

# Identification With Christ

<i>Near, so near am I to God, Nearer I cannot be; For in the Person of His Son, I'm just as near as He.</i>	<i>Dear, so dear am I to God, Dearer I cannot be; The love wherewith He loved His Son, Such is His love for me.</i>
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*When God buildeth, He casteth all downe first. He is no patcher.*

*Obedience of a Christian Man (1528) – William Tyndale.*

## Introduction

One of the great Pauline truths is the believer's identification with Christ.<sup>1</sup> This Christian doctrine is all Paul. Stated another way, these truths are taught by no other Biblical writer. These Pauline truths reveal the believer's position and blessing in Christ and teach one how to live the Christian life.

Paul's teaching on living the Christian life was revolutionary. Paul taught when one believes his gospel (Romans 2.16, 16.25; 1 Corinthians 15.1-4) God identifies him with Christ in His death and resurrection.

The believer today, as a member of the Church, the body of Christ, lives in a fundamentally different environment than Israel lived under the Law of Moses. Paul taught that believers of his gospel live under the administration of Grace, not Law. Tragically, when grace is taught in most churches it is usually shackled with qualifications. Many teach that while the believer is not under the ceremonial or civil Mosaic Law the believer is under the moral part of the Mosaic Law. The problem with such teaching is it is not Biblical. The Mosaic Law, given to Israel, was a complete system. One was obligated to keep the *whole* Law. Paul

understood this. He was a Pharisee. He never divided the Law into parts. When he wrote about the Law, he wrote about it as a unity. He did not parse it as civil, ceremonial, and moral. When he taught the believer is not under Law but under grace (Romans 6.14) he meant it. Believers are not under the Mosaic Law period.<sup>2</sup>

If this is so, a question arises: “If the believer in Christ is not under the Mosaic Law, does this mean a believer is free to sin?” Paul’s response was: μὴ γένοιτο—No!!!<sup>3</sup> How can a believer live a holy life if he is not under Law? That is what this article is about.

## Identification with Christ

Identification Truths Apprehended by FAITH	
Identification Truths	Scripture
Baptized into Christ and His death ὅσοι ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημε	Romans 6.3; 1 Corinthians 12.13; Colossians 2.12; 3.3; Titus 3.5-7
Buried with Christ through baptism συνετάφημεν οὖν αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἰς τὸν θάνατον	Romans 6.4
Crucified with Christ ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος συνεσταυρώθη	Romans 6.6; Galatians 2.20
United with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection σύμφυτοι γεγόναμεν τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ	Romans 6.5, 8; Colossians 2.12; Philippians 3.10
No longer a slave to sin τοῦ μηκέτι δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ	Romans 6.6-7, 18, 22
Possessor of eternal life τὸ δὲ τέλος ζωῆν αἰώνιον	Romans 6.22-23
Dead to the Law ἐθανατώθητε τῷ νόμῳ	Romans 7.4
Released from the Law νυνὶ δὲ κατηργήθημεν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου	Romans 7.6

Not under Law but under Grace οὐ γάρ ἐστε ὑπὸ νόμον ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ χάριν	Romans 6.14; 7.4, 6; Galatians 5.18; Colossians 2.20
No condemnation, No separation Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα, τίς ἡμᾶς χωρίσει ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Χριστοῦ	Romans 8.1, 37-39
Received Spirit of adoption ἀλλὰ ἐλάβετε πνεῦμα υἱοθεσίας	Romans 8.15
Complete in Christ ἐστὲ ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι	Colossians 2.10
Seated with Christ in heaven συνεκάθισεν ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ	Ephesians 2.6; Philippians 3.20
Joint-heirs with Christ συγκληρονόμοι δὲ Χριστοῦ	Romans 8.17

The truths Paul taught in the three chapters of Romans 6-8 are the bedrock of Christian living. If a believer in Christ is to live a life pleasing to God, understanding these passages is essential. Paul explained how the believer is to live his life before God and man after he has believed the gospel (Acts 20.24; 1 Corinthians 15.1-4) apart from the Law. Paul revealed anthropological information about our condition as members of the human race one finds nowhere else. With this information, we are able to understand better the psychological issues inherent in our nature and God's provisions to help us live lives pleasing to Him.

## Romans 6

Paul's doctrine of identification is that the believer is identified with Christ in His death and resurrection. The practical implications of this truth are tremendous. Anyone who believes the gospel (1 Corinthians 15.1-4) becomes alive spiritually. This is what Christians call salvation. It is a divine activity of pure grace. We cannot work, earn, or merit God's forgiveness or eternal life. Salvation is God's gift to the one who trusts Him (Ephesians 2.8-9). As the believer has received new life by faith, he is to live that new life by

faith. The normal Christian life is a life of faith.

## The Text

<sup>1</sup> *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?* <sup>2</sup> *May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?* <sup>3</sup> *Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?* <sup>4</sup> *Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.* <sup>5</sup> *For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,* <sup>6</sup> *knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;* <sup>7</sup> *for he who has died is freed from sin (Romans 6.1-7).*

Paul anticipated criticism. What he revealed had never been revealed before. Paul's teachings about the Law were startling for a Jew. For a Pharisaic Jew, they were revolutionary. If a believer is not under Law but under grace (Romans 6.14) some will argue this means the believer is free to sin. Paul's response was *μὴ γένοιτο* (Romans 6.1-2, 15), his strongest negative expression. Tragically, those with a legalistic frame of mind have no understanding of grace or its healthful effects. But when one appropriates by faith his position in Christ under grace he has a wholly different mind and set of attitudes.

Paul declared the believer has died to sin (verse 2). What did he mean? When Christ died on the cross, God identified the believer as having died with Him. Paul expressed this thought with the phrase, "baptized into His death" (verse 3). This

baptism contains no water. It is dust dry. God views the believer as “buried with Him” (verse 4) in His death. God also sees the believer as risen with Christ. As a result of Christ’s rising from the dead, we can experience a new life (verse 4). Paul taught that since we were united or identified with Christ in His death we also have a new, resurrected life in Christ. This new life will be completed with physical resurrection when Christ returns for His Church, the body of Christ. Paul alone taught this doctrine of Christ’s return for His Church—the event known as the Rapture.<sup>4</sup> The Rapture is part of the great Christian doctrine of the resurrection. Members of the body of Christ will receive resurrection bodies at the Rapture. This new body will be incapable of sin.

At the present time, no one can live a sinless life. The reason is we live in bodies corrupted by Adam’s sin. Paul wrote our present body, our “old man” (ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος) has been crucified with Christ in order that our “body of sin” (τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας) might be “done away with” or “deactivated” (ἵνα καταργηθῇ). The believer is being prepared (saved but still in a body poisoned by Adam’s sin) for eternity. For this reason, we are no longer to be “slaves to sin.” Paul ended this section with a thought he will examine further: the dead don’t sin. Thus, “he who has died is free from sin.”

*<sup>8</sup> Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, <sup>9</sup> knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. <sup>10</sup> For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. <sup>11</sup> Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6.8-11).*

Since Christ died for all believers,<sup>5</sup> what is the proper

response to this reality? The proper response is faith. We are to “reckon” or “consider” (λογίζεσθε) ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. The word [λογίζομαι](#)<sup>6</sup> is the first command in the passage. Our identification with Christ’s death on the cross is not an existential experience. It is a reality apprehended by faith: we believe God. We believe what God has said. The word is a present, middle, imperative. The action is continuous (present tense) and in the middle voice—the believer does it on his own behalf, and it is a command (imperative mood). As one has believed the gospel (1 Corinthians 15.1-4) for justification, we are commanded to “reckon” or “consider” ourselves dead to sin and alive to God for sanctification. Both justification and sanctification operate through faith: the just live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

<sup>12</sup> *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,* <sup>13</sup> *and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.* <sup>14</sup> *For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace (Romans 6.12-14).*

The faith command of “reckoning” governs and is followed by three additional commands in verses 12-13. Verse 14 forms the summary and conclusion to faith, which means our lives are to operate through Grace, not Law. The passage may be outlined in the following manner:

Primary Command Based on Faith	Consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. λογίζεσθε ἑαυτοὺς νεκροὺς μὲν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ζῶντας δὲ τῷ θεῷ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.	v.11
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Subordinate Command (Negative)	Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts Μὴ οὖν βασιλευέτω ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θνητῷ ὑμῶν σώματι εἰς τὸ ὑπακούειν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ	v.12
Subordinate Command (Negative)	Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness μηδὲ παριστάνετε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν ὄπλα ἀδικίας τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ	v.13
Subordinate Command (Positive)	Present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God παραστήσατε ἑαυτοὺς τῷ θεῷ ὥσεὶ ἐκ νεκρῶν ὄντας καὶ τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν ὄπλα δικαιοσύνης τῷ θεῷ	v.13
Declarative Summation	Sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. ἁμαρτία γὰρ ὑμῶν οὐ κυριεύσει, οὐ γάρ ἐστε ὑπὸ νόμον ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ χάριν	v.14

In verse 15, Paul repeated the question he posed in verse 1 and gave the same answer.

<sup>15</sup> *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!* <sup>16</sup> *Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?* <sup>17</sup> *But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,* <sup>18</sup> *and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.* <sup>19</sup> *I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to*

*lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification (Romans 6.15-19).*

Paul anticipated an objection from legalists: a believer will sin if he is not controlled by Law. Paul answered this objection with his second *μὴ γένοιτο*. He revealed a new truth: the believer died to sin through the death of Christ. Before this, he was enslaved to sin. But as a result of Christ's work on the cross and His resurrection, in which He conquered sin and death, God views those in Christ as participating in this victory. The believer has been freed from his enslavement to sin to become a servant of righteousness. Paul's exhortation was, "just as you presented your members (body) as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness . . . so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification."

<sup>20</sup> *For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.* <sup>21</sup> *Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.* <sup>22</sup> *But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.* <sup>23</sup> *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6.20-23).*

Paul concluded this portion of his argument with a declaration that before believing the gospel we were without righteousness and slaves to sin. Paul asked what benefit resulted from sin (of which the believer is now ashamed) since it leads to death. Christ's death freed the believer from sin's slavery which results in sanctification and eternal life. Sin's payment was death. God's gift is eternal life. What a contrast!



## Romans 7 or “We Are Not Sinners Because We Break the Law; We Break the Law Because We Are Sinners.”

### Introduction

Romans 7 is a source of controversy. Some maintain Paul described his life before he became a believer. Others maintain Paul was describing his life as a Christian. If one follows the entire argument Paul made in chapters 6-8, it should be clear he was writing of his life as a believer.

Believer	Unbeliever
Romans 7.1-4, 6, 12-25	Romans 7.5, 7-11

Previously, Paul revealed Christ has freed the believer from sin. The believer is not home free, however. Our old or Adamic nature, which came into being as a result of Adam's fall, continues to exist as long as one lives in his present body. But, as we saw above, Paul revealed the way to victory was through faith—by reckoning ourselves as dead to sin and alive to God.

### The Text:

<sup>1</sup> Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? <sup>2</sup> For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. <sup>3</sup> So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man (Romans 7.1-3).

In this part of Paul's argument, he reminded readers that law has jurisdiction over the living, not the dead. To illustrate, he gave an example of a married woman. As long as her husband

lived, she was bound to him. Once he died, however, she was free.

*<sup>4</sup> Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. <sup>5</sup> For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. <sup>6</sup> But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter (Romans 7.4-6).*

As a married woman is freed once her husband has died, the believer is freed from the Law through Christ's death and his identification with Christ in that death. Paul then revealed another truth: far from constraining sin, the Mosaic Law actually excited or energized ([ἐνηργεῖτο](#), imperfect, middle, indicative) it. Literally, verse 5 reads,

For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sins worked through the Law in our members to bear fruit unto death.

ὅτε γὰρ ἡμεν ἐν τῇ σαρκί, τὰ παθήματα τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν διὰ τοῦ νόμου ἐνηργεῖτο ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν εἰς τὸ καρποφορῆσαι τῷ θανάτῳ

The phrase, παθήματα τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν is a genitive of quality or an objective genitive, i.e., sinful passions or passions which lead to sinful acts. These passions worked (were energized) through the Law in our members (μέλεσιν), a synecdoche for the whole body, "to bear fruit (καρποφορῆσαι, cf. verse 4) unto death." Thus, the result was that when natural passions came in contact with the Law it produced death. Paul used the word καρποφορῆσαι to illustrate this result was as natural as an apple tree producing apples. The imperfect tense (which always occurs in the indicative mood) indicates the reality of continuous past action.

Paul wrote sin (the sin nature) is aroused when it comes into contact with the commandment. The middle voice indicates that

the subject “passions” participates in the results of the action. Thus, the effect Law had upon the Adamic nature was to produce sin. Paul then declared, “But now” (verse 6). When is “now?” When was the believer released from the Law? He was released when God saw him identified with Christ in His death and resurrection. When did this occur? It occurred when the individual believed the gospel (1 Corinthians 15.1-4). A believer has been freed from the Law at the moment of faith. Why is this significant? Paul declared, “so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter (or Law).”

*<sup>7</sup> What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “YOU SHALL NOT COVET.” <sup>8</sup> But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. <sup>9</sup> I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; <sup>10</sup> and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; <sup>11</sup> for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. <sup>12</sup> So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good (Romans 7.7-12).*

Having stated all the above, Paul anticipated another objection to his argument. The objector would say, “Wait a minute. God gave the Law. Was what God gave bad?” Paul responded with his third *μη γένοιτο*. On the contrary, Paul stated. God gave the Law to reveal sin. In Paul’s own personal experience, the commandment that nailed him was, “You shall not covet.” Instead of keeping him from coveting, Paul said it exploded his desire to covet. As long as he was unaware of the commandment not to covet, his coveting remained largely

dormant (“I was once alive apart from the Law”). But when he came to understand the Law, coveting awoke (“when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died”). Where lay the fault? Was the Law at fault? Not at all. On the contrary, the Law was “holy, righteous, and good” (verse 12). What the Law did, what it was designed to do, was to reveal our rebellious, Adamic nature for what it really is. The result: it “killed me” (verse 11).

*<sup>13</sup> Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful (Romans 7.13).*

To answer the question of whether the Law caused his problem, Paul remonstrated with his fourth *μή γένοιτο*. Nothing was wrong with the Mosaic Law. The problem lay not with the Law but with us. In the words of the comic character, Pogo, “we have met the enemy and he is us.” When Adam disobeyed God, he died (Genesis 2.16, 3.10, 5.5). He died spiritually immediately. Later, over 900 years later, he died physically. His spiritual death infected the whole human race (1 Corinthians 15.22) for all are “in Adam.” As a result, each person enters the world spiritually dead, condemned to die. Each of us inherits Adam’s nature which is in rebellion against God. The result is we wish to flee from God just as Adam and Eve hid themselves following their sin (Genesis 3.8). We want God to “leave us alone.” We want to be independent of God and “on our own.” The Law revealed this rebellion—“that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.” That was the purpose of the Law: to reveal sin—not make us righteous. The Law was extremely effective in this work. It not only revealed sin; it energized sin. But it had no power to effect righteousness. Verses attributed to John Bunyan expressed this thought:

*Run, John, run! The Law commands!  
But gives me neither feet nor hands.  
Far grander news the Gospel brings:  
It bids me fly and gives me wings!*

Paul continued:

*<sup>14</sup> For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. <sup>15</sup> For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. <sup>16</sup> But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. <sup>17</sup> So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. <sup>19</sup> For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. <sup>20</sup> But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me (Romans 7.14-20).*

Paul wrote the Law was good. But our “flesh” (Paul’s term for our inherited Adamic nature) cannot obey it. Psychological confusion results. Paul knew what was right, i.e., what the Law required. He desired to do what was right. But he could not. His new nature, i.e., his new life in Christ, wished to do good. But his old, Adamic nature did not. Verses 17-25 indicate Paul was writing from the perspective of a believer: “no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me,” etc. The fight was between the “I,” of the new nature and “sin,” the sinful (Adamic) nature.

*<sup>21</sup> I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. <sup>22</sup> For I joyfully concur with the*

*law of God in the inner man,* <sup>23</sup> *but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.* <sup>24</sup> *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?* <sup>25</sup> *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin (Romans 7.21-25).*

Paul acknowledged that even though he was a believer, his Adamic nature still existed and had power over him—"evil is present in me." As a believer, he could "joyfully concur with the Law of God in the inner man" (the new nature). But another "law" or principle (Adam's fallen nature) waged war against his new nature. In his psychological frustration, Paul exclaimed, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" The problem is our present bodies. As long as we live in mortal bodies, infected by Adam's sin and death, we will experience this conflict. We will not be free from sin fully until we receive a new, resurrection body. This experience is what theologians call glorification.

## Romans 8

### Introduction

In Romans, chapter 8, Paul shook off his despair. In Christ, hope abounds. Whatever frustrations and sufferings we experience in this life, they pale in comparison to future glory. The chapter begins with the great truth of "no condemnation" and ends with the great truth of "no separation." The Holy Spirit is center stage in this chapter. He is the One who is the source of life. In Genesis 2.7, we read, "Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." The breath of God is life; the Holy

## Spirit is Life.

### The Text

<sup>1</sup> Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. <sup>3</sup> For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup> For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, <sup>7</sup> because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, <sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8.1-8).

No condemnation exists for those in Christ Jesus! This great fact puts the believer's heart at rest and his mind at peace. God has *nothing* against him. The believer's *position* is that the "law" or principle of the Holy Spirit has freed the believer from the "law" or principle of sin and death. What the Mosaic Law could not do because of our Adamic nature, God did through His Son. The Son's death and resurrection conquered sin and death. What was the "requirement of the Law?" (verse 4). The Law required death (the "wages of sin is death," Romans 6.23). The Law required perfect obedience and righteousness for life. Man is unable to meet these demands. It does no good to be 99.5% good in God's sight. One must be 100% good—all the time. We are unable to achieve this

righteousness no matter how many good deeds we do. But the God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, was able to meet this standard. He had no sin nature. He was without sin and righteous. He fulfilled the righteous demands of the Law and paid the death penalty for sin. God sees the believer "in Christ," not "in Adam." As such, the believer is given the very righteousness of Christ (Romans 4.4-5).

In terms of the practical aspect of how to live as a result of Christ's work, Paul explained that the Flesh equals Death while the Spirit equals Life. The Flesh (Adamic nature) is hostile towards God and cannot fulfill the Law. Thus, he concluded, "those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

*<sup>9</sup> However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.*

*<sup>10</sup> If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you (Romans 8.9-11).*

Paul meant by being "in the flesh" two things: 1) our natural state as children of Adam and 2) living one's life according to one's Adamic nature. Opposed to this, Paul declared believers "are not in the flesh but in the Spirit." Christ indwells the believer and the Holy Spirit indwells the believer (verses 10-11). This indwelling is the hope of resurrection (2 Corinthians 5.5; Ephesians 1.14).

*<sup>12</sup> So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— <sup>13</sup> for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you*



will live. <sup>14</sup> For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him (Romans 8.12-17).

Because of our identification with Christ, because He indwells us, because of the hope of resurrection, we are obligated ([ὀφειλέτης](#), a debtor, a person under obligation) not to live under the control of the flesh (Adamic nature). Sin brought death (separation from God) to mankind and resulted in man’s fear of God (Genesis 3.8). Paul explained a believer has not received a spirit of slavery which leads to fear. On the contrary, we have received a new spirit: a spirit of adoption as sons. As a result, we exclaim, “Abba! Father!” <sup>17</sup> The indwelling Holy Spirit agrees with our spirit (that we are children of God, heirs ([κληρονόμος](#)) of God, and joint-heirs ([συγκληρονόμος](#)) with Christ (Romans 8.16-17). This is an awesome revelation. The believer is an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ! A joint-heir is one who shares everything with the heir. A joint-heir or a joint-tenant on a bank account, stock, or bond has full rights to the financial asset. Such is our position in Christ. Everything He has, we have.

<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but

*because of Him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. <sup>24</sup> For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. <sup>26</sup> In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; <sup>27</sup> and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God (Romans 8.18-27).*

Paul wrote our present suffering cannot be compared to future glory. We must remember the one writing these words suffered more for Christ than almost anyone who has ever lived (2 Corinthians 11.16-33). The whole creation is enslaved to corruption (known in science as entropy) and has been subjected to this state not of its own will but according to God's plan. God has given us the Holy Spirit, who is the down payment ([ἄρραβών](#)) or promise of our hope (2 Corinthians 1.22, 5.5; Ephesians 1.14), of adoption and resurrection. The Holy Spirit helps also ministers to us in our present weakness, by helping us pray.

*<sup>28</sup> And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so*

*that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; <sup>30</sup> and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified (Romans 8.28-30).*

We know everything that happens in life is not good. But God, in His sovereignty, is able to cause all things to work to good for the believer. We lack full disclosure of God's plan. But God has provided sufficient information to trust Him. In verses 29-30, Paul provided insight into God's plan: He foreknew all who would trust Him. Foreknowledge governs predestination and God "predestined [believers] to become conformed to the image of His Son," who is the firstborn, i.e., the preeminent one and first resurrected one. The believer is predestined, called, justified, and lastly glorified (resurrection and the removal of all possibility of sin).

<sup>31</sup> *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; <sup>34</sup> who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. <sup>35</sup> Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." <sup>37</sup> But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor*

*things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8.31-39).*

Paul concluded his great dissertation on the believer's identification with Christ with a pawn of praise of God's greatness and an exuberant encouragement for believers. Thus, to live a holy life requires us to be controlled by love working in concert with faith, not Law. Paul wrote:

*<sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; <sup>15</sup> and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf (2 Corinthians 5.14-15).*

We belong to a God who sacrificed everything to win us. God has justified us—who can condemn? The God who won us intercedes for us. In Him, we conquer all. Nothing can separate us from Him and His love.

Additional Passages That Provide Insight into Our Identification with Christ

Ephesians 2.4-10

*<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of*

*yourselves, it is the gift of God; <sup>9</sup> not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*

This passage exalts God's mercy and love for the believer so that God views us as being with Christ, seated in heaven. Paul made it clear salvation is not on the basis of works but on the basis of faith. Works result from faith.

## Colossians 2

*<sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, <sup>10</sup> and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; <sup>11</sup> and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; <sup>12</sup> having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. <sup>13</sup> When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, <sup>14</sup> having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him (Colossians 2.8-15).*

This passage emphasizes our completeness in Christ, having been “buried with Him in baptism” and “raised up with Him” (verse 12). Believers have been made alive with Christ who has forgiven our sins (note the past tense of verse 13, cf. Ephesians 1.7). Christ’s victorious work on the cross has removed the “certificate of debt” (verse 12) which was the Law. How can believers live lives under that which Christ has removed? Paul wrote of the Law that “He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” This is as plain as language can be.

*<sup>16</sup> Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—<sup>17</sup> things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. <sup>18</sup> Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, <sup>19</sup> and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God (Colossians 2.16-19).*

The practical result of not being under the Law includes not having anyone pass judgment on the believer regarding legal matters. Paul explained his meaning more fully in the next passage.

*<sup>20</sup> If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, <sup>21</sup> “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” <sup>22</sup> (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? <sup>23</sup> These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-*

*abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence (Colossians 2.20-23).*

Paul had a never-ending fight with Jews who wished to put believers of his gospel under the Law of Moses. This was the great issue at the Jerusalem Council in 51 A.D. (Acts 15; Galatians 2). Paul understood this. Israel had been under the Law for 1,500 years. As a Pharisee, Paul knew the Law backwards and forwards. He had forgotten more Law than the Twelve had learned their entire lives. But the risen Christ had given him a new revelation: members of the body of Christ were not under the administration of Law but under new administration: Grace. Paul was constantly engaged in correcting erroneous teaching of the legalists and reminding believers they were not under the administration of the Mosaic Law. Paul knew, all too well, that the Adamic nature (Romans 7) is incapable of keeping the Law. Only by reckoning oneself dead to sin by faith under the control of the Holy Spirit can one live righteously before God.

### Colossians 3

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. <sup>5</sup> Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry (Colossians 3.1-5).*

The Church, the body of Christ, is a heavenly people. Our blessings are heavenly. Israel, on the other hand, is an earthly people. The blessings God gave Israel are earthly. Our

position as believers is that we are “raised up with Christ” who is “seated at the right hand of God.” That is how God views the Church, the body of Christ. We are to “set our minds on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.” In verse 5, we have similar language to Romans 6.11. A better translation would be, “Put to death, ([νεκρώσατε](#), aorist imperative) therefore, your earthly members to sexual immorality, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, covetousness, which is idolatry.” This is the secret to victorious life: faith.

## Conclusion

The believer in Christ has been identified with Christ in His death. This is a positional truth. Paul encourages us to make this positional truth an existential truth by living according to the Spirit. We do this by faith. Just as we take by faith that Christ died for us and rose from the dead, we are to reckon or consider ([λογίζεσθε](#)) ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. Christ’s victorious death and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15.1-4) placed the believer under Grace. The Law could do but one thing: condemn. We are now under new management. As the great Tyndale said, “When God buildeth he casteth all downe first. He is no patcher.”<sup>8</sup> Under grace, the believer’s motivation is to live for the One who loved him.

<sup>1</sup> Romans 6-8 are the primary passages which speak of the believer’s identification with Christ. Other passages include Galatians 2.19-21, 5.16-24; 1 Corinthians 12.13; Ephesians 2.4-10; Colossians 2.9-14, 3.3-4; Philippians 3.7-16; Titus 3.5-7.

<sup>2</sup> Paul cited the Mosaic Law in his epistles, most notably in Romans 13.8-10. Paul’s point remains. The believer is not under Law as a *modus vivendus*. Love fulfills the Law and is a result of apprehending God’s grace through faith.

<sup>3</sup> See Romans 6.1-2, 15 for Paul’s response. *Μὴ γένοιτο* was



Paul's strongest wording to indicate an impossible or unthinkable idea.

<sup>4</sup> See the author's study on [The Rapture](#) and [The Day of Christ](#).

<sup>5</sup> See the author's article on the extent of the atonement in [For Whom Did Christ Die?](#) No Biblical or logical case can be made that Christ died for *only* believers. The Scriptures leave no doubt He died for every single person.

<sup>6</sup> The word λογίζομαι was a favorite of Paul's. The word occurs 43x in 40 verses in the NT. Paul used the word 37 of those times. The word means to "reckon," "count," "compute," "calculate" (do the math).

<sup>7</sup> According to Vine: In the Gemara (a Rabbinical commentary on the Mishna, the traditional teaching of the Jews) it is stated that slaves were forbidden to address the head of the family by this title. It approximates to a personal name, in contrast to "Father," with which it is always joined in the NT. This is probably due to the fact that, "abba" having practically become a proper name, Greek-speaking Jews added the Greek word *pater*, "father," from the language they used. "Abba" is the word framed by the lips of infants, and betokens unreasoning trust; "father" expresses an intelligent apprehension of the relationship. The two together express the love and intelligent confidence of the child.

<sup>8</sup> C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1954, p. 188. Tyndale had a greater understanding of these truths than any of the reformers. In the same vein, he wrote we are confronted with a redemption that God performed "to winne his enemye, to ouercomme him with loue, that he might see Loue and loue againe." I encourage the reader to read pp. 186-189 of Lewis' great work. Learn these pages and you will understand the great divide between law and grace. Also, read Tyndale. He was a great, great man. And he's fun.

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