

STANDING FAST IN LIBERTY

THE BATTLE FOR THE SOUL OF THE CHURCH

by Gary H. Patterson

NOT ACCORDING TO...

“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and *not according to Christ*” (2:8).

“...Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—(9) *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 did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD...”

These verses of Scripture clearly emphasize what the New Covenant is and is not according to. Summed up, it is according to Christ in whom alone we are complete, who also is the substance of all that the Old Covenant prophesied and required concerning the Kingdom of God.

It is of equal importance as emphasized by the early apostles to establish what the New Covenant is *not* according to. Doing so largely prevents false teachings based on persuasive arguments saying “Yes, it is according to Christ, but you must also include...” Such teachings may infer that your relationship with God will be enhanced or you will learn more about Christ if you keep a certain ritual, day, month, festive occasion, or year. That is clever persuasiveness. Such persuasiveness claims that you will be more greatly blessed if you incorporate this or that tradition, principle, or Old Covenant practice. Christ in us and us in Him cannot be improved on! Thus, the reason Paul warned, “Let no one cheat you!”

Clearly, the New Covenant is not according to the traditions of men, the basic principles of this world, and (much to the chagrin of some Bible teachers) *not* according to the Old Covenant.

CAN THE OLD COVENANT BE RE-PURPOSED?

There are differing and conflicting perspectives existing in the Church centering on whether we should observe any “holy days” as in the seven major feasts given to Israel. What happens when we take those Old

Covenant observances declared obsolete by God and reinstitute them into New Covenant church practice?

When Paul wrote his letter to the church in Galatia, he was primarily addressing a problem with Judaizers (false brethren of Jewish nationality appearing to be Christians) persuading the believers there to be circumcised. His warning was that by being circumcised in that context they were coming under the law and its consequent curse and bondage (Galatians 4). Whether they were accepting circumcision as their source of righteousness was not the issue, because, as Paul stated, "the man who does them (the law) will live by them" (Galatians 3:12). Since the just can only live by faith, attempting to live by the law only brings a curse. Living by faith does not incorporate any attempts on our part of keeping anything that came through Moses. This living by faith is known as the true Sabbath rest intended in the giving of the original day to be observed at the beginning of creation (Hebrews 3 & 4).

Circumcision was first given to Abraham as an outward sign of the righteousness accredited to him through faith in God. Although given before the law, nearly four hundred years earlier, it was still considered by God as being of the law based on Paul's letter to the Galatians.

As Paul said to them, a little leaven leavens the whole lump (Galatians 5:9), so it happened. They had also begun to keep days, months, seasons, and years. However, this time it was in the context, not of pagan practice as before as stated by Paul, but Jewish practice instead (Galatians 4:1-11). In verse nine, Paul addressed the fact they had gone back *again* to the keeping of such things in the context of the persuasiveness of the Judaizers. The whole point of the book was to address the influence of these false brethren and not of the believers of that church returning to their former empty pagan practices as unbelievers. Why would they do that under the influence of the Jewish false brethren who were "zealously courting" them (Galatians 4:17)? Those Jews would not condone pagan practice. In fact, they would have made the believers feel excluded by introducing their "holy and God-ordained" practices (which are no longer God-ordained).

Paul's point was this: whether it be pagan or "Jewish," the keeping of such "holy days" were weak and beggarly elements. In other words, the Spirit of God would not be saving, healing, delivering, and transforming people through it. This did Paul indicate when he asked: "Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does He do it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? [6] just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Galatians 3:5-6). What part of "you can no longer relate to God through anything that

came through Moses” do you not understand? In fact, Paul issued a severe charge against that church because of changing their beliefs to incorporate Jewish practice. They had fallen from grace and became estranged from Christ! All the while, they were still probably singing and teaching about Christ, even worshipping Him. I bet they were still having some great church services.

Again:

“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ” (2:8).

Without a doubt, as proven by Scripture, that “according to Christ” does not incorporate the Old Covenant and its practices that are now obsolete. The New Covenant is *not* according to the covenant made with Israel as clearly stated in Hebrews 8:9. As God also said, “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second” (v.7). A new covenant would be made (v.8) that would replace and make obsolete the old (v.13).

The New Covenant is no longer according to the Old. It is according the power of Christ’s endless life. That life (divine nature) we have become partakers of directly (2 Peter 1:1-4). Not *through* obsolete practices that are considered by God to be traditions of men and basic principles of the world.

Even those things which were originally of God, as in the Old Covenant and its practices now rendered obsolete by Him, when reinstated by men are nothing more than “of men” and “of the world” as revealed through Paul in the verse previously quoted from Colossians.

Walking in the Spirit sums up what is required by God in the New Covenant. By so doing, we do *not* fulfill the lusts of the flesh and conversely fulfill the righteous requirements of the law which includes all that came through Moses. If I am walking in the Spirit, for instance, fasting food on Halloween day will be just as beneficial as doing it on any day related to Old Covenant observance. *Christ is continually in me to no greater degree on one day as He is another.*

Paul indicated that practicing such things is a betrayal of Christ and the completeness we only have through Him. This was substantiated in his statement later: “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (vs. 16-17). In other words, the “substance” only exists in Christ and not in any such practices. Those will only prove to

be empty and can also bring a curse upon you (as gleaned from the book of Galatians). Let no one make you feel excluded through persuasiveness of any kind, including the adherence to outward observances, with the absurdity that simplicity of devotion to Christ can be improved on. Christ in you and you in Him are more than enough.

Someone attempted to convince me when we first moved here to North Georgia that they keep the feasts given to Israel to provoke the Jews to jealousy. Sounds honorable but it doesn't work. How many Jews have they won by doing so? Why would they be impressed with our dead empty works that may be enjoyable but gets no one saved, healed, delivered, purified, transformed, and filled with the Holy Spirit? Jesus, the Substance, does all that from the outside in and then from the inside out regardless of what day or time of the year. The Jews already know how empty those practices are, but pride keeps them from admitting it. That reminds me of the time when my wife and I visited a Messianic Jewish service and it was all about form. There were no manifestations of the Holy Spirit. We have not been back there. What should a Messianic Jewish service look like? Read the book of Acts.

So, can we repurpose, for instance, Old Covenant feasts, by worshipping Christ through them. Why would I want to? I have Christ in me in fullness and I am in Him. That is only by grace through faith which excludes any condescension or boasting on our part. The book of Galatians is an indictment against attempting to do any such thing. Even doing what God has forbidden with "good intent" could be a transgression in His eyes. Paul referred to it as transgression in the context of his rebuke to Peter for his hypocrisy. Peter was influencing others to do the same also. Simplified, Peter was eating things with the Gentile believers, contrary to the law of Moses, that he would not eat with the Jewish believers and did not want the Jewish believers from Jerusalem to know about.

There are obviously teachers in the Church who think we can pick and choose at will what we want to repurpose from the Old Covenant.

Understand that I am *not* in any way saying that the Old Testament writings are not useful. It heralds who Christ is. The New Testament reveals who He is, clearly, with no types and shadows except for the mysteries shrouding Christ's second coming. This corresponds with the mysteries contained within the Old Covenant Feast of Trumpets yet to be fulfilled. Some things will remain a bit of a mystery to God's people until they occur. By God's design they are veiled. Then, when Christ appears, we will know as we are known (1 Corinthians 13).

The Old Testament served as the basis for the teaching and preaching of the first apostles. All scripture is given by inspiration from God but what God has rendered obsolete is obsolete. Some of the prophecies are yet to be fulfilled. The giving of the seventh day as the Sabbath was the first recorded prophecy heralding the coming of the Christ and our entering His rest (Hebrews 4). The good news is that we have the “Fulfiller” in us. That’s the whole point of the New Covenant. Now we have received, if indeed you have obeyed the complete Gospel, the gift of the Holy Spirit who will take what is of Christ and reveal it to us and show us the things which are to come directly—face-to-face (John 16). That cannot be improved on. The New Covenant is according to that and not the keeping of obsolete and empty Old Covenant observances.

The New Covenant, based on the authority of the written word of God, operates according to the personal revelation of who Christ is to us directly by the spirit of wisdom and revelation (Ephesians 1:17-21). It is not mediated through outward means or people. To teach the notion that it can be achieved better through outward Old Covenant observance is at least a betrayal of who Christ is in us and who we are in Him. Are some in the Church bored with their face-face relationship with Christ and must add some outward bling-bling to spice it up? Or could it be that they have listened to too many voices “of men” and “of the world?” Instead of vital substance, they have fodder. Instead of surety, they have flattery. Instead of truth, they have placebos. Instead of true unity, they have common ground. Understand, people of God, “preacher cheater” is coming to a church near you.

Christ in us and we in Him cannot be improved on. Everything else is less than, weak and beggarly to say the least, classified by Scripture as “of men” or “of the world” even if it used-to-be ordained by God. The problem here is that when we attempt to bring back what used-to-be ordained of God we will become a used-to-be. Our identity in Christ is replaced with one ascribed to us by the law, classified as servants and not sons. The repercussions of that is summed up in the curse of the law.

Anything that we attempt to bring back into the New Covenant from the Old becomes the end and not the means intended. Relating to God according to the Old Covenant has been abolished. Attempting to do so brings a curse. Everything is now according to the Anointed One, the Lamb and Lion of God, who is alive forever more.