

“THROUGH THE BIBLE”

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ROMANS 6:1-7:13

In 1972, two men were hunting on the South-seas island of Guam when they made an startling discovery. They found an active Japanese soldier. His name was Shoichi Yokoi. For 28 years he'd lived on the island in a jungle hut. Yokoi was still fighting World War 2. He didn't know the war was over. At one point Yokoi found a pamphlet dropped by US planes. The flyer announced surrender, but Yokoi refused to believe the enemy's offer of amnesty. For over a quarter of a century Yokoi lived in fear of capture. He spent his days in the cave and only came out at night. Yokoi lived off frogs, rats, snails, nuts, and mangos. The war was over. Victory was decided. The world had changed. News of surrender had been *received*, but *not believed*... and as a result, Yokoi lived a life of self-imposed bondage.

Sadly, this is the plight of many Christians. The war in us is over. Victory was decided on the cross. The sacrifice of Jesus set off an explosion of grace that transforms *everyone who believes* and *everything about the believer*. The cross of Jesus generates a miracle in the deepest part of us. At the core of our being we become a new creation... Yet like Yokoi, if we don't believe the news its impact will be minimal. If you live in a cave called *doubt*, and on an island of *despair*, I hope you'll trust Jesus. Faith ends the fight.

In Romans 6 Paul explains it, **“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!”** In 5:20 Paul observed, **“Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,”** but such a comment can be misinterpreted. Since the more we sin the more grace God supplies, someone could conclude that it's our duty to sin! Really whip it up so God can demonstrate just how generous He is with His grace. Let's give him something to forgive! There was a Russian monk named Gregory Rasputin who lived in the early 20th century. He taught this heretical idea. People called him the **“Mad Monk.”** He said, **“If you are simply an ordinary sinner, you are not giving God an opportunity to show His glory, so you need to be an extraordinary sinner.”** Rasputin was a drunk, a womanizer - and a *disgrace to God's grace*. Rasputin's flawed logic is like a teenager saying he's going to keep a messy room so all his friends will see that his mom is a great housekeeper. Ask my kids if they were willing to try that on their mom and they'll sound like Paul, **“Certainly not! Are you out of your mind? I'd like to live a long life!”** *God's grace* should never be used as an excuse for *our sin*.

Paul writes, **“How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?”** This is a radical thought. In Christ we **“died to sin.”** When you die you're no longer aware or pulled by outside forces. Sin loses its stranglehold on a dead guy. No use tempting a corpse. To **“die to sin”** means sin stops calling the shots.

Up until now Paul has been discussing how the cross *provides blessing* and *demonstrates love* – it works *for us*, but it also works *in us!* It *cleanses us*, but it also *changes us*. Grace effects us not just *judicially*, but *effectually*. The writer of the classic hymn **“Rock of Ages”** had this truth in mind when he penned the line, **“Be of sin the double cure, save from wrath and make me pure.”** Jesus delivers not only from the *penalty of sin*, but the *power of sin*. The cross paid for more than a paint job. It installs in us a new engine. In Romans 6 Paul pops the hood on the Christian life and reveals the work God has done inside each of us who embrace the cross and believe in Jesus!

Verse 3, **“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection...”** Paul uses two terms to describes what happens to us when we come to Jesus. He uses a theological term - **“baptism.”** And a biological phrase - **“united together”** or **“grafted.”** The word **“baptized”** has multiple meanings in Scriptures, but here it means **“to induct, install, to make part of.”** When a rookie quarterback goes into a game for the

first time and gets sandwiched between a few 300 pound behemoths we say *"he got his baptism."* He's now part of the team! And this is what happened when you came to faith, you were baptized into Christ. You became part of all that Jesus has *acquired and accomplished*. The biological term he uses is in verse five. He says we've been *"united together."* It means *"to grow together, or graft."* Ever see two trees separated at the trunk - but as they grow, they touch at a certain point, and began to grow together. Well, we've been grafted into Christ and now we grow as one!

Now this is where the plot thickens! In Christ we share in all He has *acquired and accomplished* - that means when Christ died, you died with Him. When He was buried you joined Him. When He rose you rose with new life. This is what gets illustrated in water baptism. You're in the pool a sinner... You're buried under the waters... But then you rise again, alive in Christ!.. And I'm pretty good about bringing people up. I've never lost anybody to a swift current. Here's my motto: *"What goes down must come up!"* And not just to prevent a drowning. I'm just as concerned about depicting a spiritual reality. You're part of Jesus' death and burial, but you also share in His new life! During the early days of Operation Desert Storm military chaplains reported a spiritual awakening among many of our American troops. Lots of soldiers became Christians and wanted to be baptized. But there's not a lot of water in Saudi Arabia, so one clever chaplain came up with a novel idea... He borrowed a casket and filled it with water. Which fits the symbolism. The old man dies and gets buried. A new person rises up in Christ!

Blaise Pascal once wrote, *"One of the greatest principles of Christianity is that what happened in Jesus happens in the soul of the Christian."* It's strange to think we can share in an event that occurred 2000 years before we were born, and in a place we've never been - *yet it's true!* As surely as the nails were driven into the hands of Jesus you died with Him. And as surely as He walked out of the tomb you share in His life. Frank Gaebelin puts it, *"Our spiritual history began at the cross."*

Remember, when Elisha raised the Shunammite's son from the dead, we're told how he performed the miracle. 2 Kings 4 puts it, *"And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands; and he stretched himself out on the child..."* *How creepy is that...* Elisha interfaces with the child - the virtue that resided in Elisha is transferred to the corpse. Life flows through the contact. Likewise, when Jesus was nailed to the cross, in a spiritual, mysterious way your old sin nature was nailed there with Him. In your heart of hearts you *"died to sin."* What Jesus did for all mankind, He did *for you* and *in you*.

I know it sounds weird. It's tough to grasp, *but here's why...* it's a spiritual concept, spiritual mechanics at work, and our minds are tangible and earthy. We gravitate to what we understand, instead of where faith can take us. Here's a way to stretch your understanding... In the making of a movie, scenes are shot first with the actors - no special effects, no music. Later the extra stuff gets dubbed in on top of the original, actors-only shoot... Well, in God's mind when you came to Jesus your spirit - the deepest part of you - gets transposed on top of the crucifixion. God dubs in *your old man* over *His only Son*. At that moment, the life you lived at odds with God died with Jesus. Now when the footage rolls there you are... *crucified with Christ*.

This is what Paul says in verse 6, *"knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him..."* Once a little boy came home from Sunday School, and said he had learned that Paul's father was one of the thieves on the cross. His mom wondered where he'd gotten such a wild idea... He quoted Paul in Romans 6:6, *"my old man was crucified with Christ..."* That's not what Paul meant! *But it's close...* Paul's father had a father, who had a father... all the way back to Adam. And Adam sinned. He bombed - *the original Adam bomb*. And the fallout is seen in every human heart - we all have a sin nature. This is what Paul calls *"the old man."* It's the rebel - the BC you - before Christ. It was you governed by selfishness and pride. The you that ran from God. But when you came to Jesus this natural inclination to sin was crucified.

This will help... In the book of Romans, Paul sees human beings divided into two partitions. Each of us is made up of an *inner man* and an *outer man*. The real you is the inner you - it's the spiritual part of you - the part of you that when you leave this body will continue to live for all eternity. Whereas, the outer man is *"the flesh."* This is the part of you that returns to the dust. When I die the pastor is going to look down at my corpse and say, *"This isn't the real Sandy Adams. This body is just the shell. The nut has gone."*

The day you decided to follow Jesus you *looked the same, talked the same, smelled the same* as the day before. You were just as ugly or cute or corny. But inwardly, in your spirit, you became a new creation. A radical change took place in the depths of your being - **in Christ you died to sin**. The old man

was crucified. Your sin nature was replaced with a new nature. The inborn tendency to sin was replaced with love for God and others.

And notice the past tense. Our old man *“was crucified with Him.”* For years I heard Bible teachers tell me that I needed to crucify the old man. So I tried to say “no” to sin, and discipline my body, and master my passions. But nothing I was able to do could change what I was inside. Nobody crucifies themselves. Crucifixion is never suicide. Someone else has to drive in the nails. Dying to sin isn’t my work. It occurs in Christ.

Take a pig off the farm - clean him up - dress him in pants, and shirt, and little boy shoes. Take him home and treat him like a child. *But a pig is still a pig!* You can’t alter what he truly is... without changing his basic nature. And this is mankind’s problem. We can’t change what we are... we’re sinners at heart. We can dress ourselves up in religious garb, and speak religious phrases, and develop religious habits – we can clean ourselves up. But deep inside we’re sinners waiting on an opportunity to act sinfully. Only God can change us, and His solution is the cross. God’s answer to our sin nature isn’t turning over a new leaf, or behavior modification, or hypnosis, or psychiatry, or reality therapy, etc., etc., etc. The only way to get victory over the old man is to crucify him. It’s not a 12 step approach we need. **It’s a one step approach.** You believe that *your old man* died with *God’s only Son*. The power is in the cross.

Here’s what you need to grasp... when you come to Jesus, He doesn’t just add to your life – *His nature, His Spirit*. No, the sin nature you’re born with gets *subtracted*. 2 Corinthians 5:17 reads, *“Old things have passed away...”* I use to think the old nature was left to slug it out with the new nature. I was taught by well-meaning but mistaken teachers that nothing died at my salvation. *My sin nature* continued side-by-side with *God’s new nature*. The net result was a split personality - two natures competing for obedience. And it was up to me to deny the old, and submit to the new. Here’s the illustration that confused me... *Two dogs live in my heart - a good dog and a bad dog – and the dog I feed the most is the dog that grows the strongest and takes control.* There’s only one problem - that’s not biblical. You’re not a doghouse with two dogs. Actually your old dog is dead and buried in the back yard. You need to *know* a new dog has taken over!

It reminds me of two country boys. They were playing with a turtle that was crossing the road. One fellow pulled out his knife and chopped off the turtle’s head - yet its body kept walking along the blacktop. *It caused an argument...* Elmer said, *“That turtle is dead, it doesn’t have a head.”* Otis replied, *“No way, how can a turtle be dead when it’s still walking?”* Just then up walks Bubba. They asked Bubba to settle the issue. *“Is that turtle dead or not?”* Bubba reply was classic. He said, *“Well boys, it seems to me the turtle is dead, he just don’t know it yet!”* And if we’re still struggling with sin this is our problem! This is why Paul begins verse 6, *“knowing this...”* The key is *to know that you know* that in Christ you’re not the same person. You’re brand new.

There’s a cartoon... It’s a Ladies’ Bible Study. The topic is Romans 6. One of the ladies is trying to be real honest with the group. She confesses to her peers, *“Well, I haven’t actually died to sin, but I did feel kind of faint once.”* You might be thinking something similar. *I’ve run from sin - I’ve wrestled with sin - I’ve struggled with sin - but I’ve died to sin?...* that’s a stretch. Even now you feel very alive to *tempting desires* and *sinful thoughts*. So here’s the million dollar question, *“If I died to sin when I came to know Jesus; then why do I still sin, and why do I continue to feel the pull of sin?”*

Look closely at verses 6-7, *“Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.”* Notice Paul mentions *two pockets of sin* – or two strongholds of sin in a person’s life. There was *“our old man”* and there is *“the body of sin.”* Remember I’m two parts – inner man and outer man. Inwardly I’m new. But in this body – in my flesh – I’m the same guy I’ve always been. That means the body still knows how to sin. That’s why Paul calls it *“the body of sin.”* Before I came to Jesus I spent 20 years programming my mind, and hands, and tongue, and feet, and emotions to do sinful, selfish stuff. To make matters worse, I still live in a world that eggs on *“the body of sin.”* The language, opinions, music, and images – everything that surround me 24/7 – all encourage me to sin – it reminds me of who I was apart from Christ.

And even though I know I’m new in Christ... **old habits die hard!** Ever wake up at 6 AM on a Saturday, think it’s Friday, and start to work? Our auto-pilot betrays us... I use to drive a stick. Kathy drove the automatic. But whenever I got in my wife’s car I’d reach for the phantom shifter. **Some actions take time to stop even when their reason no longer exists.** This is what happens to a Christian. Deep inside I’m a new person - but my feelings, and thoughts, and emotions have been conditioned to act and react in sinful ways. And under pressure... it’s easier for me to revert back to an old habit – just fall into the rut - than it is to cultivate new habits and new patterns.

The key is *to know that I know!*... *"knowing this..."* Paul says when I really get my mind around this truth, then the *"body of son"* is *"done away with."* It's effect gets negated. When I know what Jesus has done it silences my flesh. Rather than listen to *the echoes of my past*, or *my tainted emotions*, or *the lies of this world* - real faith stakes my identity on what God has said about me in His Word... *Hey, God is not the tour guide on my guilt trips!* Satan, the flesh, the world usher me down that dead end. It's all about who has your ear!

I get a lot from a poem. Listen, *"Three men were walking on a wall, Feeling, Faith, and Fact. When Feeling took an awful fall, then Faith was taken back. So close was Faith to Feeling, that he stumbled and fell too. But Fact remained and pulled Faith back, and Faith brought Feeling too!"* Don't allow your **feelings** to steer the ship. Live by **faith** in the **facts** of God's Word!

He continues, verse 8, *"Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God."* In the Wild West days bad guys were wanted *"Dead or Alive."* Whereas, Christians are made *"Dead and Alive."* We're dead to sin and alive to God. We don't just share in His death. We also share in His resurrection.

Verse 11, *"Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Here's proof Paul came from the Deep South. He uses the term *"reckon."* But he doesn't use it Southern style. If you ask me, *"Is it going to rain tomorrow?"*, and I reply, *"I reckon!"*, here's what I'm saying... *"It probably will,"* or *"It might,"* or *"I hope so,"* but if I said, *"Well, I reckon it'll rain..."* I doubt I would even take an umbrella with me. That's not what Paul means when he uses the word. The Greek word translated *"reckon"* means *"to consider it so"* - *"to treat it as if it's true."* When Paul tells us to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God - He's saying, consider it a *done deal*. Start seeing yourself in light of this truth!

God's goal is to get us to change the way we see ourselves. Don't just see yourself as a *struggling sinner* - see yourself as a *victorious saint*. Don't just know the truth - take it a step further and let it shape in you a new identity! Understand, this isn't mental gymnastics, or the power of positive thinking. *Considering it so doesn't make it so. We consider it so because it is so!* One day a sportswriter asked baseball's greatest shortstop, Honus Wagner, if he had a tough job. The old country boy answered him, *"Ain't much to being a ballplayer, if you are a ballplayer."* And the same is true with being a Christian. The real you *died to sin* and *lives to God*. Embrace a new you! I love what John Wayne once said, *"When I take a role I play John Wayne regardless of the character I happen to be portraying!"* Dress him as a cowboy, or soldier, or firefighter – *John Wayne always played John Wayne*. He knew who he was and he refused to be anybody else. This is how you live the Christian life. Know the truth, then develop a strong identity around it.

Verse 12, *"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments (or tools) of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."* Three words stand out in Romans 6 – **know, reckon, present**. **Know** that you're dead to sin and alive to God... Then **reckon** it so, form a new identity in Christ... And last, **present** your members as *"instruments of righteousness"* – get behind this new identity with your *mind*, and *words*, and *memory*, and *eyes*, and *hands*, and *feet*. Use it all as a **tool** to promote your new life. Start *speaking*, and *doing*, and *going* in ways that fortify your faith. Understand how this works... **Identity determines behavior** - how we see ourselves determines how we live our lives. **But then subsequent actions reinforce our identity**. If I see myself as a speed skater, but never get out on the ice I won't be a very good speed skater. And you can see yourself as a Christian, but if you never read your Bible, or fellowship, and worship, or witness it'll be hard to hang on to that identity when pressure gets applied. The idea is to get into a new groove. *Off with the old. On with the new.*

"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!" Implied is that grace makes us more godly than the law. *"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?"* *Everybody serves somebody!* And you choose! Think evil, grab evil, chase evil. Let your members - your mind, hands, feet - hang out with the devil, and one day you'll wake up a slave to a cruel master. Once you're his, he'll chew you up and spit you out. Whereas, direct your members Godward – read godly, watch godly, do godly – and you'll be the happy servant of a generous and gracious King.

Verse 17, *"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And*

having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.” In other words, to the degree you pursued sin in the past - now pursue God! *And who but Paul would be the ultimate example...* Before he was saved Paul murdered the Church, and tried stamp out the Gospel. Afterwards, he was as zealous for Jesus as he'd been against Him. Some of us should take the energy we spent raising hell and use it to populate heaven. If you *partied hearty* then, I hope you *worship hearty* now!

“What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is death.*” Looking back, isn't it sad, we put so much energy into a lifestyle that brought only shame, and hurt, and death. Some of us were driving hard and fast down a road to nowhere! But here's the deal, now that you've got your car turned around and you're headed down the right road, don't brake or slow down. Keep the pedal to the medal. Keep living all out, just make sure it's all out in the right direction. Keep living the “high life,” just realize the “real high life” is in Christ! Verse 22, “But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.” Here's a life worth living – “holiness” now, and in the end “*everlasting life!*”

“For the wages of sin *is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” Sin is pleasurable. If it wasn't it wouldn't be a temptation. But there's a price to be paid. And the cost of sin is steep - its wages are death. Sin extracts a price. Eventually, it gets its pound of flesh. Count on it. But God comes with gifts. Rather than “pay up,” God says “Let Me lift you up.” In Christ God graces us with an elevated life that lasts for all eternity.

Romans 6 teaches us that we're **free from sin!** In **Romans 7** Paul will show us that we are also **free from the Law.** When we come to Jesus we *die to sin*, but we also *die to the Law* - and both realizations are *vital to victory.*

When a Jewish boy turns 12 he's “bar mitzvah(ed)” – it's Hebrew for “son of the law.” A Jew is reared on the Law. A young Jew memorizes, practices, and studies the Law. And at age 12 the boy became accountable to obey. Of course the Law of Moses didn't just consist of the two stone tablets that held Ten Commandments. That was just a Top 10 List. The Law consisted of 613 different commandments - and the Jews measured their status before God by how well they stacked up to this myriad of rules and rituals. Actually, when God gave the Law He sounded like a doctor. “Take these two tablets, call me back in a few days, and tell me if you're doing better.” And Paul's conclusion was after 1500 years they were doing worse not better. Rather than righteousness, all the Law did was make the Jews self-righteous.

Legalism is a rollercoaster. You're up one minute, down the next. It's a constant inflate, deflate – inflate, deflate. Legalism is worse than beach toys. One minute, you're doing good – keeping your nose clean - you're loud and proud – look at your righteousness! Then you blow it, and all the air goes out of the tire. You're deflated. It's a vicious cycle – puffed up, shot down... The Law produced a chronic *syndrome* – it was a real “sin-drome.” And Paul writes to Romans living under the Law. He wants to get them off the rollercoaster. Moses *laid down the law* in a way that bound us to it, but in Christ we can *lay down the law* in a way that frees us from it. The two tablets God gave to Moses didn't make His people any better, so Paul went back to the doctor and the Great Physician prescribed us bountiful doses of grace!

Chapter 7:1, “Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives...” Paul compares our relationship to the Law with a marriage. You would think that since the Law didn't make a man right with God – he could just walk away - but it's not that easy. It's like a marriage. You can't just walk away. Mankind is bound to the Law until death does us part! “But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband. So then if, while *her* husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.” This was Marriage 101. But Paul applies marital protocols to our relationship with the Law.

Before we come to Jesus we were married to Mr. Law - the perfect mate! The Law was perfect! Ladies, you might think you'd like a perfect husband, but wait... He wakes up in the morning - not a hair out of place. He smiles and prays, before he drops out of bed and does a 100 push-ups and 200 set-ups. That's before he serves you breakfast in bed... and not sweet rolls or coffee – not for this guy. It's granola, prunes, and a glass of vegetable juice. Granted,

this might be nice for a while... Until Mr. Perfect starts pointing out ways that you're not... *you could lose a few pounds... why is he running a white glove over the mantle?...* Before long Mr. Perfect is a Mr. Pest! In fact, life with Mr. Perfect gets so bad you go to court to file for divorce. But the Judge asks, "On what grounds? Forget it, your hubby is perfect?" So you try to kill him. You spike his vegetable juice with a few tablespoons of arsenic. But Mr. Perfect is so healthy all he gets is a stomach ache. Finally, you conclude the only way to really get free is *to kill yourself*.

Understand, living under the roof with legalism its the same as being married to Mr. Perfect – it's frustrating and condemning - and there's no way out! The Law is perfect. It stands forever! Your only way out is for you to die! And the Gospel has already taken care of that... "*we died with Christ!*" Verse 4, "Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another - to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God." What if I were robbing a bank - and had a heart attack, and died... Would the cops still cuff me and book me? Of course not! The Law doesn't care about a corpse. I'd be free from the Law, and so are you if you died in Christ.

I love what Paul writes to the Corinthians – he says it twice – "*All things are lawful.*" Critics say Christianity is narrow and restrictive. It's a straight-jacket. How can you say that, when "*All things are lawful.*" That's as free as it gets! If you're in Christ - *dead to sin and alive to God* - you're free from the Law. You can do whatever you *want*... because all you *want* is to please Jesus!

Verse 4 tells us when we die to the Law we can marry another, Jesus! Notice this, we go from *Perfect Mr. Law* to *Gracious Mr. Love* - and what a difference that makes! Mr. Love doesn't expect you to be perfect. "*Love covers a multitude of sins...*" He doesn't check the house with a white glove. He helps you clean up... He's even patient when you put on a few pounds... There's no *pressure to perform* with Mr. Love, like there was with Mr. Law! With Law you obey because you *got to*. With Love you obey because you *get to*. Let's put our legalistic tendencies behind us and enjoy God's grace.

Verse 5, "*For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.*" Married to Mr. Love bears *fruit*, but married to Mr. Law causes *frustration*. Law tells me what to do, but it doesn't give me the power to do it. In verse 5 Paul uses the word "*flesh*" – this is me apart from Christ - the "*flesh*" is me and my efforts. The Law causes me to trust in the flesh which inevitable fails. In fact, rather than provide us the *power to overcome*, the Law creates a *propensity to succumb*. Paul says, "*sinful passions are aroused by the law.*"

There's an old saying, "*There are two ways to get something done... Do it yourself or tell your kids not to.*" If we posted a sign in the church lawn that read, "*Please don't throw beer cans on the church lawn,*" what do you think we'd find the next morning? We'd look like a frat house after a Georgia game. You've heard it said, "*Rules are made to be broken.*" All rules do is provide a sinner with a target. We need more than an *outward standard*, we need an *inward Spirit*... which leads us to verse 6...

"*But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.*" The Law held up the standard for me to obey. But it leans on me - a recipe for disaster... Jesus supplies me with His Spirit. The Law worked from *outside in*. People had to measure up to an external yardstick. But the Spirit of Christ works from *inside out*. He's an onboard power source. We can serve God with a freshness and fruitfulness.

"*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not!*" Paul makes it crystal clear - there's nothing wrong with Mr. Law - he's perfectly perfect! And he helped us in a vital way. Verse 7, "*On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'*" Before I come out to teach God's Word my last bit of preparation is to look in the mirror. It's not that I'm vain. I'm just on guard against a piece of food stuck between my teeth, or a hair sticking out of my nose – something unsightly. And you folks are so nice you wouldn't tell me. That's why I need a mirror. And the Law was a mirror. It identified the ugly nose hairs. Without seeing God's standard Paul would never have known how far short he'd fallen. Paul *learned from the Law*, but he didn't *live by the Law*.

Verse 8, "*But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.*" The Law was a double-edged sword. It *revealed sin*, but in doing so it also *aroused sin*. Let me explain with an experiment... Close your eyes for 30 seconds... go ahead... but whatever you do, don't imagine a rhinoceros in a tuxedo playing a pink guitar. Please, don't do it! *No rhinos – not in tuxedos – no pink guitars!*

Of course, the moment I mentioned a rhino in a tuxedo with a pink guitar, guess what popped into your mind. The mere suggestion produced the temptation. If I didn't want you to imagine it, I should've never brought it up. This was the Law. It's *condemnation of sin* became my *suggestion to sin*.

It reminds me of the Flagship Hotel in Houston, Texas. It's on the waterfront, and the hotel management had problems with people fishing off the top floors. Some of the high-rise fishermen didn't use long enough line. They cast their metal lures into the glass windows of the first floor restaurant. The Flagship Hotel hired an engineer to solve the problem. And after a quick survey he made a simple suggestion, "Remove your "NO FISHING FROM THE BALCONY" signs." Well, as soon as they did the fishing stopped. Oftentimes, the Law stirs up the very action its intended to suppress!

Verse 9, "I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me." Paul recalls a little of his early Christian experience. When He first came to Jesus, Paul was alive with new vitality – a real enthusiasm for God. He was reveling in God's grace. He was free from the Law. He was out from under the awful pressure that use to weigh him down. Serving God was fun... *until the Law slipped in and blindsided him...*

If you want to take the fun out of reading your Bible, set yourself up on a rigid reading plan... To lose the joy of giving, just make it mandatory, a duty rather than an act of love and gratitude... Want to turn coming to church into a big league drag, turn it into an *obligation*, rather than a *opportunity*... As Paul says in verse 11, *legalism is lethal*. It kills the fun and the joy!

For fun my kids use to take my rakes off into the woods and clear paths and build forts. But ask them to rake the leaves in the backyard and it was like pulling teeth... And likewise, *when serving God becomes a job, it loses it's joy!*

Verse 12, "Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." The Law isn't the problem. We are the problem. So in order to save us, God in His wisdom developed a righteousness *apart from the Law*. "Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful." Under Law **my sin** is the issue in my life. The Law uncovers my sin. It casts a spotlight on sin. The Law heightens my awareness of sin's sinfulness. But under Grace **the Son** is the issue in my life. It's all about Jesus! I progress as a Christian not *by fighting with sin*, but *by following the Son*.