

## Dead to the Law

### Introduction

#### A. The Identification of God's Law

The apostle Paul refers to the law of God twenty-three times in Romans 7. God's law is the theme of the chapter. Its intrinsic goodness needs to be established because Romans 7 speaks so much about the believer being dead to the law. According to Scripture, the law of God is a glorious thing.

1. Psalm 19

Verses 7-10 say, *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."* The terms "law," "testimony," "statutes," "commandments," and "ordinances" all refer to the law of God. The psalmist is exalting God's holy law.

2. Psalm 119

The entirety of Psalm 119 is dedicated to the glory of God's law--all 176 verses of it! It is the longest chapter in all the Bible. In verse 12 the psalmist says, *"Blessed art thou, O Lord; teach me thy statutes."* Verse 16 says, *"I will delight myself in thy statutes."* Verse 18 says, *"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."* Verse 77 says, *"Thy law is my delight."* Verse 97 says, *"Oh, how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day."* Verse 136 says, *"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law."* Verse 142 says, *"Thy law is the truth."* Verse 165 says, *"Great peace have they who love thy law."* Verse 174 says, *"I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord, and thy law is my delight."* The psalmist truly honored the law of God.

#### B. The Importance of God's Law

Not only is the law of God to be exalted, but it is also to be obeyed. Moses said, "Cursed be he who confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all of the people shall say, Amen" (Deut. 27:26). Likewise Solomon said, "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccles. 12:13).

1. As seen in the Old Testament

- a. Deuteronomy 6:1-15--This is the most definitive Old Testament passage conveying the character, quality, and honor of God's law. Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying, *"These are the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land to which ye go to possess it; that thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear*

*therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it, that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey."*

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thy walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not, when thou shalt have eaten and be full; then beware lest thou forget the Lord, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."

*"Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people who are around about you (for the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth."* God was saying, "Obey My commandments or be destroyed." This passage of Scripture gives high position to the revealed law of God.

- b. Isaiah 42:21--The prophet Isaiah said, *"The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honorable."*
- c. Psalm 138:2--The psalmist said, *"Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."*
- d. Exodus 18:16--Moses, speaking to his father-in-law Jethro about his role as leader of the children of Israel, said, *"I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws."*
- e. Malachi 4:4--Do you know the last command in the Old Testament? The final exhortation from the prophet Malachi is, *"Remember the law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and ordinances."*

As you study the Old Testament, you cannot help but be overwhelmed by the dignity, character, and centrality of the law of God.

## 2. As seen in the Talmud

The Babylonian Talmud, the main codification of Jewish law, was completed around A.D. 500. It is inundated with the sacredness of God's law. Here are some examples:

- a. Rabbi Raba  
Rabbi Raba said, "The Holy One created man's evil inclination but created the Torah to overcome it" (*Baba Bathra*, 16a). Although that statement is an example

of errant theology, it does demonstrate the importance of the law to the Jewish people. They believed the law could overcome man's sinfulness.

b. Rabbi Judah

Rabbi Judah said, "The nature of the Holy One differs from that of mortal men. When a man prescribes a remedy, it may benefit one individual but injure another. But God gave the Torah [God's law] to Israel as a source of healing for all" (*Erubin*, 54a).

The Rabbis declared that a man could make himself right with God by keeping the law. So the law was considered sacred because it was thought to be a mode of salvation.

3. As seen in Jewish thinking

By the time of the life of Christ, the Jews had elevated the law far beyond what God had intended. They had almost made an idol out of the law and in many cases were worshiping the law itself rather than the Author of the law.

a. John 9:28-29--When Jesus healed the man born blind, the Pharisees came to investigate the miracle. They reviled the blind man and said to him, "*Thou art his disciples; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke unto Moses; as for this fellow, we know not from where he is.*" The Pharisees were advocating the law of Moses as the only revealed truth of God and therefore ignored Jesus.

b. Acts 21:20--The apostle Paul had just returned to Jerusalem with Gentile believers after some missionary journeys. They brought with them gifts from Gentile churches to give to the poor Jewish believers in Jerusalem. He told the church in Jerusalem what God has done among the Gentiles, "*and when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said to him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who believe, and they are all zealous of the law.*"

c. Acts 20:27-28--Paul, wanting to show his own regard for the law, went into the Temple to go through a rite of purification. Luke said, "*When the seven days were almost ended, the Jews who were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help! This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law.*" When they grabbed Paul, a riot broke out. Had the Roman soldiers not intervened, the people would have killed him because of their zeal for God's law.

4. As seen in Paul's thinking

The testimony of the apostle Paul before his conversion echoes a similar attitude toward the law of God.

a. Philippians 3:4-6--Paul said, "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath reasons for which he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." With a vengeance, Paul ignorantly pursued the law of God.

- b. Acts 22:3--Paul said, "I am verily a man who is a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God."
5. As seen in the New Testament  
We see in the New Testament that same commitment to the sanctity, dignity, and honor of God's law has not diminished.
- a. Hebrews 2:2--The writer said, "*The word [the law] spoken by angels was steadfast.*"
  - b. Acts 7:53--Stephen pointed that the Jews "*received the law by the disposition of angels.*"
  - c. Acts 7:38--Stephen referred the law as, "The living oracles."
  - d. Matthew 5:17-18--Jesus said, "*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no way pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*"
  - e. Romans 7:12, 14--Paul said, "*The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.... the law is spiritual.... I delight in the law of God after the inward man.*"
  - f. 1 Timothy 1:8--Paul said, "*We know that the law is good.*"
  - g. 1 John 3:4--The apostle John said, "*Sin is the transgression of the law.*" The law of God brings sin to the surface.
  - h. Romans 3:31--Paul said, "*Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law.*" Paul, as Jesus before him, didn't want to abolish the law, but to establish its rightful place.

### **C. The Inadequacy of God's Law**

Although God's law is sacred, holy, just, and good, it is utterly incapable of producing righteousness within sinful man.

1. Romans 3:19--Paul said, "*Whatever things the law saith, it saith to them who under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*" As good as the law is, no one can be justified by trying to keep it, because doing so is impossible.
2. Romans 5:20--Paul said, "*The law entered, that the offense might abound.*" Instead of creating righteousness, the law exposed man's extensive and utter sinfulness.

When Paul came to Christ, he seized the opportunity to defend God's grace, saying, "*Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law but under grace*" (Rom. 6:14). He explained the meaning of "*sin shall not have dominion over you*" in

Romans 6:15-23, and the meaning of "ye are not under the law but under grace" throughout Romans 7. Those who had an exalted view of the law would be devastated by his statement unless he explained what he meant. He began by explaining what it means to be free from the law.

## **I. THE AXIOM (v. 1)**

*"Know ye not, brethren (for I speak to them that know the law), how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?"*

As we have done for the last two chapters of this study guide, the first major outline point is an axiomatic principle Paul uses to begin his defense. Paul was good at establishing self-evident, axiomatic principles that helped prove his point. An axiom isn't a profound theological statement; it's a self-evident truth that doesn't need to be proven because it's apparent. Paul's first statement in chapter 7 is patently obvious.

### **A. The Basics (v. 1a)**

*"Know ye not."*

By making this statement, Paul was appealing to his audience's common knowledge. He is attempting to be tactful by giving them the benefit of the doubt. Paul was speaking to those who were well versed in the law, regardless of what law you are talking about. Anyone who knows about law knows it has authority over living people only.

When an alcoholic wrecks his automobile and dies, you don't see a police officer bending over the corpse and writing him a ticket! The law simply does not apply to dead people. When President John F. Kennedy was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald, and then Oswald himself was immediately assassinated outside the courtroom, Oswald was never tried because the law has jurisdiction only over living people. That is an obvious point.

### **B. The Brethren (v. 1b)**

*"Brethren."*

Paul interjected an affectionate greeting to his critics because no doubt some of the Jewish leaders were ready to stone him on account of his comments about the law. He was tender in approaching this tension-filled subject.

## **II. THE ANALOGY (vv. 2-3)**

### **A. The Marriage (v. 2)**

*"The woman who hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband."*

Paul's point is simply this: A married person is bound by law to his or her spouse only as long as the spouse lives. If your spouse dies, you are no longer bound by law to him or her. You are not bound in marriage to a corpse for the rest of your life! The law of marriage binds people only while they are alive.

### **B. The Meaning (v. 3)**

1. The binding of the law (v. 3a)

*"If, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress"*

Paul's point is that according to biblical law a person must not be married to two people at the same time. Doing so would make you an adulterer and a bigamist.

**\* Divorce and Remarriage in Romans 7:2-3?**

Paul used the analogy of marriage in Romans 7:2-3, but never intended to communicate a full-blown theology of marriage. Those who attempt to use Paul's analogy in this passage and expand it into a definitive statement on marriage, divorce, and remarriage are not on safe interpretative grounds.

Paul didn't even raise the issue of divorce in Romans 7:2-3. For someone to make a blanket statement--as some have--that this portion of Scripture teaches that all divorce is wrong, is to misconstrue the intent of this passage. Many have interpreted this passage to say that the only time you could ever remarry is if your partner died. They follow that by attempting to interpret Matthew 5:31-32 and Matthew 19:3-9 in light of Romans 7:2-3. Hermeneutics--the science and art of biblical interpretation--demands that definitive passages on divorce and remarriage, such as those in Matthew 5 and 19, be used to interpret other analogous passages, instead of the reverse.

The analogy of marriage in Romans 7 is limited both in its scope and intent. Paul's point was simply to say that the law of marriage applies only as long as both partners are alive. When one dies, that law is no longer applicable to the surviving partner.

2. The breaking of the law (v. 3b)

*"But if her husband be dead, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man."*

A woman whose husband has died is as free as she was before she ever married. She is free to marry another man if she chooses.

- a. 1 Timothy 5:14--Paul said, *"I will, therefore, that the younger women [widows] marry, bear children, rule the house, give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."*
- b. 1 Corinthians 7:39--Paul said, *"The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord."*

Death permanently ends the law that binds two people in marriage. In fact many marriage ceremonies contain the words, *"Till death do us part."* Unfortunately, many are eliminating that portion of their wedding vows because they do not

want to be obedient to that ideal. Paul's analogy here is simple and straightforward: Death ends a marriage.

### III. THE APPLICATION (vv. 4-5)

"Wherefore" refers back to the axiom in verse 1. Law applies only when people are alive.

#### A. The Past (v. 4a)

*"Ye also are become dead to the law."*

The Greek text better renders this phrase to read, "Ye were put to death." The Greek word translated "become dead" (*εθανατοθετε*) speaks of a violent death. The same word is issued in Matthew 10:21 and Romans 8:13.

The believer was put to death at Calvary. As Paul said earlier, *"Know ye not that, as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death, that as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin"* (Rom. 6:3-7).

#### 1. The inability of the law to save

The law has no ability to save sinful man. Paul declared that *"by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight"* (Rom. 3:20). All the law is capable of doing is condemning us. Earlier in our study, we learned that *"the wages of sin is death"* (Rom. 6:23). If I commit a crime and am executed, yet I happen to rise from the dead, the law has no more jurisdiction over me because I satisfied its penalty. In Christ, believers have already died and, so the law cannot exact its penalty from us.

#### 2. The ability of God to save

Paul here used a passive verb in the Greek text (translated "are become dead") to communicate that believers don't die to the law themselves or kill themselves; we were made dead to the law in Christ through a divine act. God not only plans salvation, but also carries it out. When believers die to the law, it no longer has authority over them. Paul said, *"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus"* (Rom. 8:1).

#### B. The Procedure (v. 4b)

*"By the body of Christ."*

By dying on the cross, our Lord paid sin's penalty in full and allowed man to become free from the law's demand.

1. 2 Corinthians 5:21--Paul said, *"[the Father hath made him [the son] who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* Jesus redeemed believers from the law by His death on the cross.

2. Galatians 3:13--Paul said, "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse for the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.*"
3. Galatians 2:19-20--Paul said, "*I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*" Believers have died to the law and come alive in Christ.

### **C. The Picture (v. 4c)**

*"That ye should be married to another."*

The believer is no longer married to the law, but is now married to Jesus Christ. This is a beautiful picture of the believer's relationship to Christ as His bride.

1. Ephesians 5:24-27--Paul said, "*As the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*"
2. 2 Corinthians 11:2--Paul said, "*I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*"

### **D. The Present (v. 4d)**

*"To him who is raised from the dead"*

Paul is emphasizing Christ's present union with all believers. Christians are identified not only with Christ's death in the past, but also with a living Savior in the present. That assures the believer of his salvation. In Romans 6:9 Paul declares that Christ's death was sufficient and that He will never have to die again. Those who place their faith in Jesus Christ will never lose their husband. Our marriage bond with Christ will last forever!

The underlying point of the book of Romans is this: Salvation brings about a total transformation. Paul teaches us about the security of the believer (chaps. 5, 8), sanctification (chap. 6), and liberty from the law (chap. 7). Believers are free from attempting to earn their salvation. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the key to that reality.

### **E. The Purpose (v. 4e)**

*"That we should bring forth fruit unto God."*

The purpose of any believer's life is to glorify God by bearing fruit. This is not a command, but a statement of fact. Paul's words could literally read, "we do bring forth fruit unto God." There is no such thing as a Christian who does not bear fruit. Salvation has a product, and that product is a transformed life that bears fruit for God. Therefore, when preaching about salvation by grace through faith does anything but lead to sin!

Romans 6 declares that if you know Christ, you will be holy. Romans 7 says that if you are truly married to Jesus Christ, you will bring forth fruit unto God.

Charles Hodge once said, "As far as we are concerned, redemption is in order to [produce] holiness. We are delivered from the law, that we may be united to Christ; and we are united to Christ, that we may bring forth fruit unto God.... The only evidence of union with Christ is bringing forth fruit unto God.... As deliverance from the penalty of the law is in order to [produce] holiness, it is vain to expect that deliverance, except with a view to the end for which it is granted" (*Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.], p. 220). What kind of fruit does the apostle Paul have in mind?

1. Attitude fruit

In Galatians 5:22-23 Paul says, "*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control.*" Those are attitudes.

2. Action fruit

a. Hebrews 13:15--The writer said, "*Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.*"

b. Philippians 4:17--Paul said, "*I desire fruit that may abound to your account.*"

c. Philippians 1:11--Paul prayed that the Philippians would be "*filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.*"

Any righteous act that glorifies God is considered fruit unto Him. Christ does not transform a life simply on the basis of a past historical event. He continues the transforming process because He is actively living and producing fruit in us for His own glory. Jesus said, "*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*" (John 15:1).

Salvation by grace doesn't give us license to sin. You do not possess true salvation if you think you will be forgiven regardless of how you live your life. The product of true salvation is holiness--the fruit that glorifies God.

**F. The Problem (v. 5)**

*"When we were in the flesh, the sinful impulses which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death."*

The apostle Paul introduces four key thoughts in verse five that describe man's unregenerate state: flesh, sin, law, and death--a pathetic quartet. All these things operate within the same sphere. The flesh produces sin, which is stimulated by the law, resulting in death. Those four terms are a sad description of man's unregenerate state.

1. Flesh (v. 5a)

*"We were in the flesh"*

"In the flesh" means that man's sinfulness reaches the very core of his being. The term "flesh" is used two ways in the Bible.

a. Its physical usage

The term "flesh," when used in its physical sense, carries with it no evil connotation.

- 1) 2 John 7--John said, *"Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh."*
- 2) John 1:14--John said, *"The Word was made flesh."*
- 3) 1 John 4:2--John said, *"Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God."*

b. Its moral usage

When the term "flesh" is used in its ethical or moral sense, it always has an evil connotation.

- 1) Romans 8:3-10--Paul said that Christ "condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be. So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Unregenerate people are of the flesh, but believers are of the Spirit.
- 2) Galatians 5:13--Paul said, *"Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh" (cf. vv. 17, 19, 24).*
- 3) Ephesians 2:3--Paul said, *"We all had our manner of life in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh."*

In its ethical and moral sense, Scripture always speaks of the flesh as the believer's unredeemed body. Before we came to Christ we were engulfed in and captive to the flesh. Fortunately for the believer, however that is history. Believers are not in the flesh.

But why is it that we continue to sin? The answer is that believers are not in the flesh, but the flesh is still in them! Although the flesh no longer makes you its slave, you still possess an unredeemed body, which remains susceptible to sin. That is why the apostle Paul said, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves

groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:22-23).

Believers, however, do not have to yield themselves to sin (Gal. 5:16). A Christian may do fleshly things because the flesh is in him, but he is not a slave to the flesh. The believer is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), and his new, incorruptable nature is patterned after the very nature of God Himself (2 Pet. 1:3-4). So believers will battle the flesh, which attempts to dominate, until the glorious redemption of their bodies.

2. Sin (v. 5b)  
*"The sinful impulses ... did work in our members"*

After discussing the flesh, Paul went on to say that man's unregenerate nature sends out sinful impulses to his body. The Greek word used for "work" (*ενεργεο*), implies that the flesh energizes sin, which in turn generates more sin.

3. Law (v. 5c)  
*"Which were by the law."*

How could God's perfect law create evil passion? It does so in two ways: First, because God's law is good, it exposes evil. If God's law hadn't been written upon the hearts of men, there would be no standard by which to judge evil. Second, because nothing is more appealing to sinful man than to do something that is expressly forbidden. Simply tell people what they cannot do and they will rush to disobey. The law of God both reveals and stimulates sin. Inherent within every man is a relentless effort to pursue evil.

4. Death (v. 5d)  
*"Bring[ing] forth fruit unto death."*

The flesh produces sinful impulses, which are heightened and intensified by the law. The result is that which leads to death of both body and soul. It is an unfortunate and ungodly spiral downward.

#### **IV. THE AFFIRMATION (v. 6)**

- A. The Deliverance (v. 6a)**  
*"But now we are delivered from the law"*

"But now" brings hope to this dismal scene of sin and death. Those who believe in Jesus Christ no longer serve the flesh because they have been released from the law. The law says man is guilty and the penalty is death. However Christ paid the penalty on our behalf, so the law has no jurisdiction over those who place their faith in Him.

- B. The Death (v. 6b)**  
*"Being dead in which we were held"*

Believers were once held captive to the flesh, which generated sin and led to death. But sin no longer reigns supreme in the believer's life. Sin is no longer the master because its tyranny has been broken by Christ's death on the cross.

### C. The Duty (v. 6c)

*"That we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter."*

A natural question then arises: "Have believers therefore been set free to do whatever they want? Paul's answer is no! Believers have been delivered from the law to serve God. The Greek construction of this verse isn't saying that believers should serve, but that they will serve! We have been saved not only to bear fruit (v. 4), but also to serve (v. 6). Kenneth Wuest translates this verse to read, "But now, we were discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were constantly held down, inasmuch that we are rendering habitually a bondsman's obedience" (*Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*, vol. 1, [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973], p. 117).

#### 1. The oldness of letter

Is grace going to make Christians sin? No. Grace transforms believers, producing security, holiness, liberty, fruitfulness and service. Those are the marks of true saving faith. The service we render to God will not be "in the oldness of the letter," but "in newness of spirit." Our service is not submission to an external code, or simply a mechanical obedience to religious ritual. It cannot be an external obedience to the law of God while the heart itself is unresponsive. That kind of response is pharisaical.

#### 2. The newness of spirit

Believers serve God "in the newness (Gk., *καινοτητα*) of spirit." That refers to a new kind or quality of life, not new in terms of chronology. Our service to the Lord is internal and heartfelt.

When people question God's grace by saying it leads to sin, they simply do not understand what true salvation means. True salvation means that God plants an entirely new nature within the believer. And the bent of that new nature is to serve God from deep within the heart. Such service is energized by the Holy Spirit. That is why Paul said believers serve "in newness of spirit" (v. 6, emphasis added). Christians now serve the law better than ever because they have been redeemed. We are no longer slaves to a legal set of rules in an attempt to gain favor with God; but now serve God out of love because He has granted us salvation by His grace.

If someone asks, "Is the law binding on me now that I'm a Christian," the answer is yes and no. It is not binding with regard to our right standing before God, but it is binding in that our new nature seeks to obey it. The law cannot save a man because he has no capacity to keep it, but now that God has saved us we have the power to keep it for the first time in our lives. We can cry out with the psalmist who said, "*Oh, how I love thy law!*" (Ps. 119:97).

### Focusing on the Facts

1. True or False: According to Scripture, the law of God is a sinful thing, which is why believers should be free from it.
2. What is the whole duty of man? Support your answer with Scripture.
3. Where in the Old Testament do we read of the dignity and centrality of the law?
4. What had the Jewish leaders done to the law of God?
5. What was Paul's perception of the law of God before his conversion?

6. How is God's law looked upon in the New Testament? Support your answer with Scripture.
7. True or False: Although God's law is sacred, holy, just, and good, it is utterly incapable of producing righteousness within sinful man.
8. How did Paul defend the grace of God?
9. What is Paul's axiomatic principle in Romans 7:1?
10. What analogy did Paul use to describe his axiomatic principle?
11. True or False: Paul's analogy in Romans 7:2-3 is a definitive statement on marriage, divorce, and remarriage.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ permanently ends the law that binds two people in marriage.
13. How did Jesus Christ satisfy the demands of God's law?
14. Who is the believer ultimately married to? Support your answer with Scripture.
15. How secure is a believer in his relationship with Christ? Explain.
16. What is the underlying point in the book of Romans?
17. The purpose of any believer's life is to \_\_\_\_\_ God by bearing \_\_\_\_\_.
18. What is the product of salvation? Explain.
19. What two kinds of fruit is Paul referring to in Romans 7:4? Explain, using Scripture.
20. What four key thoughts does the apostle Paul introduce in verse 5?
21. What did Paul mean by his use of the term "flesh" in verse five? In what ways is that term used in Scripture?
22. Are believers still living in the flesh? Explain why or why not.
23. What affirmation does Paul give in verse 6 regarding the believer and sin?
24. True believers do not serve the Lord in the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, but in \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ (Rom. 7:6).

### **Pondering the Principles**

1. Do you delight in the law of God? All the terms in the Bible that refer to the law of God including "law," "testimony," "statutes," "commandments," and "ordinances" are synonymous with what is also referred to as the Word of God. Can you declare with the Psalmist, "Oh, how I love thy law!" (Ps. 119:97)? Over the next few months, read Psalm 19:7-10 and the entire 119th Psalm, asking God to give you a love for His Word.
2. Jesus Christ satisfied the demands of the law by living a perfect life and then sacrificing His life on the cross (v. 4). Have you trusted in Christ as your Savior and Lord? That involves more than simply knowing the facts about Christ, but actually beginning a personal relationship with Him. If you have not done so, repent from your sins, and receive Christ into your life. If you have already done so, are you enjoying victory over sin? Are you bearing fruit for God? Pray that you might bear much fruit for Him, and seek ways to bring glory to His name today!