

Dead And Dead

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Well, it's good to see you out tonight. If you will, turn in your Bibles to Galatians 2:17-19. Paul says,

17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. 18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. 19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

Now what Paul is addressing is a very serious subject about the believer's relationship to the law and the law's relationship to the believer, and the answer to both of those situations is dead; the law is dead to the believer and the believer is dead to the law.

Paul wrote a young pastor named Timothy and told him that he left him at Ephesus to keep people from teaching any other doctrine, and the other doctrine that he was talking about was that some were trying to bring believers back under the law. He said this, "They desire to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor whereof they affirm." Now what that simply means is they don't know what they are talking about and have no idea or notion of the consequence if someone believes what they say, and the consequence is that the work of Christ is of none effect, for he goes on to say this, "But we know that the law is good if a man use it lawfully." How can a man use the law lawfully? He uses it lawfully as it's set forth in Scripture, that it was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ, answered in its justice by his death on the cross, and then set aside because it has no more use whatsoever to the believer. But if a person insists that a believer goes under the law, this is how the believer ends up if he, indeed, goes back under the law. It says, "Knowing this that the law is not made for the righteous man but for the lawless and the disobedient," so if a person goes under the law, that makes him lawless and makes him disobedient, "for sinners," makes him a sinner, "for unholy," makes him unholy, "for the profane," makes him profane, "for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers," patricide, matricide, that's what he becomes, a homicidal maniac, "manslayers," a person who kills people, "for whoremongers," if you make a man go back under the law who says he believes on Christ, that person to you is a whoremonger, "men that defile themselves with mankind," homosexuality, "for menstealers, or liars," kidnappers, "for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine."

So that's what the law does. If a man stands in the pulpit and seeks to bring believers back under the law, he's saying, "You're a whoremonger. Christ's work did not put away your sin. There's something I have to say about it and I say that you still need to do something in order to be righteous before God." That's what Paul is dealing with in the book of Galatians and also in the book of Colossians, he's dealing with this matter of those who would come in to those who have received the grace of God and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation and that only, and bring them back under some rule and regulation of the law. He said, "You make us sinners," and if we do it, if preachers do it, they make themselves transgressors. And that's important and we look at the law and we think of Moses' law and the ceremonial law and the rites, and we think, well, some people like to separate the two and say we have the 10 Commandments and then you have the ceremonies. It's one law. One law. The 10 Commandments condemns, the ceremonies point to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only hope of salvation and that's all the law does.

That's what it does, but men can make laws out of other things. They can. Men can take, for instance, those who trust in the merits of Jesus Christ alone for salvation and require them to accept or receive a specific area of doctrine that has nearly nothing to do with what Christ accomplished on Calvary's tree, and then they make the Gospel a law, to believe a law, and it's very common in the world, very common in religion. Men like to chase rabbits down rabbit holes. They do, and they will do that, and if they want to self-aggrandize and bring themselves up and set themselves in a situation of power and strength, they will take and make the Gospel a pie chart. It's not a pie chart. It's just one thing: Christ and him crucified. That's the Gospel. But they'll take a section, something that happened, something the he did, and make that or some aspect of faith and make that the singular most important thing, and then say, "If you don't agree with me, I can't have fellowship with you." They've created a Gospel law and they've brought people back under the law.

That's just what they've done and they're saying that Christ's death which happened 2,000 years ago and the work was finished, f-i-n-i-s-h-e-d, it was finished. The word he used on the cross was teleioo, perfect. That word is used three times there in John 19, accomplished and perfect and finished. Accomplished, fulfilled and finished, the same word, teleioo. It is exactly the same word that was used describing what he did on Calvary's tree in Hebrews 10 when it said, "He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." And where that remission is made, there is no more sacrifice for sin.

So Paul here is dealing with a very very important thing, very important. It's not a matter of opinion, it's not a matter of theological discussion. What it is, is a dead set fact and an absolute that Paul is dealing with. In this passage, Paul is set for the defense of the Gospel of free grace as it stands in total, complete and absolute opposition to the works of the law. Total opposition. He has established that justification by Christ and justification by the works of the law cannot coexist on any level or to any degree. He said that in verse 16, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ." That's the phrase he uses often throughout Scripture, in Romans here and in Colossians, and what he's talking about is the work that Christ did when he

said that. We're justified by the faith of Jesus Christ or by the work that Christ accomplished on Calvary's tree.

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by the work of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith by the work of Christ, and not by the works of the law for by the works of the law shall," no, "no flesh be justified in his sight." Now he made that clear, made that very clear. This dogmatic position and this dogmatic assertion was basically this: the believer is justified without doing the works of the law, and those who would seek to add the works of the law for justification are they themselves not justified at all. That's pretty clear. That's pretty clear.

The bane of legalists is for someone to say that the works of the law have nothing to do with justification but the fact is that the works of the law is a non-issue for believers. The legalist of that day as well as those of this day, would call believers antinomians, against the law, or those who are averse to the law. But you can be assured that the same accusation will be applied to you if you believe that salvation is by grace alone. That word will be applied to you. It's hard for a legalist to believe that their life doesn't count for something. How you live in this world matters but it doesn't count. It matters but it doesn't count in the salvation of your soul. Not one whit.

In verse 17 Paul turns the legalist arguments on its head and defines the consequence of asserting that a person must not only believe but also do the works of the law for justification, and Paul in no uncertain terms declares that those who are applying to the law for justification are sinners. He says that. Those who apply to the law for justification are sinners rather than those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Now he's not saying that believers are not sinners, but rather that in truth if we hold that a man is justified by the works of the law, we are the actual transgressors of that law.

The first phrase of verse 17 says exactly that when he says, "we ourselves are also found sinners." He is equating keeping the law for justification with sinning against God. Now, boy, that just doesn't seem right to most of religion in this day. You sin against God when you try to get a man up back under the law if he's a believer in grace. That's a sin against Almighty God. The wording is difficult because the old English doesn't always fit with our American version of the same language. I think it's been said that England and America are two countries separated by the same language and that's often true.

Paul is saying that if we who believe Christ yet apply to the law for righteousness, we are sinning against God. He said it differently in chapter 5, verse 4 of the same book. He said it this way, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." That means you've left grace. You no longer believe grace. And though this interpretation is so, it does not fully deal with the context in what Paul is dealing with here. Paul is dealing with how legalists view or perceive Gospel believers, how legalists view or perceive those who believe the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They view them as sinners, as sinners or those who disregard the law.

He said in verse 15, "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles." This being so, Paul is here saying that in light of the way that the lawmen, these forensic specialists view believers being a sinner, according to their view, they say we're a sinner, God says that's the only right thing to do. If they say you're a sinner because you won't keep the law, that means you're doing right. That's what he's talking about here and that's an amazing thing.

If you seek to be justified by Christ, if we seek to be justified by Christ, we are found to be sinners if we go back under the law, or if we have someone else do it for us. Those who refuse to go to the law for righteousness, those who have turned their back on the law, and I am one who don't go to the law for righteousness, well, I won't say completely because I'm really a legalist in recovery, I guess you'd say. There's a whole lot of legalism still left in me. My flesh is totally legalist. It's always against the Spirit of God. It always is. It's totally legalist, but generally speaking and I make this as a generic statement somewhat, those who refuse to go to the law for righteousness, those who turn their back on the law, they're merely acting as believers rather than Judaizers. That's what they're doing, they're acting as believers.

He says in verse 14, "But when I saw," speaking of Peter and Barnabas, "when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel," now what had they done? Had they denied the Gospel? Had Peter said Christ didn't die for his sins? Had Peter said Christ didn't put away his sins? Had Peter said that Christ wasn't Lord of all and he had accomplished salvation? No, Peter would never deny that. You could never put him in that position. Well, what had he done? He had switched tables at a church social, is what he had done. You say, "What's the deal about that?" Well, these people over at this table had been saved by God's grace, they believed Christ alone is their righteousness and their only hope, and they know they'd been saved because they've heard the Gospel and they never even knew what the law was. They're Gentiles over there, never been under the law, didn't know anything about it. According to Romans 2, they were a law unto themselves, they excused themselves or accused others by the law in their own hearts, their conscience, but Peter was sitting with them and everything was going fine. He was rejoicing in their salvation as he says he was in Acts 15, rejoicing in their salvation, patting them on the back, "Hey, brother, we got it going. We believe the Gospel. Bless our hearts, Christ died in our room and stead. Everything's good." And in walks the Judaizers, in walks the legalists, their nose in the air, proper clothing, proper attitude, austere, scary, and they walk over to Peter and they don't say much, they just sort of nudge up against him and say, "You know these fellows here, they've not been circumcised. They really need to be circumcised." And Peter caved. He didn't love those guys any less but he caved and he got up and went down and sat with the Judaizers and Paul said, "But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" Why do you do that? Why do you do that? Because like I said, I guess we're all legalists in recovery.

This being so, Paul is here saying that in light of the way that the lawmen view us, we are sinners, and that's the best thing to be in that light. This is but the necessary consequence of justification by the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the legalist the believer is found to be a sinner because he ignores the law, just trusting Christ alone for justification which makes us in the eyes of the legalist a sinner, then make Christ the minister of sin, that's what he's asking. "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid." Christ the minister of sin? Christ the promoter of sin? It does, if ignoring the law for righteousness is sin, it makes Christ the minister of sin. If ignoring the law for righteousness is sin, it makes Christ the minister of sin.

Paul however says, "God forbid. No, not ever ever, no, never let it be." That's what that means. You see, rejecting the law for justification may make us sinners before the religious legalists, and it will, but in the sight of God we are doing the right thing. We're doing the right thing. If believing Christ alone for justification makes me a sinner in the legalist's eyes, then I'll gladly wear that badge and I'll gladly and rejoice in them calling me a transgressor of the law.

The indictment against legalism is that it makes Christ the promoter and minister of sin and as a believer you can expect religion to respond to this truth negatively. The legalist asserts that the believer, the one who believes he's justified by Christ without the law, promotes lawlessness. We've all heard it. We've all heard it. To believe that salvation is by grace alone will, the religionist declares, open the floodgates of sin. I've heard them say it. If you believe in grace alone, you just open up people to sin all they want to. Well, I sin all I want to anyway, don't you? You held back on yourself? I don't think so. You got a gun to your head? I don't think so. I sin more than I want, to be honest with you, but I don't hold back and neither do you. Neither do you. I'll tell you this, I've been sick sometimes and I've been healed. I do not want to be sick again. I don't want to be sick again. Anybody who's been healed by the grace of God does not want to be sick again.

So they refused to go back under the law, but that's the natural reaction of the lost religionist to the freedom accomplished by the Gospel. Paul dealt with it in Romans 3. He said, "They slander us. They say what we preach, that where sin abounded grace did much more abound, then we ought to sin more so we'd have more grace." They slander us, that's what he said. Those who believe in Christ alone as their justification before God are those who disregard the law for justification. The believer who turns his back on the law for justification is doing right in the eyes of God, and the legalist sees this as contempt for the law but nothing is further from the truth. I'll tell you, I love the law and what I'm doing right here tonight and what you've done for 40 years and what you do every Sunday and Wednesday night, is take flowers and put them on the grave of the law. That's what the Gospel does. I visit the grave site but not to ask for help, not to dig up the old bones but to honor it because it was good and holy and just and I broke it. I was bad and unjust and unholy but I love the law, I just don't look to it for anything and neither does any believer.

The believer who turns his back on the law for justification is right and the legalist sees this as contempt for the law, but the believer is actually the only one who establishes the law according to Romans 3. We establish the law through faith. He's the only one that sees the law for what it is, it's good and holy and just. He's the only one who honors the purpose of the law in its temporary capacity, and the law is a temporary thing. It entered because of transgression. It entered because of sin. It entered. Where was it before? It wasn't. It came in and it went out on Calvary's tree. No doubt about that. It went out on Calvary's tree. It has a temporal capacity, a temporal capacity.

In verse 18, Paul continues the principle that faith in Christ alone is disregarding the works of the law for justification and that is a right thing to do. He says, "For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." If I go back there, I make myself a transgressor. He now speaks of the ramifications of believing Christ for righteousness without the deeds of the law.

The principle might be best understood by asking this question: what would Paul be doing if, as a believer, he began to apply to the works of the law for justification? Paul says that he'd be building again that which he destroyed, building again that which he destroyed and the result would be that he would make himself a transgressor of the law. Now though the legalists call themselves, the legalist calls believers sinners because they turn their back on the law for righteousness, if the believer returned to the law for righteousness he would actually be making himself a transgressor.

Paul uses some strong language here to declare this truth, he says that believing Christ alone for justification is destruction of the law. It's destruction of the law, and to return to the law is sin. It's sin. Tell that to a legalist sometime. It's the truth. It's the truth. He refers to the works of the law for justification as the things he wants built back when he was Saul of Tarsus. It's a good definition of the legalist's way of life. The whole system of false religion no matter the alias under which it travels is conditioned upon building something, accomplishing something, stacking up something, and that something is usually, always actually, acceptable legal merit before God to obligate God to save you.

The idea of rewards, people like to talk about rewards, crowns and such, and that idea of rewards in religion in order for one person to get more than another and that's always the way it is. Many years ago back in the Southern Baptist Church, I was in Sunday school and my Sunday school teacher was a student of Piedmont Bible College, and he actually wrote up on the board for us kids, I was a teenager at the time, I didn't know God from a goose, and I was Southern, I had been raised on the Bible and cut my eyeteeth on the KJV because that's what went on in our house and in our neighborhood, but he says, "I'm competitive in this rewards thing." He says, "I want to get more rewards than anybody else." And as dumb as I was, I thought, "That don't sound right. That don't sound right," and it's not but people believe that.

"I do things and merit righteousness before God. I'm gonna get some kind of reward in heaven. Reward in heaven based on some legal merit." The notion and I say it's a notion because it's not a Bible doctrine, it's a notion, the notion of progressive sanctification

must have its progress measured. How can you say it's progressive if it can't be measured? It must be measured. It must be measured and if it is measured, that's how you keep score. The imperative suffixes of "er" and "est," people like those, holier and holiest. Jim Bird was sitting with a fellow up in Virginia one time who took a pastorate there in Virginia and they were talking about holiness and Jim Bird says, "Do you believe you're more holy today than you were yesterday?" And that fellow says, "Yeah." Jim said, "My soul, I don't think there's any hope for you at all."

Holier and holiest. Holiest is in the Bible when it speaks about that 15 x 15 foot cubicle that the great high priest went in once a year to offer blood sacrificed before the Shekinah glory of God but never applied to a human being. Holiest. And when the word holier is used in the Scripture, our Lord says it's those who say, "I'm holier than thou," and they're smoking my nose. So those don't apply but people like to apply them because, you see, they're making progress. They're on that road. They're marching on that road and they're making progress toward God. Listen very carefully, I'll only say this once: that's Oscar Mayer baloney. That's what it is. Every believer knows this the older he gets, the longer he's in this thing, the blacker his heart is, the wickeder his mind is, the weaker he is, the frailer he is, and the more utterly dependent he is upon God keeping him or he will fall. If you think you've progressed, you're in trouble. You're in trouble. What you're demanding is recognition. That's what progressive sanctification demands, recognition of your building skills.

This is the language that Paul uses to describe what those who will not submit to the righteousness of God is in Romans 10:1-4. He says, "I bear them witness they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they will not submit to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to them that believe." They go about to establish their own righteousness, to build a righteousness before God, and though Christ is the end of the law, and that means the purpose and the fulfillment and the satisfaction of the law, for righteousness to all who believe, the legalist rather than submit, rather than believe and that's what submit means, rather than believe goes about the business of building up a righteousness by which he will obligate God to accept him. And people believe that.

Many years ago there was a judge that used to attend church, he's gone now, him and his wife both died, he was from Florida, and I would have loved to have heard him on the bench because he had a resounding bass voice and had a real command of the English language and he was very good at what he did as a judge. And often he would say he appreciated my messages and hugged me and pat me on the back. What he liked was my style. I figured out after a while he didn't like what I said but he liked my style. And one day in the hospital his wife was sick and I went over to visit his wife and have prayer with her, and he was sitting in the lobby of the hospital, I can out and I said, "Hey, Judge, how ya doing?" He said, "I gotta ask you a question, Pastor James." And I said, "Okay. Go ahead." Now he's a man who then had the color hair I have now, back then my hair was red and he was an older fellow so I wanted to show him respect, and I said, "What do you have, sir?" He said, "I know you've been saying that our works don't mean anything and I've heard you," he said, "but my wife's sick and I've been caring for her for about a

year. I've been taking her to the hospital, I've been washing her, been feeding her," he said, "you mean to tell me that doesn't mean anything?" And I said, "I mean to tell you, it doesn't mean anything. I'm glad you're doing it and I can say you're a good man for doing it, but that will not stand before God one iota." The legalists believe it will, and by so doing they are transgressors of the law. It's important. Important.

Paul declares that he used to be a builder, "If I destroy that which I built." He used to be a builder before he understood the purpose of the law. He said, "When I actually understood the law, sin revived and I died. I thought I was alive, I thought I had everything going for me, I was keeping the law," and according to his testimony in Philippians 3, he was pretty good at it. He says, "Touching the law I was blameless, touching the law I was a Pharisee, a Hebrew of Hebrews. I had it all going for me." He said, "It's nothing but manure but it was good manure. I had it going." He had built up a reputation of a holy and a righteous man and he held onto that. He said, "I built that up. I was of the Sanhedrin. I went out to persecute the church. I wanted to get the name of Jesus Christ wiped off the face of the earth. I was full of zeal and I was working for God." Then he said, "That's what I was building, and then one day I met Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, found out that I'd been kicking against the pricks, he blinded me and sent me down to a house on a street called Strait in a place called Damascus, and I stayed there in that house blind as a bat, couldn't see anything. One day he sent a preacher named Ananias to me and Ananias said, 'Brother Saul, you've been chosen of God to see the just one and to be a witness in his name.' And the scales fell off my eyes and from that day on I've believed Christ and with that belief in Christ, everything before that was destroyed. Destroyed."

People have difficulty with their former life, with their former life in religion. Old Donny Bell used to say a man will give you his wife, his car, and his bank account before he'll give up that old profession of faith. I've had people, I had a doctor who came to church in Sequoia for a while, sovereign grace believer. I mean, he came all the way from Florida and moved to Franklin so he could drive to church so he'd hear the Gospel from Tim James. Well, he heard the Gospel from Tim James for about six weeks and then I preached from Ephesians 1:14, "You believed after you hear the word of truth and the word of truth when you heard it was the good news that God had saved you 2,000 years ago on Calvary's tree, and everything before that is nothing." And the good doctor stopped me on the porch and said, "That can't be. I remember trusting Christ beside my momma's sickbed when I was a young child." And I said, "Well, I don't doubt your experience," and don't doubt people's experiences. People have experiences. I've had plenty of experiences. They used to call me Mr. Rededication at Antioch Baptist Church because I was always running down the aisle crying because I was always guilty. I've had tons of experiences in religion. Don't doubt a man's experience. If he has an experience, fine. I said this, "Does your experience that you had as a child at your mother's bed, does it line up with what God says about how he saves a sinner, because if you've not heard the Gospel, you don't know Christ and there's just one Gospel, one Gospel."

That's what Paul was talking about, having believed Christ alone for justification, if a believer does that and then returns to the law, the law would still have the same effect on

him that it had when it started and that effect is simply this, namely that sin would revive and he would die. No matter how logical or pious the legalist's arguments may sound, to return to the law is to disallow the righteousness of Jesus Christ and that's the believer's only righteousness. That's it. God hath made him to be unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. We have no other righteousness. But that righteousness which is imputed to you, the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ and therefore to stand before God without any righteousness at all, you're gonna perish and if you go back to the law, you're back under sin and you have no righteousness. To apply to the law for righteousness or for the rule of life is to sin against God.

In what manner did Paul by trusting Christ destroy the law? He did not destroy the law in its function and its temporal purpose, believing Christ destroys the law basically in two ways: first, it destroys the law by rejecting it as a covenant under which men are righteous before God. You could never be righteous under the law. Why? The Lord said, you know, the law is a shadow of good things coming, not those very things because even the law could never make the comers thereunto perfect as pertaining to conscience, but once you believed on Christ, there was no more conscience of sins. And all those sacrifices were offered and there were plenty. On the feast of tabernacles in an eight day period there was close to 1,000 beasts killed and their blood poured out. Then from Abraham or from Adam all the way to the book of Revelation, it's blood, blood, blood. The Old Testament is a coagulate finger pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ. But in all that blood, a veritable crimson tide, not one sin was remitted. Not one. Think about that. Think how marvelous that is, how God, as it were, soaked the world in blood pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ and when he came. Paul was not angry with the law but he destroyed the law as a covenant under which you could be righteous.

Secondly, believe in Christ for justification destroys the law as to its usefulness to the believer. The believer has no use for it. Why? Because the believer is righteous. There's speed limit signs all the way up and down these streets, did you notice them? I hope you noticed them. If you drive the speed limit, does that speed limit sign have anything to do with you? Really? If you drive under it, does it have anything to do with you? If it's 45 and you're driving 44, does that law have anything to do with you? No. Only if you go above it, then the law condemns you and that's what the law does. It always condemns. It always condemns. To the believer, the law is useless. Why? Because he's righteous. He's righteous before God and the law says he's righteous. The law itself looks at the child of God with the searchlight of holiness from the head, from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet, and the law can find no grounds upon which it can accuse. No grounds. You say, "But I know what I am." I don't care what you know, I want to know what God knows and God said, "I will remember their sin no more." Christ put away our sins by the sacrifice of himself. He buried them in the bottom of the sea, cast them behind God's back, separated them from us as far as the east is from the west. Where are they? I don't know. God don't know, God said, "I forgot them." And if you were to ask God today, "Is Tim James a sinner?" He'd say, "Absolutely not. My Son took care of that 2,000 years ago." All the elements of the law have been fulfilled by Christ and therefore set aside. That's what he said. "Lo, I said, I come in the volume of the book. It's written of me to do

thy will, O God. He taketh away the first and establishes the second." Take away that first revealed covenant and establishes the old covenant, the one who is second revealed.

"To build again that which I have destroyed is sin," Paul said. It's sin. The righteousness that is in the law has been fulfilled. Christ kept the law one time and he fulfilled the law altogether. In his life, he fulfilled the law. He kept the law in his death. There's a difference. He kept the law. How did he do it? He died under its penalty and that's the only way you can keep the law, to die under its penalty. Keeping the law ain't never gonna do nothing for you. Christ kept it for you if you are his. He fulfilled the law and the law is not only representing Moses' law and the ceremonies and the various covenants set forth in Scripture, it's this Bible, this book from Genesis to Revelation that's the law of God. It's the teaching of God. It's the doctrine of God.

And verse 19 is one of those verses that intrigue the mind and often, and is often fodder for theological debate. It says this, "For I through the law am dead to the law," I through the law. You mean the law says I'm dead to it? Yes. Why? Because it's been fulfilled and kept. It has nothing to say to you. That's a wonderful thing. Generally speaking, most commentators assert or at least imply that Paul's referring only to the law of Moses for justification while still holding to observing the law as a ruler of life or some kind of moral compass. To suggest that Paul is here leaving some wiggle-room in this matter is to do injustice to the context. One would have to suspend all reason to suggest that Paul when he was Saul of Tarsus looked to the law for justification but not as a rule of life. That doesn't make sense. If the law is approached for justification, it is because it's a rule of life. Likewise if the law's approach is the rule of life, it's so it will justify you. That's why you do it. Likewise that principle set forth here is very clear, the law is fulfilled and it's not for justification for the believer nor for the rule of life.

Well, what's my rule of life? Jesus Christ. Paul said it this way, Galatians 6:14, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified unto the world. And every man that lives by this rule, peace be upon him and the Israel of God." There's a good rule. Can you live by that rule? Next time somebody tells you you need to do that, you need to do this, say, "Oh, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ. That's my rule. That's my regulation." And that'll do ya because that'll bring peace for you even upon the Israel of God which is the church of the living God.

Very strong language Paul uses here, so when Paul here asserts that he's dead to the law, he's referring to be dead literally having died to it for justification and as a rule of life. You know, you don't want the law for a rule of life. You don't. You done broke the first one here 10,000 times tonight. "Thou shalt love the Lord God with all thy soul, all thy heart, all thy might." Let me see a show of hands, how y'all doing with that? Nobody raised their hand. Why? Because you don't do it. You're condemned. It's not a rule of life. It's in the graveyard where it belongs. That's strong language.

What is death? Well, it's the last mystery, I confess, the last thing we don't understand. Death is the cessation of ability to connect on any level with one's surroundings with

one's previous environs. I've stood by many a casket and so have you, and looked into the face of those I loved in the flesh and they looked just like they were alive. They had ears, eyes, a nose, a mouth, a tongue. They had lungs. They had a liver, pancreas, intestines, a heart. They had arms and hands and fingers and feet and toes. And I could say, "Hey, friend, how are you?" Nothing. Nothing. Why? Because it's if a curtain, a veil of some sort has been lowered between us and them. I know everything I knew and loved about them is there but there's no communication. You can't communicate. Why? They're dead. They're dead. That's what death is, it's a cessation of the ability to communicate or to be communicated with your former environs.

A corpse is finished with its former existence. The law is finished with its former existence. If the law was my former existence, being dead I am finished with it too. I can't communicate with the law. There's no way I can communicate with it. It can't communicate with me. Death is total. Death is final. The corpse has not partially died and thus we'll be able to have some part in its former life. It's dead. It can't show up for dinner. It won't do it.

When I was a boy, I loved Mad Magazine and I read it, every copy, I never missed a copy of Alfred E. Newman and all its stupid stuff that went on. I can still sing some of the songs in my head. But one particular line struck me as humorous and when I was preparing this message I thought of that line. This young girl came down the stairs and told her brother, "Grandpa is dead." And her brother said, "Well, I wondered why he didn't touch his soup." Funny but true.

The law can't touch you. The law can't do anything. It's dead and you're dead to it. This is elemental understanding. Whatever the law entails, whatever it entails, Paul and every believer is totally and finally finished with it. There is no going back, my friend. Do err here is tantamount to digging up a corpse and seeking advice on self-improvement from a putrefying carcass. Legalism is spiritual necrophilia.

Paul said, "I died to the law," but Paul ends this sentence with a very distinctive and powerful statement, "that I might live unto God." I died to the law that I might live unto God. This is the conclusion of the matter. This is the total thing that is worthwhile in all our thinking in this matter. This is the final analysis. The only way I can live to God is to be through with the law. I can't live for God and have the law have anything to do with my life. Our relationship to the law must be totally and finally resolved by being dissolved or I may not live to God. But he said, "I'm dead to the law and now I can live to God. I can live to God. If I am seeking the law for justification or rule of life, I'm dead to all things spiritual, I'm dead to God. If I'm dead to the law, then I am spiritually alive to God." That's what Paul is saying and there's no mixture and no amalgamation and no dipping of the finger and no sneaking a taste here into the law for justification. That's not permitted. Our doing does not justify, it does not justify, only Christ dying justifies and that by the substitutionary law obeying, law fulfilling, justice satisfying, God propitiating death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." That's a very clear statement in the Scriptures. Are you a believer? Now there's someone dead in your past, it's the law of God. Don't apply to it for anything for you realize you're dead and sin is alive. God bless you.

Free from the law, O happy condition. Jesus has bled and there is remission. Amen. I hope you'll stay and eat with us tonight after the service.

Our Father, we thank you for your word. Help us to receive your word against all that might be otherwise said. Help us to enjoy the liberty that we have in Christ, not use that liberty for a reason to justify misconduct but for reasons of glorifying and worship and praising you. We thank you for this food we're about to partake of and for all that are present tonight. Bless your word to our hearts for we ask it in Christ's name. Amen.