

THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

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Our subject has to do with the New Testament—The Last Will And Testament Of Jesus Christ. We find our theme in numerous passages. Referring to the gospel as a will, Paul said: “He taketh away the first that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified” (Heb. 10:9, 10). In the preceding chapter the apostle said:

And for this cause he (Christ) is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they that are called might receive the promise of an eternal inheritance. For where a testament is there must of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth (Heb. 9:15-17).

It will not be difficult for anybody who understands the simple legal processes that go into the making of a will to apply this illustration of Paul’s to the gospel.

THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

Not many people know the difference in the Testaments, called the first and the second, the old and the new. Many preachers talk of the identity of the covenants, or testaments, and give the same authority to the Old Testament scriptures in the present dispensation as they give to the New Testament. In reality, many practices in religion of about all the religious bodies are brought over from the old dispensation, thus ignoring altogether the distinction between the Testaments made in the New Testament itself. Paul said: “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of the letter” (Rom. 7:6). Again he said: “Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament” (2 Cor. 3:6). And again, “For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son” (Rom. 1:9). These passages, and many others like them show plainly that we do not serve God now in the precepts and ordinances of the Old Testament, but in the new and living way—the will or testament of Christ.

But the common run of people are very slow to learn this fundamental lesson; and when we try to teach them the difference between the testaments they usually say: “That cuts out half the Bible; we believe all of the Bible; we want all of the Bible.” Well, I believe all of the Bible, too, but I would not attempt to do all of it. I believe that God told Noah to build an ark, but I would not attempt to build one. I believe that God commanded Abraham to offer his son on an altar, but I shall not attempt to offer my son on an altar. I believe that it was absolutely necessary for the Jews to offer their animal sacrifices, burn their incense, circumcise their children the eighth day, keep the sabbath, observe the Passover and the day of Pentecost, none of which should be preached or practiced now. Yet people say that they want all of the Bible, when everybody knows that they would not have it

all if it were preached to them, even by their own preachers, and the preachers, themselves, know it. There is only one basis upon which to determine the right division of the word of God, and that is in the distinction between the two dispensations and the two testaments. We cannot be under both: "He taketh away the first that he may establish the second." The second (the new testament) could not even be established without taking away the first. That is the meaning of "that." If a young couple obtains a marriage license "that" they may be married—it means the license is necessary to the marrying. When Paul said that "we are buried with him by baptism" THAT we should "walk in newness of life"—it means the new life depends on burial in baptism. So, when Paul said that Christ took away the first testament THAT He might establish the second, it simply means that no new testament was possible without the first one being taken away, and if it is taken away we are not under it, and not subject to it, and no part of it binding on us today. It seems to me, friends, that anybody who is "at home" should be able to see that.

Have you noticed that when people try to adopt practices in the Old Testament, it results in a sort of an offshoot? The Adventists, for instance, love their sabbath day, so they go back and bring it over. The Catholics likewise love their incense, and they go back and bring it over. The Methodists and Presbyterians love their babies (infant membership) and they go back and bring them over. The Mormons love their women (polygamy) and they go back and bring them over, that is, they tried it, but Uncle Sam put a stop to it. And there is another class of Judaizing offshooters—the Christian Church—they love their music (David's instruments), and they go back and bring them over. How much better are they than the rest of them? None; they are worse, for they teach the difference in the testaments, whereas the others do not, and they are therefore downright inconsistent. If the Christian Church preacher should argue with an Adventist on the sabbath question, or a Methodist on the infant question, or a Catholic on the incense question, or a Mormon on the polygamy question, that Christian Church preacher would know where to make them stay. Ah, he would keep them back in the Old Testament; he would not let them cross the line between the testaments. But when he wants his mechanical instrument in the church, what does he do? Why, he jumps clean over the cross backwards, and lands right in the middle of David's old testament goat pen and digs out an old rusty Jewish harp and plays it in the church. He says David did it! Well, David had eight wives, and took more, the Bible says. Yes, their names and addresses are in 2 Samuel 3, and concubines besides. God would not let David build the temple in the old Testament because of some things he did, but there are preachers today who think it is all right for him to order the worship for the church of Jesus Christ!

The fact is, friends, that instrumental music in worship is the relic of an abrogated age and there is no authority for its use in divine worship. In Hebrews 10 we are told that the first covenant also had ordinances of divine service, "which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation." The "time of reformation" is the new

dispensation—the New Testament. The “carnal ordinances” of the Old Testament were only “until” the New Testament came. They were “imposed on them,” the people that were under it, but they are not to be brought over into the New Testament church. The man who brings them over does so without divine authority, and sins.

THE ESSENTIALS OF A WILL

Let us look into the gospel will a little further. We all know that certain things are essential to a will. There is first, the testator, the man who makes it; there is second, the gift, the thing bestowed; there is third, the conditions, the terms upon which its benefits are to be received; there is fourth, the death of the testator, and it is never in force while the testator lives; there is fifth, the probate of the will, the court must pass on it; there is sixth, the executors, those who administrate the will; the seventh, there are heirs, or the beneficiaries of the will. But we all know that during the life of the man who makes the will that the will does not bind him; he is free to do as he chooses in all things. The will is effective only upon the death of the testator.

Now, what is the applications to the gospel; as it is Paul’s illustration, not mine. First, Christ is the testator; second, salvation is the gift; third, the conditions are those gospel commands set forth in the Great Commission of Christ to the apostles; fourth, Jesus Christ must die, the will was not in force during His life and ministry on earth, for He lived under the law; fifth, after His death the will was probated in heaven, when He ascended to heaven and “appeared before the throne of God for us”; sixth, the apostles became the executors, qualified by the Holy Spirit on Pentecost to administer the terms of the new will (Acts 2); and seventh, all who obey the terms and the conditions of the gospel become the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. If this seems legalistic, friends, remember it is Paul’s argument, not mine. Furthermore, a legal will does not eliminate grace. It is by grace that a man makes a will in favor of its beneficiaries, and by grace are his heirs. It is by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that, under the will, we are heirs by salvation. So, do not think for one moment that we are legalizing the grace of God out of the plan of salvation. His grace has been legalized into the gospel, and not out of it.

BEFORE AND AFTER THE CROSS

If you are following me, you will remember that during the life of the testator the will is not in force, and the testator acts independent of the will, and as though it had never been made. But when the testator dies, his only power henceforth is in the will and not in himself personally—he acts through the will. During the lifetime (the personal ministry) of Christ, the will was not in force. “For a testament is of force after men are dead.” Paul did not have to tell us that, for we know it, but that’s his way of making you believe the gospel—it is just as true of Christ as of men, that His will was not in operation while he lived on this earth. There are many

instances during the personal ministry of Christ where He blessed men, forgave sins, and saved sinners—but they are not cases for us to settle our own case by, for the simple reason that we are under the will and they were not. “By the which will we are sanctified (saved)”—and that’s Paul telling you which side of the cross you are on. A palsied man was forgiven and healed in Mark 2; Zacchaeus, the publican, received salvation in Luke 19; the sinful woman, a harlot, was saved and made virtuous in Luke 7; but these do not represent gospel conversion for the simple fact that they were not under the gospel. In each instance, the circumstances and the conditions varied, the testator was on earth with “power on earth to forgive sins.” Thus, before the cross there was a diversity of conditions upon which men received the dispensations of the living testator’s blessings; but after the death of Christ, there is a uniformity of conditions upon which men are saved—the terms of the will, sealed by the blood of the testator.

WHAT ABOUT THE THIEF ON THE CROSS?

There is a book in the New Testament designed especially to show men how to be converted. It contains many cases of conversion, under the preaching of the apostles. It not only tells us how to be converted, but by actual example shows us how to do the things that we are told to do. Yet men,—even preachers—will ignore this book entirely, the express purpose of which is to execute the will of Christ, and try to make a model case of conversion out of the thief on the cross, when it was not in any sense a gospel conversion. Wherever we go, whenever we tell anybody what Jesus said in the Commission: “Go preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned,” people instantly say, preachers and all, “Well, what about the thief on the cross?” If by that, friend, you mean that you aim to put yourself in the place of the thief and be saved like the thief, I must say that you may be a thief, but if you are, you still cannot be saved like that thief. Granting that the words of Christ to the thief, “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise,” mean that he was saved (though Paradise was not heaven) still his case is no model for us. A simple question or two should be all that is necessary to clear the matter up. When did the thief die, and get his blessing—before or after the death of the testator, before or after the will? Was the will in effect, in force, in the case of the thief? “For where a testament is there must of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while he that made it liveth.” Now, just apply that to the thief and anybody who can see through a ladder can see that the case of the thief is not a gospel conversion, not being under the will. But we are under the will. Jesus died, arose from the dead, delivered the will to His apostles, commissioned them to preach, but ordered them to tarry in the city of Jerusalem until they received the Spirit to qualify them as executors; then He ascended to heaven, probated the will and sealed it with the authority of heaven’s court, and sent it in the power of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2) to the twelve who waited for their qualifications, and upon that eventful occasion for the first time

the terms and conditions of the new will were declared and executed. And “by the which will we are sanctified.”

THE GREAT COMMISSION

The Great Commission is the Lord’s own statement of the terms of the new will. He made it, died for it, and then delivered it to the twelve for execution, after the Spirit should come. His instructions to them were specific, and their execution of his orders were divinely ordered. The Commission exists in three specific records: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Matthew records the command to teach and baptize. Mark records the command to preach, believe and be baptized, with salvation following. Luke puts down repentance and remission of sins in his name. Taking the witnesses and their testimony in due order, it follows that wherever the gospel is preached, men must believe it, repent of their sins, and be baptized in order to become heirs to the blessings of salvation. After this commission was given and executed on Pentecost, there were no exceptions to it. On Pentecost Peter said: “Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”—every one of them were commanded to do the same thing and for the same purpose. Through the book of Acts the story is uniform—the gospel believed and obeyed and the promise of the new will enjoyed. It does not make void the blood at all, my friend. We are saved by the blood, but Jesus said “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). We are cleansed by the blood, but Paul said that we are “cleansed with the washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:25). We are sanctified by the blood, but Paul also said that Christ sanctifies us “by the washing of water with the word” (Eph. 5:25). We are washed in the blood, but we are commanded to “arise and be baptized and wash away sins” (Acts 22:16). We have remission of sins in His blood, but the inspired executor of Christ’s blood-sealed will, said on Pentecost, “Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins.” So, friends, you cannot separate the blood from the will, nor the will from obedience. “By the which will we are sanctified.” Then, won’t you obey it? Truly, there is a fountain filled with blood and it’s drawn from Emanuel’s veins. It is opened for you, it is opened for all; yea, sinners plunged beneath its flood lose all their guilty stains.~

Deceased