

DEAD TO THE LAW

“Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.” —ROMANS 7:9-10

In the above verse, Paul refers to the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai. It is the moral law of God, which reveals His moral character. Paul talks about this law as something negative; the obvious question is why.

One of the traps we can so easily fall into is when we begin to measure our relationship with God by our ability to keep the law. The problem with the law is that it can only be applied externally. It can demand what is right, but cannot accomplish what is right. If we seek to live by the law, all that will do is ‘house train’ us. We house train animals mostly by rewarding them, but they are not aware of why they are being house trained. We, however, are aware of what is right and wrong, and our struggle is often in doing what is right. We know whether we have been evangelically house trained if the way we behave when no one is around is different from when someone is around.

The law will let us know what is good, what is right and proper, and although it can house train us as far as outward actions and behaviours are concerned, it cannot change us on the inside. The law remains purely an external force with demands that are humanly

impossible to keep. What we need is new life and a new spirit that comes from within, and God has provided that.

Paul explains in Romans 7:5-6, “For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.” We have died to the law, Paul says, and he sets the law and the Spirit in contrast with each other, not in their meaning, but in their empowerment to keep them.

In dying to the law, we become alive to the Spirit, receiving the life of Christ, who is our enabling to keep what the law demands. Far from being house trained, the Christian life is being liberated, free to live in dependence upon the Spirit of Christ who transforms us on the inside so that our attitudes and behaviours reveal the moral character of God, for which we were created.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I am grateful that the law exposes our need of You, and thank You we can go beyond that to receive new life by your indwelling Spirit.

TO REFLECT UPON: Am I trying to keep the law under my own steam?