

Are We to Keep Both Covenants?

The New Covenant is often called the New Testament, and is rightly compared to the last will and testament of one departing from this life. "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth" (Hebrews 9:16–17). The Mosaic Law was thus in force only until the death of Christ. During all His lifetime on earth, Jesus lived as a Jew, but being full of the Spirit of God, He taught, exemplified, and instituted New Testament doctrine. When a will is made and duly authorized, it is not in force until the death of the maker. If he makes a new will, however, and dies, it is the latter will that is binding, and the first then has no legal force at all. Thus, when God in Christ brought a new will and sealed it with His own blood, it became binding, and the first then became of no legal status in His sight, despite the fact that it was "holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12). To try to keep both is to recognize neither the passing of the Old Law nor the legal force of the New.

Romans is quite strong in its wording. It compares a person who would be under two covenants to a woman who has two living husbands, declaring such to be an adulteress, she being married to another man. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become *dead to the law* by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead" (Romans 7:4). Being under two covenants would constitute adultery in the spiritual sense.

Some maintain that this refers to keeping the Ceremonial Law, not the Moral Law. The Scriptures make no such artificial division, the moral concepts of the Old Law being superseded by those of the New, just as the ceremonies are also done away. We are to be "dead" to the Law. (Romans 7:1–4). But what law? The Ceremonial Law only? Notice the context: the discourse is continuous, and verse 7 identifies this Law with the Ten Commandments: "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, *Thou shalt not covet*."

Again, in 2 Corinthians 3 where the glory of the Old Covenant is described as being "done away," what portion of the Law is being referred to? Is it not that which was "written and graven in stones," associated with the glory emanating from the countenance of Moses on Mount Sinai? This again is unmistakably the Ten Commandments, indicating that the entire Old Covenant is included in that which is superseded by the New.

Most important is the fact that this New Will of God is associated with the experience of regeneration. Without it, even the Old Covenant, which was on a lower spiritual plane, was not kept. It was "a yoke... which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts 15:10). But the blood of Christ cleanses the conscience, which the Law could not do (Hebrews 9:13, 14). Our entire viewpoint is altered: the mind is renewed (Titus 3:5) as we are transformed by the Spirit of Christ. In this sense, the New Law is "written in our hearts," and we are empowered to keep the everlasting covenant to the glory of Christ our Saviour.

The tragedy of Christendom (including Fundamentalism) is that two thousand years after the birth of Christ, it still does not realize that the Covenant of Christ is complete and perfect without the Old Law,

which has passed away. Its haziness on the two covenants is responsible for much of the glaring inconsistency that robs us of the power and testimony of the New Covenant. In any real crisis, the carnal and the worldly will thumb back to the Old Testament to justify their position on carnal warfare, divorce and remarriage, worldly adornment and attire, and conformity to the world in general. This is the challenge that we meet today. May we have a true church—a New Testament body of believers.

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