

Communion

Deliverance From The Other Law

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Most of us grew up in Evangelical, Pentecostal or other church traditions, and some of us didn't grow up in any kind of church context at all. If we've come from a church tradition, we will have grown up with a gospel that gave us no understanding that we have another law and self-righteous iniquity within us (Romans 7:21-23). We will have related to Jesus' death as a historic event that meant the Old Covenant no longer applied to us and therefore we had no obligation to keep it. We thought we had the New Covenant by believing what we were taught - that Jesus died for our sins.

Jesus *did* die for our sins, but we forgot, or didn't know, that He was also bruised for our iniquities. We didn't even know what our iniquities were.

What we didn't know

We didn't know that we were just like Israel, self-righteously proclaiming, 'All You have said we will do.' (Exodus 19:8). We thought that Christianity was about believing the right things. After all, the church fathers spent centuries, convened councils, engaged in controversies and wrote creeds trying to define what Christians should believe. Since believing the right thing was their focus, that's what everyone thought being a Christian was - believing the right things, saying the right creeds and agreeing with statements of truth; hearing and reading the Scriptures; studying catechisms; and following the church traditions we grew up with.

We forgot, or didn't know, that eternal life, the evidence of that life, is in the fruit coming forth from the word, not in our holding on to the seed of the word. We thought, self-righteously, that in believing the word, in having the seed of the word, we had the life.

But now, many of us are finding joy in being daily delivered from this self-righteousness.

The Lord is recovering us

Thankfully, the Lord *is* delivering us. In the fear of the Lord we are now beginning to speak to one another, as the book of Malachi records:

"...those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written

before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name.” (Malachi 3:16)

The fear of the Lord causes us to relate and speak to one another. This is an action of faith.

“I believed, therefore I spoke.” (2 Corinthians 4:13)

As we speak in this way to one another, the Lord is writing a book of remembrance among us, and we are being recovered to be the people He named us to be. What a joy to know that we are being recovered, and that this is His activity and not our own!

Alternatively, when we don't fear the Lord, we draw back.

How will we respond?

Broadly speaking, we can respond at any time in one of three ways to this other law and iniquity that is in us: we can be unaware of it (we didn't know what we didn't know); we can deny its existence ('I don't believe that'); or we can follow the narrow way of the cross. However, only one of these responses leads to eternal life - the way of the cross, just as Jesus said:

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Matthew 7:13-14)

Our iniquity leads us to believe there is some other way that is not quite as narrow as Jesus said. Because we are uncomfortable with the idea that Jesus sometimes excludes people, we deny His truth and look for some other way that will set free and include everyone in the end, and so give us the happy outcome we want.

But the Lord desires every person among us to understand and be set free from our iniquitous self-righteousness so that we are free indeed.

Follow the pattern shown

Paul makes a wonderful statement in his letter to the Philippians, describing his own former self-righteousness that now means nothing to him (Philippians 3:7-10). Instead, he walks and urges us to walk according to this pattern:

“...always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” (2 Corinthians 4:10-11)

“Brethren, join in following my example and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us”. (Philippians 3:17)

The pattern that Jesus laid down and calls us all to join is His dying and His living, carried about in our bodies, so that we can become a pattern for others to follow. That's wonderful!

The Gospel has to be proclaimed to all of us by those, like Paul, who are carrying about in their bodies the dying and the living of Jesus, demonstrating that being a Christian is more than just believing that Jesus died for our sins. Believing He died for our sins gets us started, gets us 'a ticket in the game', but we have a problem when we bring the rules and plays of an old game into a new game with us. When you've only ever played tennis then start playing squash, you'll find that even though both games have a racket and a ball, you can't hit the ball properly and can only wonder what's happening when you line the ball up as you used to only to have it sail straight past you.

We don't know what we don't know. We start off knowing and believing, 'Jesus died for my

sins. This is the Gospel'. Of course, that's a wonderful truth when it's illuminated to us. But we *also* need to be delivered from our iniquity.

What *is* our iniquity? Well, if we follow the pattern of the cross in other brethren, speaking with them in the fear of the Lord so that a book of remembrance can be written, we will begin to recognise our iniquity. If we don't follow this pattern, and follow some independent pathway instead, like sitting at home with our Bibles and our historic or preferred interpretations, we will reap trouble.

This pattern began in the Apostles

The Apostle John also spoke of this pattern of the cross, shown and true in himself and in his brethren, when he wrote, 'What we've heard, seen, touched and handled we proclaim to you concerning the Word of Life. It's real; it's tangible. We have the fruit of it and we've modelled a pattern for you to follow. We're proclaiming it to you so that your joy may be full and that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.' (1 John 1:1-3)

When we look at *this* pattern, we find that the Apostles were the first to suffer for the word, just as Jesus told the disciple Ananias: 'I'm going to talk to Paul and tell him how much he's going to suffer for My word so he can carry My dying and living about in his body and the Gospel will be true in him and can become true in those to whom I send him.' This is the way the Gospel works.

But we can unknowingly walk as enemies of the cross. Paul wrote:

"For many walk of whom I have often told you and now tell you even weeping that they are enemies of the cross of Christ". (Philippians 3:18)

He was speaking about *believers* who were enemies of the cross. When we read this Scripture, we protest, 'That couldn't possibly be us!' The problem is, it could absolutely be us.

Iniquity opposes the cross

Look at Peter, for example. When Jesus' blood began to flow from His wounds as His pathway to the cross began, Peter opposed the cross. He was an enemy of the way, and not a friend. Neither was he a friend of Jesus when his testing came.

What caused him to be an enemy of the cross? His self-righteous position. Peter had been illuminated by the Father to see who the Christ was (Matthew 16:17). He had been on the Mount of Transfiguration with Christ and had seen Elijah and Moses (Matthew 17:1-3). He had seen and walked with Jesus. He had much to be self-righteous about, but he opposed and was an enemy of the cross (Matthew 16:21-23). This is iniquity.

Isaiah prophesied that Jesus was to be bruised for our iniquity (Isaiah 53:5). It was only when Peter saw the bruised face of Jesus that he began to be delivered from his iniquity (Luke 22:61-62). It was then that, in the fear of the Lord, he stopped opposing the cross.

Peter began to become a friend of Christ and of the cross when he stopped standing on the ground of his own self-righteousness, which was iniquity, and looked into the face of Christ. Then grace came to him, and he realized that he didn't love *anybody*. He couldn't love with the love of God.

The believers Paul described in Philippians as enemies of the cross of Christ were people like you and me. Either, like Peter, they didn't know there was another law within them (Romans 7:21-23), or they'd heard the word and responded in unbelief: 'I don't believe that. I was delivered

when Christ died for my sins. All this 'other law' stuff is just using up oxygen and I'm not bothering with it.'

Hopefully, we are all in Peter's camp, simply not knowing what we don't know. But Jesus is praying for us and crying out on our behalf, 'Father, forgive them, for *they don't know what they're doing*' (Luke 23:34). As the Lord shows us this very thing, we're now saying to Him, 'Lord, I didn't know. I've been dumb. I didn't know about my own self-righteousness.' But if, when we *do* know, we resist or just don't care, there will be no help for us at all. Nothing can help anyone in that condition.

Let's not be enemies of the cross but rather, as Peter was, let's be entreated by the love of God back to His love. Otherwise, we will be among those Paul identifies:

"...they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite" (Philippians 3:19)

Let our appetite be for the will of God

It sounds very extreme to say that the god of a Christian person who goes to church is their appetite, doesn't it? How could that be? They're going to church; they're trying very hard to keep the Covenant; they're working hard; they're not committing this or that sin. But when the rich young ruler told Jesus, 'I've kept all God's laws and haven't committed the sins described in His law', Jesus replied, 'One thing you lack. You don't get it. You think you're good.' (Mark 10:17-22). It was the same for Peter.

When Paul writes that people's 'god is their appetite', he means that their appetite is for the fulfilment of their own will. This can be *our* appetite too, when we believe Jesus died for our sins and that God has a plan for our life that we are going to fulfil. This makes us really

dangerous, like the Apostle Paul, who began as an enemy of the cross, just as Peter had.

In contrast, Jesus said that *His* food was to do the will of Him who sent Him (John 4:34). *His* appetite was for the will of the Father in Heaven, and His food was to do that will, not His own. In Gethsemane, that was Jesus' prayer on our behalf:

"...not My will, but Yours be done." (Luke 22:42)

After Christ had been crucified, Paul took the Scriptures 'under his arm' and ran around persecuting anybody who believed in the cross of Christ. Without a care He set about ripping believers out of their houses and sending them to their deaths. There was no love in him. He happily watched Stephen stoned to death (Acts 7:54-60). He believed the Old Testament Scriptures and he prayed every day, but there was no fruit of God's life in him. He was cut off from God but believed in his own self-righteousness.

No wonder Paul later said, referring back to all his religious achievements, his intellect, his learning, his grace gifts in the body of Christ, *everything*: 'All of it is now nothing to me. It's rubbish. Whatever was gain to me I now count as fit only for the dung heap, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him.' (Philippians 3:7-9)

Can you hear what Paul is saying? 'My self-righteousness will never again drive and control me; my appetite for good, the good that I want, will no longer be my god. Jesus is my Lord'.

Jesus prayed for us, 'Father, not My will, but Yours be done' (Luke 22:42) so that our god would not be our appetite. If we read and believe His prayer as historically true, yet are not joined to the fellowship of His dying and His living, and to His cross as a real cross taking place now in our lives as we suffer with Him, we

will not receive His blood that would otherwise be flowing from Him to us. Then, independent of Him, we'll only minister to the appetite of what we want from His cross.

We didn't know we were like this! But the fellowship of God's present word to us, His present truth, is causing us to know that we *are* like this. And God is delivering us from it. This deliverance is marvellous, and is becoming our testimony.

The mechanism of shame

When anyone's appetite is their god, Paul warns:

"...[their] glory is in their shame." (Philippians 3:19)

The shame in which the Scripture says we glory is all the things we do that *result* from shame, and it's from this shame and its fruit that God wants to deliver us. But in our self-righteous condition, instead of being set free from shameful ways, we boast about those very things.

Can you see how disastrous that is, when God is wanting and working to set us free from living like this? He wants to set us free from all need to compete, to prove ourselves, to be strong and to be right. Wanting to be right is a very strong appetite, and standing on the conviction of being right produces some very bad outcomes. 'It's only because I'm right that I'm being unkind to you. If I wasn't right, I wouldn't be doing or saying these things to you.' That kind of logic is typically how human beings work and think, justifying the means by the end. But is it *really* OK to be unkind if we're right?

God is delivering us from this. To remain in this condition is to be carnal, and mere men fighting and splitting into factions until no fellowship

remains. Thank the Lord He is delivering us, and that it is *He* who delivers and calls us to stop trying in vain to conquer our own shame-based 'goodness' by our own shame-based 'goodness'.

When our glory is in our shame, we are believing in our own goodness. The very thing God wants to deliver us from - what we believe is good - is the shame we glory in, like the emperor walking around with the crown on his head, utterly naked and the only person who doesn't know it. His glory is in his shame. All anyone wants to do is help the poor guy and all he does is posture that he's the emperor. That's how silly we are!

We think we've got the prize because it's within reach, we can see it and we believe it. And because we believe it, we think we can do it, just like the children of Israel, who said, 'All that You've said we'll do.' (Exodus 19:8)

Setting our minds

In our self-righteousness, our minds are set on earthly things, like the enemies of the cross about whom Paul warned the Philippians. He continued his description of them by saying:

"Their mind is set on earthly things" (Philippians 3:18-19)

But the Scriptures exhort us not to set our minds there but on things above (Colossians 3:2). This is not some sort of impractical aim to hover about above the earth thinking nice thoughts. That's what Eastern spirituality tries to do, and it's false religion. Setting our minds on things above and not being drawn by earthly things means that we've joined the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, and in that fellowship, His blood is flowing to us. His cross is active, and when we join Him there, the earthly things going on in our lives are the

material for His spiritual work in us of cutting our other law out of our lives.

Joined to Him, we don't obsess over difficulties or over what's going wrong in our lives or in the world around us. Otherwise, we so easily set our minds on earthly things, seeking earthly solutions, whether in the political realm, our personal lives, church life, our workplaces or anywhere else. Political activism is an obvious example, but there are many other ways in which our minds can be set on earthly 'solutions'. Someone might have wronged you, so you set your mind on reaching an outcome that would render justice to you. Or you may perceive a real or imagined threat, so you set your course to neutralise the threat. You may feel inadequate in some way or upset over something, so you shrink back and begin to withdraw from fellowship to avoid the problem. All these responses show a mind that is set on something earthly and a gaze that is away from the face of Christ.

Peter's gaze and mind has been set away from Christ so that all he could see were the earthly things happening around him, the things that were in front of his face. He became a mere man, driven by the stimuli of his senses. Being in this state is referred to in Scripture as being driven by our appetites. If you or I live that way long enough, certain appetites will take over and we will end up losing control of ourselves. That is a leprous and terrible condition, in which a person blunders around doing things without any sensitivity to the things they're doing, not able to hear from anyone, deceived and defending themselves, insisting, 'No, I didn't do *that*. I didn't *feel* that'.

Now, we could all say that at certain points in our lives the Lord has had to say to us, 'You didn't know what you were doing, but here is the word for you. Now turn! Repent.' What is repentance? Not some abject beat up on

yourself. Repentance is believing the word the Lord speaks *today*, and turning with the word towards the face of Christ; to the direction and obedience of the word. The Apostle John had to turn when he heard the voice that was speaking to him (Revelation 1:12), and when *we* turn, the word takes us with it because the capacity of God is in the word. Faith comes by hearing the word, and as you and I hear and turn, the faith of God is at work in us and we *can* obey. Praise God!

Our battle is with our iniquitous other law

When I was growing up, I didn't know this, although I did know that mere chronology from the Old Covenant to the New didn't add up to deliverance; that just because we were born after Christ didn't mean the Old Covenant was no longer relevant to us. In our day, just as in the Israelites' day, any of us could use the Bible in the same iniquitous way that the Israelites used the Old Testament Scriptures. Indeed, most of the New Testament epistles address issues of iniquity in the church rather than trying to convince people that Jesus died for their sins.

The problem in the church, and the difficulty for the Christian, is not in disbelieving that Jesus died for our sins. The problem is dealing with the other law that is in every one of us; dealing with the facts that iniquity and carnality are our default and we don't know how to love, even though we think otherwise.

The Corinthian church had been hijacked to a false form of love that became amoral (1 Corinthians 5). In the name of loving people, they sanctioned things that were totally and utterly immoral. Insisting that as Christians we have to 'love' everyone can be amoral even while calling itself Christian, and can result in worse things than anything the world can produce. Such 'love' abuses even the idea of God's love,

His forgiveness and His grace, and can produce behaviour that is worse than the lowest standards that are in the world. This is iniquity. It is darkness. God rescue us from *that!* Lord, save us.

Paul knew what he could become. He knew what was in him. He knew his tendency towards pride (2 Corinthians 12:6-8). He knew that knowledge puffs up (1 Corinthians 8:1), and he knew that he had to keep being delivered over to the death of Christ so that the life of Christ could then be found in him (2 Corinthians 4:8-12).

When we were baptised into Christ's death, we were joined to the circumcision of Christ (Colossians 2:11). This is where we can be continually delivered from the iniquitous other law that is in us and keeps deceiving us, tripping us up. We have been baptised, and in Christ we have been raised and seated in Him in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). Our citizenship is now in heaven (Philippians 3:20).

It may be that you believe and need no convincing that the other law in you is real and strong - so strong that you're completely bound by it, think you're never going to be able to deal with it and are losing heart. You may believe the Lord circumcises hearts, but you can't see it happening in *your* heart. You think it *can't* happen in you. That's a terrible feeling, isn't it? It's also evidence that you're still, in some sense, trying very hard in yourself to do what only God can do.

Come back to the fact that God has crafted sufferings for you, today, tomorrow and the next day, which become your opportunity to be delivered if you hold fast to Him in those difficult times and events. He crafts them for you. They are tailor-made to deliver you. Just keep yourself in the love of God and don't react. Acknowledge the Lord in all these things, and you will hear what He is saying to you.

If we rise up under and against these pressures, we come under and are driven by our other law. We will excuse what or whom we think worth excusing and accuse or oppose what or whom we think needs accusing or opposing. Sometimes, it's ourselves we excuse or accuse. Sometimes, it's other people. We complain, and the more severe the issue we are objecting to, the louder we complain. We gossip, and the less we are coping with what's happening, the more we gossip, as if finding someone who agrees us and joins us in putting someone else down will be therapeutic and make us feel better. If we kick against the pressures God is bringing to bear on us, we will seek compensating indulgences that we won't always recognise as such, particularly if our indulgence feels 'good' and not 'bad'. But always, in them all, we will draw back in unbelief from fellowship and relationship.

The Scriptures warn us:

"Now the righteous shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." (Hebrews 10:38)

If you are feeling discouraged, and don't feel the Lord can deliver you or set you free, then clearly, one of the things you need to be set free from is unbelief in the word of God! So turn again in repentance, look into the face of Christ and keep looking there. That's our discipline - just to stay there. For when the sufferings that the Father has crafted for us come, there we are, with Christ, being chastened as the Father's sons. He is making us legitimate (Hebrews 12:8).

The Father is qualifying us through these difficulties so that we know, and bring forth, the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Colossians 1:12; Hebrews 12:11). *This* righteousness is not a self-justified position from which we state our beliefs. It's our living testimony that is part of

the testimony of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of Prophecy is the testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 19:10) and the whole direction of the church, and it is into *His* testimony that we are being caught up by the Father's chastening hand. Hallelujah!

Reconciliation, and how much more!

When we start off as Christians we are a bit confused. We know that although we used to be God's enemies we've been reconciled to Him:

"For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son..." (Romans 5:10a)

We know we're no longer *God's* enemies, and so we think that must also mean we're not enemies of the cross of Christ. In Peter's mind, when he opposed the cross of Christ, he wasn't at war with God. He was just at war with the way God was doing things. But won't that put anyone at war with God in the end? Peter had been reconciled to God and was no longer His enemy, but he was still an enemy of the cross. (If enmity to the cross of Christ runs far enough, it runs to the spirit of antichrist, and that spirit always starts in the church and goes out from it. Those who go out from the church may describe their motivation in many other ways but enmity to the cross is always at the root).

We, having first been God's enemies, were reconciled to Him by the Son. What we didn't know at first was the 'much more' of our salvation:

"...much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:10b).

Having been reconciled, how much more will we be saved by the life of God's Son! The life of the Son is in His blood, and His blood is available to us in the fellowship of His offering.

"And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."
(Romans 5:11).

Our reconciliation to God is absolutely wonderful, and then, in the fellowship of His offering, we are also saved by His life. Hallelujah!

Can you see how we miss that there are two aspects of our salvation? Reconciliation to God *and* a salvation that is 'much more'? It is much more important, today, that we know what God is working in us, today, than that we only know Jesus died for our sins. It is so important for us to know this because His work in us, today, delivers us from our iniquity, today. In the fellowship of Christ's offering, the context He has provided for us, we are saved by His life that is in His blood. Hallelujah!

Paul speaks of the blood of the cross of Christ, shed all the way from Gethsemane to Calvary, in this way:

"For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death..." (Colossians 1:19-22)

Our reconciliation to God is not just through *Christ's* death. It's through *our* death in Him, in His fleshly body. How is it that we can touch His fleshly body? Only by God miraculously joining us to the fellowship of the offering of Christ's fleshly body, today, by the Holy Spirit.

When you are suffering, you can, through faith, join Christ right there. The miracle can happen, at the very moment of your suffering, joining you to the dying of Christ for you. As you turn

to Jesus in what you are suffering, whether trouble or grief of any kind, Jesus is right there, saying, 'Don't take it personally. It's being done to Me. It's happening to me.' (John 15:20). Can you see? In joining Him, your suffering at any point in time is carried in His fleshly body.

Why?

"... in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach - if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard..."
(Colossians 1:22-23)

The hope of the Gospel that you have heard is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). It is you in Jesus and Jesus in you, formed in you in fellowship with Him in His offering. That is *much* more than believing Jesus died for your sins!

"...the gospel that you have heard was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister. Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake...."
(Colossians 1:23-24)

Can you see what Paul is saying? He was suffering now for the sake of his brethren in Christ, a purpose well beyond his own sonship. He was now helping others. This is the Gospel that the Lord is delivering us to and that the Scriptures teach.

"... and in my flesh I do my share, on behalf of His body which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions..." (Colossians 1:24)

Paul's afflictions were all in the fellowship of Christ's offering. This man was truly loving his brethren! And so that we can love with the love of God, the Lord is delivering us from all the activity of the other law that is within us. This deliverance is where our fellowship in the word is at present. Can we be of one heart in this, and

encourage one another? If you are discouraged, can you be encouraged today that the Lord is surely going to achieve this in you if you hold fast and let Him keep firmly establishing you. Let's walk together in this faith, in this heart, and not let His word be snatched away.
