



## The Epistle to the Romans

### Lesson Number 21



# LIBERATED FROM THE LAW

7:1-6 Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? 2 For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. 4 Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another; to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. 5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. 6 But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. – Romans 7:1-6 <sup>NKJV</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The Spirit has introduced the subject of the Law – the Divinely given standard of moral conduct. It was given specifically to Israel as a covenant. It also had a specific relationship to the entire world. The Law was more than a mere code, or moral standard. It revealed key aspects of the very nature of God. Although it did not unfold all of His Being, it did reveal enough to lead men to the conclusion they were coming short of His glory (3:23).

□ We have read of sinning “without the

Law,” and sinning “in the Law” (2:12).

- Again, the Spirit spoke of the “hearers of the Law” and the “doers of the Law” (2:13).
- The Gentiles are said to “have not the Law” (2:14a).
- The consideration of Gentiles doing “by nature the things contained in the Law” is brought before us (2:14b).
- By being inclined toward things written in the law, the Gentiles are said to “show the work of the Law

written in their hearts” (2:15).

- The Jews “wrested in the Law” (2:17).
- The Jews boasted that they were “instructed out of the Law” (2:18).
- The Law has a “form of knowledge and of the truth” (2:20).
- The Jews made their “boast in the Law” (2:23a).
- The Jews broke the Law (2:23b).
- Circumcision was of profit only if the Law was kept (2:25).
- The Spirit refers to “the righteousness of the Law” (2:26).

*Our death with Christ has yielded Liberation from the Tyranny and Condemnation of the Law--by Given O. Blakely*

**LESSON OUTLINE**

- I. THE DOMINATING TENDENCY OF THE LAW (7:1)
- II. THE NECESSITY OF A DEATH ILLUSTRATED (7:2-3)
- III. DEAD THROUGH THE BODY OF CHRIST (7:4a)
- IV. THE PURPOSE OF OUR DEATH (7:4b)
- V. WHEN WE WERE IN THE FLESH (7:5)
- VI. NOW WE ARE DELIVERED FROM THE LAW (7:6a)
- VII. THE REASON FOR THAT DELIVERANCE (7:6b)

- ❑ We are asked to consider if the uncircumcision *“fulfil the Law”* (2:27a).
- ❑ There is the *“transgression of the Law”* (2:27b).
- ❑ The Law speaks to those who are *“under the Law”* (3:19a).
- ❑ The Law speaks that *“every mouth might be stopped and all the world become guilty before God”* (3:19b).
- ❑ By the *“deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified”* (3:20a).
- ❑ *“By the Law is the knowledge of sin”* (3:20b).
- ❑ The *“righteousness of God without the Law is manifested”* (3:21a).
- ❑ The righteousness of God is *“witnessed by the law and the prophets”* (3:21b).
- ❑ We *“conclude that a man is justified without the deeds of the law”* (3:18).
- ❑ Through faith we *“establish the Law”* (3:31).
- ❑ The promise that Abraham would be the *“heir of the world”* was not given *“through the Law”* (4:13).
- ❑ If those who are *“of the Law, be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect”* (4:14).
- ❑ *“The Law works wrath”* (4:15a).
- ❑ *“Where there is no Law, there is no transgression”* (4:15b).
- ❑ The *“promise”* is not only to those who are *“of the Law,”* but to those who are *“of the faith of Abraham”* (4:16).
- ❑ *“Until the Law, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed where there is no Law”* (5:13).
- ❑ The *“Law entered, that the offense*

*might abound”* (5:20).

- ❑ Sin will not have dominion over believers, for they *“are not under the Law, but under grace”* (6:14).
- ❑ God forbid that we should sin *“because we are not under the law, but under grace”* (6:15).

Thus far, there have been thirty-one references to *“the Law”* in this book (2:12 thru 6:15). That is a most remarkable circumstance! It confirms that our confident understanding of justification requires some grasp of *“the Law.”* Its true role in the redemption of humanity must be perceived, else deliverance from it will matter little to us.

**MAN’S PENCHANT FOR LAW**

Man has an unfortunate penchant, or tendency, toward being governed by law. While on the surface this appears to be the most strict way of governing man, it is not at all. Government by law presumes waywardness within those it governs. That is, of course, the reason for law: to restrain the outbreak of lawlessness. If man was not basically and fundamentally sinful, there would be no need for Law.

While the Jews rested in *“the Law,”* making their boast in it, the Gentile church has promoted a dependency upon its own man-made laws. Whether it is a list of denominational requirements, or solicitation to be under a certain routine

aware of their consistent shortcomings. This is accented by the fact that the Law offers no strength, provides no grace, and never bends to accommodate those who are weak. It is not lenient with sinners, and makes no provision for release from guilt or the cleansing of the conscience.

**THE TEXT BEFORE US**

The Spirit will now elaborate on the fact that we are *“not under Law.”* This condition was not accomplished by a Divine mandate. Rather, it is the result of a Divine **work**. Believers have actually been moved beyond the reach of a condemning Law.

The point is not that we are beyond rules, requirements, or Divine commands. Rather, we can no longer be condemned by the Law, even though imperfection can still be found within us. This is a critical matter, and must be comprehended. Those who are under a system of Law, even if they are conscientious in their devotion to God, will never be confident before Him. Their lack of assurance will actually become the occasion for their fall.

Because this matter of not being *“under the Law”* is the basis for much contention among professed believers, the Spirit will not leave us in a state of ignorance. The Law of God is not at fault, and we are to maintain the utmost respect for it. The Law *“was weak through the*

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or discipline of life, the principle of law is being advanced. This is largely a heartless approach, and encourages men to live mechanically, and without real commitment to the Living God. Such living is more related to the Old Covenant than he New one.

Those who take God’s Law seriously are convinced its demands are greater than their ability. They have the utmost respect for the Law, but are painfully

*“flesh,”* and not because of anything that was in it (Rom 8:3). It could not change those who were under it. It could not remove their past or give them a fresh start. All it could do was point to their miserable flaws. However, God made a way of escape for us.

The passage before us will show us precisely how this was accomplished. It will also prepare us to understand the involvements of new life.

## THE DOMINATING TENDENCY OF THE LAW

***"Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?"*** Once people are added to the church (Acts 2:47), born again (John 3:7), or baptized into Christ (Gal 3:27), they need to know what really took place at that time. All too often, energy is put into bringing people TO Christ, without due regard being given to teaching them IN Christ. Although men are often prone to place the emphasis on conversion, the Scriptural stress is clearly placed upon nurture and edification. Conversion is necessary for deliverance from the guilt and power of sin. Growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ is essential for being found in Christ at His appearing.

### Beginning Is Not Enough!

Although numerous doctrines have been invented by men that cause them to feel secure in merely beginning the race, there is no promise of good to those who do not finish it. Grace is never promised to those who do not keep the faith! There is no such thing as a justified person who does not live by faith (Heb 10:38-39). It is not possible to maintain the fellowship of Christ, into which we have been called (1 Cor 1:9), if we do not walk in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1:7). There is not a single blessing pronounced upon those who quench or grieve the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 5:19; Eph 4:30). Try as you may, you will not be able to find a solitary word from God that commends or promises to sustain those who do not "go to perfection" (Heb 6:1-6).

Although these things are commonly known among the faithful, yet they must be affirmed, lest we forget them. We are living in an era and place when *Christians* are subjected to doctrines that lead them to think as though these things were not true. A remarkable lack of interest in the things of God exists among professing believers. They insist on infrequency of gatherings and brevity in Scriptural presentations when they do gather. All of this clashes sharply with both the text and nature of Scripture.

### This Is Not Pointless

It may appear as though all of this has little to do with our text, but that is not the case. In this section of Romans, the Spirit is reasoning with us concerning the unreasonableness of sin. He is showing us that we died to it when we were baptized into Christ's death. For the believer, sin is not merely committing certain wicked and reprehensible acts. It is returning to the old manner of life – living as though there was no God: i.e., returning to a vain life. It is "drawing back," or failing to live by faith (Heb 10:39). It is NOT going on to perfection (Heb 6:1), refusing to press toward the mark (Phil 3:14), and NOT growing up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15). It is NOT laying hold on eternal life (1 Tim 6:12), and NOT running with

from the power of darkness, they were "translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son" (Col 1:13). Not only were they released from guilt and condemnation, they were called to obtain "an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

**When failure to grow in Christ occurs, it is because of the dominance of sin.** Whether men admit it or not, when professed believers are not growing, they are sinning. When they are not advancing to glory, they are drawing back to perdition. If they are not pressing toward the mark, they are living in the flesh. That is the way it is, and our hearts must embrace that truth, and live in an acute awareness of it.

**Grace is never promised to those who do not keep the faith! There is no such thing as a justified person who does not live by faith. It is not possible to maintain the fellowship of Christ, into which we have been called (1 Cor 1:9), if we do not walk in the light as He is in the light.**

These conditions have dictated the reason for our text. This is not merely religious philosophy, or the development of a lifeless creed. The Spirit is showing us WHY we have been accepted by God. He is unveiling the true nature of spiritual life. We have no obligation to sin! In Christ we are freed from both its guilt and power. While we do have to contend with it, if we are overcome by it, it is because we yielded ourselves to it.

In order to assist us to triumph over sin consistently, the Spirit will now show us precisely how we were delivered from the Law. In doing this, He will encourage and equip our hearts to be determined to fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, and finish the course appointed to us.

### DO YOU NOT KNOW?

This is the third time this expression has been used (6:3,16; 7:1). Although I have said this before, it bears repeating. The phrase "Do you not know?" means "Are you ignorant?" This introduces the Kingdom manner of thought. It is the way faith directs us to think. When the grace of God is received, it encourages this kind of knowledge. **It is wrong to think in contradiction of what follows this expression.** When the Spirit says, "Do you not know," He means **salvation makes no provision to think in any**

patience, or endurance, the race set before us (Heb 12:1-2). While these conditions are common in the professed church, they are not acceptable to God. Unless they are corrected, they will be the cause of condemnation, for they are clear and unmistakable evidence of a rejection of the life and grace of God.

In order to correct these things, people must be made aware of the real nature of spiritual life. It is imperative that their conscience be trained, or exercised, concerning what happened when they came into Christ. They were not only delivered from darkness, they were brought into God's "marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9). They were not only delivered

**other way.** This IS the manner of the Kingdom, and it is our business to see to it that it is our way of thinking and living.

The new creation is endowed with the capability of thinking in this manner, and a lack of ability to think in any other way. In speaking in this manner, the Spirit clearly addresses the “new man,” thus encouraging the readers to put on that “new man,” in order to understand, and make progress in, life in Christ Jesus. By saying “Do you not know,” the Spirit is

or engine, of the Law. The various statutes that surrounded the Law dealt with its implications, spelling out how it was to be applied. The summation of the Law consisted of two commandments. *“The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor*

### Scriptural Use of “Law”

In Scripture, particularly in Romans and Galatians, “law” is compared with grace (Rom 4:16; 5:20; 6:14,15; Gal 2:21; 5:4), and “works” are men’s efforts to keep the law (Rom 9:32; 11:6; Gal 2:16; 3:2,5,10). “Law” is, therefore, a means of gaining God’s approval and “works” are the attempts of men to measure up to the requirements of the Law. With great care, the Spirit has confirmed to us that righteousness and Divine approval cannot come by the Law. All efforts to keep the Law failed, as attested by the Divine affirmation, “There is none righteous, no not one” (3:10).

When Paul says he speaks to those who “know the law,” therefore, he is not referring to a mere technical acquaintance with the precepts of the Law. Rather, he speaks to those who are acquainted with the PRINCIPLE of law as revealed in the Law of Moses, or the First Covenant.

### DOMINION WHILE THEY LIVE

**“Know ye not . . . how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?”** Here is an important principle upon which profound teaching will be built. The Law pertains ONLY to life in this present world. It exclusively addresses life in the flesh. The Law has no relevance whatsoever in the tomb, where the dead body lies. It also has no pertinence in the unseen world where those separated from their bodies reside. It will have no application in the glory, when we will ever be with the Lord.

The Law is for men “in the flesh,” and in the world. It is for those who are alienated from God and are under the dominion of sin. As soon as an individual dies, he is no longer under the Law. His state is fixed, and thus he is no longer subject to the Law. Using these principles, the Spirit will unfold the blessed state we now enjoy in Christ Jesus. There is every reason for the believer to be confident in the good fight of faith.

**Law in any form, as it relates to mankind, presumes recalcitrance, waywardness, and the inclination to do what is wrong. Law also presumes some degree of ignorance and insensitivity. If these conditions did not exist, there would be no requirement for law.**

shining a light on the truth, showing it to be the only acceptable context of thought.

### THOSE WHO KNOW THE LAW

Here the Spirit makes a special appeal to those who have an understanding of the Law. This is the law of Moses, not the law of nature. There are at least two reasons for speaking in this manner. First, a special appeal is being made to those with more advanced understanding of the principle of Law. Second, those who lack this understanding will be exposed to needed understanding, thereby enabling them to expand their perception of the Kingdom.

### The Premier Example of Law

**The Law of Moses is the premier example of the principle of Law.** The term “law,” in this case, relates to a means of becoming just before God. It has to do with measuring up to a moral code—a revealed standard of right and wrong. The Ten Commandments were the heart,

*as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these”*(Mark 12:29-31; Deut 6:5; Lev 19:13).

When, therefore, we read of “the Law,” the reference is not to civil law, natural law, or other laws that are not directly related to being accepted by God.

### Law In Any Form

Law in any form, as it relates to mankind, presumes recalcitrance, waywardness, and the inclination to do what is wrong. Law also presumes some degree of ignorance and insensitivity. If these conditions did not exist, there would be no requirement for law.

For the sake of clarity, this is moral law, or principles relating to the identity and enforcement of right and wrong. It has to do with regulating human conduct, which by nature is lawless. Therefore, it is written, “the law is for the lawless” (1 Tim 1:9).

## THE NECESSITY OF A DEATH ILLUSTRATED

**“<sup>2</sup>For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if**

**the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. <sup>3</sup> So then if, while her husband lives, she**

**marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that**

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*law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.”* The Spirit now sites an illustration of the case before us. It deals with marriage at its root, and not with the various complications and exceptions with which the Scriptures deal.

In view of our Western culture, and the infamy into which marriage has sunk, our text will sound unusually strong. But we must not balk at the language employed by the Spirit. This is the Word of the Lord, and consequently the thought is expressed in “pure” language (Psa 119:140; Prov 30:5). It is not intended to deal exhaustively with the subject of marriage. It does, however, approach marriage from the ideal viewpoint. It represents it as God intended for it to be.

In keeping with the subject before us, the **remarriage** of the woman will be the point. The Spirit will affirm that death must occur before remarriage can take place. Once again, the teaching of the text does not pertain specifically to marriage, but to our union with Christ Jesus. That is the point of bringing up this illustration.

#### A BRIEF DIGRESSION

Because of the deterioration of marriage in our society, and within the professed church itself, it is necessary to briefly deal with marriage and remarriage. Men have become too loose in their views on this subject. Divorce has become so common in our time and culture that one out of three marriages are severed by divorce. The rate is slightly higher among those who all themselves “Christian.” Divorce is sought for the most foolish of reasons, and the whole matter of marriage has been greatly obscured because of this circumstance.

The reason for bringing up this matter, is that our text recognizes death as the only thing that frees the woman from her husband. I have already said this is viewing marriage from the ideal perspective, and not from the view of exceptions and unusual circumstances that may occur. It is not intended to be an overview of marriage in its entirety.

#### Divorce Under the Law

The law was comparatively lenient on the matter of divorce. This, Jesus affirmed, was because of the “hardness” of men’s hearts (Matt 19:8).

A “certificate [or ‘bill’] of divorce” was allowed if a husband found some form of indecency in his wife. The woman given such a certificate was free to marry another man (Deut 24:1-2). If her second husband also put her away, her first husband could not remarry her. It is

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written, “her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD” (Deut 24:3-4).

If an Israelite man saw a woman among the captives of a nation they defeated, and desired her, he could take her to be his wife. Certain rules were to be followed in bringing the woman into accord with the customs of Israel. If the man was not pleased with the woman, he could let her go her wherever she desired when she left him (Deut 21:10-14).

Even under the Law, however, God spoke clearly concerning how He felt about divorce: “I hate divorce!” [“putting away,” <sup>KJV</sup>] (Mal 2:16). It was never His intention for marriage to be dissolved. His tolerance of both multiple wives and divorce was not owing to any acceptance of those circumstances. Until Jesus, sin

had such a grip upon the human race that things were permitted that were of themselves not acceptable. Without God’s longsuffering in these matters, He would have been moved to destroy the whole of our race. He therefore “winked” at, or “overlooked” these conditions in prospect of the coming Savior. But He no longer overlooks them. As it is written, “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked [‘winked at,’ <sup>KJV</sup>], but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).

#### Jesus Spoke of Divorce

As you might expect, the professed experts of the Law questioned Jesus about the matter of divorce. They seemed to sense He was more gracious toward some circumstances than they were, and more strict concerning others.

#### The Sermon on the Mount

In His sermon on the mount, Jesus drew a sharp distinction between the tradition of the elders and the truth of God’s word. He introduced these comparisons with the words, “But I say unto you” (Matt 5:22,28,32,34,44).

One such saying concerned the matter of divorce. “It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery” (Matt 5:31-32).

Here an exception is made—fornication, or marital unfaithfulness. Under this condition divorce and remarriage are approved.

#### The Pharisee’s Question

Revealing how they read the Law, the Pharisees once came to Jesus asking, “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” Jesus appeared to totally ignore their question, going

straight to the heart of the matter. *“Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”* **These men had asked the wrong question!** In the origin of marriage, God had made no provision for the dissolution of it. Men were not to separate what God had joined together—something that occurs when husband and wife become *“one flesh.”*

The Pharisees were not satisfied with the answer. Seeking to snare the Savior, they responded, *“Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?”* In his answer, Jesus revealed they had missed the spirit of the Law, viewing it as a lifeless code. *“Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.”* <sup>NKJV</sup> The provision of Moses, therefore, was a concession to protect the woman and keep God from destroying the men. It was not an ideal provision at all, for God has never intended such things: i.e., *“from the beginning it has not been this way.”* <sup>NASB</sup>

Jesus then rose to magnify the law and make it honorable, thereby fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa 42:21). *“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”* Other versions read *“except for sexual immorality,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“except for immorality,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“except for marital unfaithfulness,”* <sup>NIV</sup> and *“except for unchastity.”* <sup>NRSV</sup>

The words were as startling to Christ’s disciples as they are to some in our day. Knowing that handing out bills of divorce had become popular, they responded, *“If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.”* <sup>NASB</sup> They certainly had caught

the drift of our Lord’s words. Marriage was serious business with Him! His answer has caused much discussion among professed believers. *“Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it”* <sup>NASB</sup> (Matt 19:7-12).

The *“statement,”* or *“saying,”* <sup>KJV</sup> to which Jesus refers is not the one He had just made concerning unlawful divorce causing one to commit adultery when remarrying. Rather, it is the statement made by His disciples: *“It is better not to marry.”* That is the statement that is not adapted to everyone. Some people were *“given”* the ability to refrain from marriage, but such abstinence was not intended to be the standard for men. Some were born with no desire for marriage. Some had the condition forced

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upon them by others, such as those taken captive by Babylon (2 Kgs 20:18). Still others chose this manner of life to give themselves to the work of the Lord, like Paul (1 Cor 7:7). Only such individuals could embrace that it was *“better not to marry.”* For all others, as with Adam, it was **not** good *“for man to be alone”* (Gen 2:18).

The point is that Jesus appears to be

in conflict with our text. Romans 7:2 states a woman can only remarry if her husband dies. Jesus allowed for an exception: fornication, or marital infidelity. In Romans, the Spirit is not basing an argument upon the marriage with all of its involvements, but with marriage in its ideal form. It would not be comely to base a truth calculated to produce confidence on a shifting circumstance. That would be counter-productive. Rather than resulting in assurance, such an approach would cause even more confusion.

### God Is Divorced

It may sound a bit crude, but God Himself has given a bill of divorcement to Israel, putting them away because of their unfaithfulness to Him. Here is what the Scriptures say. *“This is what the LORD says: ‘Where is your mother’s certificate of divorce with which I sent her away?’”* (Isa 50:1). He refers to Israel’s *“mother”* because He had rejected a generation of Israelites, and not all the seed of Abraham. And again, *“I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries”* (Jer 3:8). He says *“faithless Israel”* because He did not put the whole nation away—only those who were unfaithful to Him. There is still *“a remnant, according to the election of grace”* (Rom 11:5).

### Paul Speaks on Divorce

Paul gives some extensive teaching on marriage and divorce in the seventh chapter of First Corinthians. He speaks in view of the conditions at Corinth. There were apparently numerous homes where one mate had turned to the Lord and the other had not. Some were hasty to dissolve the marriage at once, not desiring to be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

His counsel to the people is straightforward. *“And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.”* That was the general rule, and strictly comports with our Lord’s words concerning marriage. The wife who

insists on leaving, however, is told to remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband. All of this is to be considered in light of what Jesus said about separations that allowed for remarriage.

The Apostle then addresses those who are unequally yoked with unbelievers. Whether it is a believing husband and an unbelieving wife, or a believing wife and an unbelieving husband, the admonition is the same. If the unbeliever is *“willing to live”*<sup>NIV</sup> with the believer he/she is not to be put away. The marriage and the children are *“sanctified”* through the believer. If this was not the case, the children resulting from that marriage would be *“unclean.”*

If the unbeliever is **not** willing to remain, the believer is told, *“Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.”* I understand the *“bondage”* to refer to the marital bond. The individual loosed from that bond is free to remarry. A special condition has been introduced, and a remedy is provided that is not standard, but is accepted.

In order to encourage determination to do the best they can under unfavorable circumstances, Paul reminds believers that they may actually save their unbelieving mates. *“For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (1 Cor 7:10-16).

**Why the Lengthy Explanation?**

There is a reason for this rather lengthy, but by no means thorough, explanation. **First**, it is important that no person uses this text to bludgeon believers who have been divorced. There are some things that cannot be undone, and this is one of them. We know from Christ’s dealings with the woman at the well, that there is grace for such people. He told that woman, who had five husbands, and was living with one that was not her husband,

*“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water”* (John 4:4:10).

**Second**, the text should be an encouragement to the unmarried to approach marriage with all solemnity. It must not be entered into with the thought that it can be quickly dissolved. It is intended to last until parted by death. A disregard for the view of marriage set forth in this text will yield disastrous and

The intention of this passage is to explain WHY we are no longer under the Law. By that, I mean we are no longer subject to its curse, for *“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them”* (Gal 3:10).

The Spirit has already declared that we have entered into a state of death. We *“were baptized into His (Christ’s) death”* (6:3). Verses two and three are establishing how the Law considers death. Death removes one from the dominion of

**The text should be an encouragement to the unmarried to approach marriage with all solemnity. It must not be entered into with the thought that it can be quickly dissolved. It is intended to last until parted by death. A disregard for the view of marriage set forth in this text will yield disastrous and far reaching consequences.**

far reaching consequences.

**Third**, there is a certain manner of reasoning that is inherent in the Kingdom of God. The basis of reasoning is always founded on the ideal and sure foundation of truth. Our views of Scripture must NOT be molded by circumstances that vary, such as custom and tradition. To approach the Word of God with inconsistent circumstances as our foundation can only result in confusion and the removal of confidence.

**Fourth**, our view of God-ordained institutions, such as marriage and government, must be shaped by Divine intention, not the customs or abuses of our times. Marriage, in this case, is to be seen from the standpoint of what God intended, not from how men have corrupted it.

**THE INTENT OF THE PASSAGE**

the law. That is the whole intent of the passage.

The expression *“free from the law”* applies to the wife who was bound by the law to remain with her husband. When her husband dies, she is released from that law of marriage. She is now at liberty to be married to another man without becoming an adulterous, or infracting the Law in another area. **DEATH FREES FROM THE LAW.** That is the point. It moves the individual beyond the jurisdiction of Law. The Law is made for those alive in the flesh, not those who have died.

We must take care not to press the text too far. It is a general statement, and must be so taken without attempting to impose traditions on men. It is not intended to be either a bludgeon or an elixir of delusive oil. We will find that the application of this truth appears to contradict the very illustration given.

**DEAD THROUGH THE BODY OF CHRIST**

*“<sup>4a</sup> Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law*

*through the body of Christ . . . ”*On the surface, this does appear to be at

variance with the illustration taken from the Law. In the case adduced concerning

*Our death with Christ has yielded Liberation from the Tyranny and Condemnation of the Law--by Given O. Blakely*

marriage, the husband died and the woman was free to remarry. In the application before us, it is the woman who dies—the one under the law of the husband. There is a reason for this line of thought. **The Law of God cannot die!** It came from God, and it cannot succumb. We cannot be freed from the tyranny of law by it dying. It is “*holy*,” “*just*,” “*good*,” and “*spiritual*” (Rom 7:12,14; 1 Tim 1:8). It is “*light*” (Prov 6:23), bringing the “*knowledge of sin*” (Rom 3:20), and witnessing to “*the righteousness of God*” (Rom 3:21).

There is no scenario in the Law that precisely depicts what occurs to us in salvation. However, the principle that declares what must happen IS here.

**It is not the Law that has died, but us! The Law did not need to be joined to someone else, we did! By saying we have “become dead,” the Spirit shows our death was a Divine accomplishment, not something we ourselves did.**

**Before we can be joined to the Lord, a death must occur!** Once death occurs, the jurisdiction of the Law is obviated. **Until it occurs, we cannot be released from the condemnation of the Law or be joined to the Lord.**

#### **WE ARE THE ONES WHO DIED**

It is not the Law that has died, but us! The Law did not need to be joined to someone else, **we did!** By saying we have “*become dead*,” the Spirit shows our death was a Divine accomplishment, not something we ourselves did.

The Spirit reasons, “*that if One died for all, then were all dead*” (2 Cor 5:14). In Christ, **our** death is as real as His! Once we were “*dead in trespasses and sins*” (Eph 2:1). Now we are “*dead to sin*” (Rom 6:2). Because we are “*dead*,” we

are “*freed from sin*,” and shall “*also live with Him*” (Rom 6:7-8). We are now “*dead with Christ*” (Rom 6:8), and are to reckon ourselves to be “*dead indeed unto sin*” (Rom 6:11). Again, it is written, “*For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God*” (Col 3:3).

Let no one doubt the reality of this death. It is spiritual, but not metaphorical. It is our union with the death of Christ. We were “*baptized into His death*” (6:3). **If He had not died, we could not have died to the Law.**

This death occurred when our sins were remitted and the righteousness of God was imputed to us. When we came into union with His death, we came out of union with sin’s guilt. As soon as that happened, the Law had no more dominion over us. It could no longer condemn us or drive us from the presence of the Lord. The Law could not defile our conscience or accuse us before the Lawgiver. As already illustrated, the Law has no jurisdiction in the realm of death, and we **really** died!

Freedom from the Law does not mean freedom from obligation,

but **freedom from condemnation**. It does not mean freedom from the restraint of the flesh, but **freedom from condemnation**. It does not mean freedom from the responsibility to obey God, but **freedom from condemnation**. In Christ, we are out of reach of the condemnation of the Law, although we delight in it after our renewed “*inward man*” (Rom 7:25).

#### **THROUGH THE BODY OF CHRIST**

We have not become “*dead to the Law*” through any doing of our own. We have not cancelled its unbending requirement of perfect obedience by fulfilling its demands. We have not measured up to its standard so that condemnation has now been withdrawn. The law cannot retract the sentence it passes! God can repent (Gen 6:6; Ex

32:14), but Law cannot. God can forgive sin, but Law cannot. God can give repentance, but Law cannot.

#### **A Sacrificial Body**

Our death to the Law was “*through the body of Christ*.” **This is Christ’s body from the sacrificial point of view**—an offering for sin. Scripture makes much of Christ’s body from this point of view.

❑ **A PREPARED BODY.** “*Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but A BODY hast thou prepared Me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do thy will, O God*” (Heb 10:5-7). In His body, Jesus came to grips with the circumstances faced by the ones He came to redeem. His body was also the vehicle through which a pleasing sacrifice for sin would be presented to God the Father.

❑ **BORE OUR SINS.** “*Who His own self bare our sins in HIS OWN BODY on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed*” (1 Pet 2:24). The sins of the world were localized and judged in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

❑ **COMMUNION WITH.** “*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of THE BODY of Christ?*” (1 Cor 10:16). At the table of the Lord we come into fellowship with Christ’s body and the benefits that resulted from its sacrifice.

❑ **REMEMBERED.** “*And when he had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is MY BODY, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me*” (1 Cor 11:23). Christ’s body is remembered because of what was effected in His death.

❑ **RECONCILIATION.** “*And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in THE BODY of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight*” (Col 1:21-22). In Christ’s death, sinners were



brought back to the God from whom they were alienated by sin.

- **SANCTIFICATION.** *“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of THE BODY of Jesus Christ once for all”* (Heb 10:10). The presentation of Jesus’ body as an offering for sin qualified us for Divine acceptance and employment.

In our baptism we were effectively united with Christ’s sacrificial body. All of the benefits that flowed from that sacrifice passed to us as we were united with Him in His vicarious death. That effective unity is what brought about our death to the Law—our release from its condemnation. It moved us beyond its jurisdiction.

### **CHRIST AND LAW CANNOT UNITE**

It is not possible to be under the Law and united to Christ at the same time. When we are joined to the Lord, we are necessarily dead to the Law. Believers are now in covenant with Christ NOT Law. They now live for Him, not with a mind to fulfill a code or an obligation.

Some might imagine this arrangement to be less demanding than that of Law. This is a delusion. The person in covenant relation with God through Christ has more demands placed upon him than any law can place. No thought or deed can be his own. His body is not his own. He affection is to be placed on things above, and self is to be denied. With these more strenuous demands comes an abundance

of grace that we may be able to keep them with great joy and peace.

The Law as a covenant condemned us. As a means of defining sin, it helps us. Seeing this distinction brings great liberty to the soul.

Robert Haldane said of Martin Luther, “When Luther discovered the distinction between the law as a covenant and as a rule, it gave such relief to his mind, that he considered himself as at the gate of paradise.” That view is one that joyfully acknowledges we are, in Christ, *“dead to the law.”* Yet, the believer holds the Law in the highest regard, hiding it in the heart, and serving it with the mind (Psa 119:11; Rom 7:25).

## **THE PURPOSE FOR OUR DEATH**

<sup>4a</sup> *... that you may be married to another; to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.”* There is a reason why we have become *“dead to the Law.”* In our unity with Jesus in His death, our sins were put away, and the *“flesh”* circumcised, or cut away, from our essential persons (Col 2:11-13). However, separating us from our sins was not the major objective. Rather, it was the MEANS to a large purpose.

### **THAT WE MIGHT LIVE TO GOD**

From a Summary point of view, the purpose of our death to the Law was that we might live toward God Himself. *“For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Gal 2:19). To *“live to God”* is to live for Him, doing His will, and furthering His purpose on the earth. It is to be absorbed with His revealed agenda, engaged in casting down imaginations and high thoughts, and wrestling against principalities and powers. There is no purpose for dying to sin and the Law is this does not take place. Death must lead to life!

Let it be clear, until a person has died with Christ, or been *“buried into His death,”* life toward God is not possible. Prior to our death with Christ, we were *“slaves of sin,”* and had neither the will nor the capacity to live toward God. Only a death can resolve that situation.

### **WHY BE SUBJECT TO ORDINANCES?**

*“Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations; Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle, which all concern things which perish with the using; according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh”*<sup>NKJV</sup>

to sin, pass away, and everything becomes new (2 Cor 5:17). We develop a certain disdain for sin that can keep us from it if we will live by faith. Now our emphasis is doing what God pleases, not trying in the flesh avoid what He hates.

### **THAT YOU MAY BE MARRIED**

From one point of view, we are *“betrothed”*, or *“espoused”* to Christ (2 Cor 11:2). Here a marriage between the believer and Christ is mentioned, and it is on an individual basis. Ordinarily, being

**Dying with Christ moves us beyond the need to be subject to elemental ordinances. When we die with Christ we receive a new heart, a new nature, and a new spirit. Old things, such as preferring to sin, pass away, and everything becomes new (2 Cor 5:17). We develop a certain disdain for sin that can keep us from it if we will live by faith. Now our emphasis is doing what God pleases, not trying in the flesh avoid what He hates.**

(Col 2:20-23).

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wedded to Christ is a collective view, taking the entire church into account, which is Christ’s *“bride”* (John 3:29; Rev 21:2,9; 22:17). How refreshing to learn it is also an individual view.

This is a further development of the

thought of being freed from the Law, which was our first husband. As long as we were under the Law, we could not be married to Christ. Our sin was still with us, and Christ cannot be joined to a person under the rule of Law and servitude to sin.

Our marriage with Christ has not taken place in its fulness, but it has, in a very real sense, started. We belong to Him as surely as Mary belonged to Joseph before their marriage had been fully culminated. "Before" they came together, she was found with child by the power of the Holy Spirit. And, "before" they came together, before Joseph knew the real situation, he was minded "to put her away *privily* (privately or secretly)" (Matt 1:19).

#### Raised with Christ

Marriage, in this passage, is viewed as being joined to the Lord in the first fruits

the times in which we live. Sin is altogether too prominent in the modern church. There is too much of it in its leaders, and it is allowed too much in its constituency.

Under the Law, there was a perpetual "remembrance" of sin, year after year (Heb 10:3). The Law could not get rid of sin, but only remind people of its continual presence. But in Christ, this is not the case. Now the blood of Christ purges our conscience "from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb 9:14).

#### UNITED WITH A RISEN CHRIST

We are united with a RISEN Christ, and share His resurrection life. We have been freed to be married "to Him who is raised from the dead." Our lives are now "hid with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). We are presently participating in the "Divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4), and made "partakers

1:11).

This "fruit" is the consequence of Christ living within us. As it is written, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" <sup>NKJV</sup> (Gal 2:20). It is also the result of God working in us, "both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). Again, this fruitage is to be viewed as God working in us "that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ" (Heb 13:21).

Notice that it is "fruit unto God." He is the prominent member of the Godhead. From the very beginning, the result of believing on Christ accrues to God's glory.

- We turn from Satan "unto God" (acts 26:18).
- We are now "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:11).
- We yield our "members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom 6:13).
- We are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice "unto God" (Rom 12:1).
- In Christ, we are a "sweet savor of Christ" unto God (2 Cor 2:15).
- Jesus has reconciled both Jew and Gentile "unto God" (Eph 2:15).
- We are to give diligence to show ourselves "approved unto God" (2 Tim 2:15).
- One of the benefits of the New Covenant is that we can "draw nigh unto God" (Heb 7:19).
- We "come unto God" through the Lord Jesus (Heb 7:25).
- Jesus has made us "kings and priests unto God" (Rev 1:6).
- Strong faith that does not stagger at the promises gives "glory to God" (Rom 4:20).
- Through His death, Christ has reconciled us "to God" (Rom 5:10).
- The person who serves God in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, is "acceptable to God" (Rom 14:18).
- In Christ, our sacrifices and offerings are "acceptable and well pleasing to God" (Phil 4:18).
- We have "turned to God" to serve Him (1 Thess 1:9).

**This is a further development of the thought of being freed from the Law, which was our first husband. As long as we were under the Law, we could not be married to Christ. Our sin was still with us, and Christ cannot be joined to a person under the rule of Law and servitude to sin.**

sense. We are, after all, "risen with Christ" (Col 3:1). Not only were we "buried with Him in baptism," we are also "risen with Him through faith in the operation of God" (Col 2:12). That experience started the "married" experience of our text.

#### SIN HAS NO PLACE IN THIS MARRIAGE

The person who is dead to the law is not free to sin. God does not take a tolerant view toward sin in those identified with His Son. Ananias and Sapphira confirm this to be the case (Acts 5:1-10). The infamous fornicator at Corinth also cries out to us about the total unacceptability of sin in those who have named the Son (1 Cor 5:1-4).

Let it be clear that no person who is serving sin is "dead to the Law," for the Law is, indeed, "for the lawless." This whole matter points out the seriousness of

of Christ" (Heb 3:14). Our life is resurrection life, and is moved along by the "power of His resurrection" (Phil 3:10), the power which God "wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead," exalting Him to His own right hand in the heavenly places (Eph 1:20). How radically this life differs from living under the domination of the law!

#### FRUIT UNTO GOD

"... that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Here is why we died to the law! Here is why we were raised with Christ and are married to Him. It was to bring forth "fruit unto God." This is the "fruit unto holiness" mentioned in 6:22. It is the fruit that glorifies God, to which Jesus alluded in John 15:8. It is the fruit of the Spirit, all of which is presented to God "in all goodness, righteousness and truth" (Eph 5:9). This is "the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Phil

All of this is fruit – fruit “unto God.” In Christ, “much fruit” brings glory to the Father (John 15:8), and a lack of fruit results in removal from the Vine, who is Christ Himself (John 15:2).

It should be noted that all works previous to our union with Christ are “dead works,” from which our conscience must be purged (Heb 9:14). They were “dead” because they were not produced

from its condemnation and married to the risen Christ. While it is true that David loved and served the Law prior to Christ (Psa 119:48,97,113,127,159,167), he did so as a spiritual pioneer, ahead of his time. Like Abraham, he had a faith that transcended the day in which he lived.

But for those in Christ Jesus, loving and serving the Law is the standard or norm, not the exception. We have been elevated to the heavenly places in Christ,

*truth of the gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth” (Col 1:5-6).*

### SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Note with what care the Spirit speaks on our deliverance from the Law and new life in Christ Jesus. He ever holds before us the Divine intention behind this marvelous transformation. It is that we bring forth “fruit unto God.” This is designed to put a damper on the flesh, removing any tendency to be lenient with sin, or excuse our indulgence in it.

When a person sins, regardless of the reason, he has departed from the will of God. He has ceased to bring forth fruit unto God, for such fruit cannot come from sin. In Christ, fruit is related to “holiness” (6:21,21). Being in Christ NEVER results in sin. Faith, or believing God, will never yield a harvest of sin. Walking in the Spirit cannot lead to sin. Sin always springs from unbelief and alienation. In my judgment, there is a great need to emphasize this aspect of spiritual life. We are living in an indulgent age, and amidst a transgressing society. Unless “by reason of use,” our spiritual senses are “exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb 5:14), we will find ourselves condoning what God condemns. In such a case, sin will surely express itself through us.

**But for those in Christ Jesus, loving and serving the Law is the standard or norm, not the exception. We have been elevated to the heavenly places in Christ, and are capable of bringing forth consistent fruit to God in large measures. This is a most marvelous circumstance.**

out of a oneness with Christ. Whether they were works of imagined goodness, or expressions of sinful lusts, they were “dead,” and were not “fruit unto God.” Our conscience must be “purged” of any trust in imagined “good works,” and any defilement caused by transgressions of the Law. All of this is involved in being freed from the Law and married to Christ.

### VIEWING THE LAW

We will never be able to serve the Law with our minds until we are liberated

and are capable of bringing forth consistent fruit to God in large measures. This is a most marvelous circumstance.

The circumstance of bringing forth fruit to God is beautifully stated in the Epistle to the Colossians. Paul gave thanks for the Colossians, praying diligently upon hearing of their faith in Christ and love toward “all the saints.” This, he said, was because “the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the

## WHEN WE WERE IN THE FLESH

**“For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.”**

As Paul progresses in opening spiritual life to our understanding, he masterfully weaves our past with our present, showing what a marvelous transition we have undergone. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he speaks in strict harmony with what has occurred to us in Christ Jesus. He does not judge according to appearance, but righteously, appealing to the “new man” which is “renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him” (Col 3:10). There is power in this approach because it serves to remind us of the great work God has

done in us through Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit. To show us more fully how much we have been blessed, the Spirit will take us into the past, confirming our former condition. It will be precise, but it will be seen as the **past**, not the present.

### WHEN WE WERE IN THE FLESH

Most of the modern translations maintain the word “flesh,” although the NIV uses the expression “sinful nature,” adding the footnote, “Or, the flesh.”

The phrase “IN the flesh” means controlled by the flesh, or the unregenerate part of our being. This is the part that came from Adam, or was “born

of the flesh” (John 3:6).

### An Argument for Consistent Terminology

One of the great disservices of so many translations is the loss of consistent and meaningful terminology. The text of Scripture has become so diluted by the great variety of translations that the meaning of some key words has been significantly obscured. The word “flesh” is a case in point.

Many translators have taken the liberty of **interpreting** the word “flesh” rather than translating it. From the etymological point of view, there is no question concerning the propriety of the

word “*flesh*.” Taken from the word σαρκί, the word, from a translators viewpoint, is undoubtedly “*flesh*.” This precise word is used forty times from Romans through Second John. While various contexts do give it a slightly different significance, the meaning ALWAYS has to do with the natural, or temporal, part of us.

For those whose minds are cultured by Scripture, the word “*flesh*” rarely speaks of good. It is one of those terms that is undeniably related to sin and degradation. A few such uses will suffice to illustrate this point.

- ❑ “For I know that in me (that is, in my FLESH) nothing good dwells” (Rom 7:18).
- ❑ “I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with THE FLESH the law of sin” (Rom 7:25).
- ❑ “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to THE FLESH, but according to the Spirit” (Rom 8:1).
- ❑ “For those who live according to THE FLESH set their minds on the things of THE FLESH, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit” (Rom 8:5).
- ❑ “So then, those who are in THE FLESH cannot please God” (Rom 8:8).
- ❑ “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors; not to THE FLESH, to live according to THE FLESH you will die” (Rom 8:12-13a).
- ❑ “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for THE FLESH, to fulfill its lusts” (Rom 13:14).
- ❑ “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of THE FLESH and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1).
- ❑ “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by THE FLESH?” (Gal 3:3).
- ❑ “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” (Gal 5:13).
- ❑ “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and

you shall not fulfill the lust of THE FLESH” (Gal 5:16).

- ❑ “For THE FLESH lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against THE FLESH; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” (Gal 5:17).
- ❑ “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” (Gal 5:19-21).
- ❑ “And those who are Christ’s have crucified THE FLESH with its passions and desires” (Gal 5:24).
- ❑ “For he who sows to his FLESH will of THE FLESH reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life” (Gal 6:8).
- ❑ “Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our FLESH, fulfilling the desires of THE FLESH and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others” (Eph 2:3).
- ❑ “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in THE FLESH” (Phil 3:3).
- ❑ “For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of THE FLESH, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error” (2 Pet 2:18).
- ❑ “For all that is in the world; the lust of THE FLESH, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; is not of the Father but is of the world” (1 John 2:16).

After reading these verses, the thought of being “IN THE FLESH” should strike fear into the heart. The use

of words like “sinful nature” (NIV, NASB), “natural self” (NJB), “natural inclinations” (NJB), and “sinful passions” (ASV), have not served to clarify the concept of “*flesh*.” While there may be some helpful facets in these words, they have introduced a certain inconsistency in Scripture itself. That inconsistency has, in my judgment, diffused the power of the word. It is the peculiar prerogative of Apostolic doctrine to make clear that “no good thing” dwells in this part of the human makeup.

“*Flesh*” is what is “born of the flesh.” It is more than the chemical makeup of our bodies. There is the “will of the flesh” (John 1:13), “the things of the flesh” (Rom 8:5), “filthiness of the flesh” (2 Cor 7:1), “lust of the flesh” (Gal 5:16), “works of the flesh” (Gal 5:19), and the “body of

**For those whose minds are cultured by Scripture, the word “*flesh*” rarely speaks of good. It is one of those terms that is undeniably related to sin and degradation.**

the sins of the flesh” (Col 2:11). There is also “*fleshly wisdom*” (2 Cor 1:12) and “a *fleshly mind*” (Col 2:18).

Make no mistake about this, no good thing can come from “*the flesh*.” It “*profits nothing*” (John 6:63), leading to death and ultimate condemnation.

#### **“In the Flesh”**

When, therefore, we were “*in the flesh*,” we were in a hopeless condition. We were not good. We were not righteous. We were “*dead in trespasses and sins*.” Sin controlled us, and we were its slaves. We were, by virtue of being dominated and controlled by the flesh, alienated from God and shut out from heaven. Earlier, in chapter six, the Spirit said we were “*free from righteousness*” at that time (6:20). It was a hopeless condition.

Now, this is the condition from which we have been liberated as a result of being baptized into Christ's death. Although we are "in the body," we are no longer "in the flesh." Later, the Spirit will affirm, "But ye are **not** in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" (Rom 8:9).

**THE MOTIONS OF SINS**

When we were "in the flesh," or in a state of nature, dominated by the temporal and enslaved to sin, there were certain activities within us. The KJV calls it "motions of sins." Other versions read, "sinful passions,"<sup>NKJV,NIV,NRSV</sup> "passions of sins,"<sup>DARBY</sup> "evil passions,"<sup>BBE</sup> and "sinful desires."<sup>NLT</sup>

The "motions of sins" are sin working within the individual, pulling him downward into the spiral of indulgence. Sin is not dormant. It has "motions," or passions and emotions that refuse to keep quiet. When we were "in the flesh," sin was like a bubbling volcano, erupting at every opportunity, and defiling everything about us. It certainly is not a lovely picture, but that is how it was when we were "in the flesh." We were governed by sin, which worked within us through lusts, or godless desires.

**PASSIONS AROUSED BY THE LAW**

Herein is a most marvelous circumstance. These sinful "motions," or

the Law,"<sup>ASV</sup> "which came into being through the Law,"<sup>BBE</sup> and "the law aroused these evil desires."<sup>NLT</sup> The New Century Version gives an unusually strong reading. "The law made us want to do sinful things." The Children's International Bible reads the same way. God's Word, a 1998 version of Scripture, says sin was "Stirred up by Moses' laws."

Whatever one may think about this verse, there is a resounding unanimity in all of the versions of Scripture. Care must be taken, however, not to ascribe fault to the holy Law of God. The text does not say the Law MADE us sin, but that it aroused the passions, or "motions," of sin. It is as though it awakened lusts, causing them to spring into action, and thereby defiling us. **The Law excited, provoked, or inflamed sinful passions.** It did not do this because it was evil, but because natural man is evil.

This is why the Scriptures affirm, "the strength of sin is the law" (1 Cor 15:56). As this will be developed at length in verses 7-14, I will reserve further comments for our coverage of those verses.

Do you wonder about the sinfulness of man? Are you confused about how far man fell when sin and death entered into the world? Ponder that God's holy Law aroused sin, causing it to express itself

which I am familiar. For the most part, the people in those sectarian precincts are woefully ignorant of the nature and power of sin. It is a most tragic circumstance.

**FRUIT UNTO DEATH**

And what was the result of the awakening of the sin principle within us? How were we affected by it? The "motions of sins" worked in our "members to bring forth fruit unto death." Mind you, this is a condition that existed when we were married to the Law—when it was our master, and we were responsible to it.

All of our faculties were impacted by the motions, or emotions, of sin. Sin proliferated through our entire beings, infecting our thoughts, desires, ambitions, judgments, and perceptions. All of this happened while we were wed to the Law, and we could not extricate ourselves from the dilemma! There was not a single part of our complex persons that was not tainted by these lusts. They "worked in our members," driving us further from God and deeper into sin and transgression.

Those who can see these things have reason to thank God we have died to the Law in order that we might be married to another. That death to the Law was the prelude to living unto God. The new life we receive in Christ Jesus is aroused by the Gospel, and fueled by the promises. It has no propensity to sin, but is a more precise image of God than ever born by even Adam, the "first man."

Our marriage to Christ has brought power to us that can never be realized through the principle of law. Life in Him is superior in every way. Now, praise the Lord, we can "awake unto righteousness and sin not" (1 Cor 15:34), rather than have sinful passions awakened and inflamed by the holy Law of God. Now God works in us to will and do of His own good pleasure. What a "great salvation" has been brought to us! Let us see to it we do not neglect it in any way (Heb 2:3).

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evil passions, "were aroused by the law." The KJV reads, "which were BY the law." Other versions read, "which were through

and dominate us. That is what this passage teaches. It is a truth that is rarely, if ever, heard in the circles with

**NOW WE ARE DELIVERED FROM THE LAW**

"<sup>6a</sup> **But now we have been delivered from the Law, having died to what we were held by . . .**" Never forget this: we have to be "**delivered from the Law!**" Whatever you may think of the human will and man's power of

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analysis, they were wholly inadequate to remove men from the dominion of the condemning Law! In my judgment, there has been far too much emphasis placed on the “you can do it” approach to salvation. The truth of the matter is that we could NOT do it. We could not get rid of our sin or the inclination to sin. We were impotent to come out from under the dominion of the Law. We could not stop it from condemning us. In fact, when it spoke to us, sin broke out the more, expressing itself in all of our capacities.

Our condition apart from Christ was one of death (Eph 2:5), alienation (Col 1:21), captivity (2 Tim 2:26), servitude to sin (Rom 6:17), darkness (Eph 5:8), and hopelessness (Eph 2:12). We had hard and stony hearts (Ezek 11:19), were blind (Eph 4:18), and our ears were uncircumcised (Acts 7:51).

#### DELIVERED FROM THE LAW

Let it be clear that all who are NOT delivered from the Law ARE condemned by it. It was given that *“every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God”* (Rom 3:19). The fact that people run quickly to sin does not mean they are not under the Law. Because sinful souls do not feel the restraint of Law does not mean they are not ruled by it. Their involvement in sin is only accruing wrath for them. In the words of Scripture, *“But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath”* (Job 36:13). Again, *“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath”* (Rom 2:5).

Verse fourteen of the sixth chapter said, *“for you are not under Law.”* Now the Spirit tells us **why** we are not under the domination of law. It is certainly not because we have fulfilled it. It is not, as some imagine, because the Law has passed away, or been erased. We have been **“DELIVERED from the Law,”** or **“released”**<sup>NASB,NIV</sup> from its domination.

Not only were we *“delivered from the power of darkness”* (Col 1:13) and *“the wrath to come”* (1 Thess 1:10), we were also *“delivered”* from the Law that condemned us. In both cases, we were helpless to change our situation. We could

not break loose from the powers of darkness, and we could not reverse the sentence of the Law.

The accomplishment of Christ’s mission is pictured this way in the second chapter of Hebrews. *“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the*

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*same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”* (2:14-15).

The *“fear of death”* was induced by the Law, which declared *“The soul that sinneth, it shall die”* (Ezek 18:4,20; Rom 6:23; Gal 3:13). In fact, this was the very first curse pronounced by God—and it had to do with breaking Law. *“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”* (Gen 2:17). Like a ruthless master, the Law stood over us, refusing to let us go, all the while calling for our well-deserved execution. If we were ever to experience freedom from its condemnation, we would have to be delivered.

#### Now We Are Delivered

Whatever our former condition, *“now we are delivered from the Law!”* God delivered us through Christ and by the Holy Spirit. He did it, as will be confirmed, with inscrutable wisdom. No mortal could ever have conceived of this means of deliverance.

#### WE DIED TO WHAT HELD US

We died to what held us! Other versions read as follows. *“Having died to what we were held by,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“having died to that by which we were bound,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“by dying to what once bound,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“dead to that which held us captive,”*<sup>NRSV</sup> *“having been made dead to that which had power over us,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“having died to what was binding us.”*<sup>NJB</sup>

#### Did We Die, or Did the Law Die?

Some versions read as though the Law is what died. *“That being dead wherein we were held,”*<sup>KJV</sup> *“That being dead by which we were held,”*<sup>WEBSTERS</sup> *“that being dead by which we were held,”*<sup>REVISEDWEBSTERS</sup> *“that being dead in which we were held,”*<sup>YOUNGS LITERAL</sup>

While these readings may appear to say the Law died, none of these translations actually say that. If we apply the word *“that”* to the Law, the text appears to justify the conclusion that the Law died. On the other hand, if read the word *“that”* in the sense of *“in order that,”* the death applies to believers. That is the sense of the text.

If the language does not appear to justify this conclusion, the doctrine will. Beginning with Romans 6:2, the death of believers is the emphasis. *“We that are dead to sin”* (6:2), *“baptized into His death”* (6:3), *“buried with Him by baptism into death”* (6:4), *“in the likeness of His death”* (6:5), *“our old man is crucified”* (6:6), *“he that is dead is freed from sin”* (6:7), *“reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin”* (6:11) *“those who are alive from the dead”* (6:13). As if this was not enough, the statement is nailed down firmly in 7:4. *“Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another; to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.”*

It is difficult to conceive of the Spirit declaring then matter with any more clarity. The notion that the Law has somehow died is an absurdity unworthy of embrace. If that was the case, we would not need to be delivered, for a dead Law

could not hold us! Further, if the law itself had died, or had been abrogated, it could neither condemn or have dominion over anyone, sinner or not. But this is not the case, for the Law is still “for the lawless” (1 Tim 1:9). It still is a “schoolmaster” to bring men to Christ. Men are not released

way. The NRSV reads, “erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands.” It was the Law’s CLAIM against us that was cancelled and nailed to the cross.

**EPHESIANS 2:15.** Here again, the

delivered from what “held us,” or “what we were held by.” Other versions read, “by which we were bound,”<sup>NASB</sup> “what once bound us,”<sup>NIV</sup> “that which held us captive,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “that wherein we were held,”<sup>ASV</sup> “wherein we were detained,”<sup>DARBYS</sup> “that which had power over us,”<sup>BBE</sup> and “what was binding us.”<sup>NJB</sup>

The Law will not let a guilty man go! It holds him fast, even defiling his conscience after he has offered sacrifice after sacrifice (Heb 10:1-4). Whenever the Law makes a demand upon the sinner, even if those demands are seemingly fulfilled with a most exacting precision, the law shouts “GUILTY” in the face of the transgressor.

But when we become “dead to the Law through the body of Christ,” the Law condemns us no longer. By being joined to Christ, we have died to the order over which the Law presides. It cannot condemn us, for the God who spoke the Law has Himself justified us (Rom 8:33). The Law, therefore, very much alive and speaking, looks at the person who has died with Christ, and condemns him not. He is in the heavenly places, and his sin has been washed away. The part of him that is in fellowship with Christ is clean and pure, and is the dominant part.

What is even more, the Law of God, far from being abrogated, has been written upon the heart of the believer and put into his mind. Now, the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled by the believer (Rom 8:1,4), something that would be utterly impossible if the Law had died or been abolished.

It is absurd to think that God would write a law upon a heart that had been abolished. Or, that He would put into our minds a Law that had been nailed to the cross. Further, to affirm that the righteousness of a law that had been abrogated is fulfilled in those who are in Christ Jesus is, indeed, stretching our imagination.

It appears to me that men have attributed their own ignorance to God, representing as acting not only in contradiction of His word, but also in violation of His Divine nature. That is particularly reprehensible when you consider we partake of that nature.

**If we have died to the law in order to be freed from its dominion and condemnation, and in order to serve God in the newness of Spirit, let us once and for all have done with everything that is lifeless and unproductive! Such things are out of place in the Lord’s service.**

from that “schoolmaster” until “faith comes” (Gal 3:24-25).

**Wasn’t The law Nailed to the Cross?**

Some will respond by saying the Law was nailed to the cross, removed and taken out of the way once and for all. It is written, “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Col 2:14). And again, “Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace” (Eph 2:15). And again, “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom 10:4).

In each of these verses painstaking precision can be seen. None of them say the Law was abolished, abrogated, or removed. **It was not the Law that was judged in the cross, but the transgressions of the Law.** Sin could not be removed by destroying the Law, for it was in the world before there was a law (Rom 5:13).

**COLOSSIANS 2:14.** The point here is not that the Law itself was nailed to the cross, but the indebtedness that was created by violating its precepts. The NASB therefore reads, “having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us.” The Law in its condemning capacity was taken out of the

Spirit carefully states the case. He does not say the commandments were “abolished,” but “the commandments contained in ordinances or regulations.” These were not the Ten Commandments, the platform of the Law, but the commandments pertaining to the ceremonial Law. These commandments forced men to deal with their sin, offering various and frequent sacrifices. It also imposed washings and other formalities upon the constituents of the Old Covenant that were required because of their sin. However, when Christ removed our sin, that brought an abrupt end to the “ordinances” of the law, for sin is what required them all.

**ROMANS 10:4.** Again, the case is stated most precisely. The Law was ended as a means to righteousness, and not as a moral standard: “the end of the Law FOR righteousness.” Because faith is the exclusive means of appropriating righteousness, and because the death of Christ has opened the door for faith to be given to men, the Law has been terminated as the way to become righteous.

**Law Has No Claim Over the Dead**  
Apart from these several observations, the whole point of the text is that the Law has no claim over the dead—and we have died with Christ!

**WE WERE HELD CAPTIVE**  
Our text affirms that we have been

## THE REASON FOR THAT DELIVERANCE

<sup>6b</sup> . . . so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.” Why is it that we have died with Jesus? For what purpose have we been raised to walk in newness of life? What is the reason for being released from the Law by our death with Jesus? All of this has been done that we might serve the Lord “in newness of Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.” Right here we will come to grips with some of the major deficiencies in modern religion, particularly in the Western world.

### NEWNESS OF SPIRIT

Pet 3:13). Under such marvelous conditions, it is utterly unreasonable to attempt to serve God in old and lifeless routines.

Serving God in “newness of Spirit” is serving Him in the energy, and under the direction, of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit has been “poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior”<sup>NASB</sup> (Tit 3:5). In addition, the Lord Jesus Himself is appropriately described as a “life-giving Spirit”<sup>NKJV</sup> (1 Cor 15:45).

Serving God “in newness of Spirit,” is ministering to Him in the power of the

is NOT an enviable position.

“Newness of Spirit” is not fleshly hype. It is driven by spiritual insight, godly joy, and faith that sees Him who is invisible. Where “newness of Spirit” is not found, God is not being served, and His will is not being done. It makes little difference how elaborate the institution or appearance may be.

### OLDNESS OF LETTER

Attempting to serve God in the “oldness of letter” is Old Covenant religion. It is trying to serve God without the Spirit of God. It is following procedures instead of Jesus. It is a liturgy instead of a living sacrifice. “Oldness of letter” involves the heartless observance of rules and procedures. It has no spiritual life in it, does not perceive God, or have a heart for His great salvation.

Before we were in Christ, “oldness of letter” was all that was available to us. Most of us did not even follow that. But whether we did or not, life was vain and pointless—even religious life. Now we have been delivered from lifeless religious procedures—serving God in “the oldness of the letter.” That kind of service allows you to keep a hard heart and a defiled conscience, yet go through a religious routine. Such things are altogether too common in our world.

If we have died to the law in order to be freed from its dominion and condemnation, and in order to serve God in the newness of Spirit, let us once and for all have done with everything that is lifeless and unproductive! Such things are out of place in the Lord’s service, and damaging to our hearts and minds.

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Newness is essential to the service of God. Old manners are not acceptable. We have been given “new life” (Rom 6:4), a “new heart,” and a “new spirit” (Ezek 36:26). We have even been given a “new covenant” (Heb 12:24), and are ourselves a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). We have been given a “new man” that is to be “put on” (Eph 4:24), and come to God by “a new and a living way” (Heb 10:20). We are “newborn babes” (1 Pet 2:2), and are even looking for “a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness” (2

new creation. It is living under the domination of the “new man,” while subordinating the “old man,” not allowing him to govern our lives.

But none of this could happen until we died to sin and the Law, and were made alive to God through Jesus Christ. Until we die with Jesus, and are buried with Him, and raised with Him, we are shut up to lifeless and unacceptable service to God—if, indeed, there is any effort to serve Him at all. It should be apparent that this

## CONCLUSION

In Christ Jesus we have been brought to the end of lifeless formalities. Having been raised from death in trespasses and sins, and buried with Jesus into death to sin, we are now “children of light” (Eph 5:8), possessing “the light of life” (John 8:12). However, all of this is to no avail if we are ignorant of what has happened to us in Christ Jesus. Many of God’s people are regularly served doses of law and do-

goodism. They are told what they ought to do, with little regard to what has happened to them, and what they possess, in Christ Jesus. Too often they are addressed as though they were still enemies of God, and with a near-total disregard for the fact that they have been reconciled to Him.

These unfortunate conditions have

compelled multitudes to devote themselves to temporary pursuits, perceiving the service of God to be futile and without genuine benefit. They are completely unaware of the “much more” (Rom 5:9,10,15,17) aspect of spiritual life and the “do you not know” (Rom 6:3,16;, 7:1; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:2-3) approach to living.

In Christ both death and life are

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experienced, and both are a blessing. We are dead to sin and alive to God. We are dead to the Law and married to Jesus. Our situation has been reversed by the grace of God, and through the Lord Jesus Christ. We were once dead to God and alive to sin. Now we are dead to sin and alive to God. Once we are barren and now

we bear fruit.

If there is one thing that should come across to our hearts in this text, it is the marvelous advantage that we have in Christ Jesus. Our sin has been forgiven, and the Law cannot condemn us. We have died to what cursed us, and are alive to

the One who blesses us. All of this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes (Psa 118:23). The Law cannot condemn us, and the flesh has been robbed of its power. In Christ, you are united with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection. WYou have every reason to rejoice and be glad!

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 10/20/2000 Continuing in our studies on Romans, we will cover 7:1-6, **"SIN GAINS THE ADVANTAGE THROUGH THE LAW."** The Old Covenant formalized man's guilty condition, pointing out his sinful nature and consistent transgression. Like a mighty judge it passed the sentence of death upon all men, showing it to be just because of their sinfulness. Because the Law was holy, just, and good, it could not simply be set aside. This text will show us the manner in which we were liberated from the condemnation of the law. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship.

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