

**2:19 For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God.**

Verses 19 and 20 justify the implicit claim in verses 17 and 18 that the Law became obsolete when Christ through His death ended the era of the Law and that it is not sin to reject the Law.

Paul died to and through the Law. To “die to” something is fairly easy to understand and there are parallel expressions elsewhere that clarify what is meant. For example, in Romans 6:2 Paul says that believers “died to sin.” In Romans 7:1-2 he speaks of dying “to that which we were once bound to.” In other words, to die to something is to be released from the power and authority of it. To say we “die” to it shows how radical the break is. Therefore, when Paul says, “I died to the Law” he means he is released from the power and authority of the Law. How foolish it is for Peter to rebuild that authority again.

But Paul also says he died “through the Law.” This is more difficult to understand for there are no parallels to it. There are two or three major views as to what this means. It could mean that (1) Paul realized that he could not keep the Law (he was condemned by it; Ro. 7:14-25) and would die because of it. This helped him see his need of Christ. It could also mean (2) that Paul died with Christ when Christ took the curse of the Law upon Himself (Gal. 3:10); or (3) that Jesus lived under the Law so He could free those under the Law from its bondage.

Because Paul died with Christ, he died to the Law, as well (2:20). This explains why it is sinful to impose the Law on the Gentiles. If you must die to the Law in order to live to God, then it is a transgression to try to build the Law again.

The purpose for dying to the Law is explained by the words, “so that I might live to God.” The analogy to marriage in Romans 7:1-4 is helpful in understanding what Paul means:

**Romans 7**

- 1 Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the Law), that the Law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?
- 2 For the married woman is bound by Law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the Law concerning the husband.
- 3 So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the Law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man.
- 4 Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

The first verse in Romans 7 is the key to the chapter, namely, that the Law has dominion over a man as long as he lives. The authority of the Law has binding force while one is under it, but it is not permanent.

This is seen in marriage. The Law states that a woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive (cf. I Cor. 7:39; Matt. 19:3-9). This is proven by the fact that if she marries another man while her husband is alive, she is called an adulteress (7:3). However, if her husband dies, she is free to remarry. This could not happen unless death nullified the Law of marriage.

Verse 4 provides the spiritual application to us. Although Paul now speaks of “our death” instead of the husband’s death, his point is the same - death releases us from obligation to the Law. Just as death freed the woman to remarry, so our union to the death of Christ frees us from the Law (Ro. 6:1ff; Gal. 2:19), making it possible to be joined to Him.

The believer’s death is due to our union with Christ<sup>1</sup>; we were made to die through the body of Christ. When we believed, we were incorporated into Him so that His experiences are ours. We died when He did, and our death freed us from the dominion of the Law, allowing us to be joined to Him.

The necessity of freedom from the Law and the consequences of freedom from the Law follow. Romans 7:5-6 say, “For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.”

The flesh, as it is used here, is our human nature directed by our sinfulness. When we were enemies of God and alienated from Him (“in the flesh”), The Law only aroused our sinful desires which resulted in us bearing fruit that led to death.

As long as we were bound to the Law, there was no possibility of release from our bondage to sin and the consequent condemnation. It is, therefore, necessary to be freed from the Law if we are to live. Freedom came when Christ died and we were united with Him in His death (7:4).

The consequence of our death to the Law is that we are no longer in servitude to it but can serve “in the newness of the Spirit.” That is, the believer now serves the living Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit) instead of being forced to try to submit to a list of rules that offer no power to obey them. Therefore, it didn’t make sense for Peter to impose the Law on Gentiles for it only resulted in sin and death.

When Peter reverted back to the Law (Gal. 2:12 ff.), he was in practice denying that any change in redemptive history had ever taken place. Christ’s death started the new stage of history in God’s plan to save men; therefore, turning the clock back implies that the Law, rather than Christ, is decisive for salvation.

***2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.***

The object of the Apostle's faith and the truths which he believed were (1) that Christ is the Son of God, (2) that He loved him and, (3) that Christ gave Himself for him.

The consequences of Christ's death are that we are united to Him and that it is no longer we who live, but Christ lives in us. Jesus said, "Because I live, you shall live also." (John 14:19.) This union with Christ is illustrated in the vine and its branches (Jn. 15:1-6). "As the life of the vine is diffused through the branches, and as they live only as connected with the vine, so the life of Christ is diffused through his people, and they are partakers of spiritual and eternal life, only in virtue of their union with Him" (Hodge).<sup>1</sup>

Paul and all other Christians presently enjoy the life in the age to come. We have not lost our identity as individuals, but who we were in Adam no longer exists; we are new creatures in Christ, though we still have a body that lives out this existence on the earth. Though the new age has not arrived in its fullness, the life of the believer is not marked by observance of the Law but by faith in Christ.

***2:21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.***

Christ's death marks the end of the OT era (see notes on 1:4), but union with Christ and His death also starts the beginning of new life for believers. To go back to the Law denies both. Those who require the Law for salvation reject God's grace because they are trying to establish and maintain a relationship to God by keeping the Law.

It is impossible to be justified (to attain a right standing with God) by the Law, so Paul does not reject God's grace (I do not nullify the grace of God). Furthermore, if one could be justified through obedience to the Law, then Christ died needlessly. Our Lord, in Luke 24:26, asks, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" There was an obligation, or necessity, which demanded His sufferings if the salvation of sinners was to be accomplished. Still more explicit is His language in Galatians 3:21: "if a Law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on Law." It is here asserted that if any other method could have been availed to save sinners, it would have been adopted.

Whether Peter realized the implications of his actions or not, he was compelling the Gentiles to keep the Law so that they could fellowship with Jewish believers. He, in effect, was making the cross unnecessary as the means of attaining righteousness (Gal. 2:14). In the least, adding obedience to the Law would make Christ's righteousness incomplete, for it would mean that Christ's righteousness plus the contribution of personal righteousness would be necessary to gain a right standing with God. This is not what the Bible teaches. We are saved by grace through faith alone (Eph. 2:8-9).

It is certain that Peter heeded Paul's advice, for Paul's appeal to the apostles' agreement with his gospel (2:1-10) would be meaningless if Peter ultimately disagreed with him.

### **Notes on Our Union with Christ:**

Our union with Christ is used in two senses: (1) we are joined to Christ in a representative sense and (2) in a living, or vital sense.

The representative union we have with Christ is described in Romans 5:12–21. There it tells us that Adam was constituted and regarded by God as the head and the representative of the human race and Christ the head of the new "race" of believers.

#### Romans 5

17 For if by the transgression of the one [Adam], death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

18 So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.

19 For as through the one man's disobedience [Adam's first sin (Gen. 3)] the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One [Christ's fulfillment of the Law during His entire life] the many [us] will be made righteous.

There is a striking analogy between our fall in Adam and our restoration in Christ.

by reason of one man's offense	→ judgment came
	→ resulting in condemnation

by reason of One Man's righteousness	→ the free gift came
	→ resulting in justification

In Romans 5:19, it tells us that we were made sinners in Adam and made righteous in Christ. The word in Greek translated as "made" (*katēstathesan* - κατεστάθησαν) is never used of changing the nature of someone into something different than it was before. It means to be declared to be something, or to be appointed to a position, or to be placed in a category. For example, in Acts 7:35 when it says, "Who made you a ruler and a judge?" it means, "Who appointed you as ruler and judge?" (cf. Matt. 24:47; 25:21; Acts 6:3; 7:10; Titus 1:5; Heb. 5:1 etc., Hodge, Romans, 173). Therefore, when Paul says that men were "made" sinners he does not mean that they were made sinful, but rather that they were placed in the same category as Adam. The same is true of our relationship to Christ. Through Christ's obedience we are placed in the class of the righteous, i.e. we shall be regarded as righteous and treated as such. It is not our righteousness that makes us righteous, but the imputation of Christ's righteousness that makes us so (Hodge, Romans, 174).

In other words, Adam and Christ are progenitors, originators, the singular forefathers of two nations or families of men. Picture if you will two masses of humanity. In front of each mass is a great figure - the

patriarch, the leader, the king, the spokesman - who represents everyone who is identified with him. Adam stands before one nation. Christ before the other. Indeed, so closely are the people identified with their representatives that they are said to be "in" them - either "in Adam" or "in Christ." The fortunes and fate of all who belong to them lie in the actions and decisions of each of these representatives.

Those "in Adam" are tied to his fate. Romans 5:12 tells us, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." Adam, as our representative, fell and we fell "in Him." However, we were restored "in Christ", the Second Adam. I Corinthians 15:22 says, "for as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive." Likewise, in 2 Corinthians 5:14-17 Paul writes, "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf ... Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." Christ as our representative paid the penalty for sin and fulfilled the just demands of the Law and we are declared righteous since we are in Him.

From God's perspective, when we are united with Christ, we are identified with Him in all the particulars of His dealing with sin. Romans 6:3 says, "all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death." We were identified with Christ in His death. It is as if there on the hill of Golgotha we hung with Him. Romans 6:4 says, "we have been buried with Him." We were identified with Christ in His burial. It is as if we were placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea with Him. Romans 6:4 says, "as Christ was raised...we, too, might walk in the newness of life." We were identified with Christ in His resurrection. It is as if we arose with Him when He arose on the first day of the week (see Eph. 2:5). Ephesians 2:6 tells us that "God seated us with Him in heavenly places."

Technically, ideally we are seated in Washington, DC, on the floors of both houses of Congress in the persons of our elected representatives. It is in this representative sense that we are to understand how we can be seated in heavenly places.

Martin Lloyd Jones says it like this:

Adam, our representative, rebelled against God: he sinned, he was punished, and certain consequences followed. But because Adam was our representative and our head, what happened to Adam also therefore happened to all his posterity and to us. Now that is one aspect of the matter and a very important one. We know something about this in ordinary life and living. The ambassador of this country in a foreign court represents the whole country, and he engages in actions in which we are all involved whether we want to be or not. As citizens of this country, we all suffer the consequences of actions that were taken before we were ever born...What the leader or the official representative of a nation does is binding upon all the citizens of that nation. Now that was true of Adam. It is also true of the Lord Jesus Christ. Adam was the first man; Jesus Christ is the Second Man. You have the first Adam; you have the Last Adam. Now Jesus Christ, according to this teaching, is the Representative of this new humanity.

Therefore, what He did and what He suffered is something that applies to the whole of this new race that has come into being in Him.

So, beloved, you are joined, you are connected to Christ in a representative union.

But we are also joined to Christ in a vital union.

If something is vital it is necessary to the maintenance of life itself (like the air we breathe). We not only receive life from Christ, our life is sustained through Him as well. The Bible gives several metaphors to help us understand this connection to our union with Christ. One is that of the vine and the branches from John 15. Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15:5). Once a branch is cut from a plant, the leaves began to shrivel up and die, for they had been cut off from that which sustained life.

But that is not the only illustration used. At the end of the first chapter of [Ephesians], Paul says that the union between a Christian and the Lord Jesus Christ is comparable to the union of the various parts of the body with the whole body, and especially with the head. Now, any one of my fingers is a vital part of my body. It is not simply tied on: there is a living, organic, vital union. The blood that flows through my head flows through my fingers. That indicates a kind of internal, essential unity . . .

We can therefore claim that what has happened to Christ has happened to us. This is the marvel and mystery of our salvation, and it is the most glorious thing we can ever contemplate! The Son of God, the Second Person in the eternal Godhead, came down from heaven to earth; He took unto Him human nature, He joined human nature unto Himself, He shared human nature; and as the result of His work we human beings share His life and are in Him, and are participators in all the benefits that come from Him. (Martin Lloyd Jones)

As those who have experienced the regenerating, life-giving grace of God, we now have the capacity to respond to and enjoy fellowship with the one, living and true God. We have been granted new capacities, a new allegiance, new affections, new desires, new perspectives, a new status, new motivation, and newfound freedom all as a result of God's grace. We have been made both capable and willing to submit ourselves to God.

Being alive to God is *to delight in Him*. God, as He has revealed Himself to be, is agreeable to our souls.

Being alive to God is *to have regard to Him*. We have a hunger for His Word and seek to conform to His will.

Being alive to God is *to have concern for Him*. We have an interest in His honor and glory in our lives and among men.

This is the life created in us by the Holy Spirit (John 6:63). This is the life sustained in us by that same Holy Spirit who indwells us. In this sense we are joined to Christ in a vital union.