

## **Freed from the Law to Serve God in the Spirit**

### **The Purpose and Meaning of Romans Seven**

Chapter Seven of the Book of Romans may be the most misunderstood chapter in the entire New Testament and with the gravest consequences to the Christian faith.

Many Christians mistakenly think Romans Chapter Seven highlights the conflict of the two opposing spiritual natures (the old sinful nature and the new Christ-like nature), which they believe co-exist within every Christian. However, this is not Biblically correct. In Romans Chapter Six, the apostle Paul taught that God crucified our sinful nature with Christ and removed it from us when we were saved (Romans 6:6; see also Colossians 2:11). Therefore, if you are born of the Spirit, you now have only one spiritual nature – Christ’s holy nature, dwelling in you. The reason why you may keep sinning is not because you still have a sinful Adam nature; it is because your old Adam way of thinking still needs to be renewed and your soul transformed by the truth of what Jesus Christ accomplished for you on the cross. The normal Christian experience should be that you sin less and less as you apply this essential truth to your life more and more. God’s purpose and provision through Christ’s death is that sin would no longer have dominion over you (Romans 6:7, 12, 14). However, many Christians do not know (and believe and act on) the truth that they have died with Christ and that their old sinful nature is dead and gone; therefore, they are overcome by besetting sins and still personally identify with the experience of the “wretched man” in Romans Chapter Seven. Since they are defeated by sin, they mistakenly and tragically conclude that they still have a sinful nature. However, the truth is that God never intended for His people to be overcome by sin; that is why He removed our sinful nature when we were saved.

Note: In Romans Chapter Seven, Paul uses the “first person” to emphasize the anguish and futility of trying to keep God’s Law before you were born again and still had a sinful nature that was hostile toward God. When reading Romans Chapter Seven, it is important to remember that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans in the Greek language, a precise and expressive language which often strategically uses the *present* tense to dramatically describe a *past* action and experience. In Chapter Seven, Paul made effective use of this *historical present* tense, as it is called in the Greek language, to vividly describe the misery and hopelessness of a person who truly wants to serve God but finds himself continually frustrated and sabotaged by his rebellious sinful nature because he is not born again. In writing this chapter, Paul drew from his own past personal experience as a devout Pharisee before He became a born again Christian. Thus, in Romans 7:5 and 7:6, Paul contrasts the spiritual condition of a Jewish unbeliever (whose righteousness depends on keeping God’s Law, but is

subverted by his sinful nature because he is not born again), with the spiritual condition of a born again believer (who no longer has a sinful nature and whose righteousness now depends on faith in Christ instead of keeping the Law). Romans 7:5 sums up the unbeliever's life, which Paul then describes in Romans 7:14-24; whereas Romans 7:6 sums up the believer's life, which Paul then describes in Romans 8:9-17. Remember that the original New Testament epistle of Romans did not have any chapter and verse denotations.

## **The Purpose of the Law**

With this in mind, let us now look at Romans Chapter Seven. Paul specifically addresses this chapter to his fellow Jews or "brethren" who are following Yeshua ha'Mashiah (Jesus Christ) and know God's Law, but they do not know that in Christ they have died to the Law (Romans 7:1, 4, 6). What is the Law, and what is its divine purpose? The Law, also known as the Law of God, the Mosaic Law, and "the Commandments," is a complete system of divine law given by God through Moses to the Jews, in order to set them apart as a holy nation (Exodus 19:5). Since the Law originated with God, the Law rests on fundamental and eternal moral principles consistent with the holy nature and character of God Himself. The Bible calls the Law the "embodiment of knowledge and truth (Romans 2:20)." The Mosaic Law consisted not only of God's moral law; it also contained civil and ceremonial laws (613 individual laws in all). For the purpose of this study, we will focus on the moral Law of God (expressed principally in the Ten Commandments), since the Old Covenant civil and ceremonial laws applied to Jews only; whereas God will impartially judge every person in this world (not only Jews) by His moral Law (Romans 2:1-16). In our study, we will see that "the Scripture declares the whole world is a prisoner of sin because they are found guilty by the Law, so that what was promised, based on faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe in Him (Galatians 3:22)."

The Law, which includes the Ten Commandments, is found in its entirety in the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Christians call these five books the Pentateuch, which means "Five Scrolls" in Greek; Jews call these books the Torah, which means "the Law" in Hebrew. The Law was given to govern man's moral conduct by declaring God's commandments concerning right and wrong. The Law is a binding and exacting standard of statutes, which expresses man's duty toward God and man's duty toward his fellow man. The Bible declares that if you obeyed the whole Law, you would be blessed by God; however, if you did not obey the whole Law, you were under a curse (Deuteronomy 28). Therefore, everyone who was under the Law was expected to keep the whole Law, or face the penalties for breaking the Law. Many of Law's penalties were severe, often resulting in capital punishment. For transgressions not warranting death, the Law could provide a

means of restitution, as well as a means for forgiveness and atonement through sacrificial offerings, such as an unblemished lamb (Leviticus 1-7). You were not allowed to pick and choose what part of the Law you wanted to obey and what part of the Law you do not care to obey. This is also plainly stated by the apostle James, "For whoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet stumbles in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the Law (James 2:10-11)." Therefore, anyone who was under the Law and broke just one part of the Law was guilty of breaking the whole Law. "All who rely on keeping the Law are under a curse, for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do *everything* written in the Book of the Law.' Clearly no one is justified before God by keeping the Law (Galatians 3:10-11)."

### **No One Can be Justified by the Law**

Why cannot anyone be justified before God by obeying the Law? The reason is that sin naturally rebels against the Law; therefore, sin's power is exposed whenever anyone tries to keep the Law. The Bible says, "The power of sin is (*exposed by*) the Law (1 Corinthians 15:56)." This seeming paradox is a spiritual axiom. The more you know God's Law and try to keep His Law, the more you will become aware of the power of your sinful nature (if you are an unbeliever), which will frustrate your every attempt to live by God's Law. In fact, you will never find out how inherently sinful you really are until you try to be holy! As the Bible says, "The Law came so transgression could increase (Romans 5:20)." This was certainly Paul's own past experience when he was a dedicated Pharisee who was zealous to keep the Law (but was still an unbeliever in Christ). Paul wrote, "For when we were in our sinful nature, the passions of sin which were aroused by the Law were at work in our members to bear fruit for death (Romans 7:5)." This can also be the frustrating experience of a born again Christian who is trying to live a holy life for Christ, but is continually defeated because he mistakenly believes he still has a sinful nature.

To sum up our three points concerning the Law of God: 1) The Law was first given to the Jews; 2) Everyone who was under the Law had to obey the whole Law, not just selected parts of the Law; and 3) Everyone who was under the Law was found guilty of breaking the Law (because of their sinful nature). The Bible says, "Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in His sight by keeping the Law... for we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:20, 23)." Consequently, no one can achieve God's righteousness by trying to comply with the requirements of the Law, especially the intent and spirit of the Law (Romans 9:31; 10:3). This brings us to our next point. If everyone under the Law is guilty of breaking the Law; and, therefore, is under the curse of the Law and God's judgment, then why did God give us His Law?

## **The Law is a Tutor to Lead Us to Christ**

The Bible says the Law was given for our good to lead us to faith in Christ. This is clearly stated by Paul: "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24)." The Bible says "The Law is holy, and the Commandment is holy and righteous and good. Therefore, did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good (Romans 7:12-13)." The Law, which is God's holy standard or plumbline, places exacting demands on us to reveal that we are lawbreakers and show us that, in our own moral strength, we cannot overcome sin. Paul describes this tutoring "pre-Christian" experience in the first person since he himself had already gone through it. "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law... so that through the Commandment, sin would become utterly sinful... the Law is spiritual, but I have a sinful nature, sold into bondage to sin... For I know that nothing good dwells in me; that is, in my sinful nature, for the willing is present in me, but the doing of good is not (Romans 7:7, 13-24, 18)." Before God could prescribe His cure to us (which is Jesus Christ), He first had to diagnose our condition (which is indwelling sin), and also give us His prognosis (which is spiritual death). As God plainly spoke, "Behold, all souls belong to Me... every soul who sins will die (Ezekiel 18:4)." The truth is that God knows who I am, but He also wants me to know who I am. God already knows I am a sinner before I am saved. Therefore, God gave the Law so I would also know I am a sinner and acknowledge my sin-sickness. "Through the Law we become conscious that we are sinners (Romans 3:20). Remember that Jesus came to redeem those who know they are sinners, and not those who consider themselves righteous (Luke 5:31; 18:9-14). Thus the Law reveals our spiritual condition (we are sinners by nature), and our spiritual destiny as sinners (spiritual death and eternal separation from God). The Bible says, "I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the Commandment came, sin became alive and I died; and this Commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin, taking an opportunity through the Commandment, deceived me and through it killed me (Romans 7:9-10)."

## **The Law Exposes Man's Sinfulness**

Therefore, the purpose of the Law is to reveal our utter sinfulness and the outcome of our sinfulness - spiritual death, so that we might cry out to God to save us from sin through Jesus Christ. Thus, in Romans 7:14-24, Paul describes a devout Jew who is trying vainly to keep the Law. However, this frustrating and miserable experience could also apply to a Christian who is trying vainly to be morally good and live according to the Bible, but who does not know that his old sinful nature is dead and gone. A Jew is erroneously told the solution is to study the Law because "the more he

knows the Law, the more he will be able to keep the Law.” In the same way, a Christian is erroneously told the solution is to read the Bible more because “the more he knows the Bible, the more he will be able to live according to the Bible.” However, this is not the way God works. As we said before, you will never find out how really entrenched you are in the habit of sinning until you really try to overcome sin. The more a Jew knows the Law, the more he becomes aware of his own sin. The same principle also applies to a Christian. In fact, Jesus said our righteousness under the New Covenant must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees under the Old Covenant (Matthew 5:20). Thus, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives a more exacting and demanding standard of holiness that is required to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew Chapters 5-7). Jesus teaches that God will judge not only our outward behavior, but also our words and our thoughts (Matthew 5:21-30). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reveals the true intent and spirit of the Law (*not just the letter of the Law*), which is able to judge even the thoughts and motives of our hearts.

### **Greater Light Produces Greater Accountability**

Consequently, the more a Christian knows God’s Word, the more he realizes God’s standard of holiness is higher than he thought. He knew that God would judge his deeds (2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Peter 1:17), but he now realizes God will judge even his words (Matthew 12:36-37). The more he becomes aware of God’s standard of holiness, the more he becomes conscious of his own besetting sins and sin’s power over his life. But then he hears another sermon on trying harder to be a good Christian (with the “help” of the Holy Spirit sometimes added in). This erroneous teaching encourages him to decide that he can overcome sin if he just doubles his efforts and goes to church more, reads the Bible more, prays more, gives more, and is involved in ministry more. Yet, once again, the spiritual principle of “greater light produces greater accountability” puts him in a vice grip. And it is meant to do this. For as Paul declared, “I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead (Romans 7:7-8).” Thus the more a religious non-Christian or a spiritually ignorant, born again Christian knows God’s Word, the more the crushing reality becomes apparent: God’s standard of holiness is not merely difficult, it is impossible to fulfill outside of faith in Christ. In despair, he now realizes that God will judge not only his words but his very thoughts and motives (Romans 12:16; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Hebrews 4:12). If he is really zealous, he will once again redouble his efforts and try to become even more self-disciplined. But as he redoubles his efforts, he finds himself on a treadmill that is going faster and faster. Even though he is already exhausted, he is afraid to step off this unrelenting treadmill and find rest because he

thinks he will backslide if he does (and sometimes he does, in a desperate attempt to find relief).

## **Christ Has Delivered Us From Our Sinful Nature**

This is the awful dilemma that many sincere Christians find themselves in when they are trying very hard to live a moral life in keeping with the Law of God. If you were to ask them if Jesus' yoke was easy and His burden was light, they would inwardly groan from the weight of the yoke under which they labor. At this point (which can take one year or forty, depending on the person's moral self-confidence) many Christians reach a crisis of faith, which leads them to several possible outcomes. Some Christians get angry at God for seemingly giving them a standard of holiness they cannot possibly achieve and they fall away from the faith. Or, they may think they have failed both God and themselves and drift away from the faith because what they think is Christianity, as they experienced it, only brought them impossible stress, condemnation and exhaustion. Or, even worse, they may decide to continue going to church but stop trying to be holy. They may comfort themselves with the thought that everyone else in church is in the same condition as they are – very flawed, yet forgiven. They then settle for much less than God intended - either a life dominated by chronically practicing sin or becoming more religious and ministry-minded (but still inwardly lawless), and never coming into a knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 3:7). And yet others, when the Law has accomplished its divine purpose and exposed their utter sinfulness and helplessness, may come to the same spiritual place as Paul did in Romans 7:24.

In this case, when you have come to the end of your own abilities and resources and your own righteousness, you will cry out to God, "What a wretched sinful man I am! Who can deliver me from my sinful nature?" Now this is the right response. You no longer ask "what" can deliver you, but "who" can deliver you. Having already gone through this experience, Paul's sure answer is, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 7:25)." The truth is that Jesus Christ already delivered you from your sinful nature and freed you from the tyranny of sin when you were born of the Spirit. For Christ not only died on the cross to free you from the penalty of sin; He also died to free you from the power of sin (by removing your sinful nature). However, if you do not know this divine truth by faith, then you cannot experience this spiritual freedom and rest, which Christ has purchased for you by His death. As Paul wrote to the believers in Rome: "Do you not know that all of us who have been immersed into Christ Jesus have been immersed into His death?... Your sinful nature was done away with when you were born again... If the Spirit of God dwells in you, then you no longer have a sinful nature... Since you no longer have a sinful nature, you have been freed from the power of sin (Romans 6:3-6; 8:9; 6:7)."

## **In Christ, We Died to Sin and the Law**

In Romans Chapter Seven, Paul explains that not only have we died to sin, but we also died to the Law. “Don’t you know, brethren, that the Law has jurisdiction over a person only as long as he lives? (Romans 7:1).” Thus Romans Chapter Six deals with our freedom from the yoke of sin while Chapter Seven deals with our freedom from the yoke of the Law. For the Jewish believer in Jesus Christ, this means freedom from the curse incurred by failing to keep the Law of Moses. For the Gentile believer, this means freedom from the condemnation incurred by failing to keep the moral Law of God. In Romans Chapter Six, Paul taught that when we were saved, we died to sin (Romans 6:2, 7, 11). Now, in Romans Seven, he teaches that when we were saved, we also died to the Law. We could never be freed from the burden of having to keep God’s Law until we died. But how did we die to the Law? The same way we died to sin. When we were born again, God spiritually included us in Christ’s death so that when He died, we died with Him, so that we would be freed from the Law. Paul declared, “Do you not know that you have died with Christ?... You have also died 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 (Romans 6:3; 7:4).” For those who long to bear fruit for God and bring glory to His Name, this is indeed good news!

## **We Are No Longer Under Law But Under Grace**

But why was it necessary for us to die not only to sin but also to the Law? Since we no longer have a sinful nature, why can we not now obey God’s Law? The answer is that we cannot obey the holy requirements of the Law even after God removed our sinful nature; only Christ can fulfill the Law. We are incapable in our natural moral strength of keeping the Law. As long as we believe that we are under the yoke of the Law, sin will still be able to master us. This is why we died to the Law, so that we might be spiritually joined to Christ, who then fulfills the Law by living through us. This leads us to our next point concerning the Law. The only way to escape the domination of sin and the condemnation of the Law is to come under grace. Therefore, when you are in Christ, you are no longer under the Law (and God’s curse); you are under grace (and God’s mercy). “For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17).” This is what Paul clearly taught in Romans Chapter Six. “Sin shall not be master over you: for you are not under Law, but under grace (Romans 6:14).”

What does “grace” mean? The Law means I must earn God’s righteousness; whereas grace means I can receive God’s righteousness as a gift. Righteousness based on the Law depends on my own work (which always falls short); whereas righteousness based on grace depends on Christ’s completed work on the cross. The Bible says, “Now when

a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness... for the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 4:4-5; 6:23).” This is the difference between the works of the Law and the God’s gift of grace. How did we receive salvation? Was it by the works of the Law? Absolutely not! We received it as a gift of grace by having faith in the truth (Ephesians 2:8). How did we receive the Holy Spirit? Was it by keeping the Law? No! Once again, we received it as a gift of grace by having faith in the truth (Galatians 3:2, 5). Then how do we receive freedom from the yoke of sin and the yoke of the Law? In the same way! We receive our freedom as a gift of grace by having faith in the truth. And what is the divine truth that you must believe and act on to be freed from sin and the Law? The Bible says that when you received Christ, God spiritually immersed you into Christ’s death, so that you died to sin and to the Law (Romans 6:2-11; 7:4, 6). This is the truth that sets you free!

Grace and the Law are mutually exclusive. You cannot be under grace and be under the Law at the same time. If you are under grace, then you are not under the Law. What does it mean to no longer be under the Law? It means you are no longer under the binding obligation to keep the Law in order to be righteous before God. It also means you are no longer under crushing condemnation when you fail to keep the Law. The Bible says, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).” Whether you are a Jew or a Gentile, once you trust Christ for your salvation, He becomes your righteousness. As Paul wrote, “By His doing, you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God, and *righteousness* and sanctification and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).”

### **The “Law of Faith” Has Replaced the “Law of Works”**

Now that you are under grace, your righteousness no longer depends on your flawed natural ability to keep the Law; it depends solely on your faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. The Bible says, “Know that a man is not justified by keeping the Law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we too have put our faith in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law because no one will be justified by the works of the Law (Galatians 2:16; see also Philippians 3:9).” However, remember that true Biblical faith always produces corresponding action. To simply say that you trust in Jesus Christ, but then continue to practice sin and live unrighteously, is irresponsible and lawless and reveals your “faith” is either very shallow or not real at all (Mathew 7:24-27; James 2:14-26; 1 John 3:6). Paul declared, “But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that to which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of Spirit and not in oldness of letter (Romans 7:6).” Therefore, we are no longer under the futility and frustration of a “law

of works;" instead, we can now serve God in the Spirit by the "law of faith," and God credits our daily faith to us as righteousness (Romans 3:27; 4:5). When the eyes of your heart are opened to see this truth, you have real spiritual freedom in Christ!

### **Do Not be Subject Again to a Yoke of Slavery**

Therefore, Paul's purpose in writing Romans Chapter Seven was to persuade his Jewish brethren that when they received Jesus as their Messiah, they died to the Law so that they might be joined to Christ and bear the spiritual fruit of God's righteousness. Paul uses his own past experience as a Pharisee to describe a non-Christian who is zealous to obey God's Law but whose sinful nature frustrates him and makes him unable to do so. However, this could also be the experience of any Christian who is zealous to serve God, but does not know that God has removed his sinful nature through the operation of the cross of Christ. "In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by the removal of your sinful nature, by the circumcision of Christ (Colossians 2:11)." The truth is that no born again Christian (whether Jew or Gentile) has a sinful nature, and no true Christian (whether Jew or Gentile) is under the yoke of the Law! The Bible says, "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having *cancelled the written code with its regulations*, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross (Colossians 2:13-14)." What a triumph! What a victory!

Paul here declares that the requirement to obtain righteousness by obeying the Law (with its written code of regulations) was cancelled and removed from us by Christ's death on the cross. Thus by Christ's death on the cross, we have been set free from the curse of sin and the curse of the Law. For a Jew, the Law of Moses was like an unscalable, towering mountain that you had to try to climb each day to be right before God even though you knew from past experience that you would continually fail and fall. This is why Peter called the Law of Moses "a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear (Acts 15:10)." This is why the ministry of the Law under the Old Covenant is called the "ministry of death and condemnation;" whereas, in contrast, the ministry of the Spirit under the New Covenant is the ministry of life and righteousness (2 Corinthians 3:6-9). To be freed from the crushing burden of always having to keep the Law to be righteous (and always being condemned for failing) was to be free indeed. Paul prized this spiritual freedom from the Law of Moses so highly that he declared, "It was for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not be burdened again by a yoke of slavery (Galatians 5:1)." This is also why Paul warned others that they must never allow themselves to come under the yoke of the

Law, not even a part of the Law. “You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by the Law; you have fallen from grace (Galatians 5:4).”

### **Christ is the Fulfillment of the Law**

Paul also confirmed the divine truth that we are freed from the yoke of the Law in his letter to the Ephesians. “For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the dividing wall, *by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of Commandments* contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity (Ephesians 2:14-16).” Once again, Paul teaches that Christ, through His death on the cross, has done away with the requirement to keep the Law in order to be righteous. This legal requirement was the great dividing barrier between the Jews and Gentiles, and Christ has now made it possible for Jews and Gentiles, through faith in His completed work on the cross, to be made righteous and be reconciled to God and to each other as fellow members of His body.

However, it is important to point out that the requirement to keep the Law (in order to be righteous before God) is taken away only for those whom God has made righteous through faith in Christ. The Bible says, “Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes... knowing that a man is not justified by keeping the Law, but by faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 10:5; Galatians 2:16).” For a Christian, Christ is the end of the Law as a means of our achieving righteousness because Christ is the fulfillment of the Law (more on this later). Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17).” However, for those who are still unbelieving sinners, the Law is neither abolished nor fulfilled. This different relationship of the Law to the righteous and the unrighteous is made clear by Paul when he wrote, “The Law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane (1 Timothy 1:8-10).” This is why Jesus said, “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished (Matthew 5:18; see also Luke 16:17).” The moral Law of God remains essential for training us in what is righteous and unrighteous, and to convict the unrighteous of their sin (2 Timothy 3:16).

### **When We Are Led by the Spirit, We Fulfill the Law**

Paul further clarified this when he said, “If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law (Galatians 5:18).” To be led by the Spirit means we must not only be born of the Spirit; we must be genuinely governed by the Spirit. Paul also said, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God (Romans 8:14).” From these two

verses we can conclude that the sons of God, who have been born of the Spirit (whether Jew or Gentile), are not under the Law because they are now under grace and led by the Spirit. "But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor (Galatians 3:25)." Therefore, "God has made us adequate as servants of a New Covenant, not of the letter (*of the Law*) but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Corinthians 3:6)." Since we are no longer under the Law, does this mean we can be lawless and continue to practice sin? Of course not! As Paul declares, "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under Law but under grace? May it never be! (Romans 6:15)." The Bible says we are under grace "so that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit... (*for*) you are not controlled by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you (Romans 8:4, 9)." When we walk by the Spirit, we will bear the fruit of the Spirit, and the Bible says, "Against such things (*the fruit of the Spirit*) there is no Law (Galatians 5:22-23)." Therefore, if God's Spirit lives in us, we no longer have a sinful nature, which used to control us; however, we must remember that to live by the Spirit means we must walk (and be controlled) by the Spirit, which is now possible through faith in Christ's completed work on the cross (Galatians 5:24-25). "Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law (Romans 3:31)."

### **Love is the Fulfillment of the Law**

How is the Law established in us when we walk by the Spirit? Jesus declared the righteous requirement of the whole Law can be summed up by the following commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and with all your mind (and) you shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:35-40; see also Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18)." Paul proclaimed this same truth when he taught, "The whole Law is fulfilled in a single word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Galatians 3:14)," and "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the Law... Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of the Law (Romans 13:8-10)." James called this law of love the royal law. "If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well (James 2:8)." Thus the standard of righteousness, which is revealed by the Law of Moses in the Old Covenant, and the standard of righteousness, which is revealed by the gospel of Christ in the New Covenant, are one and the same and can be summed up in one word – **LOVE** - to love God and love your fellow man. Therefore, the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is not in God's righteous standard, but in His divine means to achieve this righteousness. The Law could not justify us (Galatians 2:16); could not impart divine life to us (Galatians 3:21); could not give us the Holy Spirit (Galatians 3:2); could not make us righteous or perfect (Galatians 5:5:

Hebrews 7:18; 11:40); and could not permanently deal with sin (Hebrews 10:1-4). Instead, the Law was designed to be a temporary guardian for God's people and foreshadow Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. The Law demonstrated God's provision for an atoning sacrifice for our sins (Leviticus 1-7; Hebrews 9:22), and provided many prophetic pictures of Christ's substitutionary death on our behalf as the Lamb of God (Isaiah Chapter 53; John 1:29; Hebrews 9:11-14). And, finally, the Law became our tutor to lead us into faith in Christ (Galatians 3:24).

Therefore, what the Old Covenant Law was unable to accomplish because of man's sinful nature, God accomplished in the New Covenant through His Son's crucifixion (Romans 8:3). Whereas man failed to keep the Law, Christ fulfilled the Law by His perfect, sinless life and His sacrificial, substitutionary death on the cross. Through the operation of the cross, God performed a divine heart transplant, removing our terminally sin-sick heart and replacing it with His Son's divine heart (Romans 6:3-11). By Christ's death on the cross, we have not only been freed from the penalty of sin, but also the power of sin. "And through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses (Acts 13:39)." Now that we are born again, we no longer have a sinful nature, which rendered us powerless to obey God. Our old nature is dead and gone, and we are now a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Bible says our old sinful nature died with Christ; was buried with Christ; and our new nature has been raised with Christ. This is the Christian faith. Whereas trying to keep the Law could not impart God's divine, holy life to us because we had a sinful nature; God's gift of grace enabled the Holy Spirit to impart His divine life to us because Christ removed our sinful nature by His death on the cross (2 Corinthians 3:6; Galatians 3:21). Because of Christ's divine sacrifice, we no longer have a sinful nature, we now have Christ's resurrection life indwelling us (Colossians 1:27). And now that Christ lives in us by His Spirit, we are able to obey God, overcome sin and fulfill the royal law of love. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2)." James calls this law of the Spirit "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25). Paul simply calls it the "law of Christ" since Christ now fulfills God's Law by dwelling in us, if we wholeheartedly submit to His sovereignty (1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2).

### **The New Covenant is God's Divine Heart Transplant**

This divine heart transplant is the fulfillment of Old Covenant prophecy, the promise of the New Covenant, the purpose of Christ's Atonement, and the power of Christ's gospel. This divine heart transplant was promised by the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and you will be careful to observe My ordinances (Ezekiel 36:26-

27).” It was also promised by the prophet Jeremiah, “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a New Covenant... I will put My Law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God and they shall be My people (Jeremiah 31:31-33).” When we were born again of the Spirit, God wrote His law in our hearts - “written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3).” Or, as Paul simply put it: “God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts (Galatians 4:6).” This is why the New Covenant is called a “better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises... so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant (Hebrews 8:6; 7:22).” Because we have received the New Covenant promise of God’s divine heart transplant, we can now walk in the Spirit and fulfill God’s righteousness by living each day by faith in Jesus Christ and what He has accomplished for us on the cross. This is the law of liberty and spiritual rest we now have in Christ! Jesus said, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).”

What then can we conclude from Romans Chapter Seven? Paul wrote this passage to his fellow Jews who “have a zeal for God but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God (Romans 10:2-3).” Tragically, this is also the normal experience for many Christians who do not know that they died, through the body of Christ, to both sin and the Law. Since they do not know the truth that God has removed their sinful nature through Christ’s death, they remain a slave to sin in their personal experience. Since they do not know they died to the Law, they impotently try to obey God’s Law by their natural moral strength. Like the Jews who do not know what Christ has accomplished for them through the cross, they are trying to establish their own righteousness (by their self-effort) instead of submitting themselves (by faith) to God’s righteousness. Paul wrote of this, “I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness came through the Law, then Christ died needlessly (Galatians 2:21).”

### **We Are Freed From Sin and the Law to Serve God in the Spirit**

God does not want His people to be lawless and habitually overcome by sin. Neither does He want them to pursue a self-righteous, man-made morality and outward form of godliness apart from faith in Christ’s crucifixion and sovereignty. We pray that when God’s people have reached the end of themselves and are ready to be delivered from the power of sin, God will reveal the divine heart transplant that He has given them through His Son’s death. Through the cross of Christ, we have been freed from

the ungodly yoke of sin and the unbearable yoke of the Law, so that we might put on the blessed yoke of Christ and wholeheartedly serve God in the Spirit.

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