

Legal Sin and The Law of Sin

Paul tells us in Colossians 2:14, 20 that Christ blotted out the ordinances of the Old Covenant from the time of Moses, and took them out of the way, nailing them to His cross. Therefore, if we are dead with Christ, why, as though living in the world, are we subject to ordinances?

Many Christians will ask that if this is true, what is there to keep us morally in line. Most continue to rely on guilt from breaking legal sin to do the right thing; but legal sin does not exist in Christianity. It never was effective for dealing with our tendency to sin from the law of sin. This is why Paul tells us in Romans 7:20 concerning our sin actions that "it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me." The law of sin is what makes us sinners. Our actions merely confirm it.

Only the peace of God and His strength from the Holy Spirit can lift us from the tendency to sin. Romans 8:1-8 tells us that:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace, because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

All of this had been prefigured. Paul tells us that Christianity is the fulfillment of what was prophesied in the Old Testament (see Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:26-27, 2Corinthians 3:2-9, and Hebrews 8:8-13, 10:16-17).

Our state of sin is what condemns us before any of the actions that flow from it, which are only the outward symptoms. This is why Jesus says in John 3:17-18: "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believes on him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Only Christ brings us to rest from sin when we imitate His humility toward the Father (see Matthew 11:28-30).

Unfortunately, this is not emphasized as it should be. Verbal declarations of making Jesus our Lord and Savior fall short of this. Confession of legal sin to God or anyone else doesn't do any good because legal sin doesn't exist in Christianity. Scrupulosity often accompanies legalism because there is always the fear of punishment for breaking a law; and the law of sin will not allow a person to be at rest. We need to draw close to God to be lifted out of the law of sin by grace. The efforts of those who choose any other way will be thwarted by the law of sin.

Paul, in Romans 7:14-25, describes it as our tendency to remain in a recurring pattern of sin because of our human weakness which resulted from Adam and Eve's disobedience. We are born with it even before we get a chance to do anything wrong. This is why people eventually become prone to addictions and compulsions. Even what may appear to be a good addiction is motivated by the law of sin. Only grace can lift us out of it and death, and not our own efforts at righteous living.

Christian freedom in Christ is the ability to be free from this recurring pattern of sinning: not the freedom to sin. We are then able to make full use of our wills, instead of doing the things that we don't want to do, and not doing the things that we should. Our motivation for not sinning is that we no longer want to return to being slaves of sin (see John 8:34, 1 Corinthians 6:12, and Romans 6:6-7, 12-18).

In Galatians 5:16-25, Paul tells us to walk in the Spirit, and we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh; and that if we are led by the Spirit, we are not under the Law. The Spirit is what gives us victory over the law of sin. A virtuous life results from this, and not from trying, while in our weakened state, to get into a habit of virtue by using our own efforts to replace sinning. Virtue comes from closeness to God. He infuses it when we are surrendered to Him.

The only way that I found the grace to be lifted out of the law of sin was to be anxious for nothing by casting all of my care on God (see Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Peter 5:5-7, James 4:5-10, and Acts 20:21). Before this, I had never found anyone say that it was even possible. My search for inner peace brought me to this place of understanding in Scripture. I acted on it, and never looked back.

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