

VICTORY OVER SIN – The Superiority of the New Covenant (Part-five of a sixteen-part study)

As promised, this segment will be devoted to the New Covenant and its many benefits for the Christian during the Church Age. In 2 Corinthians 3, the apostle Paul makes it unmistakably clear that the New Covenant has not only replaced the Mosaic Covenant, but that the New is superior to the Old. Why? The primary reason is revealed throughout the chapter; where in vv3,6,8,17-18; Paul speaks of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit within the believer. At the very moment of our conversion to Christ, the Spirit of God not only regenerates us by creating a new nature in each of us (Titus 3:5-7); He also takes up permanent residence within us for the remainder of our earthly lives (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 1:13-14). His presence within us is the key resource for the daily empowerment of our new nature in achieving victory over sin. The Spirit's presence moves us in the direction of a lifestyle that is pleasing to God; while the sin nature opposes His efforts in sanctifying us at every turn (Galatians 5:16-17).

The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit within the believer under the New Covenant creates an additional benefit for the Christian. We are told in Jeremiah 31:31-33, that under this new and better covenant, the law of God will be written on our hearts. This promise was initially made for the nation of Israel. However, due to the nation's rejection of Jesus Christ as her Messiah, the New Covenant has now been ratified on behalf of a new group of people: Jews and Gentiles together as members of the body of Christ, His Church (Hebrews 8:7-13; Ephesians 2:11-22). How is it possible that the law of God can be internalized within the believer? We are told in Ezekiel 36:26-27, that the agent who produces this change for the better is the Holy Spirit –

“Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”

This promise will one day be fulfilled on behalf of God's chosen theocratic people, the nation of Israel, when Jesus Christ returns, in order to establish God's Kingdom on earth. In the meantime, that promise is currently being fulfilled in God's new chosen people, Christ's Church. What this means practically, is that the law of God is no longer an “external enforcer,” as it was with the Old Covenant. Under the New Covenant, by means of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the law of God serves the purpose of being an “internal motivator” for every believer. It is also critically important to remember that those ordinances which have often been categorized as the civil, ceremonial and dietary laws of the Old, are no longer relevant under the New. What is applicable under this new and better covenant, are the “moral” aspects of the Mosaic Law, since they are a reflection of the unchanging character of God. Paul confirms this distinction in 1 Corinthians 9:21 and Galatians 6:2, describing the New Covenant as “the law of Christ,” governing the behavior of every believer.

This brings us to an additional benefit of the New, making it superior to the Old. The law of God has not only been internalized, being written upon our hearts by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit; but the law of God has also been *simplified and summarized* under this new and better arrangement. The ceremonies have been reduced down to two: baptism and the Lord's Supper. The dietary regulations are reduced to one: don't become guilty of gluttony. The civil law of God for the Christian requires submission to governing authority by simply being the best law-abiding citizens that we can be. As if that simplification weren't beneficial enough, we are told by both our Savior and His apostle, Paul, that the law of God has been summarized into one singular concept: LOVE. We are not only to love God and love people (Matthew 22:35-40), but to love one another as Christ loves us (John 13:34-35). Love is the fulfillment of God's law (Romans 13:8-10).