

Blog 2017

December 25, 2017

Christmas

I have recently posted the teaching from our December fellowship entitled: Christ's Birth - God's Faithfulness which you can access here ([link](#)). As Christians all over the world celebrate the birth of the Jesus Christ, this teaching is a reminder of how the first-century believers understood and interpreted this event. They saw it as the keeping of a promise God had made to his people. God is faithful!

May you remember this today and everyday as you live for him with confidence that he will keep his promise to deliver his people from darkness and establish his kingdom forever!

In Christ,

Scot

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them...to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days." Luke 1:68&72

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November 28, 2017

Thanksgiving

Dear Fellow-Believers,

It is only fitting that those of us who know and understand God's work in Christ should be the most thankful people on earth. For we are aware that every day of life, with all the beauty and joy that it can bring, is a gift from our heavenly Father. And so we REJOICE! But for those days that bring us face-to-face with the perils and ills of this age, we find strength to grapple with the challenges as we call out to God. And so we PRAY! Having received God's Spirit, we are now children in God's family bound together to care for one another and share in life as one body. With grateful hearts we encourage, build up and inspire each other, realizing that each day, whether carefree or difficult, brings us one day closer to the return of Christ and our being with him forever. And so we GIVE THANKS!

May we all turn our hearts to God, today and everyday, filled with a knowledge of his purposes in Christ and empowered to follow Paul's instructions to the Thessalonians:

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

I am truly thankful to God for all of you, a wonderful family of believers.

In Christ,

Scot Hahn

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Oct. 27, 2017

The 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation

God's blessings to you all in this fall season of the year! As most of you know, this October 31 marks the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation - an event so sweeping in its spiritual, political and social implications that it marked the beginning of what historians call the modern world. It was on October 31, 1517 that Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses on the church door in what is modern day Germany in protest of the practice of indulgences and other non-biblical actions of the Roman Catholic Church of that day. Luther's courageous stand for truth on that day and in the decades that followed marks him out as perhaps the most important and consequential individual for good of the last millennium of human history. Though Luther's own successful cause, intentions, and actions were almost entirely spiritually oriented, his stand for truth opened the doors for a much wider revolution in the securing of individual rights in government and society as well that continues until this day. However, it is the spiritual aspects of the Protestant Reformation that are and remain most important – just as they were for Luther - because they deal with man's relationship, first and foremost, with God. Rather than writing something new about the importance of Luther's stand for truth and the Reformation that followed I link to two previous articles of my own from 1995 entitled "Justification by Faith" and "The Protestant Reformation" which deal with the liberating biblical truth that the Reformation focused on. At this time of the year and on its 500th anniversary let us remember and celebrate the incredible significance of this major historical event and the role of Luther and the other leaders of the Protestant Reformation of that time. But most importantly, let us remember the spiritual truth primarily from the New Testament scriptures that they courageously elucidated to the benefit of all Christian believers who have lived since that time.

[Justification by Faith](#)

[The Protestant Reformation](#)

May God bless you all as we rest in the blessings of his love and grace as given to us in Christ.

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July 4, 2017

Independence Day in America

Freedom "In Christ"

Today is July 4, 2017 - Independence Day in America. As I write this I am cognizant of the fact that I have lived most of my life in a free country where I could think, read, speak and worship as I have chosen. Two weeks ago I visited the oldest church in America in the Californian town of Monterey. It is a beautiful Roman Catholic mission church dating to the 1600s when it was originally established by the Spanish. Mass is still celebrated there to this day and since I arrived to see it just as mass was concluded I was able to talk to the presiding priest and to see the joy of those who attended from every walk of life. It was interesting for me to contemplate that in America Christian worship includes the unbroken worship of the Roman Catholic faith begun by the Spanish several centuries ago on the west coast as well as the many, many Protestant churches that have come into being since

that time mainly on the east coast. Many of these, of course, came into being as a result of religious persecution in Europe and then they continued to divide and multiply once they established themselves in America. This mixture now includes also the many non-denominational churches that have arisen in the last century who often meet in rented buildings such as schools, etc. and also the thousands of house churches that now flourish in America including our own Cary Christian Fellowship in central North Carolina.

This freedom of religion in America is certainly a great blessing because it is the exception to the rule of most of history and even today billions of people have either no religious freedom or only a relatively small amount which is dependent on the capricious nature of their governments. Having spent a considerable number of years living, working, and helping people learn God's word in communist countries of Eastern Europe during the 1980s I have a great appreciation for those who still live in such situations of persecution or oppression of one kind or another today. However, as much as I cherish this political freedom of religion in America which was spurred on by the events of the signing of the American Declaration of Independence in 1776, I cherish even more the true spiritual independence, freedom or liberty that I, as a Christian, have "in Christ" no matter where I might be on the face of this earth.

In fact, there is really no comparison between these two types of freedom: one is temporary and always subject to change due to the changing nature of human affairs; the other is a permanent life-changing reality that is true both now and forever for all those who believe in Christ and are thus "baptized by one Spirit into Christ" (I Cor. 12:12-13; Acts 10; 11:15-18; 15:6-11). The result is that all who believe in Christ are, by God's grace, "created in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:8-10) and become a "new creation in Christ" (II Cor. 5:17a) – even now, while living in our oh-so mortal bodies among the captivating sin, darkness and difficulties of this world. In short, as a new creation "in Christ" the "old things are passed away, and all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17b). We are set free in Christ and given a new life in him around which our lives are now centered. This is true for any individual who believes in Christ no matter where they live in the world and no matter what type of political system under which they live. In short, "where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty!" (II Cor. 3:17).

The apostle Paul makes this Christian reality of being a new creation "in Christ" and the liberty that follows a focal point of his New Testament Letters around which so much else revolves in his theology. In short, apart from Christ's second coming and the comprehensive liberation this will ultimately bring about for both the Christian believer and all of creation (Rom. 8:18-25), there is perhaps no more liberating truth than this "in Christ" reality in all of the New Testament for the Christian believer. It changes our lives in the here and now and gives us a freedom upon which our present day lives can build. A couple of vivid examples of this come from Paul's Letter to the Galatians:

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery ... For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." (Gal. 5:1, 5-6).

"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. Neither circumcision means anything nor uncircumcision; what counts is the new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule – even to the Israel of God." (Gal. 6:14-16).

This liberating truth of being "in Christ" for the Christian believer is all throughout Paul's Letters; however, perhaps the most beautiful section is found in chapter one of his Letter to the Ephesians. I will close with this inspiring section which is loaded with truth that should bring joy, peace and freedom to the heart and life of every true Christian – not just on a political Independence Day that we may celebrate, but on every day:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realm with every

spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment – to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under [in] Christ.”

“In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be to the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who [which] is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession – to the praise of his glory.” (Eph. 1:3-14 NIV).

It is not the political freedom that we have or don’t have that is most important. Rather, it is the spiritual freedom that we have “in Christ Jesus” that counts the most by far. Let us stand fast in this freedom – whatever our political situation may be - until our Lord Jesus Christ returns to complete the task of true liberation that he has already begun.

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[Link to an audio teaching from our local fellowship by Richie Temple on the same topic “Freedom in Christ” Aug 2006](#)

April 16, 2017

Resurrection Sunday

Greetings to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world on this Resurrection Sunday in April of 2017. This is the Christian “Easter” weekend when we celebrate the culmination of the saving events of Christ’s life, death and resurrection. Perhaps the key event in this series of events is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It confirms the significance of Christ’s sacrificial death and also sets the stage for God’s future plan for mankind in the formation of a new covenantal people “in Christ” who are “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ” in all that God is bringing about for his people. The “good news” of the gospel message is thus a message of salvation for both now and the future; however, it is based upon the historical events of the “once for all” sacrificial death of Christ and then his victorious resurrection as the “firstborn from the dead” or “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” with all who believe in him later to follow at his return. It is upon these saving events of Christ that the entire New Testament stands and Christ – in this salvific sense – is thus the foundation of both the Church universal throughout the world, through all generations, and also of each and every true local Christian church ever since. Although each of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John give an account of the events of Christ resurrection, the most specific chapter dealing with the resurrection is that of I Corinthians 15. I will let Paul speak for himself with some of my favorite verses from this chapter:

“Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you.

Otherwise, you have believed in vain.”

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.”

“For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No. I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether then it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.”

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.”

“I declare to you brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with imperishable and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”

“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

(I Cor. 15 NIV).

Happy Resurrection Sunday to you all!

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[Link to a recent teaching from our local fellowship entitled: “Setting Our Course by the Resurrection”](#)

January 15, 2017

Accepted by God

Many of us derive much value and motivation in life from the feeling of being accepted by others. Whether it is a group of peers, colleagues or even those on an online social media site, the idea that we are welcomed and included gives us a sense of self-worth. Although we experience satisfaction when we have been judged by

people to be worthy of their association, it is important to remember that the judgement of other people is based on a very limited understanding of who we really are and is oftentimes subject to any wind of change that blows our way. In contrast, God judges and approves of us based on his unlimited knowledge of what others cannot see, "For man looks at the outward appearance but the LORD looks upon the heart" 1 Sam. 16:7. Ultimately, it is this acceptance by God to be included among his people and to be part of his great plan for the ages that gives our lives meaning and purpose.

We see the great difference in the significance of God's acceptance over and against man's illustrated in one of the most powerful and influential events recorded in the Book of Acts. Beginning in chapter 10 God prepares his representative, Peter, and Peter's soon-to-be audience, the Roman centurion Cornelius and his household, for the great revelation that through the gospel God includes people into his plan based on his knowledge of their heart, not on ritual observance or external factors. He does this through a series of visions and divine visitations that set the stage for Peter's proclamation to a group of Gentiles of the message of salvation through Christ which we pick up on in verse 34,

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached-- how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

We are witnesses of everything he did in the county of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen...He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. (Acts 10:34-46 NIV)

It is important to remember that from the viewpoint of the Jewish people at this time a Gentile could only be accepted as a part of God's people by undergoing certain external rites, including circumcision and the observance of dietary restrictions, so that any person could clearly see the change take place. But in this groundbreaking instance, God begins to fulfill his age-old promise to Abraham that "in him all nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 18:18) by giving the holy Spirit to Cornelius and his household simply because they believe the message spoken by Peter. There is no prior outward ritual to be observed or formal induction to be performed. God knows their hearts and gives his approval.

This naturally causes astonishment in the Jewish believers present who hear the Gentiles speaking in tongues and praising God because they know without a doubt that God has given them his Spirit. Likewise, there is perplexity among the other circumcised believers back in Jerusalem when they hear the report. In chapter 11 Peter is questioned about his willingness "to go the uncircumcised people and eat with them" so he recounts to them the whole story of how God was at work to open the door for the Gentiles to believe. In verses 15-18 we see Peter explain the inner working of his mind as he tries to make sense of the incident as well as the conclusions which the other Jewish believers draw,

As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' So if he gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think I could oppose God?"

When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has

granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.” (Acts 11:15-18)

Here for all to see is the incontestable truth that God has opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles based on the faith that is in their hearts.

As the years went by and the number of Gentile believers greatly increased, opposition continued to arise, especially among the Jewish believers, regarding exactly how it is that one is to be accepted as being truly one of God’s people. In Acts 15 we observe how the issues were resolved by an appeal back to this first occurrence of the outpouring of God’s Spirit on the Gentiles. In verse 5 we pick up,

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses.”

The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: “Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe that it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.” (Acts 15: 5-11)

Although the passage of time has rendered irrelevant some of the matters which faced the first-century church concerning the composition of God’s people, one great truth continues to shine forth from this account. Being approved by man, while of some value, counts for little when compared with being embraced by God. Through faith in Jesus Christ we have received God’s gift of holy Spirit and know of its powerful manifestation and life-changing influence. God has accepted us. At present we find fulfillment in our lives through understanding this truth; moreover, as we look ahead we know that the gift of the Spirit now is but a foretaste of all the glory that is ready to be revealed to us at the return of Christ.

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For other articles related to this topic see:

[Holy Spirit Guarantees the Christian Inheritance](#)

[Speaking in Tongues: Manifesting the Spirit of God](#)