

Rebuilding the Foundations - Romans
Part 13
“Dead to the Law”
Romans 7:1-13
Pastor Charles Price

We are going to read Romans 7:1-13,

“¹ Do you not know, brothers- for I am speaking to men who know the law - that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives. ² For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. ³ So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.

⁴ So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. ⁵ For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. ⁶ 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.

⁷ What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.” ⁸ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. ⁹ Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. ¹⁰ I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. ¹¹ For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. ¹² So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. ¹³ Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.”

Well that is as far as we are going to read of that rather complex passage.

C.H. Spurgeon was a famous preacher in Britain in the 19th century, and he told the story how one day one of his pastors — his assistant pastors — went to the house of an elderly woman in order to give her rent as a gift from the church's poor relief fund.

He knocked on the door and there was no answer. He waited, he knocked again, there was no answer. He stayed there knocking and there was no answer. And later he discovered the woman had been home all the time. And when he asked her to explain why she hadn't answered the door, she replied, "Well I heard the knocking, but I thought it was the rent man coming to evict me for what I owed."

Now, the point is this: I want to talk this morning about confusing the rent man with the one who actually wants to pay the rent. Because I want to talk to you this morning about what Paul has to say here about the law of God. Every verse of the 13 verses I read to you this morning contained the word law, and the one that doesn't contains the word commandment. In fact, throughout the book of Romans, more than 75 times the word 'law' occurs, meaning this is one of the strong themes of this letter.

Dead to the Law

And I want to talk to you this morning about breaking the power of the law. Now, I've already referred in recent weeks to legalism, one of those traps that we so easily find ourselves falling into where we begin to measure our relationship with God by our ability to keep the rules and the laws. We begin to judge everybody else's relationship with God by the same means, whether they keep the rules that we think that they should be keeping. And legalism is something which Paul in the Book of Romans speaks about as being against and contrary to the life that we are intended to live.

In fact, it says here in Romans 7:4, “My brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ that you might belong to another to him who is raised from the dead in order that we might bear fruit to God.” He talks about dying to the law.

There's a lot of dying that goes on in this part of Romans. We've looked in Romans 6 that we ‘died to sin’. We looked at the fact that we are crucified with Christ. Now here he talks about the fact we ‘died to the law.’ The reason being, according to Romans 7:6, by “dying to what once bound us we have been released from the law that we might serve in the new way of the spirit and not in the old way of the written code.” So, he says, in dying to the law, we became alive to the Spirit, and he sets the law and the Spirit in contrast with each other.

The law is the rent collector coming to evict us from our inability to pay. The Spirit is the one who knocks on the door to pay the rent, and that's what we want to understand this morning. Now let's first talk about the law, and I've divided what I want to say to you into three sections.

1.The purpose of the law

2.The problem of the law

3.The passing of the law

1.The Purpose of the Law

By the law in this section, Paul is talking about what we know as the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai: the moral law of God. Now, if we were to read the Ten Commandments out this morning, we would no doubt agree right across the board here that they are good. If we were to stop total strangers on the streets and read them the Ten Commandments, the general consensus would be that most of these are good. They may not agree with all 10, but you might get six, or seven or eight. The majority would say yes, you shall not steal; that's a good law. You shall not kill; that's a good law. Do not covet; that's a good law. Do not commit adultery; that destroys families and anybody on the receiving end of that knows that's a good law. When you fantasize about it, sounds a bit of an inconvenience, but actually it's a good law and most people recognize that.

Yet, although we agree that the Ten Commandments are good, we have to admit that they are unrealistic because every one of us here this morning has broken the law of God. If I were to come to you, and you were a stranger to me, I'd be prepared to look you in the eye and say to you this: "You have broken the law of God."

Would you not get hot under the collar? Would you not get angry and say, "How dare you suggest such a thing? You don't even know me!" You'd probably look me back in the eye and say, "And so have you!" Because you and I both know there's no man, no woman, no boy, no girl who's ever kept the law of God.

That raises a very important issue, and the issue is this: "Why has God given a law that we cannot keep?" If you are involved in making rules, and if you have a family, you make rules about your family life. A basic principle in making rules is that: any rule people can keep is a bad rule. If you make rules people can't keep, you're asking for trouble. And yet God has given to us in his law a set of requirements we recognize as good and yet we are unable to keep them.

In fact, Paul says here in Romans 7:7 "I wouldn't know what sin was except for the law." It's the law which makes me aware of my failure! That, of course, is one of the functions of the law. You can be living in violation of the law with a totally clear conscience until you read the law and suddenly you realize, "Oh, I'm a failure."

I remember some years ago I was visiting Australia. I arrived there after Christmas at the end of December, I had flown out from England, and I'd left behind a cold, wet, damp English winter and was enjoying this warm, hot Australian summer. And I'd arrived on the Friday, - on the Sunday morning I was driving into the city of Sydney, where I was going to be preaching, and I was staying with some friends of mine, who were outside of the city but I had a car and I was driving into the city on my own. And I was driving along this road, enjoying the beautiful sunshine of the beautiful, warm day, thinking of my wife and children sitting in the cold, wet, miserable winter back home.

I prepared my message, I was satisfied with the message I was going to preach that morning, my conscience was clear. And as I was driving along this road with a clear conscience, enjoying the beautiful, warm summer's day, suddenly somebody stepped into the road in front of me and held up his hand.

It was a cop and I pulled up and he was carrying a radar gun. He said, "What speed were you traveling back there?" I said, "I'm not sure." He said, "Take a guess." I said, "We measure in miles in England." He said, "Well guess if miles were converted to kilometres."

I guessed 100 kilometres. He said, "You're not even warm." He showed me his gun which said 130 kilometres. He said, "What is the speed limit on this road?" I said, "I don't know because I live in England," and he said, "We put up signs." I said, "I'm sorry, I didn't notice it." He said, "It's 100. May I see your driver's license?" I said, "I don't have it on me." He said, "Did you know that is against the law?" I said, "No, I didn't. It's not against the law in England." He said, "This is not England." And in the space of two minutes, I suddenly found I'm a common criminal. I mean, I was driving with a totally clear conscience, enjoying the beautiful, sunny morning.

And this man stepped into the road. He didn't make me do anything. He just exposed me for what I was and fined me on the spot. When I got to the church that morning, they said to me at the end of the service, "Did you have any expenses today?" And I said, "Yes, I did, actually."

But the point is this: the law and the policeman didn't make me the criminal, he simply exposed me by asking me the difficult questions. And you see, the law has that effect. But what is the purpose, though?

Is the purpose of the law simply to embarrass us, to expose us, to humiliate us, to condemn us? Is that the purpose of the law? That's the effect of the law, but is that the purpose of the law?

Well, no. It's very important we understand the purpose of the law. Why did God give these Ten Commandments? Have you ever asked that question? Why did God give these Ten

Commandments, why didn't he give 20 or six? Why these ten? Well, there's an answer to that question.

There is a criteria that determined what the law should be, and to understand that criteria, I want to compare with you two verses in the New Testament. The first is in 1 John 3:4, where John writes, "Everyone who sins breaks the law...sin is lawlessness."

Now, I've explained to you before the word 'sin' literally means to miss the mark. The word was used in archery. If you took an arrow and you fired at a target, you shoot the target, and you missed the target, it was called sin. That's where the word comes from. If you miss by a centimeter, it was sin missed by a kilometer, it is sin. By how far you missed is irrelevant. Now, if sin means to miss the mark, it follows we'll never know what sin is until we know what the mark is that we have missed.

John says here, "everyone who sins breaks the law." Everybody who sins, and it doesn't matter what the nature of the sin is, they've broken the law of God, because the law represents the target that we miss every time we sin, says John.

Now, that doesn't answer our question, "Why is the law what it is?" It tells us the law represents a target that we miss. But keep that verse in mind and compare it with a second verse: Romans 3:23

And that verse says, and probably many of you know this already, "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Now, Paul says there that every time somebody sins, no matter what the nature or depth of that sin is, they've come short of the glory of God, because the glory of God, says Paul, represents the target that we miss every time we sin.

Now put those two verses together. If John says the sin is to break the law, my left hand he represents the law to sin is to come short of the requirements of the law. And Paul says the sin is to come short of the glory of God.

If my right hand represents the glory of God, to sin is to come short of the glory of God. If John says the law is the target and Paul says the glory of God is the target, that tells us that the law of God and the glory of God equal the same thing.

Therefore, to answer the question. Why is the law of God what it is, we must ask another question: "What is the glory of God?" Now, the word glory occurs with some slight variation of meaning in Scripture, depending on its context. But essentially, the glory of God is the character of God. It's God's moral character.

It's the kind of thing John had in mind when he wrote in his gospel and John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

And when John says he saw God's glory, what did he see? Was it a bright light suspended six inches above Jesus head in the shape of a polo mint? That's how artists portray it. No. What he's saying is this: what we see in Jesus Christ is what God is like. We saw the moral character of God. That's the glory of God.

Those of us who have kids in Nazareth, says John, who may have kicked the ball up and down the road with Jesus, as a boy, who may have gone hunting in the hills with him or hiding in the woods with him, and the way he acted, in the way he reacted, and the way he talked to his mother, we saw what God was like. When he began to work in his father's carpenter shop, the way he went about his business, the way he paid his bills on time, the way he invoiced accurately for the work he had done, the way he would get up early to put on some of his roof and blown off in a gale the night before, we saw what God was like. When he began his ministry, the way he would cross the road and sit next to a dirty woman, everybody else was embarrassed to be seen with, we saw, says John, what God was like. When lepers came down the road ringing that bell saying unclean, everybody else cleared the area. Jesus would cross the road and touch them.

You ever noticed how Jesus touched lepers? Nobody touched lepers. We saw what God was like. The disciples tried to keep the kids away, and he said, "No, let them come." And they climbed all over him. We saw what God was like because the glory of God is the moral character of God.

Now if the law of God and the glory of God equal the same thing, then the law was given in order to reveal what God is like, for this reason: human beings must understand what they were designed to be like because they were created in the image of God.

And when God created human beings in his image, it is, of course, in his moral image. But you remember, right from the start, they sinned and came short of the glory of God, no longer showed what God was like, and so the law was given to reveal what God is like. So, when God in the law says, "You shall not steal," the reason is not because stealing isn't nice, though of course it isn't. The reason is because God is not a thief, and human beings were created to be in his image, so do not steal. When he says, "You shall not bear false witness," it's for one reason: God never lies. Human beings were created to be in his image, so do not bear false witness. When he said, "You shall not covet," it's for one reason: God is not greedy. Human beings are made to be in his image, so do not covet. When he said, "You shall not commit adultery," it is because God is totally faithful and human beings were created to be in his image, so don't ever commit adultery. When he said, "Children honour your parents," interestingly, within the Trinity, the Son says, "I always do those things to please the Father," and you are created in God's image, children honour your parents.

When it says, for instance, "Six days shall you labor, on the seventh day do not work," it tells us why. It says, "because God rested on the seventh day." Not because he was tired, of course, God wasn't exhausted after six days of hard creating. God rested, not because he was tired, but because the work was finished; that's why God rested.

And interestingly, for human beings created on the sixth day, the first day was a day of rest. It was a good day to have been created for Adam on the sixth day. What's happening tomorrow? It's a day off. Why, because it's exhausting getting created?

No, because we rest in the complete sufficiency of God, which is why under the New Covenant, when all that was made possible by the gift of the Holy Spirit, the calendar caught up and under the New Covenant, we rest on the first day.

God rest on the seventh day, because the work's finished, we rest in this finished sufficiency of God. But the point is, the law was given not as an arbitrary set of rules, not as a set of guidelines to help sort out people who got themselves in a mess. The law was given to reveal what God is like, so that human beings might understand what they were supposed to be like, having been created in his image. So, the purpose of the law is to reveal the character of God.

Well, that's all well and good, if that's the purpose of the law. And that's why it tells us the law is holy, the law is righteous, the law is good. Those are three descriptions of God. Jesus said, "No one is good except God." "The law is good," Paul says in Romans 7:12, "The law is righteous," and that's a theme of Romans. It's the righteousness of God. The law is holy. But that's all very well. The second thing we must talk about is the problem with the law.

2.The Problem of the Law

Because the problem with the law is, although it reveals the character of God, and therefore it may raise within a sense of hope and anticipation, he says in Romans 7:10, "The very commandment that was intended to bring life, actually brought death." What the law did was bring death. Now, the history of the law in the Bible is very interesting, and we haven't time to talk about this fully this morning, but it's very interesting.

When God gave the law to Moses on Mount Sinai, he wrote it with his own finger. It's the only part of the Bible God actually wrote himself. He inspired the rest, but he wrote the Ten Commandments with his own finger; we're told that. Throughout the Old Testament, the historical books affirm the law as the plumb line by which society and behaviour is to be judged.

When you get to the poetic books of the Old Testament, they meditate on the law. When you get to the prophetic books and the Old Testament, they preach about the law. When you turn to the

New Testament and you read the Gospels, Jesus says, “Don't think I've come to abolish the law, I've come to fulfill it.” Not one dot from any ‘i’ not one stroke from any ‘t’ will disappear from the law. Heaven on Earth will pass away. The law will not pass away. The law is fully intact until you get into the writings of Paul, and suddenly in the writings of Paul, the word ‘law’ becomes a dirty word.

You read Galatians 3:10-13, for instance, where Paul says in that chapter “to rely on the law is to be under a curse.” He says in that same chapter, “the law is the opposite of faith.” He says in the same chapter, “Christ redeems us from the curse of the law.” He talks in the same chapter of being “held prisoners by the law.” Romans, which we're looking at, Romans 3:19 says, “the law condemns us.” Romans 4:15 says, “The law was given so that the trespass might increase.” In other words, if you get worse. Here in Romans 7:7, “I wouldn't know what sin was except to the law, but the law brings death to me.”

Now why this sudden change? The law is revealed as the character of God but Paul talks about the law as something negative. Why? Well, the problem with the law is that it can only be applied externally. By that, I mean this: it can demand what is right, but it cannot accomplish what is right.

If you and I seek to live by the law, all the law will do — and it'll do this much for us — is that it will house train us. Do you know what I mean by that? We house train animals. We've got two kittens in our house, and those kittens, whatever else you might think about kittens, however cute they are, they have sinful natures, ours do anyway. They've got to be house trained. They've got to be trained.

Back in England, we had a couple of cats, and we trained those cats. We never let them eat in the house. We fed them outside every morning, every night, just enough to keep them alive, not enough to get fat because they're supposed to catch mice. Our house in England was in the middle of a field so they'd catch mice every day.

We estimate they would catch between them, probably between 400 to 500 mice per year. And there were so many mice around, but they'd find them, drag them into the house, and sometimes before they were dead, they'd let them go. We had to teach our cats how to behave. We taught our cats: you never jump onto the table, and they learned the lesson, "Oh, I'm not supposed to do that."

We taught them not to hang around when we're eating because they don't get fed in the house anyway. There's nothing there for them. We told them not to go under the counter in our kitchen. That was out of bounds. And if you came to our house and you observed our cats, you would be impressed. Our cats would behave perfectly...as long as we were there. We left the house one morning and Hillary took some meat out of the freezer and put it on the counter to thaw during the day. The moment we left the house, the two cats — sitting one in each arm chair would open an eye and look across to the other and say, "They've gone. Let's check it all out."

And they'd find the frozen meat, stand around it, and when we came back, there were teeth marks in the meat, bits missing. If there was butter on the table, tongue prints in the butter. They behave perfectly as long as we were there for this reason. They were only worried about the consequences.

You do the wrong thing, get in trouble. Do the right thing, you might get rewarded. That's all the law can do for you. It can threaten you and it can reward you. And I'll tell you this: if all you have ever known is evangelical house training, and some of us have only ever known that it seems to me — I'm speaking generally of Christendom — you know you've only been evangelical house trained. When you find the way you behave when people are watching is different to the way you behave when no one is around.

That means you've been housetrained, but that's all. And the law will house train you. It'll let you know what's good, what's right, what's proper and you'll do your best, and not even that! Out of a sense of satisfaction, you'll impose on everybody else the same kind of regiment. It's exactly what the Pharisees did in the New Testament. Because although the law can house train us, it cannot change us.

And the problem with the law is, although it reveals the character of God, it is purely an external force, and what we need is something internal. We need life. We need spirit. Which leads me to the third point. If the purpose of the law is to reveal the character of God, the problem with the law is it can demand, but not produce.

3. The Passing of the Law

My third point is the passing of the law. I read again from Romans 7:4. “So my brothers, you died to the law through the body of Christ that you might belong to another.” That's the reason: you belong to another. To him, who was raised from the dead, in order — this is the purpose — that we might “bear fruit for God.”

Now you've died to the law, he says, “for what reason?” That you belong to somebody now who has been raised from the dead, the resurrection life of Jesus, that you might bear fruit.

And by the way, fruit is only the consequence of life. If you leave this church this morning and find some bananas hanging on a lamppost, you know somebody is playing tricks. Lampposts don't produce bananas. But if you find apples on an apple tree, you know the apple tree is alive and it's healthy.

Now he talks about fruit here. Fruit comes from within as a result of life. And so, in Romans 7:6, he says, “By dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we may serve in a new way, the spirit and not in the old way of the written code.”

Now, what does this mean, dying to the law? As I've already mentioned, there's a lot of dying in this part of Romans. In Romans 5, “Christ died for me”. Romans 6, “we die to Sin”. Romans 7, we “die to the law”. But we must understand it is simply one death he's talking about in all three instances.

When Christ died, as we explain in Romans 6, I died. Legally before God, I died to sin. All the just consequences of sin, the wages of sin were paid in full, and Christ, as my substitute means I'm incorporated into him and I stand legally before God as someone who's died to sin because I died in Christ. We've explained that before. But at the same time, he says 'he also died to the law.'

That is, all that the law produces, which is a sense of failure and condemnation and death, has been meted out, and it's no longer going to master me.

Now, Paul uses an illustration here in the first part of Romans 7. He says, for example, in Romans 7:2, "By law, a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage, so if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulterous. But if a husband dies, she is not adulterous, even though she marries another man."

Now he says there are two women. One woman, who is married, falls in love with another man, goes and lives with him, and she is an adulteress.

The second woman — also married — later falls in love with a man and marries him, but her husband died first, and she married him, she's not an adulteress, because he died. Now, Paul says, we've got to understand how the law has died, how we have died to the power of the law in order to be free now to be married to another, to Christ. That's his illustration.

Let me try to illustrate this. I've tried to take Paul's illustration and adapt it, and I hope this will help you. Just imagine if you would, a young woman falls in love with a wonderful man. He's the most perfect man that she could ever meet, she thinks, and actually other people tend to agree with her as well. Everything he does is good. Everything he says is right. He can't be faulted. It seems at any point most people know it. They recognize it. They admire him for it. This couple plan to marry, her mother is absolutely delighted. This is Mr. Perfect who is coming into our family. And they get married and his name is Mr. Law. To give his full name, his name is Mr. Mosaic Law.

He's a wonderful guy. He's good. He's right. They go on their honeymoon, have a great honeymoon, she's just so secure in his disciplined life, she knows exactly where she is with him. He's so good, he's so right. She admires him, she loves him.

But they come back home from their honeymoon and on the first day in which she's going out to work, he says to her, "Listen, while I'm away today, I want you to behave exactly, as you know, how I behave. I'm giving you a piece of paper here with a checklist of all the things I want you to do today and when I get home tonight, I'm going to check and make sure you've done everything I've given you on this long checklist."

He goes away, comes home that evening, he comes into the house, he doesn't ask her how she is, he doesn't give her a kiss. He just says, "Bring me the checklist. Let me see how you've done. Is that all? This one was OK, but most of them don't seem to have been done very well. Tomorrow morning I will give you the exact same list, and by tomorrow night, you better make sure you've done better."

He comes home the next night and says, "Show me your checklist." This goes on week after week, month after month. He never asks her how she is. He doesn't show any love, he just makes demands and she becomes exhausted. She develops a huge inferiority complex. She becomes full of a sense of guilt and failure. And then one day, Mr. Law dies. Well, she's polite about that, and she mourns properly. But what a relief. Later, she meets another man and he's a wonderful man.

In fact, he's just as good as Mr. Law used to be. Everything he does is pretty well perfect. Everything he does is good, everything he says is right. He can't be faulted. Most people recognize it and admire him for it. They fall in love and plan to marry, and her mother is excited all over again. His name is Mr. Life. To give him his full name, his name is Mr. Resurrection Life. Mr. and Mrs. Resurrection Life go on their honeymoon and return. She has an overwhelming sense of his love.

He also makes demands, but there's a huge difference. His standards are actually the same as those of Mr Law. But he says, "Listen, I want you to know from the outset you cannot do this alone. But with me, we can do this together. We can live this way together. I'm able to infuse inner strength into you. I'm able to infuse wisdom and goodness into you."

And sometimes she fails, but he doesn't condemn her. He says, "I want you to understand there's no condemnation in this marriage. Instead I'm going to pick you up. We'll get back on track, we'll say, 'Let's do it again,' and I'll help you again, and let's try it again. And everything I'm there with you to help you to enable you." And Mr. and Mrs. Resurrection life live happily ever after.

Well, that really is what Paul is teaching in this section. He describes in Romans 7:7-10 marriage to Mr. Law, Mr. Mosaic Law. Is the law sin? Certainly not. Is Mr. Law a bad man. No, no, he's a good man. The only problem is I wouldn't have known what sin was, I wouldn't have known how rotten I was, if it wasn't for him, because the law exposes my sin. I wouldn't have known what coveting was if he hadn't said, "Don't do it" and I found that I did.

"I found the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death," says Mrs Law. It sucked the life out of me. Well, the law will, and it "bears the fruit of death" it says in Romans 7:8. But then Mr. Law dies, you see, because the law, although reveals the character of God, is totally insufficient for the needs of humanity, and so all the demands of the law makes, which exposes our failure, were crucified with Christ. And when I died to sin, I also died to the law, and when I was crucified with Christ, I was crucified to the demands of the law, in order that, he says, "in order that I might belong to another." Romans 7:4 says. "To him, who was raised from the dead" I was released from the law to be married to Mr. Resurrection Life, the one who was raised from the dead.

And Mr. Resurrection Life comes to be part of your life and the result is that you bear fruit for God. It says in Romans 7:6. Fruit. Fruit is a result of life. Now, of course, the goal of Mr Life is to restore the character of God, which Mr. Law revealed. The law reveals God's moral character. God has not reduced that requirement. The law still reveals what the Spirit of God living in a

Christian will do, because the Spirit of God living in a Christian will never commit adultery, never steal, never covet, never bear false witness.

But now we're living in his strength, in his power. I want to ask you a question as I finish this morning: "Who are you married to?" As a Christian, are you married to Mr. Law?" I'm sure your checklist will be absolutely right, but you go to bed at night, and you'll feel utterly drained. You can't keep it up, so you put up a facade and begin to pretend, and I get house trained, but nothing more. But the liberty of the gospel is: the law is still good, still holy, still righteous. But I've been released from its external demand to be married to another who is raised from the dead, Mr. Resurrection Life. He infuses to me now strength and power.

You see, going back to my story of C.H. Spurgeon, which I began. The rent man who is knocking at the door to evict us for non-payment is Mr. Law. And sometimes we're so afraid of the demands of the law, we're scared of getting close to the risen Christ, not realizing his demands are equalled in full by his resources, and he pays the rent.

And we're equipped to go out into a world that is dirty and godless, and to live a life that is clean and godly, not because we're trying a bit harder than we used to, but because it's the Spirit of Jesus Christ in us, who works in us to will, he changes our desires, and to do according to his good purposes. He puts new desires and new power.

But you see one of the biggest threats to living a Christian life that is free and a Christian life that is relaxed and the Christian life that is spontaneously real and joyful, is living married to the law. It's the easiest thing to do because there's nothing wrong with the law.

There's everything right about the law, but it just cannot produce. So, we died to the law, and every day we live in dependency on the Spirit of God who enables us to live new lives and forgives us and cleanses us when we fail. And slowly but surely, he begins to reproduce in us the character, the image of Jesus Christ. And it will be exactly what the law demanded, but what the law could not produce.

If you're not a Christian this morning, I'm very glad that you're here. Although some of what I've talked about may not have made a lot of sense to you because I'm addressing those primarily this morning who are already Christians. But you may have sat there this morning and you've sensed in your heart "There's something here that's different to anything I've ever known. There's something here about life, that I've never known in my own experience."

The marvellous thing is that you can come to Christ this morning. You can come and say, "Lord Jesus Christ, I realize my own inability, my own failure, my weakness. Please forgive me, cleanse me, and come by your Holy Spirit to live in me, the resurrection life of Jesus, the life that has died been raised from the dead, so death cannot touch it again. Now to empower me to live a holy life." And he will. And you'll never be the same again.

But to many of us who are Christians, and we need to make that same discovery because we've been living under the demands of the law. We wonder why the Christian life is about as exciting as pushing a bus up a hill, which isn't very exciting. But the good news is, there's an engine in the bus. Switch it on and live in the power of somebody else. Let's pray together.

Closing Prayer

Father, we're so grateful this morning that you haven't come to add to that sense of condemnation, which the law has given us. We're grateful for it because it exposes our sin, we're grateful that the law exposes our need of Christ.

But thank you that we can go beyond that and receive you by the Holy Spirit, on the basis of your death to pay for our guilt, you have risen again to live within us and empower and enable us to be godly men and women. Make this real.

We pray in Jesus' name,
Amen.