

Whited Sepulchers

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness - Matt 23:27

Scribes and Pharisees were Bible scholars who skillfully used the law of God to manage every facet of life— their own and that of others as well. You would think that God would be well-pleased with them, since they had such a strong desire to live according to His Holy law. Yet, Jesus called them “whited sepulchres” because they became so self-important in their zeal to serve God that they had no room within their hearts for Him. They thought more about themselves and how to control life than they did about the liberty that God, through Christ, grants to believers. At one point, Jesus strongly denounced their misuse of the law, “*For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers*” (Matt 23:4).

Apostle Paul spelled out the proper use of the law, “*But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster*” (Gal 3:23-25). That is, before a person ever becomes awakened to sin by the Word of God, he is held under the impossible obligation of fulfilling the law of God. The scribes and Pharisees were operating under this impossibility, as is anyone who tries to live by the law. But, once a penitent soul finds release by the grace of God from his past burden of sin by hearing and believing the gospel message, “*Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee*” (Matt 9:2), he is no longer under that obligation to fulfill the law.

Satan, however, stealthily seeks to return believers to bondage of the law. Paul chastised the Galatians for doing this very thing having once tasted the goodness of heaven through the forgiveness of sins to turn back once again unto living by the law of God, “*O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?*” (Gal 3:1). Paul posed several key questions, “*This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?; Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?; Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be*

ye in vain, He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (Gal 3:2-5). His reasoning was that if one thought himself to be justified by being able to live to certain standards, all hope for eternal salvation was lost, “*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace*” (Gal 5:4).

Concerning Christian liberty, Paul gave this warning, “*For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*” (Gal 5:13-16). Paul is saying that believers are free to follow the leading of the indwelling Holy Spirit in areas that the Word does not explicitly address. For example, the Corinthian Christians were not sure whether it was right to eat meat offered to idols out of concern of being complicit in pagan worship, which would be sin. Although Paul affirmed that eating such meat was not sin, he yet understood that some Christians reasonably had doubts. To this Paul said, “*Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth...*” (Rom 14:3). Further, even though “*All things are lawful...*” (1 Cor 10:23) Paul states that we should abstain from doing anything lawful if it causes spiritual problems for others, “*Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend*” (1 Cor 8:13).

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

God’s Peace,
Charles Korhonen

Feb 4	Ken Storm	Holy Communion
Feb 11	TBA	
Feb 18	Ken Storm	
Feb 25	TBA	Potluck meal following

TAPIOLA APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH
P.O. Box 531
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Winter Schedule

Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9:45am Church at 11am

Bible Study at 7pm on Wednesday.

Church Cleaning:

February Barb Mattila

Online Broadcasts

From our webpage: <http://www.tapiolachurch.org/> you will see the mixlr live audio – we will be 'on the air' during our church services. Previous sermons will be archived and available on the web.

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