

Online Grace Bible School

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**Online Grace Bible School
Phase 2
The Identity-Driven Life**

1) Unchain My Heart

1. The word 'heart' in the Hebrew is the word *leb* i.e. the inner, centre or middle of a thing.
2. Jesus described the heart as a 'storehouse'.

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil" (Lk.6:45)

The heart is the place where we store the significant experiences in life which we encounter through the faculties of the soul. The most significant experiences of life are:

- ✓ Those which have brought us the greatest pleasure
- ✓ And those which have brought us the greatest pain

Every day our hearts are being programmed by what we choose to retain from that which happens in our lives. This storehouse greatly influences the way we live our lives.

This is illustrated by a parable Jesus told, the parable of the sower. As the man in this story sowed his seed it fell into four different kinds of soil. These represent 4 different types of heart condition.

Life works from the inside out. Yet we often try to get things to work from the outside. Here are three examples of this principle:

- ✓ Behaviour is an outworking of that which is in the heart. Jesus said: *"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies"* (Matt.15:19). The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.
- ✓ Sickness and health are influenced from within. Up to 70% of sickness is psychosomatic, i.e. the state of the mind affects the health of the body (Prov. 4:20-22; 12:25; 14:30; 17:22).
- ✓ The power for Christian living is within us. We have all the power we need for the Christian life. (2 Pet.1:3). This power is not imparted from outside, but is sourced within (Eph.3:20)

The three most powerful influences that have helped shape our hearts are:

1. The environment we have been brought up in
2. What we have been taught
3. Traumatic experiences from the past

At the end of the parable of the sower, according to Mark, Jesus said: *"Take heed what you hear"* (Mk.4:24). According to Luke, He said: *"Take heed how you hear"* (Lk.8:18).

Since everything we do passes through the filter of the heart, two people can be in the same situation and each respond differently. Their response is largely determined by the condition of their heart. That's why in the Book of Proverbs we read:

"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (Prov.4:23)

The Bible teaches these 3 things about God and your heart:

1. At salvation we received a new heart. Our heart is now a sphere of divine influence
2. God searches our hearts and causes us to know them
3. He will establish our hearts in grace

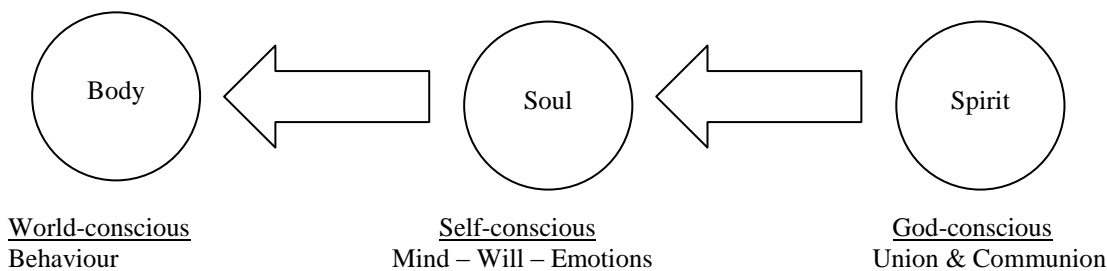
2) Understanding The Root Of Our Problems

Any attempt to understand the problems of humanity which fails to take into account the origins of human life and of human problems will never address core issues. Without God’s perspective on life’s problems we will deal with the fruit of the problem, but not the root.

A. THE GENERATION OF MAN (Understanding Our Beginnings)

Key verse: (Gen.1:26&27). The human spirit is the unique capacity given to man whereby he can receive and be motivated by the life of God.

Man in creation under the influence of Divine Love

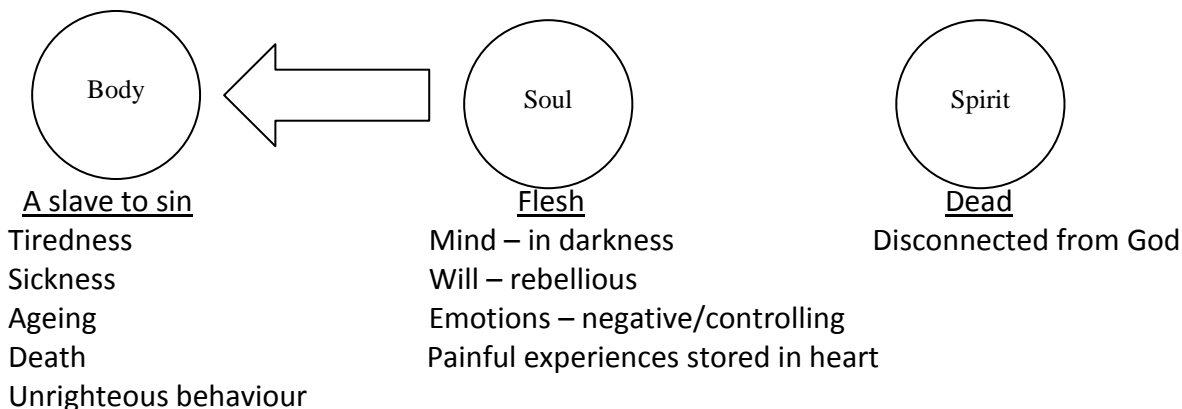


Under the influence of divine love man *loved* God and *cared* for others.

B. THE DEGENERATION OF MAN (Understanding Our Problems)

Key verse: “*In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die*” (Gen.2:17). Divine life could only be experienced and maintained in relationship with God. Disobedience would lead to death.

Man in the Fall under the influence of Self Love



The negative emotions and painful experiences we feel today are due to the fall.

1) In relationship to themselves they felt guilt and shame.

- ✓ People often use guilt and shame to manipulate and control others.

2) In relationship to God they experienced fear and wanted to hide.

- ✓ Fear is the emotion of one who expects to be punished or harmed. Hiding is an instinctive reaction to guilt.
- ✓ Love draws us to God, but fear drives us from Him. “*The one who fears is not made perfect in love*” (1 John 4:18).

- ✓ Fear is the antithesis of love. The two cannot co-exist. *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear; because fear involves torment”* (1 John 4:18).
- ✓ Many Christians still relate to God on the basis of fear, rather than love. God’s way of transforming us is to expel our fear and teach us to trust in His love. Responding to His love will take us much further than fear ever can.
- ✓ There is nothing more critical to spiritual growth than making the transition from a fear-based relationship to a love-based relationship.

3) In relationship to one another they began to hurt each other.

Divine love was replaced with self-love. This is characterized by:

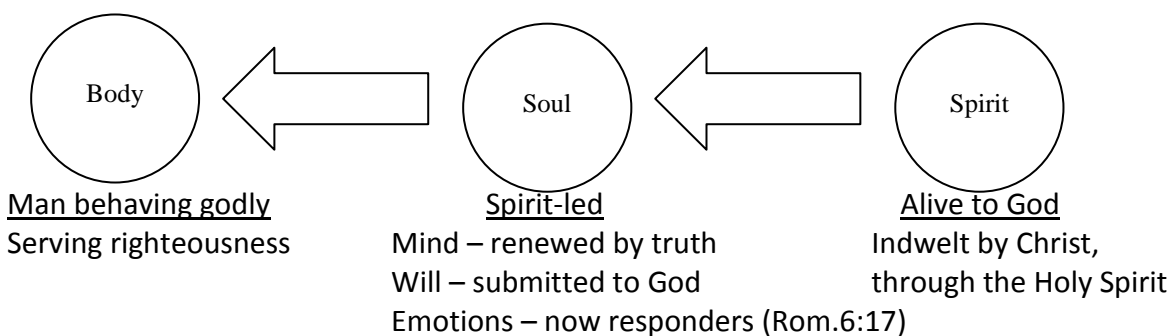
- ✓ Instead of caring for one another, each looked to meet his/her own needs through the other person and was even prepared to hurt the other one in the process.
- ✓ They forgot they were meant to draw their life from God and would attempt to draw it from one another. No one is powerful enough to impart life and value to another. Only Jesus can.
- ✓ They experienced the “desire for”/“rule over” syndrome.
- ✓ A common mistake is that when unrealistic expectations are unmet a person might leave a relationship (e.g. divorce) still believing that another person can meet their needs. They leave one false god who has failed to meet their needs, to another false god who promises to! Idolatry is trying to get your needs met through anyone other than God.

C. THE REGENERATION OF MAN (Understanding Our Hope)

Key verse: Jn.1:12&13. Regeneration, i.e. the new birth, is totally a creative work of God. When we were born again we were joined together with Christ. Our spirit was made alive. We became indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who now manifests Christ’s life in us and through us.

The Spirit of God, in the human spirit, is able to influence every part of the soul of redeemed man - communicating truth to his **understanding**, leading him to respond with obedience to the truth with his **will**, and moving his **emotions** to carry out this obedience with all of his heart. Thus, the Spirit-led soul directs the body to behave in a godly way. Godliness is simply ‘God behaving in man’.

Man in regeneration, being led by the Spirit



- ✓ Regeneration is God’s work.
- ✓ Renewing the mind is our work.
- ✓ Renewing the mind is the key to transforming the heart

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom.12:2)

3) The Blame Game

- ✓ Guilt may be the most powerful negative human emotion
- ✓ Guilt is the result of the reporting of the conscience
- ✓ Guilt is the fear of punishment

The consequences of guilt can be overwhelming.

- ✓ Satan will use guilt to get you to draw back from God
- ✓ Others will use guilt to manipulate and control you

Handling Guilt – Wrong Ways:

- ✓ Run from God
- ✓ Blame Others
- ✓ Denial
- ✓ Rationalize
- ✓ Self-punishment
- ✓ Despair
- ✓ Compensate

Handling Guilt – God’s Way:

Righteousness through the blood. This is illustrated by:

- ✓ Adam and Eve after the Fall
- ✓ Cain and Abel
- ✓ The letter to the Hebrews.

The Hebrews were called to *“repentance from dead works and faith towards God”* (Heb.6:1).

Remember, guilt is both a legal state and an emotion. Therefore, God wants us not only to *know* we are forgiven but also to *feel* we are forgiven.

This involves two things:

1. We must be convinced that even the thought of our sin has been removed from God’s mind
2. All consciousness of our sins must also be removed from our hearts and replaced with righteousness consciousness

Heb.9:14 says that the blood of Jesus purges our conscience from dead works. This is because when we feel guilty our natural tendency is to look to our performance in an effort to feel good.

- ✓ For God to cleanse our conscience from sin He had to establish a faith which eliminated any calling to mind of our sins. See Heb.10:1-3.
- ✓ In this way Christianity is contrasted with every other religion. See Heb.10:11-12.

When you understand that you are righteous before God no one will ever manipulate you again.

4) The Truth About You

The most important question you can ask yourself is “Who am I?”

Sadly, many Christians receive their identity messages from the wrong sources. Three examples:

1. Achievement
2. Approval
3. Appearance

Furthermore, Christians too readily accept psycho-labels in an attempt to understand themselves. In this case identity is based on behaviour.

- ✓ Psycho-labels do more than *describe* human behaviour, they *define* human beings
- ✓ A person’s life will be dominated by the behaviour of the label he wears.

As Christians we do not receive our identity from achievements, behaviour or appearance, nor the approval or disapproval of others. Our identity is based upon the one with whom we are identified.

- ✓ Who we were: ‘In Adam’ people
- ✓ Who we are: ‘In Christ’ people

We were baptized into Christ. This means:

1. We died with Christ
2. We were buried with Him
3. We have been raised to newness of life in Him

- ✓ Understanding our new creation identity is vital to spiritual health and wholeness.
- ✓ It is a fact that our brain will steer our lives in the direction of the picture we have of ourselves.
- ✓ It’s not what we do that determines who we are, but knowing who we are that will determine what we do.

The problem many Christians struggle with is this:

- ✓ They have a new identity
- ✓ But have kept their old mentality

Q. How do we make the transition from old identity thinking to new identity thinking?

A. By renewing our mind.

4 keys in **Romans 6:1-14** to appropriating the power of our new identity:

- 1) 6:3. **Know** what is the truth concerning your new creation identity
- 2) 6:8. **Believe** the truth concerning your new creation identity
- 3) 6:11. **Reckon** the truth concerning your new creation identity
- 4) 6:13. **Yield** the members of your body as instruments of righteousness

5) The Shame Game

Guilt is the feeling that I did wrong. Shame is the feeling that I am wrong.

Guilt is a *personal, private* awareness of moral failure leading to a feeling of low self-esteem. Shame is the sense of lacking value *in the presence of others* leading to inferiority.

When I am guilty I don't want to face *myself*. When I feel shame I don't want to face *others*.

We feel guilty for what we *do*. We feel shame for who we *are*.

Guilt says something is wrong with my *behavior*. Shame says something is wrong with *me*

Guilt says, "*I made a mistake.*" Shame says, "*I am a mistake.*"

Guilt says, "*You'll pay for this.*" Shame says, "*You have no value.*"

Guilt is the fear of *punishment*. Shame is the fear of *abandonment*.

Guilt strikes at my *conscience*. Shame strikes at my *identity*.

- ✓ The roots of shame are often traced to our family of origin. God has designed that we should receive love, protection and care in the family. Every child born into a family is totally defenceless and dependable on the family that surrounds it for love and protection.
- ✓ When there is a breakdown in the human family there are profound emotional and personality effects in the children involved.
- ✓ A child that is brought up in a loving atmosphere and home faces all future relationships with security and confidence.
- ✓ A child that has felt rejection during childhood will grow up to be defensive, fearful and suspicious concerning future relationships
- ✓ 3 parental attitudes that are absolutely necessary for a secure and wholesome personality are *acceptance, affection and approval*
- ✓ Our duty to honour our parents does not require us to endorse or deny any treatment we received which has been damaging to us.

Rejection can result in different consequences. Examples:

- a) Spiritual consequences
- b) Physical consequences
- c) Emotional consequences

Only God can minister effectively to the rejected. See **Psa.27:10**.

If a person has been rejected, God knows all about it. In fact Jesus suffered rejection more than any other person. **Isa.53:3&4**. He was rejected for us. He bore our rejection. He was rejected:

- ✓ By religious authorities
- ✓ By His own people
- ✓ By His disciples
- ✓ By His Father

The path to freedom from the shame of rejection

1. Be willing to part with your rejection
2. Forgive all who have ever rejected you
3. Believe God's acceptance and receive His love
4. Ask God to make you a whole person
5. If God gives you an emotional release, let it flow
6. Ask God for a spirit of meekness
7. Draw confidence from your relationship with God

6) Breaking Free From Feelings-Based Living

We were created emotional, but we need to understand the role emotions are meant to play in our lives. See Rom.6:17. Emotions are responders. Whilst God gave us feelings so that we can respond to life, He never intended us to be controlled by our emotions. Negative emotions are like a smoke detector, warning that something is wrong.

If a smoke detector alarm goes off, what are your options?

- 1) You could ignore it, and drown out the sound by turning up the volume on the TV or stereo.
- 2) You could stop it by turning it off, or removing the battery.
- 3) You could investigate the reason why the alarm is sounding.

- ✓ If negative emotions are primarily responders, what are they responding to?
- ✓ Sometimes, wrong behaviour. Often, wrong thinking
- ✓ Our emotions are mainly a product of our thoughts.
- ✓ Depression is related to what we believe - about God, self, others, circumstances, Satan, etc.
- ✓ If what you believe does not reflect truth, then what you feel does not reflect reality.
- ✓ Satan can control our lives with just one lie.

We need to identify our false beliefs and replace them with truth. Examples:

False belief: "God is angry with me because of the mistakes I have made in the past."

Emotion produced: Guilt.

Truth: God's anger against us was poured out on His Son at the Cross. It has been fully discharged.

False belief: "God is punishing me because of my present wrong behaviour. That's why I struggle."

Emotion produced: Condemnation.

Truth: Rebellion will result in coming under His chastening, but this is different to punishment. Each has a different goal. The goal of punishment is *punitive*. The goal of chastening is *corrective*.

False belief: "If my circumstances were different, I would be happy."

Emotion produced: Depression.

Truth: It is not our circumstances which determine our happiness, but the way we view them.

False belief: "I can't do this; I am totally inadequate."

Emotion produced: Inadequacy.

Truth: Our weaknesses and inadequacies do not limit us; they open us up to the grace God.

False belief: "If such and such happened, I couldn't handle it."

Emotion produced: Fear.

Truth: God will never allow us to be tempted or tested beyond our ability to endure (1 Cor.10:13).

False belief: "I can't live without him/her."

Emotion produced: Anxiety.

Truth: Our Creator, and not a created being, is our life source. Idolatry is trying to get our needs met through anyone or anything other than God.

False belief: "My dreams and goals have been blocked by others."

Emotion produced: Anger.

Truth: Any goal over which we have no ultimate control is not a goal that God has set for us.

7) Addictive Behaviour

- ✓ God has created us with the power of habit.
- ✓ Satan has hijacked the power of habit and turned it into addiction.
- ✓ Definition of addiction: “A compulsive or obsessive relationship to a substance, person, behaviour or thing.”

Addiction is distinguished from the power of habit in that it leads to:

1. Bondage
2. Life domination
3. Destruction

We need to understand something of the cause of addiction:

- ✓ People become addicted to anything that gives pleasure at the time, in order to compensate for their emotional pain.
- ✓ The pleasure the addict derives from their ‘drug’ is a refuge from their emotional pain.
- ✓ The addict has made a discovery. The discovery is this: ‘I know how to get relief.’
- ✓ The addiction is a coping mechanism leading to the cycle of addiction – relief, relapse, relief, relapse.....
- ✓ If an addict never learns how to deal with negative emotions, all he/she is able to do is to numb their feelings

The Bar Cycle:

- ✓ I have a **belief**. It leads to an **action**. It ends with a **result**.
- ✓ Each time I repeat the process, I erect another BAR in my life.
- ✓ A room full of BARs is called a ‘prison’.
- ✓ In order to change the process I must start with changing my beliefs.

1) Recognize the problem for what it is – a coping mechanism – and renounce it.

2) Recognize that it is a substitute for the real solution for dealing with emotional pain – being emotionally connected:

- a) Vertically
- b) Horizontally

3) Find a grace environment where healing can take place.

4) Close all doors of re-entry to your addiction.

5) Become a righteousness addict.

8) Toxic Relationships

We were created as relational beings. God's main purpose in relationships is love. It is in relationships that we learn how to love. But sometimes relationships can become harmful.

Three Kinds Of Toxic Relationship

1) The Desire To Control Others

In every relationship each person should be free to make choices for themselves. When that freedom to choose is denied a person becomes violated as an individual. Even when a person is in a role of submission, their submission is of a voluntary nature. The meaning of the word submission is that it is something which is given, not taken. If it is given it is submission; if it is taken it is control.

There is a difference between biblical authority or unrighteous authoritarianism:

- ✓ Righteous authority is exercised in divinely appointed positions of leadership within the family, the church and society, for the purpose of ordering life on earth. It is characterized by voluntary submission to loving leadership.
- ✓ Authoritarianism is the corruption of authority. It is an attempt to usurp control over another person's life by demanding unquestioned submission.

True spiritual authority is characterized by a servant heart (Matt.20:25-28), a gentle spirit (1 Thes.2:7), and an exemplary life (1 Pet.5:2&3; 1 Cor.11:1).

Control is the endeavour of one person to dominate another. This usually happens either through **intimidation** or **manipulation**.

- ✓ Intimidation uses *direct* means of control.
- ✓ Manipulation uses *indirect* means of control.
- ✓ Spiritual abuse uses legalism in its efforts to control.

2) The Desire To Change Others

- ✓ A relationship is potentially damaging when one person attempts to change another. The 'changer' thinks they know better than the other person concerning what is good for them.
- ✓ A person who operates this way fails to make the distinction between being responsible *to* others and being responsible *for* others.
- ✓ When we attempt to change another person we lose control of our own lives.
- ✓ Co-dependency takes place when a person sets himself up as a life source for another.
- ✓ God's grace is His power to effect change in our own lives; but not to change others.
- ✓ If you have been operating in the role of 'changer' to someone you need to repent of your failure to trust the Holy Spirit's work in them. Learn to connect them to Christ the true Vine.
- ✓ If you have been living in dependence on another person to meet your needs, you also need to repent and make the transition from co-dependency to Christ-dependency.

3) The Desire To Be Carried By Others

- ✓ A 'carrying' relationship is one in which one person attempts to shield another from the consequences of their actions. In a carrying relationship instead of a man reaping what he has sown, he sows and another reaps.
- ✓ There are, of course, times when we help others to face the crises and trials they encounter. This is different to relieving them of their responsibilities, however.

9) Good Grief

It is important to understand the place of grief in the process of healing and recovery.

- ✓ Grief is our response to loss
- ✓ Grief is the pain that heals

“Sorrow is better than laughter, for by a sad countenance the heart is made better” (Ecc.7:3).

There is a difference between miraculous healing and recovery healing. Miraculous healing is instant; recovery healing is gradual. We can identify at least three stages in the grief process:

1) Believing

The first reaction to loss is one of shock, which makes us feel out of control. It is usually characterized by either disbelief or denial.

- ✓ Disbelief = we *cannot* believe that the loss has occurred.
- ✓ Denial = we *will not* accept that the loss has occurred.

We must accept the reality and the finality of the loss.

2) Grieving

Once the reality of loss is accepted, grief work can begin. This includes coming to terms with all the implications of the loss. This will involve owning and working through various negative emotions.

Grief needs to be not only felt, but expressed. The two most helpful ways is through *tears* and *talk*.

No one who has sustained loss needs permission to grieve. In fact, they must either express their grief or suffer the consequences

3) Leaving

Remember, grief is God’s way of finishing with the bad; it was never intended to be a life sentence.

“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning” (Psa.30:5).

The psalmist said, *“Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a spring; the rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion” (Psa.84:5-7).*

One psychologist’s definition of prolonged grief = “the baggage of unfinished sadness”.

‘Leaving’ involves:

1. Accepting
2. Assessing
3. Adjusting

God will heal you. Jesus said, *“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted” (Lk.4:18).*

Grieving is God’s way for us to let go of pain so that we can lay hold of new beginnings. *“Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psa.126:5&6).*

10) Establishing Your Heart in Grace

- ✓ Rom.6:14. The way to live the Christian life is by grace.
- ✓ Both law and grace demand a response from us: law = works; grace = faith
- ✓ Rom.11:6. Works and grace cannot be mixed

Does grace lead to sin? No!!! (Rom.6:1&2). Does the law lead to sin? Yes!!! (Rom.7:5&8).

Rom.7:1. Yet, a person is under the law until he/she dies.

God gave the law for two reasons:

1. To show us what He is like
2. To show us what we are like

- ✓ The law does not lead to holiness.
- ✓ The law puts ideas in our minds that weren't there before (Rom.7:5&8).
- ✓ The law puts us back under the power of the flesh (Rom.8:3)
- ✓ Rom.7:18. Under the law: will – yes; ability – no.
- ✓ Any area of your life where you are operating under law 'Christ is made of no effect to you' – marriage, sanctification, work, ministry, finances.
- ✓ The law can neither justify nor sanctify but it is an important aspect in the process of salvation. The law is good if we use it lawfully (1 Tim.1:8).
- ✓ 7:24. But we have to experience this "law-work".
- ✓ The function of the law is to bring us to the end of ourselves. *"Who will deliver me...?"* How can we get out of this relationship?
- ✓ Answer = Rom.7:25.

Now, the New Testament teaches that:

- ✓ We are not under law but under grace (Rom.6:14).
- ✓ We are dead to the law through the body of Christ (Rom.7:4).
- ✓ We have been delivered from the law (Rom.7:6).
- ✓ Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to those who believe (Rom.10:4).
- ✓ The law has passed away (2 Cor.3:13).
- ✓ Those who are led by the Spirit are not under the law (Gal.5:18).
- ✓ Christ has abolished in His flesh the law of commandments (Eph.2:15).
- ✓ Christ has wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has nailed it to the cross (Col.2:14).

Rom.7:4. It is important to see that this freedom is not attained by setting the law aside, but its demands being met in Christ. Also, the consequence of freedom from law is not indulgence of sin, but holiness of life.

Rom.5:10. 8:2-4. In Christ we do not have a law, but life. The law was given; grace came. In contrast to the law working from the outside, the indwelling presence of Christ works from within. *"This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be My people"* (Jer.31:33.) See 2 Cor.3:17&18.

Phil.2:12&13. Under grace: will – yes; ability – no.