

Galatians 2:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

Analysis

For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. The prepositional phrase *egō gar dia nomou nomō apethanon* (ἐγὼ γὰρ διὰ νόμου νόμῳ ἀπέθανον, "I through law to law died") contains profound paradox—the law itself became the instrument (*dia nomou*) of Paul's death to the law (*nomō apethanon*). How? The law's demands exposed complete inability to obey, driving Paul to despair of self-righteousness and revealing his need for Christ. The law's curse fell on Christ (3:13), and in union with Christ, Paul died to the law's condemnation and authority.

The purpose: *hina theō zēsō* (ἵνα θεῷ ζήσω, "that I might live to God"). The dative *theō* indicates living for God, oriented toward God, in relationship with God. The aorist *apethanon* (ἀπέθανον, "I died") is decisive, completed action; the future *zēsō* (ζήσω, "I will live") indicates ongoing life. Death to law isn't the goal but the means—freedom from the law's condemning power enables genuine life toward God, powered by grace rather than fear.

This verse articulates the Christian's legal status: the law executed its death sentence on Christ, our substitute. United to Him by faith, we share His death and resurrection. Dead to the law's claims, we're alive to God through Christ—free to obey from love rather than compulsion, from gratitude rather than fear, in the power of the Spirit rather than fleshly striving.

Historical Context

Paul's pre-conversion zeal for the law (Philippians 3:4-6) led to murderous persecution of Christians—the law's highest righteousness produced the deepest sin. His encounter with Christ on the Damascus road (Acts 9) revealed that the law's purpose was to point to Christ, not produce righteousness. In Christ's death and resurrection, the law's demands were perfectly fulfilled and its curse fully satisfied, freeing believers to live for God in newness of life.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the law itself drive you to despair of self-righteousness and cast yourself on Christ's mercy?
2. What's the difference between being dead to the law and being lawless or antinomian?
3. In what ways are you attempting to live for God through law-keeping rather than through union with Christ?

Interlinear Text

ἐγὼ	γὰρ	διὰ	νόμῳ	νόμῳ	ἀπέθανον	ἵνα	θεῷ
I	For	through	the law	the law	am dead	that	unto God
G1473	G1063	G1223	G3551	G3551	G599	G2443	G2316

ζήσω

I might live

G2198

Additional Cross-References

Romans 7:4 (Word): Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

Romans 6:2 (References God): God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Romans 6:11 (References God): Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:15 (Parallel theme): And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

1 Thessalonians 5:10 (Parallel theme): Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Romans 8:2 (Word): For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 6:14 (Word): For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

1 Peter 2:24 (Parallel theme): Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Hebrews 9:14 (References God): How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Colossians 2:20 (Parallel theme): Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,