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After describing the fruit of the Spirit, Paul observed that “against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:23). The law had come as a result of God’s covenant with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt. As such, the law served as the standard of behavior for the nation. It revealed the righteous will of God, yet it did not make people righteous. Instead, it supplied a basis for determining when people had sinned and how they should be punished. The law condemned many to death, but it did not grant life to anyone.

While the law of Moses might control behavior through threat of punishment, it could not produce love, joy, peace, and the other character traits of God in the people. The law could only do so much, and it does not stand against what goes beyond it. The freedom of the Spirit, on the other hand, does not invalidate the truth of the law. The covenant of the law simply served to prepare the world for a new and more glorious covenant (Gal. 3:24).

Earlier in the Book of Galatians, Paul had posed the question, “Is the law then against the promises of God?” (3:21). The transformation of people which the law could not produce came as the result of promises God had made through the prophets. The transformation that could not come through obedience to the law now comes through faith in Jesus Christ. While the covenant of the law provided a basis for relationship with God, it did not provide a means of justification and transformation. To achieve this end, God gave the promise of a new covenant to His people.

Apart from the new covenant, one strives in vain to produce the fruit of the Spirit. Apart from the new covenant, people could not become like Christ. God delivered the promise clearly through Jeremiah who foretold:

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:31-34).

The prophet Ezekiel brought the word that God would “put a new spirit within” His people (Ezek. 11:19). While the old covenant served to expose sin, the new covenant would serve to forgive sin and change the sinful heart.

The Lord's Supper

Throughout this examination of the fruit of the Spirit, we have referred to the Last Supper when Jesus spoke of many of these qualities to His disciples. Before saying anything about the quality of life they could expect through abiding in Him, however, He declared to them the new covenant. For centuries, the Jewish people had celebrated the Passover. They had taken the unleaven bread and the cup from generation to generation as they told their children the story of how God redeemed Israel from bondage. On that night, however, Jesus interrupted a thousand years or more of tradition. This time, the meal meant more than it ever had meant before.

In his Gospel, Luke recorded what happened as they observed the Passover:

He took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And likewise the cup after supper, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the old covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:19-20).

In Matthew's account of the event, he includes that the blood “is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt. 26:28).

Jesus gave new meaning to the meal. He came to bring the new

covenant. The Passover meal which had symbolized the old covenant of Israel now formed a bridge for understanding the new covenant. Instead of discarding the Passover meal as no longer significant, the followers of Jesus clung to the meal as a symbolic explanation of what Christ had done. When He said, "Do this in remembrance of me," He did not mean in a sentimental way not to forget Him when He was gone. He meant for us to observe the meal in order to keep fresh the meaning of the new covenant. He meant for us to remember constantly the magnitude of the salvation that came as a result of the new covenant.

Freedom from Death

The Passover meal recalled the events surrounding the Exodus from Egypt. The name recalled the final crisis which prompted Pharaoh to release the enslaved children of Israel. Nine times God had sent plagues upon Egypt, and nine times Pharaoh had resisted the command to let Israel go. Finally, God announced the final plague. He would pass through the land of Egypt and slay the firstborn child in every house from the palace of Pharaoh to the hut of the lowliest Egyptian slave. In issuing the threat, however, God provided a way of escape. If anyone would slay a lamb and place its blood on the lintel and door posts of the house, then God would "pass over" that house and no harm would come (Ex. 12:23).

God was not allergic to the lamb's blood. It contained no magic power, nor did it in anyway serve to appease God. It demonstrated that people believed what God said and trusted Him to save them. All those who believed God acted on their faith, and death passed over their homes. A parallel experience occurred during the wilderness wandering when Israel sinned against God. God caused serpents to bite the people, which resulted in sickness and death. Again, however, God provided a way of escape. He instructed Moses to fashion a bronze serpent and set it on a pole in the middle of the camp. Anyone who looked at the bronze serpent would live. Once again, the serpent had no magical power. In fact, King Hezekiah destroyed the serpent years later when the people of Judah began to worship it as magical (2 Kings 18:4). God healed the people because they acted on their faith. They believed what He said. Jesus used the example of the serpent to illustrate how faith operates in salvation: "As Moses lifted up the ser-

pent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). Both the plague of death of the firstborn and the episode of the serpents in the wilderness demonstrate the gravity of the human situation. The hovering nearness of calamity reinforces the need for a Savior.

In the Passover meal, the Jewish people recall how death passed over them in a historical situation at one time and place long ago. In the Lord's Supper, however, Christ promises that death will pass over not just temporarily but for all time for all who look to Him in faith. The blood of Christ replaces the blood of the paschal lamb placed on the lintels and door posts. Paul referred to Christ as our paschal lamb (1 Cor. 15:1-7). In his Gospel, John described the crucifixion as coinciding with the prescribed time for the "Preparation of the Passover" (John 19:14). As Jesus went to His death, the priests began killing the Passover lambs.

Freedom from Sin

In the Exodus, God not only saved some from death, but He also saved the nation from bondage to Pharaoh. In the Lord's Supper, Christ promises freedom from the bondage of sin as well as the bondage of death. The Passover celebrated liberation for people held as slaves. Paul spoke of Christians in the same terms in Galatians a few verses before describing the fruit of the Spirit. He declared: "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1). The Passover recalls that God freed a particular people in a particular place and time from a particular slavery. In the Lord's Supper, Christ offers to free people in all places and times from the slavery of sin and death if they will have faith in Him.

While the Exodus changed the physical condition of Israel, it did not change the spiritual condition of the people. They left Egypt free from the yoke of slavery, but the ensuing events in their journey to the Promised Land indicate that they remained enslaved to sin. The covenant of the law did not release them from that bondage. The law did not make them holy, nor did it justify them before God. In fact, the law increased the guilt of sin because it abolished the excuse of ignorance: "What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should

not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet' " (Rom. 7:7). But under the new covenant, salvation means freedom from the reign of sin, "For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace" (Rom. 6:14).

Freedom from the Law

God gave the law as holy and righteous (Rom. 3:21; 7:12). Because of the sinful nature of the human race, however, it served to accuse rather than excuse. With pathos, the Scripture explains: "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them' " (Gal. 3:10). By giving knowledge of sin and making people accountable for their sins, the law served as an overwhelming burden. As long as the covenant of the law stood in effect, it kept people bound to the curse of their own sin.

When Christ came, however, He fulfilled the law in all its demands and thus accomplished its purpose. Once fulfilled, it could be replaced by a superior covenant. Jesus Himself explained that He had not "come to abolish the law and the prophets;" instead, He came "to fulfil them" (Matt. 5:17). Jesus did not appear suddenly on the stage of history and announce that He intended to start a new religion. He came as the climax of the religion of Israel. He constantly reminded His followers that He stood in continuity with the faith of Israel, not as a rival to it. The New Testament frequently refers to Christ's coming as a fulfillment, and Jesus insisted that He came in accordance with the promises of God (Luke 24:27; Acts 2:22-36; 7:2-53; and 13:17-41).

The new covenant frees those who have faith in Christ from the legal demands and penalties of the law. Christ accomplished this liberation on the cross: "having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:14). Thus, Christ not only frees from sin and death under the new covenant but also from the just penalties of the old covenant. The Lord's Supper symbolizes not only the freedom Christ brings, but also the manner in which He brought the freedom. A substitution took place: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us . . . that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:13-14). Through His death, Christ fulfilled the letter of

the law by substituting Himself for the guilty parties. Settling the requirements of the law once and for all, He opened the way for the new covenant.

Christ ended the curse of the law by assuming the curse. Salvation came through the plan and initiative of God. Only by direct intervention of God could the continual cause/effect law of sin and death be broken:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:2-4).

Jesus reflected this mission to fulfill the law when He came to John for baptism. John balked, realizing his own unworthiness to baptize Jesus, but Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15).

Redemption

By virtue of His death, Christ became the Redeemer. In the Old Testament, the redeemer served as a mediator or stood in on behalf of the next of kin. The redeemer vindicated, avenged, or fulfilled the obligations of kinsmen powerless to help themselves. Boaz obtained the right of redemption in the case of the estate of Elimelech. As redeemer, Boaz had the first right to purchase the property to keep it in the family, but he also incurred the obligation to marry Ruth so that the dead husband would have an heir (Ruth 4:1-10). Job longed for a Redeemer to stand between him and God to justify him (Job 19:25). In the case of the Passover, it recalled when God declared Himself the Redeemer of Israel. Since Israel could not free herself from bondage, God came as a stand in, as the next of kin: "Say therefore to the people of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment" (Ex. 6:6). As Redeemer, God fought against Pharaoh as the substitute for Israel, too weak to fight her own battle.

As Redeemer of the world, Christ stood in our place with respect to

the law, sin, and death. As Redeemer, He fulfilled all obligations to the law with respect to sin and death. The law had not brought death. Sin had brought death, but the law brought the knowledge of the relationship between sin and death. As Redeemer, Jesus took upon Himself the sin and death of the ones He loved as next of kin: "Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant" (Heb. 9:15). Hebrews stresses that Christ came into the world "so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one" (Heb. 2:9). As Redeemer, Christ died as a substitute.

The idea of the substitute permeated the old covenant. The yearly observance of the Passover taught the concept. When the Lord commanded Moses and the Israelites to keep the Passover every year, He commanded that they should set apart all the firstborn for a sacrifice to God as a memorial. The commandment extended to all animals and people! With the commandment, however, came the provision for redemption. Though the firstborn children stood consigned to death as a sacrifice of thanksgiving, God also ordered that they be redeemed: "All the firstlings of your cattle that are males shall be the Lord's. Every firstling of an ass you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every first-born of man among your sons you shall redeem" (Ex. 13:12-13). While the old covenant served to condemn, it also had contained within it from its inception the means of deliverance by redemption. By implication, this concept suggested that a redeemer could take the place of those who stood accused under the law because of sin.

Forgiveness

The old covenant never offered forgiveness of sin in a complete and finished fashion. The old covenant provided for sin offerings, and the most solemn observance of Israel came on the annual Day of Atonement when the High Priest made sacrifice to God for the sins of Israel and himself (Lev. 16). Under the old covenant, sacrificial laws provided for an appropriate offering for every sin a person might commit. Every sin required an offering, and the fire of the altar remained kindled by the priests to carry out the unending ritual of sacrifice for the people who brought their offerings.

Because of the continual problem of sin, the people had the continuing necessity to seek forgiveness through the means provided under the law. The law itself demonstrated the inability of people to solve the problem of their own sin and the separation it caused between them and God. In the new covenant, however, Christ brought to an end the need for the perpetual offering of sacrifice:

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. . . . Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin (Heb. 10:12-14,18).

The death of Christ satisfied the demand of the law for a sacrifice. Religions all over the world have practiced continual sacrifice, but God put an end to sacrifices through Christ who offered Himself as a final sacrifice (Heb. 9:26). Unlike the goats and bulls sacrificed on the altars without their consent, Christ offered Himself—giving a profoundly ethical dimension to the new covenant.

More than satisfying the legal demand of the law with respect to sin, however, the death of Christ brought forgiveness of sin. Sin has a willful dimension to it of rebellion against God. It rightly incurs the wrath of God, but for the sake of Christ the redeeming Mediator, God offers "the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7). Salvation involves the deliverance from sins, but also, the forgiveness of sin on God's part which makes reconciliation possible: "He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13-14). Because justification comes through the redeeming blood of Christ, we are saved from the wrath of God (Rom. 5:9).

Paul made this point of forgiveness in comparison to the old covenant in the climax to his sermon in Antioch of Pisidia: "Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39). Peter concluded his great sermon on the Day of Pentecost with the same offer of forgiveness in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38). The Lord's Supper symbolizes the forgiveness that God

extended to all who would receive redemption as a gracious gift (Rom. 3:24-25a).

Cleansing

Christ accomplished what mere animal sacrifice could never do. The sacrifices could not make a change in the nature of people. Regardless of God's willingness to forgive sin, it persisted. The rituals of sacrifice and worship never flattered or enhanced God. He commanded them as a means of instructing Israel on the need for holiness (Gal. 3:24; 4:2-5).

The prophet Amos expressed God's attitude toward the ritual offerings of the nation:

"I hate, I despise your feasts,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
Even though you offer me your
burnt offerings and cereal offerings,
I will not accept them,
and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts
I will not look upon.
Take away from me the noise of your songs;
to the melody of your harps I will not listen.
But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an everflowing stream" (5:21-24).

The rituals of the old covenant accomplished a ceremonial purification or cleansing, but they did not affect the nature of people. They did not effect a change in character. God gave the new covenant to go beyond what the old covenant had done. Instead of treating the outward form of ceremonial purity, the new covenant attacks the inner problem of spiritual cleansing.

The old covenant forms an analogy for what Christ accomplished in terms of cleansing the inner person:

For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. 9:13-14).

The new covenant brings about a spiritual transformation just as God

had promised through the prophet Jeremiah. Sin is not simply a legal matter that implies forgiveness or punishment. It is a spiritual problem that implies cleansing or death. The new covenant ratified by the blood of Christ has a permanent and continuing affect for those who abide in Christ. Christ is the unblemished one, and we share His purity to the extent that we abide in Him. He cleanses us by His presence: "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). In the Book of Revelation, the vision of John sees Christ as the Lamb slain whose blood brings cleansing (Rev. 7:14).

Reconciliation

The old covenant provided for peace offerings. The constant state of sin with its rebellion required a constant effort to make peace with God. Under the old covenant, responsibility lay with the sinner to make the gesture of peace toward God, but under the new covenant, God took the initiative in making peace. From conception to execution, God took the initiative in the redemption of the world. Christ carried out the plan, not as an agent of God, but as God: "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:19-20). Christ literally accomplished the reconciliation in Himself.

By coming into the world and taking the form of a man, God brought together both His divine self and humanity. Jesus died as Son of God and Son of David. By His redemptive death, Christ extends this reconciliation to the very world that rebelled against God: "You, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death" (Col. 1:21-22). This reconciliation brings about more than the legal reconciliation that the peace offering brought under the old covenant. The offering brought only a temporary, uneasy peace until sin renewed the rebellion again. But under the new covenant, God makes reconciliation based on the change He makes in people:

Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to him-

self, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:17-19).

Those who have faith in Christ participate in His life and undergo the transformation that accompanies reconciliation to God. The Lord's Supper symbolizes this participation through the eating and drinking (1 Cor. 10:16).

Ransom

Freedom, redemption, forgiveness, cleansing, and reconciliation come at a great cost. When the Bible speaks of the ransom, it refers to the cost. Under the law of the old covenant, everything had a value for determining restitution. If someone stole an ox or a sheep and sold it or killed it, he had to restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep. If, on the other hand, he had no means to make restitution, he would be sold into slavery. The idea of making things right permeated the law, but how does one make restitution for sin which, despite its physical manifestations, is essentially a spiritual matter? The plight of humanity is that we have no resources for correcting the damage of sin, either to others or to ourselves.

The law expounded a situation in which a man had an ox that had gored someone. The animal had gored in the past, but the man took no steps to confine the animal. Under the law, the animal and the man stood under penalty of death. The law provided for redemption, however: "If a ransom is laid on him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is laid upon him" (Ex. 21:30). In this case, the ransom referred to the cost of redemption. The death of Christ served to redeem the world from all sin because His life had such surpassing worth to the Father. Because of His dynamic relationship to the Father, Christ can serve as Mediator between God and humans. It cost Him His life to redeem the world, but He freely "gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:6).

Christ supplied the ransom for those who could not ransom their own lives:

Truly no man can ransom himself,
or give to God the price of his life,
for the ransom of his life is costly,
and can never suffice,

that he could continue to live on for ever, and never see the Pit (Ps. 49:7-9).

People do not have the spiritual resources to prolong their own lives. No physical thing of value can affect the eternal life of a person. Some other source of value had to be introduced to provide everlasting life. Only the Source of life could alter the quality and nature of human life.

The futility of the old covenant lay in its inability to alter the quality and nature of life. Regardless of how well people kept the law, they could not add enough value to their lives to ransom themselves from death. Under the new covenant, however, Christ offered His own life of perfection to infuse those who could not change themselves from mortal to immortal: "You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

The ransom refers to what it cost Christ to change our nature and our relationship to God. The change involved more than the legal demands of the old covenant; it involved the institution of a new basis for relationship to God. Under the old covenant, God made His abode in the holy of holies, but under the new covenant He would abide within each believer, bringing life and a change in nature that results in the fruit of the Spirit. Ransomed by God in Christ, we now belong to Him: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). The new covenant creates a new basis for obedience. Instead of living righteously to earn the acceptance of God, we are free to live righteously in gratitude for having been accepted.

Life Under the New Covenant

In His life, Christ fulfilled the purpose and meaning of the law. In His death, He fulfilled the legal demands of the law. He lived and died trusting the Father for what lay ahead, and this same faith forms the basis for entry into the new covenant. Faith forms the means of receiving the blessings of the new covenant characterized by the Spirit of God, rather than the letter of the law. His Spirit alive and at work

within Christians now makes growth and service possible, for "our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:5-6). Thus, the new covenant completes the freedom and salvation of which the old covenant was a foretaste.

Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me." The Lord's Supper is a constant reminder of what Christ did to make salvation in all of its dimensions possible. Through remembering with grateful hearts, we abide in Him and draw near to Him. Never taking for granted the blood of the new covenant, we grow by His grace. Paul described the living witness of those being transformed under the new covenant in his second Letter to the Corinthians:

You yourselves are our letter of recommendation; written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men; and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts (2 Cor. 3:2-3).

And against such there is no law.