

# “The New Way of the Spirit”

## Sermons on Romans # 15

*Texts: Romans 7:1-6; Ezekiel 36:24-32*

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In Romans 6:14, Paul tells us that we are not under law but under grace. But when Paul says that we are not under law he is referring to the fact that all those in Christ are no longer condemned by the law—the so-called “second use” of the law. But the absence of the law’s condemnation does not mean in any sense that we are no longer obligated to obey the Ten Commandments. In fact, having been freed from the law’s condemnation, we are now free to obey the commandments, something we could never do while we were still slaves to sin.

We are continuing our series on the Book of Romans and we are discussing Paul’s doctrine of sanctification as set forth in Romans 6, 7 and 8. In Romans 6:1, Paul began this discussion by referring to the believer’s death to sin through union with Christ. In Romans 7, the apostle continues this discussion, now referring to the believer’s death to the law. There are several very important parallels between Romans 6 and 7 as spelled out in the following chart.<sup>1</sup>

### Parallels Between Romans 6 and Romans 7

<i>Chapter 6</i>	<i>Chapter 7</i>
v. 1—Sin (harmartia)	v. 1—The law (nomos)
v. 2—“We died to sin”	v. 4—“You also died to the law”
v. 4—“We too may live a new life”	v. 6—“so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit”
v. 7—“Anyone who has died is free from sin”	v. 6—“We have been released from the law”
v. 18—“You have been set free from sin”	v. 3—“released from the law”

The parallels here are striking. According to Nygren, “It is at least clear from this comparison that Paul’s thought in chapter 7 follows a course similar to that in chapter 6. The same categories are used, being simply applied to different matter.”<sup>2</sup> If Romans 6 is a description of our death to sin because of our transference from domination under Adam to freedom via our union with Christ, Romans 7 describes our death to the law as an elaboration on Paul’s comment in Romans 6:14 that the Christian is no longer under law but under grace. Just as sin no longer enslaves us because we died to sin through our union with Christ, so too the law no longer condemns us because in Christ, we have died to the law’s condemnation. We now stand in a new relationship to the law.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, pp. 268-269

There is a reason why Paul must address the topic of the law at this point in this epistle. As Leon Morris points out, “the place of the law in God’s scheme of things was a constant battleground in Paul’s controversies with Jewish opponents. For them the law was the greatest good, the mark of God’s kindness to his people in that he had given it to them. They studied it with the greatest of diligence, regarding even the minutest detail as important. They took it as central for any pious person as he sought to live a life of service to God. It seemed to them that Paul was rejecting this greatest of goods that God have given. Paul found himself in a difficult position. On the one hand, he could not regard the way of the law as the way of salvation, and he said this with utmost firmness. But on the other hand, it was the good gift of God and, rightly used, was of great importance.”<sup>3</sup>

While many commentators turn their attention to the description of the struggle with sin in verses 14-25 of this chapter, and to the question of whether or not Paul is there describing a Christian’s struggle with sin, or someone before their conversion, the main theme of this entire chapter is the Christian’s relationship to the law. What role do the commandments play in the life of a believer, whether they be Jew or Gentile? The Jews were struggling making sense of Moses and the law in light of the coming of Christ, while new Gentiles converts were no doubt wondering, “who is Moses?”

Paul’s discussion of the law in Romans 7 is framed in light of what he has said in chapter 6. Paul has told the Romans in 6:14 that they are not under law, but under grace. He’s told them in verses 12-13 that they are not to offer themselves as slaves to sin. Rather, they are to offer themselves to God as instruments of righteousness. Paul explains that they have been set free from the condemnation of the law because they have died with Christ and were buried with him in baptism. There is now a legal principle in view. The law’s authority over someone lasts only as long as they live. But Christians have “died” by virtue of their union with Christ! Just as someone is married only as long as their spouse lives, having died with Christ we are no longer “married” to the law. As Paul will go on to say, because of this change in status, we now belong to another (Christ) and are thereby free to serve in the new way of the Spirit, a point unpacked throughout Romans 8.<sup>4</sup>

**A**nd so with the context for this discussion of the believer’s relationship to the law in mind, let us turn to our text in Romans 7:1-6.

In verse 1, Paul reminds his readers of something they should already know. “*Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to men who know the law—that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives?*” Unfortunately, the NIV omits the conjunction [“or”] which links this section to the preceding material in chapter 6. Paul’s comment, “*do you not know, brothers,*” is designed to force his readers to admit the truth of what he has just said, that Christians are “not under law” in terms of its condemnation since they are under grace. If they don’t acknowledge this then they must admit to being ignorant about the role of law. But they do indeed know of what Paul is speaking and will go along with the argument as it is developed since, as Paul says “*I am speaking to men who know the law.*”<sup>5</sup> While some take this to mean that Paul is referring to Jews only, it is highly likely that given the dispute throughout the churches between Jews and Gentiles over Moses and the law, the Gentiles, while struggling to make sense of these

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<sup>3</sup> Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 269.

<sup>4</sup> Cranfield, Commentary on Romans, I.331-332.

<sup>5</sup> Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 270.

issues, certainly were conversant with the content of the law through their contact with the Old Testament, which served as the basis for most Christian preaching in the apostolic church.

The second point Paul makes is this: the law as has “*authority over a man only as long as he lives.*” Many commentators understand this as a broad reference to the Torah (the Old Testament).<sup>6</sup> Others, see the reference to law in general, either Roman or Jewish civil law, which both agreed that once a person has died he can no longer be prosecuted for a crime.<sup>7</sup> But Moo points out a significant problem with that view. “Paul never elsewhere uses *nomos* to refer to secular law, and he certainly uses the word in 6:14, 15 and in most of chap. 7 with reference to the Mosaic law.”<sup>8</sup> Given that fact, it seems reasonable to conclude that Paul is using the term “law” in the same manner he uses the word elsewhere. The point is that the law of Moses has authority over someone only as long as they live. Since the Christian has been crucified with Christ, and has died with Christ, the law no longer has authority over them so as to condemn them, inflicting the curse of death upon all those who have violated any of its infractions.

In verses 2-3, Paul uses marriage as an illustration of why a Christian is no longer bound to the law in these sense just described. “*For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.*” This statement raises a question about Paul’s comments in verse 4 to the effect that believers died to the law through the body of Christ. As Cranfield points out, Paul’s point is simply that “the law binds a married woman to her husband; but the husband’s death releases her from the law in so far as it binds her to her husband. While she would be accounted an adulteress, were she to marry another man during her husband’s life, if her husband dies, she is free from the law (in so far as it binds her to her husband), and is not an adulteress, if she marries another.”<sup>9</sup> The phrase the “law of marriage” is probably a reference to the rights a husband enjoys under the law—i.e., the wife is bound to be faithful to him as long as he lives. We are under the law’s condemnation and curse until we die with Christ via our union with him.

In verse 4, when Paul speaks of his brothers “[dying] *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,*” he is explaining the point he made in 7:1. He is referring to the fact that the Christian died with Jesus Christ and is, therefore, no longer bound to the law in the sense described, its condemnation.<sup>10</sup> This is

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<sup>6</sup> Barrett, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 135; Cranfield, Commentary on Romans, I.332-333.

<sup>7</sup> Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 270.

<sup>8</sup> Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, pp. 411-412.

<sup>9</sup> Cranfield, Commentary on Romans, I.333.

<sup>10</sup> The history of interpretation of the relationship of verse 2-3 to verse 4 is amazingly complex. Says Cranfield, “from early times it has usually been assumed to be allegorical. On this assumption, the natural interpretation would seem to be to take the husband to represent the law and the woman the Christian or the company of believers as a whole set free by the removal of the law to form a new union with Christ. But this interpretation comes up against a serious difficulty in the fact that in v. 4 Paul goes on to speak not of the death of the law (as on this interpretation one would expect) but of Christian’s

clear when Paul speaks of this occurring “*through the body of Christ,*” i.e., in his sacrifice for our sins. Because we have died with Christ in his death, we also have come alive with Christ in his resurrection. To follow through on Paul’s legal analogy, we are now bound to our risen Savior and will, therefore, bear the fruit of his indwelling Holy Spirit. Our behavior will begin to conform to that commanded by that same law which no longer condemns us and from which we have been released.

To put it another way, since the Christian is “in Christ,” the Christian has died to both the guilt and power of sin (something made manifest by the law according to the following section). But every Christian who has died in Christ also rises to newness of life in the power of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of bearing fruit. Once again, we see the two aspects of sanctification set forth in Romans 6:11, mortification (we are dead to sin and the law) and vivification (we come alive unto God and are now free to serve him in a new way of obedience).

In verse 5, Paul writes, “*for when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.*” His comment, “*for when we were controlled by the sinful nature,*” is clearly linked to the preceding, dying to the law through the body of Christ.<sup>11</sup> In verses 5-6, Paul speaks of bring “*controlled by the sinful nature,*” “the flesh” stands in sharp contrast to what is characteristic about those who are in union with Christ. If we are “in Christ,” we are characterized by the fact that we are dead both to sin and to the law. But if we are in the flesh, we are characterized by certain behavior. We are controlled by the flesh and inevitably bear its fruit, described by Paul in Galatians 5:19-21: “*The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.*”

Paul uses the term flesh in two ways. One is as a reference to the bodies of both men and animals which are a natural part of the created order. But Paul also speaks of the flesh in an ethical sense as something which stands in opposition to God.<sup>12</sup> The term “flesh” [τῆ σαρκί] is, says Morris, “a Pauline word (it

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having died to the law. Its exponents have sought to meet the difficulty by suggesting that Paul refrained from speaking of the death of the law, as the logic the of his allegory demanded, and spoke instead of Christians’ having died to the law, in order to avoid offending Jewish sentiment. In modern times another form of the allegorical interpretation has been proposed, according to which the husband stands not for the law but for the Christian’s old self, while the wife stands for the continuing self of the Christian which through the death of the old self is translated into a new condition of life [Sanday and Headlam, Barth]. But this seem extremely complicated and forced....The decisive clue to the right interpretation of these verses is the recognition that they are not intended to be directly connected with v. 4, but with v. 1. They are not an allegory (nor yet a parable), the interpretation of which is found in verse 4, but an illustration designed to elucidate v. 1. Verse 4 is the conclusion drawn from vv. 1-3 as a whole, that is, from v. 1 as clarified by vv. 2-3: it is not an interpretation or application of vv. 2-3....We take it then that these two verses are simply intended as an illustration of the principle stated in . . . v. 1...namely, that the occurrence of death effects a decisive change in respect of relationship to the law” (Cranfield, Commentary on Romans, I.334).

<sup>11</sup> Cranfield, Commentary on Romans, I.337. “The γὰρ indicates the relationship of v. 5f as a whole to v. 4; the function of vv.5 and 6 together is to elucidate v. 4.”

<sup>12</sup> R. J. Ericksen, Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, pp. 303-306.

occurs 91 times in Paul out of 147 times in the New Testament; the most in any non-Pauline writing is 13 in John), and the apostle uses it in a variety of ways. It may refer to the soft constituent of the human body (1 Cor. 15:50), and thus to a human being (1 Cor. 1:29). It may mean human nature (Rom. 9:5), or this earthly life (Phil. 1:24), or human attainment (Philippians 3:3), from which it is not a long step to outward appearance (1 Cor. 1:26). But this body of flesh is weak (Rom. 6:19), and the thought of physical weakness leads on to that of moral weakness. It has this meaning here and very often in Paul. When ‘we were in the flesh’ means when ‘we were characterized by fleshly desires and outlook,’ a meaning that the NIV brings out in its paraphrase [sinful nature]. Paul does not mean that the flesh is of itself evil. Indeed, his looking back to the time when we were in the flesh indicates that it is possible to live this life (and therefore to live in this body) without being ‘in the flesh’. But the fact that the flesh is weak means that it is open to temptations of various kinds, and Paul is referring to a way of life that succumbs to these temptations, a life dominated by the lower part of human nature.”<sup>13</sup>

Given the fact that this discussion is really a continuation of the contrast between Adam and Christ made in Romans 5:12-21, it is likely that Paul is thinking eschatologically here as well—using the category of realm change. Though we remain “flesh” and are still subject to its sinful orientation (indwelling or habitual sin), nevertheless, “in Christ” we belong to him and are no longer under the domination of the flesh in either a legal or an ethical sense. In this particular sense we are not “in the flesh.” We are in Christ, we now belong to him, not the law, and as we will see in Romans 8, this is but the same thing as saying that we are now dominated by the Spirit. To be in Christ is to be in the Spirit.

As Cranfield points out, Paul’s use of the term “flesh” here denotes “the condition which for Christians belong to the past. They are no longer in the flesh in the sense of having the basic direction of their lives determined and controlled by their fallen nature.” Elsewhere Paul does speak of the flesh “in the sense that fallen human nature is still an element—and a far from powerless element—in their lives. But, when we were altogether under the domination of the flesh, then that condition prevailed in our lives which the rest of v. 5 describes.”<sup>14</sup> Again, this would fit with understanding of Paul as an eschatological thinker, who sees redemption at least, in part, in terms of a contrast between two eschatological ages. What we were in Adam, stands in marked contrast to what we are “in Christ.” And we are no longer in Adam.

Doug Moo concurs with this evaluation: “In describing the person outside of Christ as being ‘in the flesh [*sarx*],’ Paul means, in effect, that the non-Christian is ‘enveloped in,’ and hence controlled by, narrowly human, this-worldly principles and values. We must understand Paul’s language against the background of his salvation-historical framework. Paul pictures *sarx* as another ‘power’ of the old age, set in opposition to the Spirit—with which *sarx* is always contrasted in chaps. 7-8.”<sup>15</sup> Moo goes on to say: “As both Rom. 8:9 and the ‘when’ in this verse makes clear, this situation is an objective one in which all non-Christians find themselves and from which all Christians are delivered in Christ. Existence in the

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<sup>13</sup> Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 274.

<sup>14</sup> Cranfield, Commentary on Romans, I.337.

<sup>15</sup> Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 418. For this reason, Moo argues that the NIV’s translation of *sarx* as “sinful nature,” is misleading. Says Moo: “‘Flesh’ in this sense, is not part of the person, nor even exactly an impulse or ‘nature’ within the person—for this reason the NIV translation ‘sinful nature’—but a power sphere in which a person lives” (p. 418, n. 51).

domain of the flesh is determined by three other ‘powers’ of the old age: sin, the law, and death.”<sup>16</sup> Therefore, for Paul, the non-Christian dominated by the “power sphere of the flesh” is held captive to sin, stands condemned by the law and faces the inevitable curse, which is death.

In verse 5, Paul now makes the very important point that it was the law which aroused our “sinful passions.” This is a very significant in both theological and practical senses. As Morris points out, “there is something passive about *passions*, which points to the fact that there is in our human nature [something] which all too readily leads to evil, those passions that lead to sin.”<sup>17</sup> Calvin puts it this way: “The work of the law, in the absence of the Spirit, our inward Teacher (interior Magister), is to inflame our hearts still more, so that they burst forth into such lustful desires. It should be noted that Paul here compares the law with the corrupt nature of man, whose perversity and lust break forth with greater fury, the more they are held back by the restraints of righteousness. He adds again that as long as our carnal affections held sway under the law, they brought forth fruit unto death. Paul thus proves that by itself the law was destructive. It follows that those who so greatly desire the bondage which issues in death are utter fools.”<sup>18</sup> Again, the law brings death and bondage to those enslaved by the flesh—not because the law is evil—but because we are sinful and at least one purpose for which God gave the law is to expose and excite our sin to even greater levels. This is why we must be very careful about how we use the law.

As D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has argued, our passions are actually “inflamed even by the Law of God. The very law that prohibits them encourages us to do them, because we are impure. So morality teaching can even be a positive danger.”<sup>19</sup> Lloyd-Jones’ warning is profound. If we preach the law, the law will do its work! And law without the gospel brings death. But we need to be careful here. When Lloyd-Jones contends that “morality preaching is positively dangerous,” many will hear his words as a call to tolerate immorality! This is not the case. The point is this: the law will indeed do its work. But if Christian preaching and teaching centers in the demands of the law, the law will expose and incite sin, further leaving us without hope and the enabling power to fight off the sin that enslaves us.

There are several points here we need to consider. Since, the law reveals the will of God to us. When the law is proclaimed, it will do its work. The law will excite and exacerbate sin and gives us no enabling power to fulfill its demands. Moralistic preaching is preaching centered in personal obedience to specific commands, either to the law, or to the rules of men. As law, moralistic preaching leads to self-condemnation [those who know they cannot obey], or to Phariseeism [those who are proud of their obedience]. Such preaching is utterly destructive of Christ’s church and the biblical gospel.

A second point is that the preaching of the law must always be followed by the preaching of the gospel. The law demands. The gospel, on the other hand, freely gives what is demanded under the law. The gospel is the proclamation of Christ’s saving work, showing how Christ not only fulfilled the law’s demands, but that his death removes the guilt of our infractions of the law. It is the Holy Spirit, working through the gospel, paradoxically, who creates both the desire and the power to obey the law. Having

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<sup>16</sup> Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, pp. 418-419.

<sup>17</sup> Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 274.

<sup>18</sup> Calvin, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and Thessalonians, p. 141.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 274.

heard the gospel and embraced its promises, the Christian's desire is now to obey the commandments of God. The charge that if you over-emphasize gospel, people will use this as an excuse to sin, is nonsense.

Third, those who criticize the historic Reformed position as antinomian or libertine, must misrepresent the Reformed position—although many Reformed Christians misrepresent the Reformed position through their conduct. We are not saying the law should not be preached, nor are we saying that morality is not important. To say, as Lloyd-Jones does that morality preaching is dangerous, does not mean that we should not talk about morality. Rather it is to say, that Christianity cannot be equated with morality. We are saying that the preaching of the law should be followed by the preaching of the gospel, so that God creates in us the desire and gives us the power to obey the law, something morality preaching cannot do.

This is why the so-called second and third uses of the law must be kept absolutely distinct. According to the second use of the law, the law demands perfect obedience, it exposes and excites our sinfulness as a harsh schoolmaster and should serve to drive us to Jesus Christ for forgiveness. But we have been delivered from this condemnation of the law because of our union with Christ in his death! But according to the third use of the law, the law reveals to all of us in union with Christ in his death and resurrection, what God's will is for our lives. The old adage is true. The law is the teacher of sin and the rule of gratitude. The Heidelberg Catechism's arrangement along the lines of guilt, grace and gratitude, not only comports with Paul's doctrine of law and gospel in Romans, it very effectively summarizes it.

In light of Romans 5:12-21, and Paul's contrast between Adam and Christ, all non-Christians are characterized by the control of the flesh, seen in both the enslavement to our passions along with our corporate identity with all that the fall of Adam entails (sin, condemnation, death). To be "in the flesh" is to be identified with moral and intellectual darkness and slavery to sin, typical of "this age." In this sense, all non-Christian are "in the flesh." For the Christian, on the other hand, things are different. We are no longer characterized by this "evil age," i.e., "the flesh." The Christian is now identified with the Spirit and the "age to come." Though all Christians remain in the flesh until they are transformed at the resurrection, we are no longer under the control of the flesh, nor enslaved to it. Unlike the non-Christian who is identified with Adam, hence, has no struggle with sin, the Christian, who is identified with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection, now struggles with sin and the flesh until the resurrection. We must never confuse Paul's doctrine of sanctification with morality or "personal holiness." Paul is concerned with the fact that Christians are to reckon themselves dead to sin, but alive to God, and to behave like what we are in Christ, now offering ourselves to God as instruments of righteousness.

In the latter half of verse 5, Paul moves from the general principle to the specific application. The law arouses sinful passions, because these passions were already at work in our bodies, bearing fruit fit for death. The force of the verb here, "were active," (worked) means that these passions worked powerfully through the law, and that as a result of their working, we bore fruit for death. It is important to note that for Paul, sin is clearly a condition (passions aroused by the law) which, in turn, produces fruit in character with those passions. Someone enslaved to sin and the flesh will only produce the fruit of the flesh. Paul's doctrine of sanctification centers not in the command for a tree to change its fruit, but rather with the good news that God changes the tree from a bad one into a good one. Paul's focus is upon the indicative here, not the imperative.

It is also important to notice the rather striking contrast that Paul sets forth between those enslaved to the law, sin and death [those "in Adam"] and those who are in Christ in verse 6: "*But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.*" Paul begins v. 6, with "*but now*" [νυν] indicating that the Christian

stands in marked contrast to those who in verse 5 are still “in the flesh.” While the Christian will in one sense remain in flesh until death and glorification, the Christian is no longer dominated and controlled by the flesh as they had been before conversion. As we have seen in each of the Old Testament lessons from the past few weeks, Israel’s prophets foretold of the messianic age in exactly these terms. In our Old Testament lesson this morning (Ezekiel 36:24-32), the prophet speaks of a time when the believer’s relationship to the law will dramatically change. *“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”*

In Romans 7:6, Paul speaks of being released from what bound us (the law) through our union with Christ in his death so that we might serve in the new way of the Spirit.<sup>20</sup> This is an important assertion because while we are no longer under the condemnation of the law, the duty imposed on us by the law as the teacher of sin and the rule of gratitude, (the so-called second and third uses of the law), is not removed. This makes perfect sense in light of our earlier discussion of Christ’s death and resurrection as the pattern of the Christian life. We died to sin. We died to the law. But we are also raised with Christ so as to offer ourselves to God, and to serve in the new way of the Spirit. And what would the Spirit have us to do? According to the prophets, he will create in us a new desire and power to obey the law.<sup>21</sup>

Again, the key here is the eschatological understanding of the role of sin, the law and the flesh in relation to whether we are “in Adam” or “in Christ.” This is setting the groundwork for what will follow in chapter 8, when Paul discusses the role of the Spirit more specifically. When Paul speaks of being released from the law, notice that he immediately goes on to point out that the Christian now serves in the “new way” of the Spirit, not in the “old way” of the written code. Clearly, Paul sets the Spirit in contrast to the law, something he has already done in Romans 2:27-29. The contrast here is not between an inward desire to obey and the external demand written upon a table of stone, but a contrast between the Old Covenant which was centered in the blessing-curse motif and the New Covenant in which we have died with Christ and are raised with him so that we are now free to serve in the new way of the

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<sup>20</sup> Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 275. “Paul’s verb [here] is unexpected, and leads to a variety of translations: ‘discharged’ (RSV, NEB), ‘stand clear of’ (JB) [‘dying to what once bound us,’ NIV; ‘released’ NASB]. But the meaning is . . . clear. As far as the law is concerned we have been made null and void. There is no link between the believer and the law. Our salvation is not due to the law. We are delivered from the law because we have died to that by which we were held down. The imagery may suggest that we were captives to the law and could not escape.” As Cranfield argues, Paul’s meaning is more restricted. “[*Ho nomos*] is here used in a limited sense—‘the (as law condemning us),’ ‘the law (’s condemnation).’” See Cranfield, Commentary on Romans, I.338.

<sup>21</sup> According to Schreiner, “when Paul speaks of release from the law [Rom 7:6], he does not imply that all external law is counterproductive for the Christian. The point is that the flesh cannot obey God [Rom. 8:4-8], and obedience to the law is not possible apart from the Holy Spirit. The law apart from the Spirit kills. Believers need freedom from the law insofar as it enslaves people under sin. In the new age, the power of the Spirit makes obedience to the law possible [Rom. 8:4]. Thus, when Paul relates sin and the law, he thinks of the moral demands of the law and stands condemned [Gal. 3:10-13]. His solution is not to do away with all external commands. He asserts that Christians, by the power of the Spirit, can fulfill what the law demands.” Thomas R. Schreiner, The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), p. 172.

Spirit. The commandments are now written upon our hearts because the blessed Holy Spirit indwells us. We no longer serve according to the “letter,” which only excites our flesh to even greater levels of sin. Rather, we are now set free to serve in a new condition in which we are free to obey and because indwelt by the Spirit, we will bring forth the Spirit’s fruit.<sup>22</sup>

Paul’s point is simply this. We are no longer in Adam, held captive to sin, condemned by the law. Since we died with Christ we are no longer bound to the law in that we are no longer under its condemnation, just a marriage is no longer in effect when one spouse dies. But Paul does not leave us here. For he also says that we have been raised with Christ to newness of life. Paradoxically, by being bound to Christ, we are now free to serve God in a new way, that which Paul calls the “way of the Spirit.” Israel’s prophets speak of the new covenant in precisely these terms because Israel’s Messiah has set us from sin, from guilt and shame, and from condemnation. But having died in Christ to those things which held us captive, we have now been set free to serve in a glorious new way, the way of the Spirit. The condemnation of the law is gone—nailed to the cross with our Savior (Cf. Colossians 2:15). For in Christ, we rise to newness of life, and we now serve God not according to the letter of the law (which condemns and excites us to sin all the more), but bound to Christ, we now serve freely and with grateful hearts, according to the law written upon our hearts, the characteristic of serving in the new way of the Spirit.

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<sup>22</sup> Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, pp. 421-422.