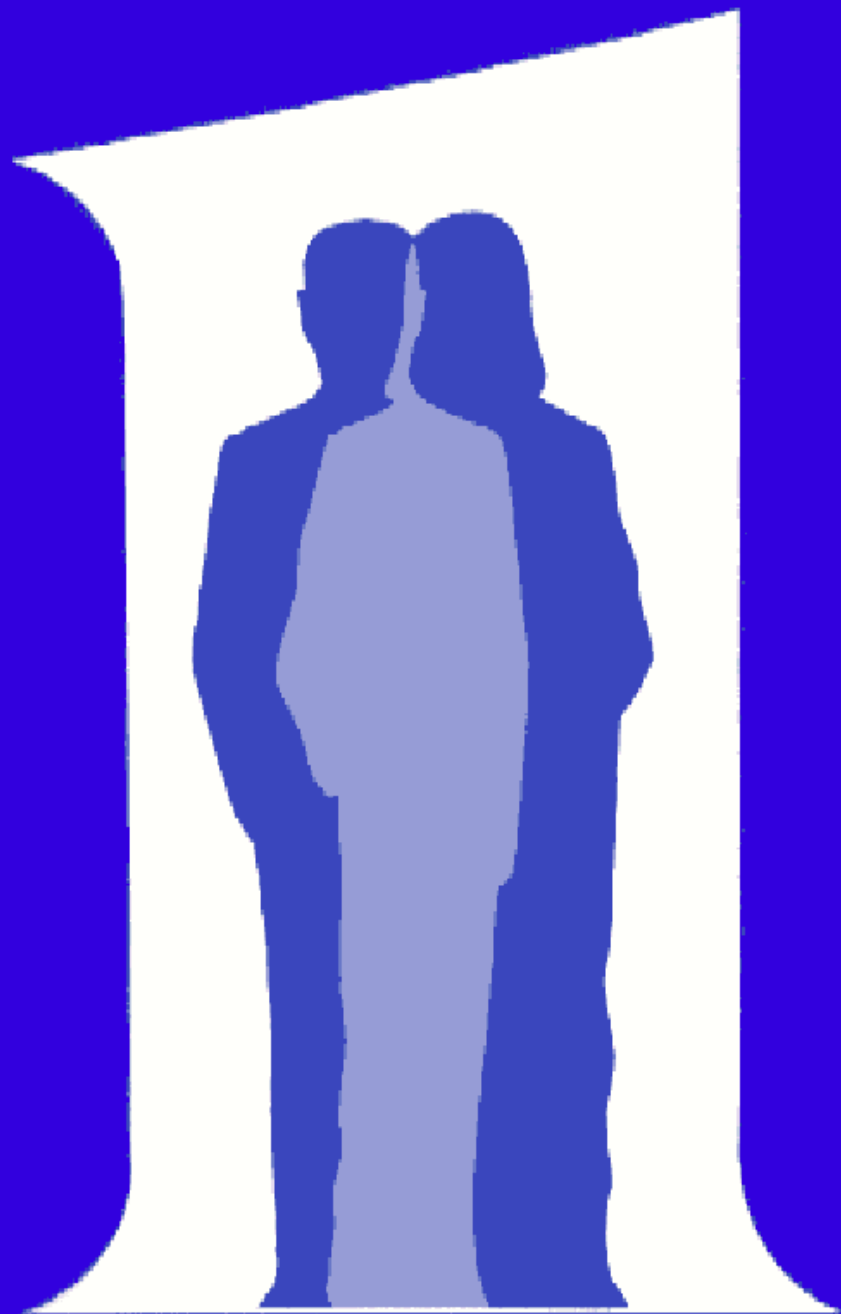


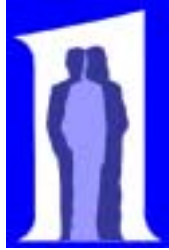
INTRODUCTION TO



**OUR ONENESS
WITH CHRIST**

DAVID KUYKENDALL

Introduction to the New Testament Theme



OUR ONENESS WITH CHRIST

By David Kuykendall

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INTRODUCTION TO OUR ONENESS WITH CHRIST

After 23 years of unanswered prayer for the abundant life Jesus promised, Phil began asking God to kill him if He could not change him. Understanding and living out his union with Christ resulted in the changes Phil longed for.

Robert's love for God and passion in Christian service were contagious. Yet, being recently divorced and feeling himself a failure in his college and church work, he felt himself a failure. What could he do?

He was directed to the New Testament message of his union with Christ. He understood. He began living it out. Today Robert is a college and seminary graduate, happily married and with two fine children, and engaged in fruitful Christian ministry.

Those who have understood and responded to the teachings set forth here have been changed in every area of life. In fact, the message of our union with Christ could be presented under many different themes—such as:

- How to be fruitful in ministry
- How to have a biblical marriage
- How to be a loving and wise parent
- How to deal with my money problems
- How to find God's will for my life
- How to have victory over sin
- How to win over fear, depression, etc.
- How to love with God's love
- Living the Spirit-filled Life



TO LIVE OUT OUR ONENESS WITH CHRIST IS TO LIVE BY GRACE

Believers experience their union with Christ through understanding and obeying the five imperatives of Romans 6:11-13. In Romans 6:14 Paul writes:

... you are not under law but under grace.

Those who understand and live out the five imperatives are not under law but under grace. Another phrase then for living out our union with Christ is “living the life of grace.” We have chosen to use that expression throughout this entire introduction of our union with Christ.

The only lengthy, organized, and detailed passage in the New Testament explaining how we are to live the Christian life is Romans 5:12-8:39. It explains that believers should and can live by grace. But what is living by grace?

One could say that living the life of grace is living out Paul’s admonition to the church at Colossae:

Col. 2:6 As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.

Because we received the Lord Jesus by grace through faith we can read Colossians 2:6 as follows:

Just as we received Jesus as Lord and Savior by grace through faith, so let us walk in Jesus by grace through faith.

The thought is difficult for some of us to grasp, though, because of our introduction to the concept of grace. Some of us were told in our earliest days of walking with God that grace is “the unmerited favor of God through which God forgives an unsaved person.” Embracing that

definition of grace we were unable to grasp the expressed desires of New Testament writers for their born-again readers to “walk in Jesus by grace through faith.”

If we are to consider the concept of living by grace, we need a definition of grace that takes it beyond God’s resource for the unsaved only. Here is one definition some have found helpful.

The grace of God is everything God is—moving freely toward you to meet your every need.

With this broader definition we see that living the life of grace is trusting God to be our total resource for life.

Romans 5:12-8:39 provides its own explanation of what it means to live by grace. In Romans 5:12-6:23 Paul continually uses the term grace in setting forth the life believers are to live. He never mentions the Holy Spirit. In Romans 8 Paul describes the same life as “walking in the Spirit” and never uses the term grace. *Living the life of grace is walking in the Spirit.*

Two verses in Romans 5 advance the truth that living the life of grace is God’s plan for us to experience the abundant life.

Rom. 5:17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Rom. 5:21 ... so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In Romans 8:10 Paul writes that the Holy Spirit gives us (the abundant) life through righteousness—just as grace does.

And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

Some have said that all believers are under grace and not under law. Romans 6:14 and 15 both mention that believers are not under law but under grace. It is not true, though, to say that all believers are not under law but under grace.

To say that all believers are under grace would be the same as saying all believers are walking in the Spirit. Consider the following verses:

Gal. 5:18 *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

Rom. 5:17b *... those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*

Both verses show that to experience the life of grace we must do something.

And we do not need to be confused as to what we must do. Paul's two statements in Romans 6:14, 15 about believers not being under law but under grace follow five commands. It is our obedience to these five commands that takes us out from under law and places us under grace.

While the entire passage of Romans 5:12-8:39 sets forth the message of living the life of grace, our purpose here is not that of verse-by-verse exposition but a study of various themes. We begin with a brief introductory look at the five commands just mentioned—returning to them later for a more in-depth study.



INTRODUCTION OF THE FIVE COMMANDS FOR LIVING THE LIFE OF GRACE

As we review these commands we will see that each is a command either to believe something or to choose to do something. The fourth of the five commands is an exception. It is a command that we both choose and believe something. We must obey the “believe” commands as decisively as we obey the “choose” commands.

THE FIRST COMMAND EXHORTS TO AN ACT OF FAITH

Rom. 6:11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Several modern translations read “consider” rather than “reckon.” Perhaps we get the clearest insight using “believe.” The idea of the command is that we believe we are dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. The verb tense indicates continual action.

THE SECOND COMMAND EXHORTS TO AN ACT OF THE WILL

Rom. 6:12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

Give attention to the fact that “sin” is singular—not plural. It is a reference to our old selfish sin nature. The “it” does not refer to our sin nature but to our body. The verb tense is again one of continual action.

THE THIRD COMMAND EXHORTS TO AN ACT OF THE WILL

Rom. 6:13a *And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin...*

The third command is different from the second command by mentioning the parts of our bodies, while the second command refers to the body as a whole. The third command is that we are not to present any part of our bodies to sin, while the second command is one of defense—*do not permit sin to reign*. “Sin” in the third command also refers to our old selfish sin nature. The result of presenting the parts of our bodies to our old selfish sin nature is this: our old selfish sin nature will use them as instruments of unrighteousness. Again, the verb tense is one of continual action.

THE FOURTH COMMAND EXHORTS BOTH TO AN ACT OF THE WILL AND AN ACT OF FAITH

Rom. 6:13b *... present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead...*

The choice feature of this command is that we give ourselves to God. The belief feature is that we give ourselves to God as being alive from the dead. Later as we look at the biblical bases for these commands we will see they are given in a context revealing that when we accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, we were (spiritually) crucified, buried, and resurrected. In that context we should think of this command in this manner: present yourselves to God as those who are already crucified, buried, and resurrected.

THE FIFTH COMMAND EXHORTS TO AN ACT OF THE WILL

Rom. 6:13c *... [present] your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*

This fifth command is just the opposite of the third command. We are to present the parts of our bodies to God Who will then do His works of righteousness through them.

Obedying these five commands takes us out from under law and places us under grace. The believer who continues to obey these five commands is walking in the Spirit. Admittedly, there is no such statement here as, “if you obey these five commands.” There are, though, several indications in the remaining passages of this study that point to assumptions on the part of Paul that his readers will obey these five commands.

One *must* have an understanding of the foundational truths underlying the five commands for living by grace. We will now look at those truths.



THE FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS UNDERLYING THE COMMANDS FOR LIVING THE LIFE OF GRACE

Through familiarity with the foundational truths for the life of grace we can with understanding obey the five commands for living the life of grace.

Paul introduces his presentation of the life of grace by revealing that Adam is a type of Christ. Essential to living the life of grace is an understanding that there is a likeness between Adam and Jesus.

ADAM IS A TYPE OF JESUS

Paul begins his discussion of this extremely important truth in Romans 5:12.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.

The purpose of this statement is to show the unity of the human race and to set forth Adam as the head of that race. Adam infected himself with a sin problem and a death problem—and passed both on to all his descendants. Paul proves his point in the two following verses:

Rom. 5:13-14a For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14a Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam.

Because we are all descendants of Adam, we were born with both a sin problem and a death problem. Therefore, we can make the following statement:

Adam is the head of the natural race. Therefore, when we entered his race, things true of him became true of us.

Then in one brief statement at the end of v. 14 Paul sets forth a truth that once understood is life-changing.

... who is a type of Him who was to come.

Paul's relative pronoun "who" refers back to Adam. The one who was to come is Jesus. In Romans 5:15-19 Paul expresses vast differences between Jesus and Adam. But in this one brief statement Paul indicates that in at least one way Adam and Jesus are alike. Since Paul has just set forth Adam as the head of a race, we should conclude that Adam is a type of Christ because Jesus also is the head of a race. While the natural race of men is the race of Adam, the race of Jesus is spiritual. Consequently, we can say the following:

Jesus is the head of the spiritual race. Therefore, when we entered his race, things true of him became true of us.

OUR ENTRANCE INTO THE RACE OF JESUS

Just as we entered the race of Adam by birth, by birth we also entered the race of Jesus. In this context, though, Paul explains our entrance into the race of Jesus as a baptism. In Romans 6:3 he writes:

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Obviously, we do not believe water baptism places us into the race of Jesus. Clearly, Paul refers to a work of the Holy Spirit. Water baptism provides a beautiful picture of the spiritual reality—but the *reality* is a work of the Holy Spirit.

Gal. 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

1 Cor. 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ...

Being baptized into Jesus by the Holy Spirit is one of the many things that happened to us when we received Jesus as Lord and Savior. The importance of our understanding and emphasizing our baptism into Jesus is boldly underlined by Paul's statement to the Corinthians:

1 Cor. 4:17 *For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.*

The statement seems to clearly indicate that Paul taught the “in-Christ” message everywhere he went.

The concept of believers being in Christ is found in one form or another—*in Him, in Whom, in the Beloved*—over 160 times in the New Testament. Respected scholars of biblical study say that many of those times it refers to our union with Christ. That is the thought here.

THINGS THAT BECAME TRUE OF US WHEN WE ENTERED THE RACE OF JESUS

We have already seen that when the Holy Spirit baptized us into Jesus some things true of Jesus became true of us. In Romans 6:3-5 Paul shows us that those things are three in number.

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.

We understand, then, at the time of our conversion to Christ, we were crucified, buried, and resurrected. Understanding that these three things are true of us we are able to obey the five commands of Romans 6:11-13. Some of us may say, “We need to be crucified or we need to crucify self.” Yet our need is to continue to experience our crucifixion.

Our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection fall into the same category of experience as the forgiveness of our sins. Especially in the early days of our walk with the Lord, when we sinned we would confess with a repentant and grieving heart—and then we would confess again.

We were forgiven but were not experiencing forgiveness. Someone pointed us to 1 John 1:9 and we began to experience our forgiveness—not because we felt forgiven but because we believed the Scriptures. In order to experience forgiveness we had to choose and believe.

We can, then, make the following statement that seems not only to be true but essential to our living the life of grace—walking in the Spirit

There are some things true of us in the Christian life we will not experience until we choose to experience them and believe they are true of us.

We must believe and choose our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection in order to experience them. And in obeying the commands of Romans 6:11-13 we do those two things. Each command is either a command to choose to do something or to believe something—or both.

The New Testament reveals that there are four features to our crucifixion, two features to our burial, and three features to our resurrection.

WE WERE CRUCIFIED

OUR OLD MAN WAS CRUCIFIED

Other than Paul's statement about his crucifixion with Christ in Galatians 2:20, the best-known statement concerning the believer's crucifixion is recorded in Romans 6:6. There Paul writes:

... our old man was crucified with Him ...

Since we know we were born with Adam's sin nature, we can think of our old man as being that sin nature and all it has produced in us. So, what is that sin nature and what has it produced in us?

For centuries scholars have set forth explanations of our sin nature—using such words as “pride.” But we must permit the Bible to give us a satisfying explanation of our sin problem. A first step in seeking an answer is to look at Galatians 5:24.

And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Our old man, then, is our flesh with its passions and desires in addition to all they have produced in us. But where Paul writes in Romans 6:6 that our old man was crucified, here he writes that we did the crucifying. He must mean that we did the crucifying only because we willed to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. It is important to note that what Paul calls “sin” (referring to our sin nature) in Romans 6 he calls “flesh” in this passage.

While the above is helpful in understanding our sin nature, the Bible gives an even clearer explanation. A further step in pursuit of that explanation is Genesis 3:6.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Adam and Eve believed that eating fruit from “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” would make them wise.

It is interesting that the words translated “good” and “evil” are not always used in the sense of moral good and moral evil. They are used to refer to that which is to advantage and that which is to disadvantage. So, the very name of the tree suggested to Adam and Eve that eating fruit from it would result in their becoming wise enough to know what was best for them—and for others.

In the first chapter of Romans Paul discusses the rejection of God by all people. In the context of that passage Paul refers to all mankind with these words:

Rom. 1:22 *Professing to be wise, they became fools.*

Our sin nature—our flesh—then, can be said to be this: *we believe we are wise*. We think we know what is best for us, for our families, for our churches, and for the kingdom of God. We think we know the best thing to do and the best way to do it. How often have you seen indications of this in your own life and in others?

As well as giving insight into our basic sin nature, the Scriptures also provide specifics of what that sin nature produces in us. Immediately following Paul’s revelation that we think we are wise he sets forth a very lengthy statement listing things resulting from our attitude that we are wise.

Rom. 1:22-32 *Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man; and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise*

also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

By understanding the term “flesh” to mean our sin nature we can see a very vivid parallel between the passage above and the following passage.

Gal. 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like.

Of course, probably only a few, if any, are guilty of all these works of our sin nature. But all of us are potentially capable of all of them. And all of us are guilty of some of them. Furthermore, there are many other things our sin nature has produced in us: things such as fear, worry, depression, and self-pity.

Our old man is that basic sin nature—that know-it-all attitude—with all it has produced in us. The good news is that our old man has been crucified. When we obey the five commands of Romans 6:11-13 we experience the crucifixion of our old man. Our old man is not annihilated. He is put out of power. We have victory over the sin nature and what it has produced in us.

Indeed our old man—including our sin nature—has been crucified. But also we have died to our sin nature. A theme to which we now turn—a theme revealing that as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we have a double victory over the power of sin.

WE DIED TO SIN

The first of the five commands for living by grace is that we are to reckon (consider, believe) ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Let us remember that we entered into the race of Jesus crucified, buried, and resurrected because Jesus, the head of the spiritual race, was crucified, buried, and resurrected.

Notice that in the verse that is located just above the command for us to believe ourselves dead to sin and alive to God is the statement that these two things are also true of Jesus. This is clear from the use of the words “likewise” and “also” in v. 11.

Rom. 6:10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

Just as Jesus died to sin and is alive to God, we are to believe that we also are dead to sin and alive to God. The truth of our being dead to sin was actually introduced by Paul at the beginning of chapter six. There he writes:

Rom. 6:1-2 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

In this passage Paul states that all believers died to sin. In v. 11 we are commanded to believe we are dead to sin. The passage in v. 11 should read “dead ones in reference to sin.” So Paul presents the same thought using both the verb—we died— and the adjective—we are dead ones.

Thinking of sin here as the sin nature, we understand this to mean that we believers are to think of ourselves as being dead as far as the sin nature is concerned. We are to believe the sin nature cannot control us.

What a beautiful thought! We are to believe our sin nature—our flesh—is crucified and as far as our sin nature is concerned we are crucified. This is a double victory over the flesh. Living out this double crucifixion, we are free from the flesh controlling our lives.

And now we have the joy and privilege of investigating yet another victory that is ours through our crucifixion.

WE DIED TO THE LAW

Obviously, the believer committed to live up to the commands of the Bible in human strength is under law. There are two other ways we place ourselves under law: by making and seeking to live by our own sets of rules and by seeking to “do our best for Jesus.” In all three we live out of our own resources rather than God’s.

The importance of understanding the believer’s death to law is revealed in Paul’s statement that those who obey the five commands of Romans 6:11-13 are not under law but under grace. The importance is also boldly underlined by the fact that over 30% of the entire passage of Romans 5:12-8:39 either directly or indirectly concerns the believer and law. All of chapter seven is about the believer and law.

The above facts explain the large amount of space given to the discussion of our death to law.

This section will examine the believer under law, the believer under grace through death to law, and the believer under law during lapses of grace. Paul presents the first two themes in two

ways: by statements of declaration and by personal testimony. The third he presents only by testimony.

THE BELIEVER UNDER LAW—ROMANS 7:4-13

Paul presents this study primarily as the believer under law by seeking to keep the commands of the law of Moses. We should not, though, lose sight of the two other ways we place ourselves under law as mentioned above.

The believer under the law as set forth by declaration—Romans 7:1-6

The believer under law is in bondage

The believer under law is in bondage because one's commitment to law-living is like a marriage that can be broken only by the believer experiencing death by crucifixion.

Rom. 7:4 Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another; to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

Paul adds:

Rom. 7:6 But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

Notice the terms “delivered” and “we were held by”—both of which imply bondage.

The believer under law is in the flesh

Following Paul's illustration on marriage he adds:

Rom. 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.

In Romans 8:3 Paul writes:

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh ...

The law arrangement was an arrangement between God's rules and man's flesh. When God gave the law arrangement, three times the Jewish nation said, "All that God has said we will do." Flesh was speaking. That is the law arrangement today. Anyone whose approach to the Christian life is "What God hath said, I will do" is in a law arrangement and in the flesh.

The believer under law is experiencing uncontrollable emotions

Read the following verses from Romans 7.

Rom. 7:5 *For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.*

Rom. 7:17 *But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*

Rom. 7:20 *Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*

How many of God's children are crying out for victory over such things as anger and jealousy they cannot control? And how long can such a list become? For some the list may be relatively brief. For others the list is exceedingly long.

The believer under law is in a state of death

Paul speaks much of law producing death in his personal testimony. He introduces the idea in a very straightforward way in 7:5.

For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.

There are those who have experienced this agony of spiritual and emotional death to the point of preferring physical death.

The believer under the law is living by rules

As we have seen, all living by rules is law-living.

Rom. 7:6 *But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.*

There could not be a better expression of legalism than this statement by Paul.

The believer under the law as set forth by personal testimony

All of Romans 7:7-25 is Paul's personal testimony concerning his own relationship to law. It divides into two sections. In verses 7-13 Paul writes of his placing himself under law after receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior. In verses 14-25 Paul writes of his lapses into law after experiencing freedom from law through obeying the five commands of Romans 6:11-13. In 7:7-13 Paul writes of his past. In 7:14-25 Paul writes of his present.

Let us follow Paul as he takes us on his spiritual journey from conversion to realizing he must have God's grace. While it is for the most part a very painful journey for Paul it has a very pleasing beginning. It is so because the beginning of Paul's journey to a life of grace was an enjoyable period of sovereign grace.

Testimony of a period of sovereign grace

It is a very common thing to hear someone say, "I just wish I could get back to what I had right after I was saved." Many—especially those who accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior as adults—have testified about a fulfilling period of walking with God immediately following conversion.

In was a time—of varying lengths—when there were no thoughts of rules of any type. They were experiencing a period of sovereign grace. Paul seems to reveal such a period in his own life.

Rom. 7:9 I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

This surely is not the testimony of a Hebrew of Hebrews. And if not, this must be the testimony of a man experiencing a period of sovereign grace. In 7:8 Paul had written:

For apart from the law sin was dead.

The sin nature was out of power as long as Paul was in that sovereign grace period.

Testimony of placing self under law

A summary of the end of Paul’s sovereign-grace period and the beginning of his law-living as a believer is found in Romans 7:9.

I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

In verses 7:7-8 Paul indicates that the commandment that came was the tenth: “Thou shalt not covet.” Because he indicated his “ladder climbing” as a Pharisee in Galatians 1, we may assume that Paul in pre-Christian days had problems with covetousness. So, perhaps one day Paul remembered his spirit of covetousness along with all of its negative results for him and for others—and resolved not to covet. The command had returned.

At the same time another thought—one which has obviously been in many in our own day resulting in a passionate commitment to legalism—must have arisen in the mind of Paul. He writes:

Rom. 7:10 And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.

Literally translated the passage reads:

And the commandment unto life was found unto death.

Obviously, words need to be added. Different translations have added different words. Why could not words be added that would make the passage say:

And the commandment which I thought was to bring life was found by me to bring death?

Paul wanted victory over covetousness. He wanted the abundant life he had experienced during the sovereign grace period. He committed himself to keeping the law. This seems to be the meaning of his statement in 7:9 “when the commandment came, sin revived.”

This also seems to be a picture of many of us today who have a deep desire to have all God desires for us. We have thought that if we would obey the Scriptures—and obey our own rules for Christian living—we would be in victory. We have passionately given our lives to God. We read the Bible much. We pray with great emotion. We repent. We dedicate and rededicate. But we still are grieved by the sins we cannot overcome.

Testimony of life in the flesh

In Romans 7:21 Paul writes of his discovery of a spiritual law.

I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me (KJV).

That statement is perfectly parallel to Paul’s revealing statement in Romans 7:9.

I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

When the commandment came sin revived. Of course, this means the flesh was now back in power. When Paul chose to obey the command, flesh said, “I can do that. I will do that.”

Perhaps this is what Paul means by his statement about the deception of the flesh in Romans 7:11.

For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.

Flesh had said, “I can.” But it could not. Back in power, though, it brought along with it a life of spiritual failure and death.

Testimony of a life that was “death”

Paul fills Romans 7 with his deep consciousness of the death law-living brings into the life of the believer.

Rom. 7:9 I was once alive without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

Rom. 7:10 And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.

Rom. 7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.

Rom. 7:24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Using the term “death” to describe what happened to him while seeking to find life through law, Paul writes of a state of spiritual and emotional failure. In Romans 8:5-16 Paul contrasts life in the Spirit and life in the flesh. Since seeking to live by law puts our flesh in power, this passage also reveals the experience of “death through law-living.”

Rom. 8:5-13 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh ... For to be carnally minded is death ... Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors; not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die...

THE BELIEVER UNDER GRACE THROUGH DEATH TO LAW

We do not know the exact duration of Paul's sovereign grace period or of his law-living period in the flesh *and in his state of spiritual and emotional death*. Paul surely rejoiced when the Father revealed that in his conversion to Christ he died to the law.

The believer under grace through death to law as set forth by personal testimony

It is perhaps appropriate to begin a study of the believer no longer under law but under grace by reading again Paul's introductory statement about our entrance into grace in Romans 5:20

Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more...

It would not be wrong to say that Paul's entrance into grace actually began with the entrance of the law. When the sovereign grace period was over, his life of continuing grace began. It began because life under law permitted Paul to see the utter sinfulness of his own heart. He would later testify:

Rom. 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

But look also at Paul's first realization of his need of grace.

Rom. 7:13 Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

It is sad to see someone engaged in law-living because of the deception of the flesh and misunderstanding of the purpose of the law. Yet, if that person has a passion for God, he is on his way to grace. He likely will only need someone to show him the passage on how to experience grace.

The believer under grace through death to law as set forth by declaration

A review of Romans 5:21 reminds us that grace results in the abundant life.

So that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In Romans 7:4 Paul declares that the life of grace is a life of marriage to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another; to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

According to Ephesians 5:22-33 our place—the believer’s place—in the marriage is that of showing utter respect and being totally available. The place of Jesus—the husband—is that of guiding, loving, caring, and nurturing us. He does this while giving us His full attention.

This marriage between Jesus and the believer experiencing his crucifixion, burial, and resurrection is a marriage with One Who is crucified, buried, and resurrected. The result of such a marriage is fruit for God.

Rom. 7:4 Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another; to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

Surely we all have longed to have more fruit for God. Here Paul gives us a simple answer. Experience our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection according to the commands of Romans 6:11-13.

Another blessing of the life of grace is the privilege of spiritual service rather than serving a set of rules. Paul writes:

Rom. 7:6 But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

It is appropriate here to look again at Paul's contrast between law and grace set forth in Romans 8:5-16 for the purpose of looking at the blessings of grace.

... those who live according to the Spirit, [set their minds on] the things of the Spirit ... to be spiritually minded is life and peace ... the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you ... if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

THE BELIEVER UNDER LAW DURING LAPSES OF GRACE

Paul uses present tense in his testimony of Romans 7:14-25. He must have been indicating that he himself had his days of not obeying the commands of Romans 6:11-13. There was for him—and for us—an immediate return to law-living and flesh-living. In painful detail Paul writes of the result.

Rom. 7:14-25 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. 16 If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. 17 But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who

do it, but sin that dwells in me. 21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. 22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Another indication that Paul must have been writing here about life after grace is his statement in 7:25 that he knows Jesus Christ will deliver him from such a sad state in life.

It is appropriate that this discussion of death to law be concluded with Paul's victorious statement of Romans 8:3-4.

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

We need not fear relinquishing to God our attempts to walk with Him in our own strength. We need not fear relinquishing to God our own set of rules for Christian living.

The concept of freedom from law can leave us confused and with serious questions. Should we keep the commands of the New Testament? What about the rules on my job? What about Christian leaders who live by rules and promote them? What about church schedules and other church rules? Following are brief and (hopefully) satisfying answers.

The Holy Spirit will give leadership, specific times (if He desires), and power for obeying the commands of the New Testament.

On our jobs we should obey our supervisors as if they were Christ Himself—regardless of the rules we must follow. See Ephesians 6:5.

Some of our church leaders may have direction from the Lord concerning certain times they should pray and read their Bibles. But even if God has given a schedule for *certain times* they should be available at *all times* to pray and read their Bibles. However, no Christian leader should take the schedule God has given him and turn it into law for others.

Christian groups such as churches must have such things as time schedules and rules for the entire group. But God has a will in it all and will lead the church or group in all they do.

When we in our churches and Christian groups live under the direction of the Holy Spirit even though schedules and rules are involved, we are not engaging in legalism. The Spirit is guiding and He will provide all that is needed to live up to schedules and rules.

WE WERE CRUCIFIED TO THE WORLD

The fourth feature of our crucifixion as set forth in the Scriptures is our crucifixion to the world.

Gal. 6:14 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Some of us may have embraced more of the world's philosophies than we realize. And where we have done so, our effectiveness as instruments of change for the world is diminished.

The best way to know to what extent we may be living by the philosophies of the world is to place our philosophies of life against the teachings of the word of God. When our philosophies of such things as accumulation and usage of money, how to treat others, etc. are not in harmony with the Scriptures, we have abandoned God's plan for our lives and embraced some of the philosophies of the world.

It could very well be true that if we were to place against the Scriptures the philosophies for life of those who have influenced us most, we would discover that they have in some ways influenced us in the direction of the world.

As we experience our crucifixion to the world through our believing and choosing, the Lord will begin to set us free from worldly practices we may be engaging in.

WE WERE BURIED

Beyond the gospel narratives there are only three references in the Scriptures to our Lord's burial: Two of them—Colossians 2:12 and Romans 6:4—reveal purposes for the burial of believers.

OUR BURIAL WAS PREPARATION FOR OUR RESURRECTION

Rom. 6:4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

OUR OLD MAN WAS BOTH CRUCIFIED AND BURIED AWAY

This feature of our resurrection is only by implication. Yet, one can think of this as an added victory over our old man—it is a second lock on the door.

WE WERE RESURRECTED

According to Paul's letter to the Ephesians there are three features to our spiritual resurrection. Notice the usage of past tense verbs in the following verse.

Eph. 2:5-6 ... even when we were dead in trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus ...

WE WERE MADE ALIVE

Just as the entrance of the life of God returning to the body of Jesus was the first feature of His physical resurrection, the entrance of the life of God into our lives was the first feature of our spiritual resurrection. There are many references in the New Testament to the fact of God living in us. To the Romans Paul wrote:

Rom. 8:9 Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

WE WERE RAISED UP TOGETHER

Here there is help from the Romans 6 passage that reads:

Rom. 6:4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

“Christ was raised from the dead” the passage reads. The word translated “dead” is in the plural. The New Testament never says that Jesus was raised from death. It always says He was raised from the dead and the word dead is always in the plural.

Applying this to our spiritual resurrection and thinking of the dead from whom we are raised as those dead spiritually, we have immediate evidence of our own spiritual resurrection. With Jesus in our lives we could not long continue in close fellowship with the spiritually dead. We became uncomfortable with them and were attracted to the church crowd—to others who had received Jesus as Lord and Savior.

All along we have been saying that we must believe and choose to experience our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. Here is one place in which this is not totally true. All who have received Jesus into the heart as Lord and Savior can testify that the Spirit of God has led them away from the lost crowd to the church crowd. Even those saved as very small children as they grow older are drawn away from their unsaved friends as their friends begin to act like the spiritually dead people they are.

WE WERE SEATED WITH CHRIST IN HEAVENLY PLACES

While it may seem difficult to think of ourselves as already crucified and buried, thinking of ourselves as already seated with Christ in the heavenlies seems to be the most difficult of all the truths of the life of grace to grasp. But Ephesians 2:6 says we have been seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

And the author of Hebrews invites us to enter into the Holy of Holies—into the presence of God. The context is not the same as Ephesians 2:6, but the experience of God in heaven is.

Heb. 10:19-22 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Another such passage is that strong statement of Paul to the church at Colossians that reads:

Col. 3:1-3 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Ephesians 1:15-23 records Paul's prayer that we believers may know that enthroned living is ours. It reads:

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

According to these passages and according to the fact of our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, we may—and should—throughout each day experience life in the following manner. Our old man with all his capacity for sin and wrong has been crucified and buried away. We are face-to-face with God in the heavenlies—far above our defeated enemy, Satan—adoring and worshipping God. We are free from our own point of view concerning our circumstances and concerning what we are to do next. We are receiving moment-by-moment His point of view for our lives. And we receive His directions for our lives with hearts totally available to Him. We receive His directions knowing we are filled with His Spirit Who will express Himself through us as we live out the guidance we receive.



A SECOND LOOK AT THE COMMANDS FOR LIVING THE LIFE OF GRACE

We began the study by looking at the five commands for experiencing the life of grace—the life of walking in the Spirit. Having seen that when we became children of God we were crucified, buried, and resurrected and having seen the different features of those three realities in our lives, we now will look again at the five commands.

Throughout we have seen that to experience our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection there are things we must believe and there are choices we must make. As we examine the five commands we will see that each of them is a command to believe or to choose or is a combination of choosing and believing.

WE ARE TO BELIEVE OURSELVES TO BE DEAD TO SIN AND ALIVE UNTO GOD IN CHRIST JESUS

Obviously, this is a command to believe.

Rom. 6:11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The words “likewise” and “also” refer us back to v. 10 that declares Jesus died to sin and is alive unto God. What is true of Jesus we are to believe is true of us.

The word “reckon” means to consider it so. It means to believe it so. The word “sin” is a reference to our sin nature. We are to believe that our crucifixion has freed us from any response to our sin nature—our flesh.

The command includes a belief that we are alive to God. We believe all that spiritual resurrection means is now true of us: the Spirit of Christ lives in us, we are free from attraction to the influence of the unsaved people of the world, and we are seated with Christ at the right hand of the Father.

It needs to be stated that to believe we are dead to sin includes a belief that we are dead to sins. We are to believe we do not have to go on with sin in our lives. This is not a promise to God we will not sin. It is not a belief in sinless perfection. It is gratitude to God that our crucifixion has set us free from the necessity to sin.

Give attention to the concluding words of the command “in Christ Jesus.” When we accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit baptized us “into” Christ. He baptized us “into” His crucifixion, His burial, and His resurrection.

WE ARE NOT TO PERMIT SIN TO REIGN IN OUR MORTAL BODIES

Clearly v. 12 is a command of choice. The command is:

Rom. 6:12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

The idea is that we are to stop permitting sin—our know-it-all attitude—to reign. In light of the broader discussion above concerning our marriage to law we understand this to mean we are to cease all law-living. We are to cease trying to do our best for Jesus.

The statement “that you should obey its lusts” is a reference to our bodies. The word “its” means the body’s. Place together the following passages from Romans 7:

Rom. 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.

Rom. 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Rom. 7:24 *O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

We should never accept a very common belief that our bodies are sinful. But when one places these passages side by side it is clear that the sin nature reaches into our bodies. Also, it seems that Paul is saying it is possible for us to lose control. And when that happens we begin to obey our bodies.

It seems strange, but our bodies are in control because we are doing our best for Jesus, or we are trying in our own strength to keep the biblical rules, or we are trying to keep some man-made set of rules.

Prov. 25:28 *Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls.*

In the second of the five commands there is an implied command. We are not to permit sin to reign in our mortal bodies, but we are to permit God to reign in our bodies. This implied command is stated in the fifth command.

WE ARE TO CEASE PRESENTING THE PARTS OF OUR BODIES TO SIN

Rom. 6:13a *And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin ...*

The idea is that we are to cease presenting the parts of our bodies to sin—the sin nature. That is, we are to cease deciding out of our own know-it-all-attitude what we will do with the parts of our bodies. The result of our choosing to present the parts of our bodies to sin is unrighteousness. Obviously, response to the third command is that of choice.

WE ARE TO PRESENT OURSELVES TO GOD AS THOSE ALIVE FROM THE DEAD

Rom. 6:13b ... *present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead*

Obedience to this command is both by believing and choosing. In light of its broader context it is obvious it means that we are to give ourselves to God as those who are crucified, buried, and resurrected.

The verbs of the first three of the five commands are in a tense that means continual action. We are to continue to believe we are dead to sin and alive to God, we are continually not to permit sin to reign in our mortal bodies, we are continually not to present the parts of our bodies to our sin nature.

When Paul, though, comes to the fourth command he changes the tense to one *not of continual action*—which breaks the pattern.

One Greek scholar has suggested that the purpose for the changing of the tense is to set forth strong contrast. He suggests the third and fourth commands should be read in the following manner:

Do not continue yielding your members to sin but start yielding yourselves to God as those alive from the dead.

WE ARE TO YIELD THE PARTS OF OUR BODIES TO GOD

Rom. 6:13c ... *and [present] your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*

The verb for this command must be borrowed from the fourth command. And if the above understanding of the verb is correct, the idea of the command is that we start yielding all the parts of our bodies to God—by making a choice. When we do so, God will begin to live out His righteousness through us.

God is always looking for a body in which He may incarnate His own light and love and life wherever and whenever He desires. When we obey these five commands, we give Him the opportunity to live out the desires of His own heart for our lives.

Your response to the five commands for living by grace will result in the most vigorous, energetic, action-filled life you have ever experienced. The God Who uses us is guiding all the time and He is a God on the move. Some of the guidance will concern private activity such as prayer and Bible study, while some will be to serve others. And you will experience the abundant life Jesus promised.

Beginning with Romans 6:14 Paul continues his presentation of the life of grace on the assumption that his readers have responded positively to the five commands for experiencing the crucifixion, burial and resurrection which he had explained in Romans 6:3-5. Consequently, he writes:

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Those living out the five commands experience God at work in them and through them—in every area of life.

In Romans chapter 8 Paul presents the life of grace as walking in the Spirit.

In the passage below, which presents the Spirit “dwelling” in the lives of his readers, it is appropriate to read each “if” as “since.” Such a translation gives certainty to the truth of His “indwelling.”

Rom. 8:9-11 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. 10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Three times Paul assumes the Holy Spirit “dwelling” in his readers and a fourth time (with the words “And if [since] Christ is in you he implies the assumption. Here Paul is obviously using “dwell” to the express the thought of their being “filled” with the Spirit.

In the second prayer for the readers of his Ephesian letter Paul asks for them the following:

Eph. 3:16-17 ... that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

Paul believes his readers to be God’s children. So, his use of the word “dwell” expresses more than a desire for them to become believers. Obviously, he uses the word to express a desire that Jesus may reign as Lord in their lives.

His word for “dwell” is an intensified form of the word translated three times “dwell” in Romans 8:9-11. He seems to imply a belief that they are filled with the Spirit because he assumes they have responded positively to his teaching that one enters the life of grace by obeying the five commands of Romans 6:11-13.

There needs to be, though, further explanation of how obedience to the five commands results in one being filled with the Spirit.

When Jesus spoke to the woman at the well He said:

John 4:14 ... but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.

According to this statement of Jesus, from the moment the Holy Spirit entered our lives He has sought to possess us. He came in to take over. He came in to express Himself through us.

So, when Paul commanded that we be filled with the Spirit, He was commanding us to experience a life that God has been seeking to give us from the moment of our salvation experience.

This same passion of the Holy Spirit is implied in Paul's statement to the Thessalonians.

1 Thess. 5:19 Quench not the Spirit.

If the Spirit is passionately seeking to fill us with Himself and we are passionately asking for that filling while committing our lives to God and repenting of our sins—why are we not filled?

The answer to that question is found in Galatians 5:17.

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Our flesh, which is our know-it-all-attitude, believes it is wise enough to know what to do next and how to make it happen, so it will not give up control. The battle then is on.

When we, though, through continually experiencing the crucifixion of our flesh keep our flesh out of power and continually make our bodies available to God, we are continually filled with the Holy Spirit.

When we are filled with the Spirit, we are in the life of grace—we are living out of the resources of God and not our own. God’s word tells us many things the Holy Spirit does in and through us. The passages are many—many in the Gospel of John and many in the writings of the Apostle Paul. Here we will be satisfied to look at one passage.

Gal. 5:22-23a But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control.

Some will wonder if the suggestion that we obey these five commands is not the legalism Paul seeks to eliminate. This is a very legitimate question, and we need some type of intelligent explanation that this is not legalism.

The Apostle Paul faithfully provides that explanation with his statement concerning the law of the Spirit which he expresses in Romans 8:2.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

The word “life” here is surely a reference to the abundant life Paul writes of throughout the passage—and which was promised by our Lord. “In Christ Jesus” may be seen as “in union with Christ Jesus.” In that sense the law of the Spirit can be explained as following:

The law of the Spirit of the abundant life—in union with Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

There is another way to translate the passage that yields another possibility for understanding the meaning of the law of the Spirit. In fact, the following seems to be the clearest way of understanding the law of the Spirit.

The law of the Spirit, which is abundant life in union with Christ Jesus, has made me free from the law of sin and death.

Beginning in Romans 7:21 Paul sets forth a number of laws. Some of them are called laws because like the law of gravity they never vary. In that sense Paul says the Holy Spirit operates in our lives through a law. He never varies from that law.

That is, the Holy Spirit baptizes every believer into union with Christ that the believer might experience the abundant life.

We should conclude, then, that the Holy Spirit (Who baptized us into union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection that we might have the abundant life) is continually working in us to experience our death, burial, and resurrection that we might experience that abundant life.

Since the abundant life becomes ours through experiencing our crucifixion, burial, and resurrection by obeying the five commands of Romans 6:11-13, we may know that every moment of our lives the Holy Spirit is working in us to obey those commands. He is working in us to teach us the life of grace. He is continually prompting us to obey the five commands. He enables us to obey the five commands—and does so according to the law of the Spirit.

And because the Holy Spirit is continually working in us to obey the five commands, we cannot look upon our obedience to them as legalism. When we are responding to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, we are not living in legalism.

One cannot fully discuss the life of grace without an accompanying study of the New Testament teaching on the theme of suffering—a theme to which we now turn.



THE PLACE OF SUFFERING IN LIVING THE LIFE OF GRACE

“Why do good people suffer?” This question—asked by believers through the ages—is being asked by believers today. The Bible gives satisfying answers. Some of those answers involve the message of living by grace.

There are two special ways suffering relates to the life of grace. First, suffering is an instrument of God assisting us in living the life of grace. Secondly, suffering is a result of our living the life of grace that we might be joint heirs with Christ in glory.

SUFFERING ASSISTS US IN LIVING THE LIFE OF GRACE

We may have absolute assurance that obedience to the five commands of Romans 6:11-13 results in our not being under law but under grace. Yet, God assists us from without in experiencing His grace through certain circumstances.

The thought is set forth in Paul’s testimony recorded in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

When Paul requested deliverance from the thorn in the flesh the Lord answered by telling Paul that the thorn was His way of providing grace. But how can this be? The answer is in an earlier statement of Paul in this same book of 2 Corinthians. Concerning another difficult time in his life He writes:

2 Cor 1:8-9 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.

Here Paul reveals that we will trust ourselves as long as we can. So if we are to live by grace, God must give us desperate circumstances in which we know that only He can take us through. Then we turn to Him in faith. And when we turn to Him in faith, we are living by grace.

Consequently, God moves us toward a life of grace in two ways. He gives us grace-producing circumstances, because they are faith-producing circumstances.

And according to the teaching of Romans 8:2 the law of the Spirit—from which He never varies—the Spirit continually works in us to understand and to live out our union with Christ in crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

He also reminds us and enables us to obey the five commands. He has faithfully done this work in us since we received Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

SUFFERING IS A RESULT OF LIVING THE LIFE OF GRACE

In a passage containing what is likely the greatest promise of the Bible—God’s children being joint heirs with Christ—Paul states that suffering is one of the results of living the life of grace.

Rom. 8:16-18 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

This appears to be a place where Paul has assumed obedience to the five commands of Romans 6:11-13, because in 2 Timothy 3:12 Paul writes:

... all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Living out our union with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection always results in suffering.



GOD'S MIRACLE WORKER THROUGH LIVING THE LIFE OF GRACE

Jesus teaches that when God brings a believer to the life of grace through faith, that believer becomes a miracle worker.

John 14:12 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.

Notice that Jesus does not say, or even imply, that the greater works would be done by the entire mass of believers. He says that the greater work would be done by individuals who live a life of continual faith in Him.

In a later passages Jesus tells his disciples that He is going away but when He does, He will send to them the Holy Spirit.

John 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

The reason we will do the greater work is because of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Our greater work is a spiritual work. The disciples themselves provide the illustration we need to understand Jesus means that the greater work is spiritual.

All of the disciples forsook our Lord when His time came to die on the cross. The most vocal one of them denied three times that he knew Jesus. Yet, 40 days after Jesus was raised from the dead they all were standing boldly on a street in Jerusalem “speaking ... the wonderful works of God.”

The disciples had seen Jesus do mighty miracles. Now He has done a greater miracle in them—by filling them with the Holy Spirit.

For the disciples of John the Baptist Jesus listed some of the types of miracles He was doing. He said:

Mat 11:5 The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up.

In John 14:12 Jesus says that we will do the same miracles but they will be greater works. Think of the thrill of raising the spiritually dead and bringing healing to those spiritually blind and lame and leprous and deaf and dead.

Consider the story of Lazarus.

John 11:43-44 Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" 44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go.

Jesus brought Lazarus back from the dead. He was now vibrantly alive. Yet, being bound hand and foot with graveclothes he could not see, likely could not hear, could not talk, could not walk, could not work, and could not fellowship with others.

But Jesus told His disciples to loose him. The desire of Jesus is for His modern-day disciples to raise the (spiritually) dead by leading them to Christ and to loose the many, who are alive but spiritually cannot see, hear, walk (in victory), fellowship (spiritual lepers), and cannot talk (in testimony for the Lord).

Jesus not only desires that we raise the dead and loose the raised but He makes a firm promise that those who live in continual trust in Him will do those very things.

Two verses before Jesus gave the promise that we would do greater works than He if we would walk in continual faith, He spoke in a most revealing way of His own life of miraculous works. He said to His disciples:

John 14:10 *The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.*

Amazingly, Jesus says that the works streaming forth from Him are not His but they are the works of the Father. What faith that should give us as miracles workers. It is not up to us to do the miracles. We are only the instruments of the Father.

There is a second extremely important truth in the passage. Notice Jesus' use of "words" and "works." Jesus seems to be saying that the works the Father does through Him are performed through words.

Think of this. Other than His death on the cross did Jesus ever do anything for anyone other than use words? You could say, "Yes, Jesus touched people and He listened to people."

We can in faith believe that God has a mighty ministry to do through us. It is a miracle-working ministry. God will mostly do the work through us through our listening, our touching, and our speaking—all under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

There are three parts to the speaking feature of the miracles God wants to do through us. They are: crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

To raise the dead our message is that of the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. To loose those who have been raised our message is that of their own crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.



CONCLUSION

Before closing there is one more truth of great importance that needs consideration. Just after Paul told his readers they were not under law but under grace he asked a question, “Since we are not under law but under grace should we sin?”

Paul then answered his question with this statement:

Rom. 6:16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

How strange that Paul would set forth the concept of “obeying obedience.” But he does. And since the statement comes where it does, we should assume his thought is that of obeying the five commands just given.

Paul writes that we may become slaves to obeying the commands. That is, When we obey these five commands over and over, obedience to them becomes a lifestyle. And to say that is to say that living by grace—walking in the Spirit—becomes a lifestyle.

In Romans 6:19 and 6:22 Paul says that walking in the Spirit as a lifestyle is “holiness”—which is the sanctification God has in mind for us all.

And in Romans 6:22 Paul adds that the ultimate fruit of holiness is everlasting life—that is, the abundant life. A lifestyle of grace results in a lifetime of LIFE.

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