

Not Guilty

Romans 7:4-6

“**Not guilty**” was the verdict heard round the world at the trial of O J Simpson in the murder of his wife, Nichole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman. With evidence so overwhelming against him, not guilty was the last thing anyone expected to hear from that jury. It looks like justice took a hit that day. Officially, these murders remain open and unsolved but in the minds of most there is no doubt of his guilt in their commission.

How could the jury, with evidence to the contrary, acquit him of this crime? How could a jury of his peers find him not guilty beyond reasonable doubt? Here a man, in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, left the court of law a free man, declared not guilty by the presiding judge. The overwhelming majority believe he got away with one. How did this happen?

There is another trial and another defendant and another court of law and another judge before whom the world will stand, and at the appointed day be judged. **Read Acts 17:31** “*Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*” All the guilty will stand to answer for sin against a holy God and no one will get away this time.

Most in religion will live out their life and leave this world to face a just God, who will by no means clear the guilty. They are guilty of sin for which there is no atonement. “*Depart from me ye that work iniquity, I never knew you*” will be their sentence. **Matthew 25:34** records this trial for us. There it will be declared who are the blessed and the cursed. “*Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared (forever) you from the foundation of the world.*” Though guilty of a crime worthy of eternal death, some will be declared not guilty and delivered from bondage. Not only declared not guilty and delivered, but clothed in perfect righteousness and restored to fellowship with the party offended, by the party offended.

To the others, **Matthew 25:41** “*Then shall he say unto them on his left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*” Justice will not take a hit that day. Strict law and inflexible justice will prevail. Though all deserve eternal death, some will go free. How can this be? How can I avoid this end? What can I do to insure my lot is with those on his right hand? How can I be confident the decision made on my behalf before the foundation of the world is no charge? It was surely there God alone decided my destiny. How can I appropriate what has already been prepared for the blessed?

How can I not be charged, considering the presiding judge who said do and live, disobey and die, who cannot lie, who always does what is right, who always dispensed inflexible justice,

declare not guilty those who sinned against a holy God? How can God, in justice justify the ungodly?

Does he overlook sin? Does he judge on the curve? Does he compromise his glory in this acquittal? How could a holy God, who must do right, release a sinner with such overwhelming evidence and remain just and holy? Does he dispense his love at the expense of his justice? Is he a respecter of persons?

I tell you those who have experienced this acquittal have experienced the justice to end all justice. When we see how God in his holiness and inflexible justice, who declared the *“soul that sinneth it shall surely die,”* and yet declares some *“not guilty”* and remain just in so doing, we are amazed. Grace truly is amazing when we see we didn’t get away with one. We see our acquittal at the expense of another who was without sin.

So the question today is how can a holy and just God remain just and holy and justify the ungodly? The whole of scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation not only raises the question but answers it a thousand times over and yet the question and its answer is foreign to most in religion today. I was fifty years into religion before I heard *“the gospel”* which exposes and explains it.

One such verse is **Romans 7:4** *“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”* In one concise statement Paul summarizes the whole of scriptures in declaring and delivering the elect of God not guilty of sin we know all too well we committed. God’s people are not liable. God’s law cannot condemn them. How so?

The law is satisfied for them. *“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law.”*

What is it to be dead to the law and how does a sinner **become** *“dead to the law”*? What was our state before we became dead to the law? What are the evidences of being dead to the law? To answer these questions we begin at the beginning.

Read Romans 7:4 *“ye are become dead to the law.”* Before we became dead to the law, what was our state? **Ephesians 2:1** *“And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin.”* We were dead in trespasses and sin to any sensibility of the extent of the law and how it reaches past the *“doing”* to the desire of the heart. (Matthew 5:43) *“You have heard that it hath been said, love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy, but I say unto thee, love your enemy.”*

How did we become dead in trespasses and sins? **Read Romans 5:12** *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world; and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”* Legally, we were guilty and condemned in Adam. Morally we were separated from God by wicked works. We were among the *“None righteous, no not one.”* We were of those *“going about seeking to establish righteousness of our own.”* (Romans 10:1-4) *“All our righteousness’s were as filthy rags.”* **Read Romans 7:9** Here Paul fitly describes the state of God’s elect before

regeneration. *“For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.”* Before a man dies he is alive: In what sense?

The purpose of the law is to slay a sinner to any thoughts of acceptance before a holy God based on anything done by that sinner, in that sinner or to that sinner, with or without the aid of the Holy Spirit as forming any part of the ground of acceptance with God. It is sin that motivates the sinner to act totally contrary to the law, motivated by threats of punishment or promises of reward. **Read Romans 7:5** *“For when we were in the flesh, (a state of nature) the motions of sins, (my best efforts at obedience) which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.”* Again, Paul is speaking of idolatry, not immorality. The law stirs up the sinner to do or abstain from some deed in order to be saved.

Adam is our Pattern.

Adam, a perfect man, upright and righteous in God’s sight, acting as the representative and federal head of all men, by design and deliberation, in the first act of open idolatry by man determined he would be as God. **Read Genesis 3:5** *“For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”* Literally, *“you shall be able to set your own standard of right and wrong. That is the sin of every man by nature and is the root of all sins. Rejecting God’s standard of perfect righteousness (perfect satisfaction to law and justice) we,* **Read Romans 10:3** *“go about.”* *“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”*

Adam’s first response when exposed to God’s wrath was legal. He was motivated by fear *“I was afraid”* to sew fig leaf aprons to cover his sin.

To be dead to the law of God is to be alive in Christ. To be alive without the law is to be dead in trespasses and sin. **Read Romans 7:9** *“For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.”* Dead in trespasses and sin is the state of all by nature. It is from this state every elect child of God is to become dead.

What exactly is dead to the law? Is it freedom from immorality? Is it victory over covetousness? Is it liberation from drugs and alcohol? Is it a cleaning up of our character and conduct? Certainly these are sins that need attention and abstinence from. But our fight is far greater than immorality, it is idolatry. Idolatry is the root; immorality is the fruit. Adam’s sin was immoral, but it was motivated by idolatry.

Whom do you know who has become dead to immorality? Is it not our constant adversary? Does it not forever challenge our resources and resolve to put it away? Do we not yield our members to its temptation all too often? Though we should *“keep our bodies under subjection”* and fight these sins, we can never become dead to the law by our overcoming them. If we ever overcome any of them to any degree, it is because we are dead to the law. If we are dead to the law we will

overcome them to some degree but these are not the sin which so easily doth beset us spoken of in Hebrews 12:1. *“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,”*

To be dead to the law is to be free from the bondage of the law which excites the sinner to seeking justification and life by his obedience to the law. The law was given Israel to reveal God's standard of judgment and show sinners the utter impossibility of meeting that standard and turn them to Christ for salvation. Ignorance in this work sets the sinner going about to establish a righteousness of our own.

Dead to the law is specific. It is to be free from the law's demands by way of satisfaction to those demands. It is to owe nothing by way of obedience in order to be saved or kept saved. It is to rest in the work of another for all my salvation. What does the law of God demand? It requires no less than perfect continual obedience from the cradle to the grave. To the transgressor it requires eternal death; even to the most moral sincere, dedicated sinner for the least offence. *“Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”* *“If ye be circumcised, (sew fig leaf aprons) Christ shall profit you nothing.”* *You are debtor to do the whole law.*

Read Romans 7:11. *“For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.”*

Here Paul explains his state before regeneration on the Damascus Road. Sin used the law of God to deceive Paul. The natural man, when confronted with the Holy Law of God is deceived by his own self-righteousness and religious pride into denying the law's foremost purpose. Seeking the righteousness of God is foreign to the natural man. He is motivated by the law to seeking one of his own. When Paul wrote in **Romans** *“there is none righteous no not one”* this is his meaning. All by nature are motivated by the law to keep it for acceptance with God. The opposite is its purpose. *“Wherefore the law was our school master to bring us to Christ.”* *Moreover the law entered that the offense should abound.”* When the law enters, (when we are made to see the extent of the law, how it reaches past the actual act to the motive), we are brought to the repentance Paul expressed in **Romans 7: 18-25** *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:23 But I see another law (sin principle) 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 shall deliver me from the body of this 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.*

Read again Romans 7:9 *“For I was alive without the law once :(while ignorant of the extent of the law) but when the commandment came, (when God revealed to me the sinfulness of even my motives to please God based on character and conduct) sin revived, and I died.”*(I died to any hope of salvation based on my best efforts at religion and morality, anything other than the imputed righteousness of Christ. The law forced me to look away from self for relief.

Where I find relief determines my state and standing before God. Paul found his, (as do all by nature) in his personal obedience. (Philippians 2:4-6) He had not yet experienced ðeath to the law.ö When the commandment came, (Romans 7:9) Paul saw the law could require nothing less than perfection. He also saw the law could expect nothing less than perfect satisfaction. It was then he saw he did not measure up to the perfections of the law in his character and conduct. It was here the Law became his school master to bring him unto Christ for all his righteousness. It was here he found the law satisfied for him *“by the body of Christ.”* (Romans 7: 4. It was here he found he had been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus before the world began.ö (Ephesians 1) He discovered he was not guilty by way of satisfaction. Not by works which he had done but by the works of another. He became dead to the law *“By the body of Christ.”*

Read again Romans 7:4 ðWherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”

Some are dead to the law. All charges against them have been charged to another, even their Surety and that from all eternity. The sins of all whose names were written in the Lamb’s Book of Life from the foundation of the world were charged to Christ who, **1Peter 2:4** *“in his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”*

My sins charged to Christ and put away by his suffering and death satisfied all the demands of the law against me. I cannot be charged for sins already satisfied by my Surety. God made him to be sin for me, who knew no sin, that I might be made the righteousness of God in him.ö The law of God requires nothing of me in the way of obedience to gain or maintain any part of my salvation. The law of God can demand nothing of me in way of payment for my sins. My Surety has already paid to the uttermost farthing my debt to law and justice. I am dead to the guilt, defilement and condemning power of the law for any part of my salvation. If I am charged with his righteousness imputed and received by God given faith, I am legally free from the law. The only debt I owe is a debt of gratitude to my Savior for his mercy and grace. I am exhorted to *“present my body a living sacrifice to God which is my reasonable service.”* (Romans 12:1-2)

My Surety, appointed such by the Father in the everlasting covenant of grace, at his appointment assumed all the responsibility I owed to the law and justice of God. He, as God-Man performed all the obedience God requires; of me, he suffered all the agony I deserved. All the punishment I deserved was charged to him who put my sin away by the body of Christ by his cross work. Sin

charged to him demanded his death. Righteousness imputed to me demands my justification. Based on what he accomplished by his cross I am not legally chargeable. I can say I have kept the law perfectly, not in my person but in the person of my Substitute and Surety, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.ö

We cannot be married to Christ and the law. No man can serve two masters for he will love the one and hate the other or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. We cannot serve God and mammon. As long as we are ignorant of, or not submitted to the imputed righteousness of God we are married to the law. He ended the law for righteousness by his death. His resurrection is God's declaration that God's elect are loosed from the law's demands for satisfaction by the satisfaction he rendered to both precept and penalty of God's holy law and justice and are espoused to Christ the bridegroom of the church, his bride.

Read Romans 7:4 *“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”*

Are you married to the law or to Christ? Are you chargeable by the law of God for any sin, even the smallest? Did Christ put away your sins by his death or leave unfinished any matter of Law? Can anyone lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Are you persuaded that nothing shall separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

It is appointed unto men once to die; after that the judgment. Will that judgment declare you blessed of the Father or cursed with the devil and his angels?

If you be dead to the law by the body of Christ let the evidence show that you are not guilty in God's court of justice. *“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who can condemn me, it is Christ that died.”*

Are you *“persuaded that that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Read Romans 6:22 *“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”*

What a wonderful truth to know I am not guilty before the Judge all the earth. He chose me in Christ before the world began and conditioned all my salvation on him. There is not one charge to bring against me. They were laid on him and he bore them away at Calvary. Where sin did abound, grace did much more abound.

Loose the prisoner and set him free.

Everybody discussed at great length the guilt of O.J. Simpson. It was the talk of the airways and highways. I am glad someone talked to me about the death of Christ to the revelation of my guilt in his murder. And I am glad he had mercy on me and gave me repentance and regeneration and made me see in time what was given me before time by the God of time. "Not guilty by way of satisfaction."

By Winston Pannell