



## VICTORY

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Let's start by looking at a very simple truth. A person either has the Spirit of God or does not have the Spirit of God. If a person has the Spirit of God, he is *in the Spirit*. If a person does not have Christ, he does not belong to Him and is *in the flesh*, which means in the sinful nature (Romans 8:9). So, the most important thing is that Christ live in our hearts. From then on, even though we have struggles, even though we fail at times, we are in the Spirit. We are children of God and He accepts us.



Now we'll look at this more deeply. Let's go to the book of Romans, chapter 7.

*Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? <sup>2</sup>For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. <sup>3</sup>So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. <sup>4</sup>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. (Romans 7:1-4 KJV)*

The apostle Paul says here that before coming to Christ, we were married to the law. And now we are married to Christ. God wants us to bear fruit. Now that we are married to Him, we can bring forth fruit for Him. Before coming to Christ we lived under the law, and **we couldn't bear fruit for God while living under the law.**

A law is a rule that you have to obey. In the Bible, the law means God's perfect standards. Living by the law means trying to live up to these standards and rules to please God and win His salvation, His approval and His blessing. Trying to please God by fully obeying His rules sounds like a good thing to do, doesn't it?

The law is good. But there is a problem. If we are living under the law, trying to fulfill it, the law condemns us. Why? Because **even though we agree that the rules are good, we don't have the ability to obey them fully.** For example, in England we have a tradition on the first day of each year of making a New Year's Resolution: this means setting ourselves a challenge, putting a rule on ourselves, and trying to live up to it during the year in order to improve in some area of our life. For example, "This year, I'll get up every day at 5.30am and run for 3 miles..." I don't know if you've ever set yourself a challenge like that. If we do, many times we manage to live up to it for the first three weeks, but afterwards, forget it! We just don't have the ability to live up to it. In the same way, **the perfect law of God condemns us because we can't live up to it.** In fact, according to the Bible, **the law of God stirs up even more sin and failure in us.** How can that be?

We all have a sinful nature which causes us to fail. The law shows us what we should do but doesn't do anything to set us free from our sinful nature or give us any help to fulfill God's standards. Therefore, the law discourages us, and being discouraged, we end up stumbling and falling even more! The law stirs up sin in us.

Some preachers say that if you want to follow Christ, you just need to memorize the ten commandments and try to obey them every day. They are not preaching Christ, what they are preaching is religion. How can we say that? Because at the end of the day, following Christ is not about struggling to keep the commandments. It is about realizing that you cannot keep them, opening your heart so that the Savior can live within you, and then depending on and obeying His Spirit in your daily life. That's how we please God, and that's how God's perfect law is fulfilled in us. Are you with me so far?

**THE RULES ARE GOOD, BUT WE DON'T HAVE THE ABILITY TO OBEY THEM FULLY.**

What is the purpose of God's law? Why did He give it to us? **To show us that we can't keep it!** To show us the holiness of God, how sinful we are outside of Christ, and that we don't have the ability to live up to His standards. The law is designed to show us that we need Jesus in our hearts and we need to depend on Him in everything. *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.* <sup>25</sup>*But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.* (Galatians 3:24-25 KJV)

*But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.* (Galatians 5:18 KJV) If we are led by the Spirit there is no need for us to live under the law. So once again, the most important thing is to have Christ in your heart and be guided by His Spirit.

*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.* (Romans 7:4) If Jesus lives in your heart, you have died to the law. Why? So that you can belong to someone else, to Jesus Christ, and bear fruit for God. The law of God shows us our sin but cannot give us the power to overcome sin. It shows us how God wants us to act but doesn't give us the power to obey His will. It stirs us up to sin more and keeps us as slaves to our sinful nature. The wages that sin pays you are death. The fruit that living by the Spirit gives you is life and peace.

*For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.* <sup>6</sup>*But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.* (Romans 7:5-6) It says **when we were**, past tense, *when we were in the flesh*. When were we in the flesh? When we were under the law. When we were not in Christ. Before coming to Christ we were under the law, living in our sinful nature (the flesh), bearing fruit for death. *But now we are delivered from the law.* **We were** in the flesh, **but now we are** free from the law, and serving God in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.



“The letter” means the law. In many countries, for something to be law, it has to be written down. In Honduras, every law is published in government documents, so if a law is not approved and written down, it cannot be a law. For example, recently the National Congress passed a new Traffic Law, which says that people who use their mobile phones while driving will be fined. It's a new law, approved and written down. And it's a good law. The law is a good thing, it should be fully obeyed. Likewise the law of God is written down in many places in the Bible, and here is referred to as “the letter.”

However, if you have Christ in your heart, now you don't need to depend on your attempts to fulfill those laws in the Bible in order to try to win salvation and God's blessing. You are free from the law. How come? Because the law of God, the law of love, is now written in your heart. *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts...* (Hebrews 8:10 KJV). You now serve God in the Spirit and not in the law.

*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.* (Romans 7:7)

When I was a child, before coming to Christ, a couple of times I stole things from shops. I knew in my heart that it was wrong to do this. Why? Because the law of the land says that to steal is illegal, and also the shops had signs up that said that anyone who stole would be prosecuted. So I knew that what I was doing was wrong because the law showed me. That's why the law is good: it convicts us of our sin. Here Paul says, *I had not known sin, but by the law*. Obviously after coming to Christ I didn't steal any more, thank God.

In many countries, fornication is very common, isn't it? It's very common for people to sleep with people that they are not married to. But what does God's law say about fornication? Is it right or wrong? It says that it's wrong. It's against God's law. But if you grew up in a culture where a lot of people fornicate, perhaps you won't realize that it's sin, until someone shows you that the law of God says that if you want to sleep with someone you have to be married to them. If not, you are sinning. Sin isn't shown to be sin except by the law.

*But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. <sup>9</sup>For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. <sup>10</sup>And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. <sup>11</sup>For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.* (Romans 7:8-11) It says that the law stirs up even more sin. Everything comes down to this: without Jesus in our hearts, we can't fully obey the law. And feeling the hopeless of knowing that we can't fully obey the law, we get discouraged, give up and give ourselves even more fully to sin.



For example, while I only stole a couple of things from the shops, I had a friend who stole a lot. Finally the police caught her. They found a wardrobe full of stolen goods in her house. I know that long before the police caught her, she knew that what she was doing was wrong, but she wasn't able to break the habit. It was like an addiction. I say addiction because there was nothing she could do with the things she stole; she didn't have contacts who could sell them for her. There was no reason for her to keep on stealing, but she had fallen into sin and the sin grew and grew. She knew that the law condemned stealing, but knowing this just discouraged her and stirred her to steal even more, because she knew, "I just can't stop; I can't break this habit." **The law showed her her sin, but didn't give her a way out.** This sense of hopelessness condemned her to sin more. And that's the effect of the law of God, it shows us what we should do, but doesn't give us the ability or the power to do it.

So, what should we do? Where is the hope? We agree that God's laws are good but we can't fully keep them. We always fail on one point or another, and the Bible says that if we keep the whole law but fail on one point, we have failed the whole law (James 2:10). Seems like an impossible situation, doesn't it? It's impossible for us to keep God's law. So what should we do? Is there any hope? Well, let's keep reading to find out.

*Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. <sup>13</sup>Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.* (Romans 7:12-13) What is Paul saying here? The Bible itself says that at times Paul's writings are hard to understand (2 Peter 3:15-16). Basically in these verses he is saying that the law of God is good and we should keep it; but we can't do it, due to the sinful nature that lives within us. The law shows us our sin and shows us our need for a Savior.

For example before I came to Christ, I had truly hated certain people who had hurt me. I would have liked to see them dead. Yes, that's how I was. And I knew in my heart that it wasn't right to feel that way. But I couldn't break free of those feelings and get rid of that hatred. When I opened my heart to Christ, He came and replaced the hatred in my heart with His Holy Spirit. I needed someone to save me; I needed a Savior. The law showed me that it wasn't right to nurse bitterness or hatred, but I couldn't get rid of it. **The law showed me my sin, but Jesus set me free.** I came to Christ with this attitude, "Jesus, I need You in my life. I just can't live how I should live." He set me free from the hatred in a powerful way. We need a Savior in our lives, not just to save us from hell but also to save us from ourselves and fill us with Himself.

**THE LAW  
SHOWED ME MY  
SIN, BUT JESUS  
SET ME FREE.**

*For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.* (Romans 7:14) Paul was already a Christian when he wrote those words. He had Christ in his heart but he still wrote, “I am carnal, sold under sin.” *For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.* <sup>16</sup>*If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.* (Romans 7:15-16) I don’t know about you, but at times I do things that I don’t want to do. And at times I don’t do things that I should do. Perhaps you are perfect, I don’t know. Perhaps you don’t have weaknesses. Perhaps you never fall. Perhaps you never have struggles. I do. At times I say things I shouldn’t and afterwards I say to myself, “Wow, that wasn’t good. I shouldn’t have said that, but it came out of my mouth.” At times I do things I shouldn’t do, things I really don’t want to do. But in this respect the apostle Paul and I are the same, because he said that he experienced the same thing. Perhaps you do too. I think you probably do.

**EVERY MOMENT  
OF EVERY DAY  
WE ARE  
COMPLETELY  
NEW IN CHRIST.**

Paul had already accepted Christ, but he still said, “I am carnal, sold under sin.” Listen carefully. If we have Christ in our hearts, we are new creations. The old things have passed away, everything has been made new (2 Corinthians 5:17) Have you been baptized? What happens in baptism? You are put under the water, and then you are raised out of the water. Why? Being put under the water signifies that you have died to your old self. And being raised from the water signifies that God has given you a new life. Your old self died in Christ on the cross, and when He rose again, you were raised to a new life in Him (Romans 6:3-11). Baptism doesn’t save you, but it is a very powerful symbol that God has given you a new life, that you are a new creation. When Paul wrote this, he was already a new creation, and he was serving God and not sin. So how could he write that he was “carnal, sold under sin”?

The answer is in the next few verses. *Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.* <sup>18</sup>*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.* <sup>19</sup>*For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.* <sup>20</sup>*Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.* (Romans 7:17-20)

How interesting! It sounds like Paul is making excuses for his sin! But he really isn’t. Paul is saying that we are new creations, raised to a new life in Christ, but while we continue living in this mortal body, the sinful nature is present with us. That’s why in verse 17 he talks about the *sin that dwelleth in me*. That’s why he can say that when he sins, it is not him who is sinning, but the sin that lives in him. He is a new creation and the new creation **cannot** sin (1 John 3:9). It is the sinful nature that lives in us that is always fighting against the desires of the Spirit. So, Paul isn’t making excuses. The truth is that when we sin, we need to repent because we have chosen to allow that sinful nature to sin, haven’t we? But at the same time we must remember that the fact that we have sinned does not change who we are. We are still new creations. When I sin, it does not mean that I am a sinner. According to God’s word I am a new creation, not a sinner. I failed because I allowed that sinful nature to express itself in my life, but the fact of having sinned does not change who I am. I am a new creation, pure and holy before God, because I am in Jesus Christ.

Sin is like a thief that breaks into your house at night. That thief doesn’t belong in the house; he is not a member of the family. You should throw him out. Perhaps you failed by leaving a door or window open, but the fact that he came in doesn’t make him a part of the family. When we sin, it’s like allowing that thief to come in. Christ already gave us the authority and power to throw him out, remembering that even though we sin at times, that sin does not belong in our lives; we are not sinners, because we are new creations. **Every moment of every day we are completely new in Christ.**



Continued in “Victory, Part 2”



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“IF ANYONE THIRST, LET THEM COME TO ME AND DRINK”- JESUS  
(JOHN 7:37)