

The Life and Theology of Paul: The Law vs. the Spirit

Review

- Just as there are two creations, so there are two human families: Adam’s and Christ’s.
- Just as in team sports the actions of the captain affect the whole team, so in the Bible:
 - Adam’s sin brought penalty/poison for everyone united to him – all his natural descendants.
 - Christ’s obedience brings victory/life for everyone united to him – all who believe in him.
- Trusting in Jesus transfers us from the old creation into the new. We have a new:
 - *Destiny:* chosen in Jesus (Eph. 1.4), accepted and forgiven in him (2 Cor. 5.21), cleaned of sin in him (Rom. 6.11-12), promised heaven in him (Rom. 6.5)
 - *Energy:* our link to Adam’s sinful “power grid” is severed by the death of Jesus the Holy Spirit links us to the “Jesus grid,” restoring us with resurrection life
note: this is a permanent rewiring! You cannot plug back into Adam:
“We that our old self was crucified with him...” (Rom. 6.6)
“For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (Col. 3.3)
 - *Identity:* the Christian life consists in living consistently with our new identity when tempted, tell ourselves: “This isn’t me. I’m not longer a slave to sin. I’m disconnected from Adam and connected to Jesus. I belong to a better world! I’m going to a feast; there’s no need to dumpster-dive on the way.”

The Big Picture

All the big ideas in Paul’s thought work together:

- Jesus is the center of *history* – his resurrection changes where I am (already/not yet)!
- Jesus is the center of *identity* – my union with him forever changes who I am!
- Jesus is the center of *activity* – union with him changes how I live before God!

What We Were Made For

- Even before God gave the Ten Commandments, human beings were obligated to obey God.
 - Our obligation to obey God is not based on what happened at Mount Sinai (Ex. 19-20);
 - Our obligation to obey God is based on what happened in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 1-2).
- Why is it so important to understand this?
 - When Paul says Christians have “died to the law,” he is *not* saying we can live for ourselves;
 - Whatever may be the case in our relationship to Moses’s law, we are still God’s creatures!
“[Christ] he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” (2 Cor. 5.15)

The Relationship of Christians to the Law of Moses

- Galatians 5.13-25
 - We are “called to freedom,” (v. 13). What’s this *not* mean (v. 13b)? What *does* it mean (v. 13c)?
 - “Through love serve one another,” (v. 13c). How do we do this (v. 14)?
 - What is “fulfilled” in the command to “love your neighbor as yourself,” (v. 14)?
 - What are we not “under” if we “walk by the Spirit,” (v. 18)?
 - Does this mean we can create our own ethical standards (vv. 19-21)?
 - If we bear the fruit of the Spirit, Paul says “against such things there is no law,” (v. 23).

Summary: 1) Christians are free not to serve ourselves, but to love our neighbors as ourselves.
2) Christians are not *under* the law, but we are commanded to *fulfill* it by the Spirit.
3) As we bear the fruit of the Spirit, we have no conflict with/lack toward the law.

Question: How can we be commanded to fulfill the law, but not be under the law?

- Romans 7.1-6
 - The context of this passage is the change between how believers lived before their conversion (6.20: “slaves of sin”) and how we live after our conversion: “you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God,” (6.22).
 - “Or do you not know, brothers...” (v. 1) – he is continuing this same of the great change!
 - To explain it, he employs an analogy: marriage, widowhood, and remarriage (vv. 2-4):
 - What part of the analogy applies to Christians?
 - What part applies to the law?
 - What part applies to Christ?
 - When we were “married” to the law, what was the result (v. 5)?
 - Are we still “married” to the law (v. 6a)?
 - To whom are we “married” now (v. 4)? What is the result (v. 6b)?

Summary: 1) Christians no longer have any direction relationship to the law.
 2) We “serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.”
 3) This service in the Spirit is intended to make us “bear fruit for God.”
 4) The key to understanding this is that Christians are “married” to Christ.

- 1 Corinthians 9.19-21
 - What does Paul say he is not “under” (v. 20)?
 - What does he say is not “outside” of (v. 21)?
 - What does he say he is “under” (v. 21)?

Summary: 1) Christians are not under the law.
 2) Christians are not outside the law of God.
 3) Christians are under the law of Christ.

Debt Consolidation: the Law of Moses Christ

- Jesus has already paid everything we owe to God. By *paying* our debt, he has *bought* our debt.
- We no longer owe *anything* to the law; we owe *everything* to him. Our motive is love, not law.
- We follow him who followed the Ten Commandments.
His Spirit does *in* us what he already did *for* us.
- We don’t follow the moral law to *earn* life in heaven;
We follow the moral law to *enjoy* the life of heaven.

A New Center

- As creatures of God, *what* we must do has not changed: we must obey God!
- As new creatures in Christ, *how* we must do this has decisely changed:

“Allegiance to a person had displaced devotion to a code.”¹

“The will of God had not changed: but whereas formerly it was recorded on tablets of stone it was now engraved on human hearts, and inward impulsion accomplished what external compulsion could not... For the sum of the commandments was love, and this was something that became possible to him only when the divine love was poured into his heart by the Spirit.”²

“Moses’ law has right but not might; Sin’s law has might but not right; the law of the Spirit has both right and might.” (T.W. Manson)

“...the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully, which the will of God revealed in the law requireth to be done.” (Westminster Confession of Faith, 19.7)

¹ F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 189.

² *Ibid.*, 200.