

The Pilgrimage To A Spirit-Led Life

Part Fifteen

In this chapter Paul deals with the question what is the place of the law, how do we relate to law?

Paul starts with a metaphor from marriage to explain our release from law and our freedom to live another way.

The basic thought of this passage is founded on the legal maxim that death cancels all contracts.

Romans 7:1-3 [NIV] *“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? 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.”*

Paul is saying here that we were married to our fleshly nature.

This is because the whole essence of the law is you are required to keep it in your own strength, relying on our fleshly nature.

As long as we are married to our fleshly nature we cannot marry anyone else.

Romans 7:4-5 [NIV] *“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. 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.”*

Paul is saying the good news in your first husband [our fleshly nature] has died when Jesus died on the cross.

By identifying with this death of Jesus being crucified with Him, we are freed from our previous marriage contract and free to marry Jesus Christ, [**Revelation 19:7-9**].

Romans 7:6 [NIV] *“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.”*

When this happens Christian obedience becomes based, not on an externally imposed obedience to some written code of laws, but on an inner allegiance to our new Saviour and husband Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:16-17 [NIV] *“Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.”*

The spiritual union with Christ.

The act by which we are joined to Jesus Christ is the act of worship.

Worship is the highest activity of the human being and worship is pro-creative, it brings forth the fruits of the spirit.

Worship is the act of consummation of our marriage to Jesus Christ when we are united with him in spirit.

Galatians 5:19-21 [NIV] *“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. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

“acts” of our sinful nature!

Do we want to pro-create this kind of children?

For this is what our sinful nature brings forth.

We cannot bring forth anything that pleases God.

Galatians 5:22-23 [NIV] *“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.”*

“fruit” of the **spiritual union** with Christ.

Nothing is bad in this list.

The people who bring forth this kind of fruit do not need to be governed by some set of laws.

The key to the Christian life is NOT effort, it is union with Christ which brings forth, without effort, the fruits that God desires.

John 15:1-8 [NIV] *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. **No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.** “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; **apart from me you can do nothing.** If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. **If you remain in me** and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”*

“**remain in me**” Greek – **to stay in a given relationship or to continue to dwell with.**

This passage follows directly after Christ promising to send the Holy Spirit and the union we have with him and the Father is through the Holy Spirit, and the peace of mind this union can bring us.

John 15:16 [NIV] *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”*

Christ then tells us that we did **not** choose him but he chose us.

Christ also “*appointed*” us.

Greek to passively place, or lay down.

Same word as translated “*lay down*” in **verse 13.**

Just as Christ in his great love for us passively lay down his life, so we in that spiritual union with him, we should passively lay down our lives for him as an expression of our love for him.

Romans 7:4 [NIV] *“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.”*

It is through worship and our willingness to passively lay down our lives out of love for Christ that the spiritual fruits of that union will be produced.

Ephesians 5:17-29 [NIV] *“Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no-one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church”*

Physical worship of God in song services and the physical love relationship in marriage are physical acts to help us understand the spiritual worship and union God desires with us now.

Perhaps we can now see why God places such importance on the sanctity of marriage and why He hates adultery.

Romans 7:5 [NIV] *“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.”*

Law never changes people.

Which type of country would you prefer to live in:

- a) one with good laws and bad people?
- b) one with bad laws and good people?

If you choose the first, you haven’t thought it through.

Getting into politics and seeking to change bad laws for better laws will not make this nation a better place to live in.

The solution is not changing the laws but changing the people.

What will do that?

Only one thing – God’s Word and Holy Spirit.

People in one sense turn to the law in pride.

They want through keeping the law to do something that they can do themselves.

But being a vehicle in the hands of God, to allow God to change us, is humbling.

Then being an example for others to let God do the same thing in them, by allowing the Holy Spirit to do this in and through us is also humbling.

“the sinful passions aroused by the law”

Most people do not view the law this way.

Romans 7:6 [NIV] *“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.”*

By accepting Christ’s sacrifice we are freed from law keeping as a means to be righteous the law does not have a hold over us to produce what follows.

Romans 7:7-8 [NIV] *“What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.” But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by **the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire.** For apart from law, sin is dead.”*

“..... produced in me every kind of covetous desire”

If we are having a problem with coveting, lust, we will not overcome it by rules that forbid you to do it.

In fact, the more we focus on the negative rule, the more power the sin will have over us.

Why?

For our whole mind is centred on the concept of lust and this will just enslave us to it.

Romans 7:9-11 [NIV] *“Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. **I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.** For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.”*

When we, through the law, have sin shown to us and we, siding with the law, know that we should obey.

Then in our futile effort to obey we come to see that we have in us a nature that is prone to sin.

The law has then accomplished just what God wanted it to do, expose the evil of sin **and** the “old man” that is prone to sin that we have in us, that he may then be dealt with, crucified.

Romans 7:9 [NIV] *“Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.”*

Let us look at this very important verse in greater depth.

Three possible things in Paul’s mind when he wrote this:

a) Paul as a descendent of Adam and is represented by Adam [human nature] in scripture.

Genesis 1:31 [NIV] *“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day.”*

Adam was alive in the garden, a perfect being – no corruption or flaw in any way.

We do not know how long he continued in this condition but when the commandment was given, sin came to life and rebellion rose up in him, and he did the very thing he was told not to do.

Genesis 2:17 [NIV] *“but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”*

Once the act of rebellion took place, as God warned.

Adam died spiritually, and was cut off from God.

b) **Paul was also an Israelite and we need to remember that Ancient Israel were redeemed from Egypt and slavery not by the law but by faith in the Passover lamb and its shed blood.**

When they came to foot of Mount Sinai, God presented them with the law and they very rashly said “*all you command us we will obey*”.

They were relying on their fleshly nature.

What happened?

They broke the first commandment and were cut off from God and died.

This was **not** an accident, it was the result of trusting in the flesh, once we rely on our own effort we revive that rebel in us, and all he can do is produce “*works of the flesh*”, none of which are acceptable to God for they are all works of rebellion.

Until we come to see this we cannot progress in our spiritual life to maturity.

c) Could be autobiographic about Paul’s own personal experience.

Judaism is totally a religion of works.

Jews despise Christians who don’t have to do works.

Every Jew that is converted to Christianity finds it very hard **not** to go back into legalism.

Saul [before God renamed him Paul] was a fanatical Pharisee.

The way Paul attacked those who wished to add Old Covenant law conditions to Christian conversion shows he understood this proclivity to return to legalism.

Jeremiah 17:5 [NIV] “*This is what the LORD says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD.”*”

When we try to do the work of God in our own strength, or seek favour in God’s Eyes by conforming to a set of laws, we put ourselves under a curse.

Zechariah 4:6 [NIV] “*So he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.”*”

“..... not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of Hosts”

We have to stand back from our own personal programmes and plans to further God’s Work and let His Spirit empower and lead us.

Is this not how Ancient Israel escaped the power of Egypt which would have destroyed them?

Exodus 14:13-14 [NIV] “*Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.”*”

The same principle is portrayed throughout the whole Word of God, not what we can do in our strength but what God has done and will do for us.

Romans 7:7 [NIV] *“What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! **Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law.** For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.”*

The fault is **not** in the law.

Romans 7:12-14 [NIV] *“So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognised as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, **so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.** We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.”*

For it is good, holy, spiritual.

The problem is in our fleshly nature which naturally looks to keeping rules as a way to righteousness.

Keeping any set of rules will never make us righteous before God, only self-righteous.

To add anything to God’s requirements to impute His Righteousness to us, again only tends toward self-righteous pride.

The only solution is to turn to God’s way of faith and not works, to receive His Righteousness.

Romans 7:15-23 [NIV] *“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.”*

Being confronted with the law brings about a conflict within us.

The more we are concerned about being good and doing good, the greater will be our awareness of this conflict.

Those who have never really considered the concept of goodness will be little aware of this conflict, their conscience not troubling them at all.

God gives us a picture of the conflict between these two natures in the story of Rebekah and the birth of Jacob and Esau.

Genesis 25:20-34 [NIV] *“and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean. Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, “Why is this happening to me?” So she went to enquire of the LORD. The LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.” When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau’s heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them. The boys grew up, and Esau became a skilful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, “Quick, let*

me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.) Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright."

Esau is all through the Bible a type of what we call the carnal nature and Jacob the type of the spiritually disposed man.

This doesn't mean that Jacob was always good.

Jacob's one redeeming feature was esteemed highly the birthright and the blessing.

He was very crooked in the way he went to get them, he did a lot of things in his life he shouldn't have done and had to pay for them.

In our culture today Esau would be the popular "good guy", and Jacob the one who would be ostracised.

Esau did not do anything drastically wrong but what caused God to say that He hated Esau was his total disregard to his spiritual birthright.

He was prepared to sell it for a bowl of soup.

We see here two natures:

- a) **the carnal person** – just wanting a good time and all its senses satisfied with little or no regard to anything spiritual;
- b) **the spiritual person** – they are not good, there is a lot of crookedness in them but they have this one redeeming feature, their determination to get the Blessing of God.

Genesis 32:24-28 [NIV] *"So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."*

Remember Jacob wrestled all night with an angel to get that blessing, showing his determination to obtain blessing.

He was left with his leg out of joint, having to limp for the rest of his life.

There are a lot of men and women who have to have a confrontation with God that leaves them limping, and for the rest of their days they do not walk in their own strength.

This was how Jacob learnt at last that he could not do it by his own efforts.

If there is a Jacob in us as well as an Esau there is bound to be a conflict, just as we see there was in Paul.

Romans 7:24 [NIV] *"What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"*

The cry from Paul is 'who will release me from the death producing carnal nature that constantly fights against the things of God, that resists my best intentions to do good and walk in God's way of life?'

Romans 7:25 [NIV] *“Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.”*

The only solution to this conflict is Jesus Christ, *“through”* – Greek preposition *“dia”* – on account of – because of – the cause or means by which an action is accomplished.

The solution is through the cross.

Romans 6:6 [NIV] *“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin”*

“our old self [the Esau nature] is crucified with him.”

“That the body of sin might be destroyed [made of no effect] – that henceforth we should not serve sin”

We can now see that there are only two alternatives to our spiritual life:

a) **Under the law** and dominated by sin because of our inability to keep the law perfectly and by centring our thoughts on the law we stirred up sin in our lives.

b) **Under grace** and led by the Holy Spirit, free from the law and sin.

You are either one or the other.

You cannot mix the two ways of life.