

Revivals And Church History :: Standing Fast in Christian Liberty

Standing Fast in Christian Liberty - posted by RobertW (), on: 2005/3/7 20:44

Standing Fast In The Liberty Of The Gospel

By Robert Wurtz II

TEXT: Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (Galatians 5:1)

There are two equal and opposite dangers that those who have begun in the Spirit face. For the one it is the temptation to fall back into a legalistic version of Christianity that I shall term here as the "works" of the flesh and the other is to give way to the "sins" of flesh (GK. Sarx). Our passage warns us to "stand fast" in our liberty. We have been called unto liberty; yet we must not use liberty as an occasion to the flesh; but by love we must serve one another. (Galatians 5:13) The Gospel of Jesus Christ is that in which man is gloriously transformed into a new creature and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. God begins a process of transforming man into His image from glory to glory by the Spirit of God. This process is also described as having God's laws placed into our heart by the Holy Spirit. The transformation is one in which men become the embodiment of the law of God themselves. They are walking and breathing demonstrations of the word of God. In this lesson I propose to show:

- I. The importance of "standing fast" in the liberty Christ provided
- II. The danger of being entangled with the bondage of legalisms
- III. The danger of being entangled in the bondage of sin

I. The importance of "standing fast" in the liberty Christ provided

A. The Gospel of Jesus Christ provides "liberty" from the written laws of the Old Testament, while simultaneously bringing the Spirit filled believer into conformance with the righteous requirements of the law- establishing that law. This is a process worked out by God who is writing His laws in our hearts and minds as we familiarize ourselves with the word and seek to walk in fullness of the Spirit. It is the molding of the very personality and heart of an individual that they by nature do those things that are pleasing to God. Any compromise to this basic principal will lead to a misunderstanding of the Gospel and a false representation of Christ.

B. Law and liberty cannot walk hand in hand. When a person begins to "do" things thinking they are gaining God's approval they are not standing fast in liberty. Our approval with God is based solely on the finished work of Jesus Christ. An example of this type of "legalism" is found in the Galatian church trying to "circumcise" their people as a sort of first step in going back under the Old Covenant system. They were also observing times and other ceremonial aspects of the law. These things can never bring favor with God. Favor with God begins when we agree with God concerning our inadequacy in pleasing God. When we serve the Lord we do it from the position of knowing that our salvation stands in the grace of God ALONE and that what we do- we do as His servants. We cannot get into a mindset that we are working for our salvation. You must TRUST Christ and not your works in order to be saved. If you do works it is because God created you unto good works and ordained you to walk in them. They come about as the natural outworking of the New Creature that you are. Good works that God accepts are the fruits of the Spirit yielded as we walk in the Spirit. They are the fruits yielded from a position of liberty in Christ- serving out of love and not to pay our sin debt.

II. The danger of being entangled with the bondage of legalisms

A. Legalism is the natural course of people who stop walking in the Spirit. Revival and renewal has at its end bringing people to the place where they walk in the Spirit. This should be the objective of every revival. This takes everything out of the hands of man and places it solely in the hands of God. Men will make up a host of legalisms with which to bring men into bondage and they are always centered in the strengths of the one making the rules to the exclusion of their weak areas. When a person masters a certain area of life they get the idea they are an authority on it and soon make all kinds of doctrines of men. This is "entanglement" and trap setting. When folk are told things are sin that are not sin their conscience is effected by that false information. God said He would place His laws into our hearts and minds. This is the job and working of the Holy Ghost who's ultimate objective is to bring man into conformance with God's definition of holiness.

B. When the focus of Christianity is "outward" and not "inward" the focus is in opposition with the Holy Ghost. God is working on man to bring them into conformance with the personality of Jesus Christ. This is a million miles from a list of "do's" and "don'ts". Folk who walk in the Spirit are not conscious of a list of things, they are simply living out the Christian life as normal as a sinner goes down to sin. Unrepentant sinners are not generally deliberate in making lists of "do's" and "don'ts" in order to identify themselves as sinners and therefore live the sinful life. If you ask sinners to describe themselves they will not say things like; "I don't go to church, I drink, I steal, I lie, I cheat. Etc." They just live that way. They are not consciously thinking about how to be more sinful. They are being what they are naturally. Christians who walk in the Spirit are not walking around identifying themselves by what they are not- they are simply seeking God and being transformed into the person of Jesus Christ- living righteously naturally. When we resort to legalistic methods we are in desperate need of being refilled with the Spirit and walking in that Spirit naturally doing what Christians do.

III. The danger of being entangled in the bondage of sin

A. The DANGER of Christians falling into sin is a very real one. The danger of Christians ceasing to walk in the Spirit and beginning to fulfill the lusts of the flesh are very real as well. The New Testament spends much time revealing various means with which the enemy comes against God's people to lure them back into sin. He can use triumph or tragedy. He can use success or failure. He can come in times of great Spiritual growth or during the mundane activities of everyday life. Walking in the Spirit means that we are very sensitive to what the Holy Ghost is saying and that we HEARKEN to His warnings in obeying His direction in maintaining victory over sin and achieving real holiness in this life.

B. Dwight L. Moody once wrote: "We all have some weak point in our character. When we would go forward, it drags us back, and when we would rise up into higher spheres of usefulness and the atmosphere of heaven, something drags us down. Now I have no sympathy with the idea that God puts us behind the blood and saves us, and then leaves us in Egypt to be under the old taskmaster. I believe God brings us out of Egypt into the Promised Land, and that it is the privilege of every child of God to be delivered from every foe, from every besetting sin." Of a truth God is willing and able that all His people live lives free from sin. The enemy is subtle and will try everything that has ever worked on you in the past to bring you down. If you frequently fall to a besetting sin, he has mastered his art in manipulating you to do his will. God has given us the wisdom and the grace to overcome all the wiles of the Devil. Yet for those who walk in perpetual victory he is constantly at work mixing up elixirs as it were of his deadly poison with which to steal, kill, and destroy a believer's effectiveness and unction. Of all the things the enemy wants he wants to steal the utterance to speak rightly the truth of the Gospel. He wants to steal the ability to understand deep spiritual truths by corrupting the mind with all manner of vain imaginations.

C. Much could be said about how the enemy works to get Christians to somehow live in the flesh. If they will not go into full-blown sin he will appeal to their pride and get them on a course to legalisms that glorify no one but those that hold to them. The enemy wants every Christian in the flesh and he is a master at doing it. He knows one thing for sure is that when the Strongman rules the house he is shut out! What happens? He works to distract you, attack you, and weaken you until you are not as full of the Holy Ghost as you need to be. It is at these times that you become vulnerable. He then sets a course to get you filling yourself with fillers that steal your time from God and weaken you further. Sin is always crouching at the door of our hearts in an attack position and the Holy Ghost is there to master it. We cannot master sin- only God can do that through us as we yield to Him. God told Cain He must master sin- and the only way that can happen is through the Spirit filled life. This is why you MUST be filled with the Spirit.

D. D. L. Moody continues on this topic of sin in the believer's lives with an admonition to understand how sin effects our effectiveness for God. He concludes: "If there is some sin that is getting the mastery over you, you certainly cannot be useful. You certainly cannot bring forth fruit to the honor and glory of God until you get self-control. He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city." If we haven't got victory over jealousy and worldly amusements and worldly pleasures, if we are not delivered from all these things, we are not going to have power with God or with men, and we are not going to be as useful as we might be if we got deliverance from every evil. There isn't an evil within or without but what He will deliver us from if we will let Him. That is what He wants to do. As God said to Moses, "I have come down to deliver you to those 613. After exhausting myself in a painstaking labor I abandoned that project and realized that what the Gospels were showing me was how I WILL live and behave once I am Born Again, filled with the Spirit (continually), and Walking in the Spirit. It was not a list of "do's" and "don'ts" - it was the manifestation of what we were NOT doing (as impenitent sinners) and a revelation of what we WILL be doing once we are truly Born Again.

REMARKS

I have often wondered if many Christians really understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ. One says one thing and another says another- but there is almost nothing said about the importance of walking in the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit is in itself what it means to be a Christian. It should be a primary focus of all of our teachings. Yet, there are so few that truly understand what walking in the Spirit is- so their Christianity is a strange mix of the Gospel and legalism. They know they need forgiveness, yet there is something missing in their understanding that keeps them from seeing the reality of genuine holiness.

I once set out to add the 'Gospel' laws to the 613 laws of the Old Testament. According to the Jews the very first law in the Bible is to "be fruitful and multiply." The second is circumcision and the third is "not eating the sinew of the animal" (Jacob's hip issue). There are many then added from the rest of the books of Moses. I thought to add all the laws of Jesus to those 613. After exhausting myself in a painstaking labor I abandoned that project and realized that what the Gospels were showing me was how I WILL live and behave once I am Born Again, filled with the Spirit (continually), and Walking in the Spirit. It was not a list of "do's" and "don'ts" - it was the manifestation of what we were NOT doing (as impenitent sinners) and a revelation of what we WILL be doing once we are truly Born Again.

We are not to be alarmed at the sheer number of commandments that scripture lines up. The Gospel teaches us that if we walk in the Spirit we are not under the law. Which law? Both the law of Moses and the law of sin. This is what God requires of us- no more and no less. We are to walk in the Spirit. If you are in Christ and will genuinely walk in the Spirit you are not under the law and there is now NO condemnation to you. You will demonstrate the reality of God's law in everyday living. To do this we must seek the Lord to be filled with the Spirit daily by His grace. He will write His laws in our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit as we study and seek Him. As for the fullness of the Spirit - If we ask for bread He will not give a stone- so just ask; "Lord fill me with your Holy Spirit... I am waiting on you..."

Comments?

Re: Standing Fast in Christian Liberty, on: 2005/3/7 21:03

quote: "The Gospel of Jesus Christ provides 'liberty' from the written laws of the Old Testament"

Are you referring to the ceremonial laws or the moral Law?

I am sure you do not mean to imply that we have the liberty to break the moral Law, correct?

Gal 5:13 "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. **For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** And so it is that we are called to fulfill, not break, all the Law by loving one another.

Ro 8:4 - "that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit"

The Christian is not under the Law, the sinner is under the Law. 1Ti 1:9 - "knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,"

The Christian is not under the Law because the deeds of the Christian do not violate the Law. "Against such there is no law"

Gal 5:18-24 "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of

the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. **Against such the re is no law.** And those who are Christ's **HAVE** crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

If we break the Law, we are under the Law. But if we walk in the Spirit, we are not under the Law because there is no Law that is against the fruits of the Spirit.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2005/3/7 21:36

Hi Jesse,

A. The Gospel of Jesus Christ provides 'liberty' from the written laws of the Old Testament, while simultaneously bringing the Spirit-filled believer into conformance with the righteous requirements of the law- establishing that law.

This is a 'cart and horse' issue. If we were to take even the moral laws of the 613 laws and try to live them it would not be Christianity. That would be having the 'cart' before the 'horse.'

If we walk in the Spirit and allow God to apply those laws to our hearts we will perform them by nature and live in such a way that against such there is no law. This places the cart behind the horse. This is not antinomianism- this is fulfilling the law by walking in the Spirit. Actually, it is way beyond anything the law could ever do. The Gospel is a better covenant because what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh- we can do as we slip out from underneath the bondage of the law (this keeps the law of sin that is in our members from rising up) and then we come under the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which fulfills the righteous requirements of the law.

The real thing we have to realize is that extrapolating the laws from the Old Covenant (the Jews call this a system of Halakah) that can be considered relevant to us and then trying to live them is not Christianity. Walking in the Spirit will keep us in line with the righteous requirements of the law and therefore fulfills the law. This is Christianity.

God Bless,

-Robert

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2005/3/7 21:46

Another little side note is that when the Gospel is accurately preached the person's response will almost always be, "Should we continue in sin that grace may abound?" If we do not get that response, I submit we have not accurately presented the Gospel. Of course we know the answer to this; but we have to present the Gospel accurately or we have misrepresented it. We need not be anymore afraid than the Holy Spirit was when He breathed out the details of the Gospel. We have to continue in our explanation to qualify the question and answer it- but we must know that it is a natural question to want to know if we should sin that grace may abound.

God Bless,

-Robert

Re: This may find a place here....., on: 2005/3/12 7:38

Law vs. Grace

By Lahry Sibley

Well this question is one many wrestle with in this hour.

Paul said that all things were permitted, but not all things are profitable. When it comes to the penalty of the law, we are free from charge. But that does not give us a license to sin. Paul even asks this very question, do we take our liberty as an occasion for the flesh? What side of "the law" does our flesh operate on?

See, if we are children of the Father, and I trust you are, then we are corrected by Heavenly Father when we step out of line. What does He use as a benchmark to determine what is out of line and what is not? The moral law. His Holy Law. No law, man made or God made, has any power in and of itself. It is not the nature of law to give power. It simply states a limit of acceptable behavior. Therefore, of itself, it can do nothing but identify behavior as being within the law, or beyond

and the law. The law has never been the problem with man, even before Moses. It's the sinful nature of man that is the problem. Natural law breakers. We don't need a school for it, we come fully equipped. We are able to train ourselves in it. It's not because of the law, but because of our fallen nature we inherit from Adam and Eve.

We know from reading God's word that sin is a transgression of God's law. The problem of man is sin. We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we are sinners, law breakers. Therefore we deserve death. God's justice demands the death penalty.

Jesus died in our place and we become partakers of His sacrifice by faith. He then imparts His righteousness to us. Now that we ARE righteous, then what? What kind of behavior can our Father expect from His children in light of what He has done for us, blotting out all record of our sin?

Will His expectations be within His moral law, or without? He has changed the desires of our hearts, but not the desires of our flesh. So as already having been made righteous (past tense) we begin to live as His children. We are told to walk after the spirit. The spirit is what has been born again. We know that the desires of our spirit are the desires of the Holy Spirit. On which side of the law would you expect that to be?

Personally, I hate driving. Why? Because it's impossible for me to drive without speeding. Not that I have the peddle to the metal all the time. But my flesh just wants to fudge. If I'm not extremely careful, I'm speeding. One day, in California, I was cruising along about 70 in a 55. (My flesh was more dominant back then.) So the Holy Spirit started dealing with me. So I slowed down to a very boring 55...or so. I told Him how hard it was to try and drive the speed limit and not slip over. And just a smidgen over is as bad as a hundred over, right? So He asked me what would happen if I dropped my speed to 50? Well, first of all Lord, I'd really be bored out of my mind, but it would be easier not to break the law. What if you slowed to 45? Oh I could drive all day and not speed, Lord. What if you didn't ever get into the car, Lahry? Lord, I would never have to be concerned with breaking the speed limit again.

Well, that taught me a whole lot more than just respecting speed laws. He showed me that as Christians, we often tend to live like we drive, as close to the "limit" as possible. But remember, He said that just a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Just a little compromise and first thing you know, you are off following the flesh on the wrong side of the law. Does that make the law bad? No, it's our behavior that's the problem. God desires us to behave in a manner that pleases Him and brings Him glory. We do that when we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. Do not be deceived, His law goes far beyond the 10 commandments. I'm not speaking of ceremonial law here, but the laws that light our paths as we walk this narrow way. The bible tells us that to know to do good and not do it, is sin. Anything that is not of faith is sin. Now we could say that this is included in the "10", and it is. Love God, with all our heart, and love our neighbor as ourselves. All commandments are summed up in that statement that Jesus made. Love is always in favor of the law, the righteous side of the law. If we live and move in love, it is far beyond the law, in opposite directions. It's not about how much we know, but about how we live day by day.

In Romans 12 vs 9 (amplified version) Paul admonishes us to flee in horror from all wickedness. In light of that I have a question for you. What side of the law would you find wickedness?

Beloved, we are saved by faith through grace. That is the only way a man/woman can be saved. It is because we ARE SAVED that God places in us both the will and desire to do His good pleasure. His good pleasure is on the righteous side of the law. Keeping the law does not make us righteous. Because we are righteous, God changes the heart and gives us the desire to live for Him and in Him, far away from the law, but always on the right side of the law. Our obedience is driven by love, thanksgiving, and worship, and not by obligation. If we are busy doing His will and not our own, the law is of no concern to us. How could it be. Like driving, we could never break speeding laws if we never get into the car. That does not make us law keepers, nor does it make us holy inside. We need a heart change. Jesus is the only One who can do that, and we get it by faith. If the heart does not change, one is simply not saved. The heart will always change toward righteousness, and that will always be within the moral law of our God. I hope this helps, beloved.