

Paul goes to great lengths to lead us through the truth regarding our identification with Christ, the effects that follow from it, and the actions I am entitled to take upon embracing it. I am to reckon myself as having died with Christ and now alive (resurrected) to God. I am no longer servant of sin but servant of righteousness. Sin has no more dominion over me so I should not let sin reign in my mortal body. I am free from the domination of sin and no longer need to serve it. I am free to yield myself once and for all to God and to bring forth fruit unto holiness ending in eternal life. All this apart from the Law of Moses. I have no excuse to sin just because I am justified by Christ's blood. And I have no excuse to sin even though I am no longer under the Law. Clearly I am not justified by my works keeping the Law. Clearly I am not to sin even though law is not the means of my salvation from the penalty of my sins. But neither is it the means of my deliverance from the power of sin in my flesh. The law is well suited to expose and condemn my sinful acts, but it cannot deliver me from the power of sin in the flesh.

1Timothy 1:8 But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; 9 Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, etc.

If I try to use the Law as a rule of life, a guide to live by, I will not succeed in overcoming sin in my flesh. I need to understand and realize this. So Paul next gives reasons with illustrations why the Law won't work as a rule of life for me to follow in order to live pleasing to God.

The first truth is that I have died unto the Law by the body (corpse) of Christ. The Law has no force over dead people. Having died unto the Law I am free to give myself to another. The illustration he uses is that of a widow. She is no longer under the rule (headship) of her husband if he has died. If a woman should be to another while still married she is an adulteress. But I am not committing spiritual adultery by shifting over to subjection to Christ from subjection to the Law. It is as if I have died to the Law, therefore it has no more authority over me. (Note the analogy shifts here, counting my having died unto the Law as the same as the husband having died. He doesn't say the Law has died for it hasn't and can't, any more than sin in the flesh has died.) Therefore I am free to righteously "be to" Another. Who? The risen Christ. The Law is not deficient in itself. But it can only condemn me. It is not abolished by the cross for the cross clearly established the Law. Justice was carried out on the Cross when the sinless One bore my sins and was judged there for them in my place. The law was not compromised there, Romans 3:31. The Law is good if it be used lawfully (to expose and condemn sin, 1Timothy 1:8-11, quoted above.)

The illustration of marriage is carried further than the wedding and honeymoon. The normal and intended outcome is children, fruit for God. So I being freed from the authority of the Law am married to Christ and bring

forth fruit to God. This applies to all believers. (Those who devote themselves to celibacy and the dedication of a cloistered life as "married to Christ" miss the point.)

Another fact about the Law is that it triggers sinful impulses in my flesh to commit the very acts it prohibits. This does not mean the Law itself is evil or sinful but that my flesh is. The Law is holy (clean, pure). The law is just, straight as an arrow. Being so it reveals instantly the sinful nature of my heart. When it says "don't" my Adamic nature, "sin in the flesh," instantly says "do." When it says "do" "sin in the flesh" instantly says "won't." Paul uses a very significant example to illustrate. **Covetousness.** The last of the Ten Commandments. "Thou shalt not covet!" What arises in my heart? Lust. Desires. Thoughts and urges usually unspoken, even less often actually carried out. Yes the Lord Jesus exposed our hearts when He declared an even higher standard than Moses' Law, Matthew 5:17 on. One can be blameless and still covet. "Blameless" means no acts detectable by others have actually been committed. Paul could honestly state he was blameless concerning the law. Philippians 3:6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

No one could pin any act of commission or omission on him regarding the Law. But here he uses the hidden lawlessness of his heart as an example of the Law's prohibitions triggering lust in his heart, as it readily does in mine. What liberty of grace Paul shows here. He didn't attempt to hide the fact he had secret lusts. He didn't want others to be mislead and discouraged by his outward righteousness. How perverse my old man, the old person I was before I was saved by grace. The Law is not sin. Paul affirms it is holy, just and good. But it excites "sin in the flesh" to rebellion. Sin is lawlessness, 1John 3:9, (NAS, NIV, JND.)

Next he emphasizes the fact that the law is indeed good. Yes, Good, even if it incites sin in my flesh. The Law is not at fault if I do bad things in rebellion to its commands. It is not at fault if I sin in reaction to it, even if my sin leads to my death. It is **I** that is at fault. I was already a sinner, letting sin reign in my mortal body so when the Law was made clear to me it simply exposed what I always was. It did not generate evil in me. It exposed the evil in me. And incidentally awakened latent evil in me. How perverse I am. That what is good I turn to evil outcomes. Sin in me, reacting to the commandment deceives me, and by it slays me. I am conquered and as good as dead as far as producing righteousness before God. Not lost, but helpless to please the One who loved me and gave Himself for me, the One I now desire to serve and please. No, the law will not be helpful to me in fulfilling the desires of my born anew heart. The truth of my condition begins to dawn on me. And we will learn more about ourselves as we read on but also will be brought to the Solution, Jesus Christ.