

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

The Necessity of Death

Romans 7:1-13

2000

Introduction

In Romans 6, Paul declared that in Christ we died to sin (Rom 6:2). As a result we have:

1. Died to our old nature and now have a new nature
2. Died to our old way of life and now have a new relationship with God through Christ.
 - a. We have a new nature
 - b. We have a new power to overcome sin
 - c. We have a new power to walk in holiness
 - d. We have a new promise of eternal life
 - e. We have a new opportunity to serve God with a new attitude and heart

Today, we will discover that we have not only died to sin, but also to the Law. Rom 7:4

Was the Law really given for us to as the means of a right standing before God?

Was the Law God's remedy for man's sinful condition?

NO! We have already discovered in our study of Romans that the law was given:

1. So that the whole world might be held accountable to God – Rom 3:19
2. To make mankind conscience of sin – Rom 3:20
3. So that the trespass might increase – Rom 5:20
4. To lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith – Gal 3:20

The law was given to reveal God's standard of righteousness and to show us the depth of our sinfulness and the impossibility of living it without a new nature and without His power.

The law has never been man's problem. Rather it is man's fallen nature that makes the Law impossible to keep.

I The Law's Authority Illustrated

A. The Law has authority only over the **living**

Authority = Kurieuo = "To rule or exercise dominion over"

Illustration: Dead criminals are released from the obligations of the law. If a criminal is alive, he is subject to prosecution and punishment. But if he dies, he is released from both – no matter how awful or numerous his crimes may have been.

B. The Law's **limited** authority illustrated:

1. A married woman is **bound** by the law
 - a. As long as her husband is alive

1 Cor 7:39a "A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives."

b. And is guilty of adultery if she marries another

Lk 16:18 “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

2. A widowed woman is **released** from the law

Released = Katargeo = “To be set free from obligation”

a. If her husband dies

b. And is free to marry another

1 Cor 7:39 “A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.”

In the same way that death breaks the bond between a husband and wife, the believer’s death with Christ breaks the bond with the law, and now he is free to enter into a new relationship with Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Rather than being supervised by the law, we are supervised by a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

Application:

Imagine being married to Mr. Perfect

II The Law’s Authority Applied

“So”, or “therefore” as it appears in some of your translations, marks a transition from principle to personal application of the marriage illustration.

A. Our relationship to the Law because of Christ

1. We died to the law through the body of Christ

Died = Aorist passive = “Were made to die”

In other words, this death is not something that happened naturally or that occurred as the result of our effort. Rather, we were made to die by the divine act of God in response to faith in His Son.

Gal 3:23-25 “Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.”

a. That we might **belong** to another; Christ

Just as a widow is freed through the death of a husband to be wed to another, so the believer is freed from the Law through death to be joined to Christ.

Paul beautifully summarizes this remarkable transformation in Gal 2:19-20 when he said, “For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

And the goal of this life changing transformation is:

b. That we might bear **fruit** to God

Fruit = Darpophoreo = “To be fertile or fruitful”

As we have discovered throughout our studies in God’s Word, a genuine faith in Christ will naturally be accompanied by fruit that reflects a Christ-like life.

1. Attitudes

Gal 5:22-23 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

2. Actions

Jn 15:8 “This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

Eph 2:10 “For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

The natural consequence of a believer who finally understands that he is no longer needs to live under the bondage of legalism, will discover that he has been set free to become a truly fruitful branch in the vineyard of God.

B. Our relationship to the Law before conversion

1. We were **controlled** by the sinful nature

In our unredeemed, unregenerate, untransformed condition, we had no other option but to act out the sinful desires of our fallen nature.

Gal 5:24 “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.”

2. Our sinful passions were aroused by the law

Aroused = Energeo = “To become active or energized”

Rom 6:13 “Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.”

How is it that the Law, which is described as flawless and holy, activates sin in me?

It does so because by declaring what is good and evil, it arouses evil in the unregenerate person because his naturally fallen and rebellious nature makes him want to do the very things he knows are forbidden.

Illustration: "No Dumping" sign on Loop Road

3. We bore the fruit of **death**

Rom 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

C. Our relationship to the Law after conversion

Again, Paul marks a significant transition of application to our lives by the words, "But now!" Those two words sum up the Christian transformation – the remarkable transition from what we were, to what God has made us!

- Once we were sinners. **But now** we are the righteousness of Christ
- Once we were separate from Christ. **But now** in Christ Jesus we have been brought near through the blood of Christ." Eph 2:12-13
- Once we were darkness. **But now** are light in the Lord." - Eph 5:8
- Once we did not know God. **But now** we know God-- or rather are known by God." - Gal 4:8-9
- Once you were alienated from God. **But now** he has reconciled us by Christ's death." Col 1:21-22
- Once you were not a people, **but now** you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, **but now** you have received mercy." 1 Pet 2:10
- Once we were like sheep going astray, **but now** you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." 1 Pet 2:25

1. We have **died** to what once bound us

2. We have been **released** from the Law

Released = Katargeo = "To be set free from obligation"

When a person dies, he is freed from all legal liabilities and penalties. When we received Christ as our Savior and champion, we died with Him when He paid our debt to sin on Calvary. And at that moment of transformation, we were released from the moral and spiritual liabilities and penalties that resulted from our violations of God's Law.

Rom 7:4 "So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God."

But the freedom that Christ has brought us is not to be misunderstood as freedom to continue doing what the Law forbids. Rather, the freedom that Christ gives

makes it possible, for the first time, for us to do what is right -- not out of obligation or fear, but out of gratitude to God.

a. To serve in the **new** way of the Spirit

Serve = Douleuo = “Service rendered by a voluntary bondservant”

This verb does not describe the voluntary service of a hired worker, who is able to refuse an order and look for another employer if he so desires. It refers exclusively to the service of a bondservant, whose sole purpose for existence is to obey the will of his master.

The person who has truly been justified by faith in Christ, has been set free to serve with a whole new motivation. For the first time, he is able to meet the righteous demands of the law because he has been given a new nature and the Holy Spirit to empower his obedience.

Rom 2:29 “No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.”

b. Not in the **old** way of the written code

Sin and death were the product of our bondage to the Law; righteousness and life are the product of our new association with Christ. For as Paul stated in 2 Cor 3:6, “the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

III The Law's Authority Reiterated

A. Is the law sin? NO!

Paul once again anticipates the questions his readers might pose: Is the law sin? Is the law evil? Is the law the problem? Can Christians now disregard the law and live as we please?

To all these questions, Paul firmly answers, “NO!”

The law continues to have great value for both the believer and unbeliever as he begins to point out in this next section of scripture.

B. Rather, the law **exposes** the sinfulness of sin

The perfection of the law reveals in a very convincing manner our imperfection. Because God has revealed his divine standards for righteousness, we are better able to identify sin and our failure to meet those standards. Consequently, we are left with only two choices:

1. Acknowledge our sinful nature and confess our resulting sins and put our trust in Christ alone for salvation.
2. Modify, minimize and externalize the law of God in order to make obedience to it something that is humanly attainable.

Rom 3:20 “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.”

From this point on until verse 13, Paul begins to share his personal discoveries regarding the effect of the law prior to his conversion on the road to Damascus. You’ll note the repeated use of the personal pronouns, *I* and *me* in the text.

1. Paul’s response to the law of coveting

It is interesting that of all the commands of God, Paul chose to illustrate his point with coveting. I believe Paul chose coveting over the other 9 commands, because it dealt with the inner condition of the heart. All the others were outward, measurable, and had significant cultural and legal stigmas attached to them. But coveting was different. It was private, internal, and not so easily controlled.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus’ central objective was to reveal that God demands perfect righteousness in the heart, a righteousness that far surpasses the external and hypocritical righteousness molded by the scribes and Pharisees.

Application:

Counseling, therapy, Alcoholics Anonymous and strong will power can help a person to modify their behavior. But only the transforming power of a new nature and the power of the Holy Spirit can take a sinful heart and make it pure and acceptable to God.

a. Sin seized the opportunity afforded by the law

Opportunity = Originally this word was used of the starting point or base of operations for an expedition or battle. Sin uses the Law of God as a beachhead from which to launch its evil work.

b. The law produced every kind of coveting

The law not only reveals sin, it activates sin!

F.F. Bruce stated that, “The villain of the piece is Sin; Sin seized the opportunity afforded it when the law showed me what was right and what was wrong.”

Illustration: Marriott Hotel on Kauai

By nature we resent commands or prohibitions that we perceive limit our “freedoms.” The classic example is a wet paint sign on a railing or door. Because of our rebellious fallen nature, there is often an immediate impulse to do the very thing that is forbidden.

c. Apart from the law, sin is dead

Paul is not saying that sin does not exist outside of the law. Instead his point is that sin is dead in the sense that it is somewhat dormant and not fully active.

Rom 4:15 "... because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression."

2. Paul's response to the law in general

a. Prior to the law, Paul was alive apart from the law

b. After the law, sin sprang to life and Paul died

It is not that sin was absent in Paul's life before the law, but rather that with the law Paul came to realize how far short he came of God's righteous standard. For the first time in his life, he realized that he was spiritually dead.

Lev 18:5 "Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD."

c. The law brought death instead of life because:

1. Sin seized the opportunity

Seized the opportunity =

2. Sin **deceived** me

Deceived = Exapatao = "To seduce, beguile, or deceive"

This is what happened to Adam and Eve in the garden. In fact, this very same word is used in 2 Cor 11:3 and 1 Tim 2:14 to describe what happened in the garden that fateful day. They were deceived by the serpent. A person who is deceived into thinking that he is acceptable to God because of his own merit and good works will see no need of salvation and no reason for trusting in Christ.

3. Sin put me to death

Put to death = Apokteino = "To kill or destroy"

The law not only reveals and arouses sin but also destroys and kills the sinner. What Paul had considered to be the means of gaining eternal life had turned out produce death.

MacArthur:

The law cannot produce blessing and peace in the unbeliever, because he cannot fulfill the law's requirements and therefore stands under its sentence of death. The law cannot produce the life it was meant to produce because no man is able to meet the law's perfect standard of righteousness. If it were possible, perfect obedience to the law could bring life. But because such obedience is not possible for fallen, sinful man, the law brings him death rather than life."

IV The Law's Authority Affirmed

Paul anticipates the next question, "Has the law that God says is good and that we affirm as being good, produced death in us?"

A. The **nature** of the Law affirmed

1. The Law is holy

Holy = Hagios = “Sacred, pure, and morally blameless”

2. The Law is **righteous**

Righteous = Dikaios = “Equitable or just”

The fact that the law reveals, arouses and condemns sin and brings death to the sinner does not make the law itself evil. When a person is justly convicted and sentenced for murder, there is no fault in the law or with those responsible for upholding it. The fault is in the one who broke the law.

Gal 3:21 “Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.”

3. The Law is good

Good = Agathos = “Beneficial or morally upright”

1 Tim 1:8 “We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.”

B. The **value** of the Law affirmed

1. It makes sin **recognizable**

Phaino = “To bring to light or to show”

Sin’s deadly character is exposed in the pure light of God’s law.

Quote: Charles Hodge

“The law, although it cannot secure either the justification or sanctification of men, performs an essential part in the economy of salvation. It enlightens conscience and secures its verdict against a multitude of evils, which we should not otherwise have recognized as sins. It arouses sin, increasing its power, and making it, both in itself and in our consciousness, exceedingly sinful. It therefore produces that state of mind which is a necessary preparation for the reception of the gospel ... Before the gospel can be embraced as a means of deliverance from sin, we must feel we are involved in corruption and misery.”

(<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/45-51B/sin-and-the-law-part-2>)

2. It produces death in us

Rom 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

3. It makes sin utterly **sinful**

Huperbole = “To throw beyond”

The ultimate purpose of the law is to make sin so obvious and unavoidably apparent that it drives men to faith in Jesus Christ.

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