was preserved as a distinct lineage because the Old Covenant, the Law, maintained a distinct earthly, physical people descended from Abraham. The Law “guarded” that lineage.

You see this then? God had a temporal purpose in establishing an earthly, physical seed (plural) of Abraham. But that purpose was temporary. When the promised Seed (singular) finally came, the New Covenant which was given to Abraham in the form of a Promise,

was enacted and the purpose of the Law/Old Covenant was over. The true Israel, the true people of God, are not “children of the flesh” (physical lineage from Abraham) but who are the “children of the promise” – children by faith, just as their father Abraham believed God and was counted righteous.

THEREFORE, if we revert back to trying to relate to God via our own works, or some works of Law, we are doing so on OUR own terms and not in accord with God’s terms. Even that Old Covenant was never intended to make men righteous. It was only given for temporal purposes which included a death sentence, condemnation.

Let’s go to Romans 4 and see once again that there really were two covenants made with Abraham. It probably would be more accurate to say that one covenant, the temporal one, was made and the other one, the new, better, and eternal covenant, was PROMISED. Listen to Paul. Actually, listen to this first:

Why is the important for YOU? Because if we clearly learn and understand the nature of these two covenants, we will clearly understand how God has chosen to establish a relationship with His people – US! And it will enable us to rightly

understand the nature of LAW and the nature of GOSPEL, and not confused the two. In other words, it enables us to understand God’s Word and to properly APPLY that Word to our own lives. To fail in this is to fall back under Law and be enslaved to the traditions of man.

Alright? We are not just playing academic and theology for intellectualistic pursuits here. These things are absolutely vital for being in a justified and healthy relationship with God in Christ.

Now listen to Paul –

Romans 4:1-12 What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, **our forefather according to the flesh?** (2) For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. (3) **For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."** (4) Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. (5) And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, (6) just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

(7) "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; (8) blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin." (9) Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. (10) **How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised.** (11) He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. **The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, (12) and to make him the father of the circumcised** who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

You see it? Abraham the father of those who are of faith. The Promise. Abraham the father of those who are circumcised (although he was only the TRUE father of the circumcised who were also of faith. Thus Jesus could tell the Pharisees who boasted of

Abraham as their father that they were not really children of Abraham, but of the Devil).

Now, you see these dual covenants to Abraham even more clearly in what we have already studied in Galatians:

Galatians 4:22-31 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. (23) But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise.

(24) **Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. (25) Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. (26) But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. (27) For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband."**

(28) Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. (29) But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. (30) **But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman."** (31) **So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.**

See it? Two sons. Two covenants. The Old one, the Law, through which our inheritance will never come because it is by works and only results in a curse. The other by God's doing, the Promise, the New Covenant, by faith.

This is exactly consistent with Hebrews:

Hebrews 8:5-13 They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." (6) **But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it**

is enacted on better promises.

(7) For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. (8) For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, (9) not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. (10) **For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.** (11) And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. (12) For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." (13) **In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and**

growing old is ready to vanish away.

The better covenant is the New Covenant. The Old Covenant has ceased (and this, incidentally, demonstrates that dispensational theology's notion that a future earthly Israel is going to continue to exist is completely foreign to Scripture). This is why the real children of Abraham, the real Israel is and always has been those who are of faith in Christ, on the basis of what was Promised to Abraham and which promised new and better covenant has been effected in Christ.

This is how God has determined to bring us into living relationship with Him. The New Covenant which is by faith through grace, apart from our works. It is established by the perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, not by any of our doings. If any human being is going to enter into this life giving relationship with God, it must be and can only be by this New Covenant, by faith alone in Christ alone.

Which brings us back around to the topic at hand – the Spirit.

A Covenant Enabled by The Spirit

Galatians 5:16-18 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not

gratify the desires of the flesh. (17) For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant is something that was entirely absent in the Old Covenant:

2 Corinthians 3:3 And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Hebrews 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

It is no wonder then that Paul brings us now to this matter of the Christian *walking by the Spirit*. And every Christian must thoroughly understand who he or she is now as a new creation in Christ. If we don't then we will be much more susceptible to the trap of

reverting back to the law, which only enables our sinful flesh.

Let's make some observations then about these 3 verses, most of which we considered last time. However, we cannot repeat them enough. We must get a firm hold on these things:

1. Every Christian has received the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who regenerates us and who works to renew our minds, joining us to Christ. There is no need for a Christian to "seek" the Spirit to come upon them. (See Gal 3:1ff)

2. Walking by the Spirit IS our new life in Christ lived out. This New Covenant in the Spirit is a relationship with God characterized by love for God and His love for us. It is radically unlike the Old Covenant.

3. The Holy Spirit IS leading every Christian. This leading is the fundamental basis of our assurance that we are genuine Christians.

4. There are "desires" in us. Two of them. The Spirit and the Flesh. The desire to obey God's law, to love our neighbor, to love God, is the desire and leading of the Spirit. In contrast, and ALWAYS in contrast, our sinful flesh presents us with a desire to disobey the Law, and to hate God and our neighbor.

5. The Spirit and our sinful flesh NEVER cooperate. The flesh will NEVER desire to love God, love our neighbor, and obey God's Law. The Spirit will NEVER desire to hate God, hate our neighbor, or disobey God's Law. NEVER.

6. Because the Christian is in Christ and in the Spirit, because we are a new creation, a child of God –THE DESIRES OF THE SPIRIT ARE OUR DESIRES. We are NOT defined in our person and in our identity by our remaining sinful flesh and its desires. We have died to those things in Christ:

Galatians 2:19-20 For through the law **I died to the law**, so that I might live to God. (20) **I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live**, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live **in the flesh** [*Here Paul uses this phrase in a different sense, meaning, in this physical, temporal body*] I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

You see this? The old person I was, the original sinner I used to be in which the flesh reigned, is dead. Crucified with Christ. That person no longer lives, but now I am a new person of whom it can be said, "Christ lives in

me.” I am a new creation who lives by faith in Christ.

Therefore, let’s repeat it again and again:

When I feel the desires of the flesh rise in me, I must not conclude that I am that flesh who is an enemy of God and who God condemns. I must remember that I am joined to Christ, that I am in Christ and that my real identity is a person who loves God, loves my neighbor, and wants to obey God’s law. Then I must yield to THOSE desires, and not to the desires of the flesh. By doing so, I will necessarily put to death the flesh and enjoy victory over it.

“...to keep you from doing the things YOU want to do.” [There is a crucial phrase for us to see here.

7. Verse 18 – *“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”*

In the Old Covenant, under the Law, sin and death and condemnation reigned. They reign in the person who is unsaved today. And for the Christian, if we are dupe into legalism and try to deal with our sin by means of keeping human traditions or by personal resolve to do better in keeping the 10 commandments, then we are going to simply FEED our sin!

We will fail. And we will be miserable.

The secret to keeping from reverting back to a condition of acting as if we are still under the Law, is simply –

“Walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”

Of course one way to make the Spirit’s voice louder and easier to hear is to immerse ourselves in the Scriptures, which were written by the Spirit. The Word of God is what the Spirit is going to lead us in harmony with, never against.

Conclusion

Finally, consider what Jesus shows us here about the mindset of those who are led by the Spirit in the New Covenant:

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (22) **On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'** (23) And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you;

depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Matthew 25:31-46 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. (32) Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (33) And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. (34) Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (35) For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, (36) I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' (37) **Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? (38) And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? (39) And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'** (40) And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my

brothers, you did it to me.' (41) "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (42) For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, (43) I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' (44) Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' (45) Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' (46) And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Do you see the marked difference here between Christ's own people and those who only pretend to be? What we have here really are Hagar and Sarah, Ishamel and Isaac, Esau and Jacob. Notice that those Christ rejects are VERY focused upon their WORKS. In fact, their works are the basis of their argument that He must accept them. So much so that they are astonished when He rejects them. "Look at all we have done in your name!" Doesn't work.

Now, notice the mindset of those who are in the New Covenant and led by the Spirit. Their love for Christ produced its fruit through them *in a way that they really weren't even aware of!* “When did we do that?”

And so it is with the sheep of Christ's flock. Because they are led by the Spirit and have His Law written on their hearts. It is the nature of the new nature to love Christ and His people.

That is our life in Christ. And that means that the Christian, though very much aware of his or her sins, obeys Christ and loves Christ MORE than he is aware of.

And that, I trust, is an encouragement to you who know Christ.