

Dead To The Law; Alive Unto God

"For I through the law died unto the law that I might live unto God" (Gal. 2:19). This is a continuation of the previous verse: "For if I build up again the things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor" (Gal. 2:18). If I am a transgressor, then I have died unto the law. What does the apostle mean when he wrote, "I through the law am dead unto the law"? Different ideas abound. Still, one thing is clear. If Paul had violated the law (as all do) then he was beyond the help of the law. There was nothing more the law could do for him. Law does one of two things: Either it pronounces one justified because he has unfaithfully kept all its precepts or else law pronounces guilt upon those who were offenders of it, and with a guilty verdict, the penalty followed -- death. Once the guilty verdict was passed, the apostle was beyond law passing a "not guilty" verdict. "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law" (Gal. 3:21). The law could not make one alive who had been made dead through violation of it. Paul lived under the law and violated it. By the very nature of the matter then, Paul became dead to the law by the verdict of guilt it passed upon him. "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live but Christ that liveth in me: and the life I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). This verse further amplifies the conclusion of the prior one. Although we are dead to the law by the sentence law passes upon offenders, Christ has done for us what the law could not. Paul explained this elsewhere: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God (could do, jm) sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sins, condemned sin in the flesh ..." (Rom. 8:3). The sinner is dead but he can live by being crucified with Christ! Christ has died for us and borne our sins in his death upon the tree (1 Pet. 2:24). Since we have died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, it ill befits any to live unto his own pleasures and lusts. We must "no longer live," it must be Christ "living in me." We must renounce the sin which brought death to Christ in the first place. Can gratitude do less?

"I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is of the law, then Christ died for nought" (Gal. 2:21). In earlier verses (which are difficult to ascertain whether they are a continuation of Paul's rebuke to Peter or a resumption of his address to Galatians) he wrote, "... by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16). This verse is an affirmation of the impossibility to be justified by the law and verse twenty one shows that were such possible, then the death of Christ was needless.

Thus these Galatians are faced with a quandary. Did they believe Christ died for them? Surely they had not digressed so far from the gospel that they had abandoned this primary precept of it! Paul told the Corinthians, "*I make known to you brethren the gospel which I preached unto you ... that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures*" (1 Cor. 15:1). Well, if they believed Christ died for them, was that death necessary, essential to their pardon? It was not, if they could be justified by any other means! Even the divinely given Law through Moses' hands could not provide the redemption so needed by man. A logical question which should have arisen in their minds would be, why attempt to be justified by a system that cannot justify and which, if it could, would make unnecessary the sacrifice of Christ? These thought provoking questions prove the futility and sin of seeking to be justified by the Law, but Paul is not yet finished. Continue on with us as we proceed further in our study of his epistle to the Galatians. NEXT: "O foolish Galatians! ..."

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