

A Shadow of Things to Come

Colossians 2:16-23, October 12, 2014

Trinity XVII

Beloved of the Lord.....In Jeremiah 14:10, the Bible says "Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet." Instead of being good and faithful sheep who stay close to their Good Shepherd, we are by nature sheep who love to wander. As sheep in God's kingdom our eyes constantly search and roam the hills looking for some better place to stay, greener pastures to feed upon, and all the while Jesus is right there next to us, but our eyes do not rest upon Him. If they did, we would not wander.

One of the many ways we as sheep wander is by way of legalism. Our sinful nature is not content to believe Jesus has done all things for our salvation, but our flesh wants to do more because then our flesh will have reason to glory and gloat. This is when the devil comes along with his bag of tricks and essentially he says "Are you sure Jesus has done EVERYTHING for your salvation? Don't you think to be sure you ought to do a little bit more?" He then pulls out of his bag of tricks certain good works we can offer up to God.....faithful church attendance, good food to keep our bodies pure, sacred festivals. For example, is it a good work to faithfully attend church every Sunday? Is it a good work to keep yourself from certain foods which do not glorify God? Is it a good work to not observe Halloween but only Reformation? Surprisingly these are not simply Yes or No answers. The law of God is not an absolute in the sense of outward deeds. Keeping God's laws is a matter of love and faith of heart. For example, as long as we live close enough we should attend church faithfully, but the outward deed means nothing to God if we are not moved by love for God to do so. Likewise there are certain jobs which require work on Sunday, and a believer misses church not because they want to, but it is necessary. Also regarding food we all know we are free to eat all that God has prepared and created, but if certain foods are connected to idolatrous worship, we should not eat such if it aides our neighbor's idolatry. Even Halloween, though it is a pagan holiday connected with witchcraft and the like, such is not an area where there is a clear commandment of God binding the conscience. Though it is good for us to remember God's Reformation by way of Luther so the Gospel was restored, if a child comes to my house seeking candy, I am not going to scold that child for being a pagan practicing a pagan holiday. I might give him candy if there is any in the house. This is not sinful in itself, but all idolatry is sinful.

On the subject then of legalism and the Law of God let us remember this, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.....Love worketh

no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law."

When we speak of the Law of God, there are three main categories or types of law: ceremonial law, political law, and moral law. In the Old Testament, God ordained and codified for the Jewish people both the ceremonial law and the political law. The ceremonial laws governed both the physical life and religious life of the Jews. They were forbidden from certain foods, and there were many laws regarding cleanliness and personal hygiene. Regarding the political laws God had for the Jews, this was a long list of commandments and punishments for various transgressions. It helped to keep law and order among the people, and it had spiritual value. But what must be remembered in today's lesson is both the ceremonial and political laws had their end, when Jesus came as a sacrifice for all. The Jews of the New Testament were not commanded by God to no longer eat pork, nor were animal sacrifices necessary. Indeed in the New Testament Church, both Jews and Gentiles became the one body of Christ.

The third category of law is what we call Moral Law, and this primarily is the Ten Commandments. The Moral Law is what all men know by nature, for God has written the Moral Law in man's heart. All men also know by nature that if they break this law, God will punish them (sooner or later), that is why all men live in the guilt and fear of God by nature. The Moral law then is binding upon all men, and when we break this law our conscience declares our guilt. Thanks be to God Christians know "Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Since Jesus kept God's commandments for us with a perfect love, and likewise paid the penalty of our sins upon the cross, the curse of the law has been removed, and His Gospel sets us free.

It is with this background we now hear Paul's warning to all Christians, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ." This means the believers of the New Testament (Jews and Gentiles alike), are not bound at all by the Ceremonial Laws of the Old Testament, and you shouldn't let anyone bind your conscience on matters where you are free. God has no commandments regarding what you eat or drink, nor is Saturday more holy than Sunday, etc. Nor are you under any obligation to keep certain religious Jewish festivals, the Sabbath, the new moon, etc. Nor are the Jews any longer God's chosen people. Jesus was a Jew, God's chosen Servant, and Jesus has come, hence "the body is of Christ." These various Ceremonial Laws in the OT were thus a shadow of Christ, they were types and figures which led up to Christ. Just as in the daytime the shadow of a man is not the man, but you can see the shape and outline, so the Old Testament sacrifices, the separation of the people from all that was unclean, etc., they all prefigured Christ. By the many laws and commandments,

and the countless animal sacrifices, the people learned they could never keep God's law, nor could they ever sacrifice enough. The Ceremonial Law thus served like an arrow which pointed to the Messiah yet to come, "until Shiloh come". So the Bible says of Jesus, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

MUST an adopted son keep any of God's laws for their salvation? The answer is NO....not at all! Christ has fulfilled and kept the law for you and me, and we are adopted by His grace, even by our Baptism so that we were born again, born from above. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." We Christians thus look at God's law in a different way, a different light....Jesus by love has kept all of God's commandments for me and He has saved me, a lost and condemned creature. Our strength then and desire to keep God's commandments flows from His continual love for us, which cannot fail. We are not the shadow of Christ nor do we live in the shadows, but the Holy Christian Church....we are *the Body of Christ*, and Christ our Head gives us strength, from which all the body by joints and bands have nourishment....we are knit together, our works of love increase by God's love.

Knowing this, we let God's Word be the only infallible guide in our life, so we do not chase after dreams, visions or angels. Given the upcoming date of Halloween then, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." It is very appealing to the pride of man to think he has discovered a new revelation, which God has revealed specially to him. Many people therefore become involved with the occult, namely witchcraft, Satanism, chasing after the souls of the dead, etc., because their fleshly mind is despising the simple Word of God. But every Christian should have nothing to do with mediums, witches, enchanters, or the occult, for God's Word says in Deuteronomy 18, "There shall not be found among you *any one* that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, *or* that useth divination, *or* an observer of times, *or* an enchanter, *or* a witch, *Or* a charmer, *or* a consulter with familiar spirits, *or* a wizard, *or* a necromancer. For all that do these things *are* an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee." Keep this passage in in mind regarding all the evil that is glorified at Halloween.

"Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as though living in the world are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not, taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using, after the commandments and doctrines of men." When a false

teacher thus tells you that this work or that work is pleasing to God, and you **MUST DO THIS THING IF YOU ARE TO BE SAVED**, do not follow after that rudiment, that worldly teaching....touch not, taste not, handle not, for the body is of Christ, your life comes from Christ! If you go down that dark path which focuses more on the law of God and His commandments, more than the grace of God which saves you from such commandments, your heart which is free in Christ, will again be bound and imprisoned by the law. God's commandments set no one free. The law of God never says "Thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace." Jesus alone is the life of the Church, also the Savior of the Body, and only Jesus through His blood can say "Son be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace. When you the believer "go in peace", you live in the peace of the forgiveness of your sins. This causes you the wandering sheep, to stop wandering so that you look again at your Good Shepherd, who once gave His life for the sheep. To look upon Him with the eyes of faith is to know His Gospel erases the record of your sins. His Gospel washes you clean. His Gospel separates you from the lost sheep of this world, so you are adopted as God's own. Even now Jesus looks upon you with love, and you return His look with love. "We love Him because He first loved us."

Do not then dear Christian dear sheep, turn your eyes away from Him who has loved you with an everlasting love. God really and truly has forgiven you all sins, and faith alone is necessary for salvation. Do not then let the false teachers and preachers turn your heart away from this love of Jesus, so that you continually focus on God's law. Always begin first with the love Jesus has for you. His justification of your soul, and then loving Him you will have a beginning of good works, and you will want it never to end. The doing of God's will truly is a delight for believers, for anything Jesus says and wills for us, we are happy to do. "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ....Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law." Amen.

Now may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds and faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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