

Introduction

- Paul has previously said that believers in Christ “*are not under law but under grace*” (6:15). Everything in the rest of chapter 6 was addressing a twisting of this teaching; he now returns to it to explain positively what it means.
- God gave the Jews the Law to show them they were sinners in need of a Savior. Instead, they turned the Law into an idolatrous tradition.
- The apostle now tells them (and us) that believers have died with Christ to all those things that separate us from God and God’s people, including traditions or cultural idols. He leads us to see our faith-union with Christ’s resurrection, which gives us a radical and eternal new life.

Christianity is a death to any self-sufficiency or self-centered culture and a resurrection to a new, eternal life united with all other Christians in Christ, the Church’s Husband.

Dying to the Old, Resurrected to the New (7:1-3)

7:1 Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? 7:2 For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. 7:3 So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man.

Those Who Know the Law

- Paul is addressing this section to Jews who have come to faith in Christ, but are struggling with leaving behind their culture’s traditions and rituals: “*...I am speaking to those who know the law...*”
 - The Jewish people were known primarily by their relationship to the Law of Moses, with its

rituals and dietary rules. For example, Paul, in describing his evangelism efforts with Jews, says, “*though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law*” (1 Corinthians 9:19,20). “Jew” is synonymous with “*those who are under the Law.*”

- Their religious tradition was a huge stumbling block to them! They didn’t want to leave these traditions behind when they came to Christ, and, even worse, wanted non-Jews to take on these traditions when they came to Christ! Traditions became a stumbling to themselves and division inside the Church.
- What traditions do we bring from our culture into the Church that might hinder our growth in Christ and build walls between us and believers from other cultures?
- Remember: God gave the Law to the Jews to both show them His will for how His old covenant people were to live, but also to convict them that they needed Him to provide a Savior because they could not perfectly obey that Law. “*...before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ*

Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise” (Galatians 3:23-29).

Knowing the Law

- Paul is referencing an inference from the Law rather than a specific command.
- What Paul mentions as an inference from the Old Testament Law, Jesus explicitly gives as a command in the New Testament (Matthew 5:32// Mark 10:11,12//Luke 16:18; Matthew 19:3-9).

Understanding the Illustration

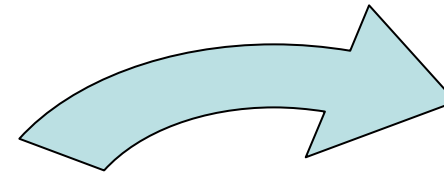
- The Lord described His relationship with old covenant Israel as one between a husband and wife:
 - READ Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 2:1-3; Ezekiel 16:8; Hosea 3:1.
 - The unfaithfulness of old covenant Israel led God to promise a new covenant relationship different from the old: “*Behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, declares the Lord*” (Jeremiah 31:31,32).
- **The death of Christ ended the marriage covenant (the Law) between the Lord and old covenant Israel, opening the way to the new covenant.**

New Covenant Marriage (7:4)

7:4 Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him Who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

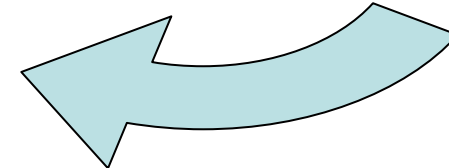
Adultery Penalty Paid

- Old covenant Israel was guilty of spiritual adultery, having pursued countless other gods aside from their Husband Who is the one true God. The Law’s penalty for adultery was death (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22-24). This was to teach us the seriousness of faithfulness to God:



“You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:2-5// Deuteronomy 5:6-9).

“You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14// Deuteronomy 5:18).



Christ Loved the Church and Gave Himself Up for Her

- The key to understanding what Paul is saying about the Law is the death of Christ. What aspect of the Law was involved in Jesus’ death? READ Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 2:13,14.
- “*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23), and “*the wages of sin is death*” (6:23). Christ took those “*wages*” of our sin (the violation of God’s Law), and paid them Himself in His people’s place.

Fruit

- “*...now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit [καρπός, or “fruit”], resulting in sanctification, and the outcome,*

eternal life” (6:22).¹ What is the “fruit” of those who are “enslaved to God” (6:22), “slaves...of obedience” (6:16), and “slaves of righteousness” (6:18,19)? The words “God,” “obedience,” and “righteousness” give us the answer. The “fruit” of a new life in Christ is growing conformity to the will of God as shown in the moral commandments of Scripture.

Echoes of Eden’s Darkest Hour (7:5)

7:5 For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

God’s Will and Man’s Desire: Now Oil and Water

- In the Garden, Adam was told, “*from any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die*” (Genesis 2:16,17). Adam ate (3:6), and began dying unto death physically, his relationship to God (and even his wife) broken. “Death is not a cessation of existence, but a severance of the natural relations of life...it may be said that sin is *per se* death, because it represents a break in the vital relation in which man, as created in the image of God, stands to his Maker.”²
- When all of Adam’s descendants now encounter the will of God as expressed in the Law of the Bible, we consistently and continuously react with rebellion. We see this on display in both the world, our culture, and in our own hearts.

¹ The English Standard Version, Holman Christian Standard, and King James Version all translate this “fruit.”

² Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996, reprint from 1938 ed.), 668-669.

New Life in Christ

- “While we were in the flesh” is a past tense description for believers; this obviously doesn’t mean that we leave our physical bodies when we come to Christ. What it means is that we are governed not by the fleshly nature, which always gravitates to sin, but are governed by the Spirit, Who works God’s will and work in us.³
- The word “temptation” doesn’t describe lawful things, good things, things in line with God’s will. “Temptation” describes our natural reaction to God’s commands. We echo the serpent’s words, “indeed, has God said?” (Genesis 3:2), suspecting that God is keeping something better from us in what He forbids.
- The Law confirms our bondage to sin.

A New Covenant Marriage (7:6)

7:6 But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

Having Died

- How have we “died”?
 - Your baptism reminds you: “...all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death...we have been buried with Him through baptism into

³ When Eve considered the forbidden fruit, she “saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise” (Genesis 3:6). The apostle John describes these categories as “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life” (1 John 2:16). “Flesh” describes a rebellion against God that puts physical desire, coveting/lust, and prideful knowledge of the forbidden in priority over God’s commands.

death...we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death” (6:3-5).

- The Lord’s Supper reminds you: “*The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?*” (1 Corinthians 10:16, E.S.V.).
- You have died (“*being conformed to His death*”) by faith-union with Christ: READ Philippians 3:8-11.
- Your faith-union with the death of Christ, your death to sin, and your death to the condemnation of the Law has immediate practical application for your daily life: **READ Colossians 3:3-11.**

So That

- Why did God save you through the death and resurrection of His Son, the pouring out of His Holy Spirit, and the proclamation of the Gospel through the global ministry of His Church? Why did God forgive you, make you right before Him in this life and the next, adopt you, fill you, and make you truly alive? The two “*so that*” statements in this section tell us why.
 - “*...if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man*” (7:3). Jesus took our death-penalty from the Law to the cross in His death, so that we might be bound to Him and not that death-penalty in a divine, eternal marriage relationship. Our eternal life and joy is not bound to our performance of the Law (which is an impossibly dysfunctional marriage), but our eternal life and joy is bound to the One Who died and rose again for us.
 - “*...having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and*

not in oldness of the letter” (7:6). United to Christ, we died to the old covenant rules that held only eternal death for us, and rose again with Him that the Holy Spirit might fill us.

The Spirit and the Law

- The Holy Spirit fills us to take God’s moral Law from the outside and bring it inside, make it a part of who we are as born-again, eternally-living children of God in Christ: READ Proverbs 1:23; Isaiah 59:21; Jeremiah 31:31-33; Ezekiel 11:19,20; 36:26,27.
- What is the only part of the Law that is left after the death of Christ is the moral Law.⁴

New, Eternal Marriage

- The death and resurrection of God the Son means the end of the old covenant and the establishment of the new, the end of the old marriage and the establishment of the new, the renewal of vows between the Lord and His Bride in a new, spiritual, eternal Israel where Jew and non-Jew are all one by faith-union to the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ (John 3:29; 2 Corinthians 11:2,3; Ephesians 5:22-33; Revelation 21:2,9; 22:17), sealed there with the wedding-ring of the Holy Spirit.⁵

Christianity is a death to any self-sufficiency or self-centered culture and a resurrection to a new, eternal life united with all other Christians in Christ, the Church’s Husband.

⁴ God’s moral Law is epitomized in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17//Deuteronomy 5:6-21), the “greatest” commandment (Deuteronomy 6:5), the “second greatest” commandment (Leviticus 19:18).

⁵ The Greek word ἀρραβών, translated “pledge” and applied to the Holy Spirit in 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:14, is used in modern Greek to describe an engagement ring.