

# The Scriptural Truth about Penal Substitution

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Penal Substitution is correct because it is the clearest and most faithful explanation of what God Himself says He accomplished in Jesus Christ at the Cross and it alone preserves God's justice, holiness, love, and grace without contradiction.

The word penal speaks of a penalty or Penal retribution; punishment for crime or offense; the suffering in person or property which is annexed by law or judicial decision to the commission of a crime, offense, or trespass.

The penalty for Sin, or penal retribution for Sin is death. God's first Words to man were filled with great promise but also was the penalty great. We will see these Truths in this study.

## Part 1

### 1. God's Justice Required a Penalty

Sin is not merely weakness or sickness as it is lawlessness against a Righteous God.

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (**Ezekiel 18:4, 20**)

"The wages of sin is death." (**Romans 6:23**)

If God were to forgive sin without penalty, He would deny His own Righteousness. God does not overlook sin, He judges it.

Penal Substitution affirms that Sin must be punished because God is just.

## 2. The Penalty Fell on a Substitute

God did not relax concerning His justice. He came and satisfied it.

### **Isaiah 53:10-11**

10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.” (**Isaiah 53:5**)

“The LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (**Isaiah 53:6**)

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” (**Galatians 3:13**)

Jesus did not merely suffer with us, but rather He suffered for us.

This is substitution:

Our guilt = His body

Our penalty = His death

Our curse = His Cross

### **3. The Cross Was a Legal Judgment, Not a Moral Example Alone**

While the Cross certainly reveals love, and defeats Satan, it does so because a legal transaction occurred first.

“God sent forth His Son... to redeem them that were under the law.” (**Galatians 4:4**)

“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation... to declare His Righteousness.” (**Romans 3:25**)

The word propitiation means: Wrath was satisfied by a blood sacrifice

No wrath satisfied = no justification

No penalty paid = no forgiveness

No substitution = no gospel

### **4. Love Is Proven Because the Penalty Was Real**

If Christ did not truly bear judgment, then the Cross becomes symbolic and sentimental.

But Scripture says, “It pleased the LORD to bruise Him.” (**Isaiah 53:10**)

“God spared not His own Son.” (**Romans 8:32**)

God’s love is not shown by avoiding justice, but by bearing it Himself. Justice demanded payment. Love paid it.

### **5. Faith, Grace, and The Spirit Only Flow From Penal Substitution**

This is where Penal Substitution becomes absolutely necessary for Christian living:

“Grace reigns through Righteousness” (**Romans 5:21**)

Faith has power because sin was judged

The Holy Spirit works only within the finished work of the Cross.

### **Romans 8:2**

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

The Spirit only operates within the perimeter of Faith in the Cross of Christ. If no penalty was paid Grace has no legal foundation, nor does Faith have an object or The Spirit have a Righteous basis to work.

## **6. All Other Theories Collapse Without It**

Other views (moral influence, Christus Victor, example-only models) may describe effects of the Cross, but they cannot explain how sinners are justified.

Only Penal Substitution answers how God remains Just, how Sinners are forgiven, how Righteousness is imputed and how union with Christ is possible.

## **Conclusion**

Penal Substitution is correct because through it God judged sin, Christ alone bore the penalty, justice was satisfied, righteousness was revealed, grace now reigns, our Faith has a sure foundation, The Spirit works lawfully and God is glorified.

Or said plainly:

If Jesus did not take our punishment, then we are still under it, but because He did, we are Righteously Free. This is not a theory. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

## **Part 2**

What many distort about Penal Substitution is not the work of the Cross alone, but the very nature of God, the purpose of the penalty, and the unity of the Godhead in the work of Redemption. When these are misunderstood, Penal Substitution is either rejected or twisted into something God never revealed.

Let's lay this out carefully, in the Light of Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

### **1. They Separate The Father from The Son**

One of the most common distortions is teaching Penal Substitution as though The Father is angry and cruel, The Son is loving and merciful, and The Father must be persuaded to forgive.

This creates a false picture of divine child abuse, which Scripture never teaches.

The truth is as follows:

**“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.” (2 Corinthians 5:19)**

The Father did not punish Jesus instead of loving us. The Father gave HIS Son because He loved us. The Cross was not intra-Trinitarian conflict. It was Trinitarian agreement.

### **2. They Make Wrath the Motive Instead of Love**

Some teach that wrath is the cause of the Cross rather than the problem the Cross solved.

### **Ephesians 2:3**

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and **were by nature the children of wrath**, even as others.

But God's Word tells us:

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." (**John 3:16**)

Wrath is not God losing control. Wrath is His settled opposition to sin. The motive of Penal Substitution is love; the necessity is justice and the result is reconciliation.

### **3. They Detach Penal Substitution From**

Resurrection and Union

Another distortion is isolating the Cross as a mere payment event though Jesus actually paid our debt and forgives us as we Believe upon Him. Penal Substitution is not transactional alone; it is relational and participatory. We were crucified with Christ. We were buried with Him, we were raised with Him and have been ascended with Him (**Romans 6:3-5, Ephesians 2:6**).

If Penal Substitution is not our being joined by Faith through union with Christ in His death, it becomes shallow and mechanical. Many TODAY desire a Jesus who died for them, but they disregard the reality of their dying with Him (**Romans 6:6, Galatians 2:20**).

### **4. They Turn Grace into License Instead of Liberation**

Some distort Penal Substitution by teaching:

“Jesus was punished so we can now live however we want.”

This divorces substitution from purpose.

Scripture says:

“He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves.” (**2 Corinthians 5:15**)

Penal Substitution does not free us to sin. It frees us from Sin’s dominion. True substitution produces holiness, not by law, but by Faith in the Cross.

## **5. They Remove Faith from Its Object**

Another distortion is subtly shifting Faith away from what Christ did to what we do.

Faith in obedience, faith in disciplines and Faith in commitment.

When Faith is no longer anchored in Christ bearing the penalty, The Holy Spirit is displaced. The Spirit only works within the perimeters of Faith in the Cross. Penal Substitution is not the starting point only as it is the continuing object of Faith (Colossians 2:6).

## **6. They Redefine the Penalty**

Some soften Penal Substitution by redefining the penalty as emotional pain only, Physical suffering only, and only social rejection.

But Scripture says the penalty was death, curse, judgment and wrath satisfied.

If the penalty is minimized, the victory is minimized, and those who belittle what caused the penalty will always belittle what God did about the solution for the penalty.

## **7. They Deny the Law Court Without Saying It**

Many reject Penal Substitution because they don't like legal categories.

But Scripture is full of legal categories such as justification, condemnation and Righteousness, imputation and propitiation.

Remove the courtroom, and the gospel collapses into therapy or inspiration.

In Summary:

Penal Substitution is distorted when people, divide the Father and the Son, make wrath the motive rather than love, detach the Cross from resurrection and union. When this happens Grace will also be turned into license as the heart is moved away from being yielded to the Crosswork of Christ.

When rightly taught, Penal Substitution declares The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit acted together in love to judge sin in the body of Christ so that Righteousness could be freely given to all who Believe. That is not abuse. That is the wisdom of God revealed in the Cross.

## **Part 3**

People do not usually teach penal substitution wrongly because the doctrine itself is unclear. They teach it wrongly because something other than the Cross is being protected, preserved, or promoted. When the Cross is not allowed to

stand alone as God's means of judgment, redemption, and life, penal substitution is inevitably distorted.

## **1. To Protect Human Ability**

Penal substitution declares something man does not want to accept:

Man is so ruined by sin that only death under divine judgment could save him.

When this offends the flesh, teachers soften the doctrine by saying:

Jesus made salvation possible but not finished.

The Cross removed penalties but not dominion of sin.

Man must now contribute obedience, law-keeping, or discipline.

This turns penal substitution into a partial payment, not a full judgment.

But Scripture says the penalty was fully executed:

“Christ died for our sins” (**1 Corinthians 15:3**)

“He was made sin (our sin bearing offering) for us” (**2 Corinthians 5:21**)

“The chastisement of our peace was upon Him” (**Isaiah 53:5**)

Wrong teaching arises when human contribution must be preserved.

## 2. To Avoid the Offense of God's Wrath

Penal substitution means that God's wrath is real, Sin demanded death, the Cross was judgment and not merely example.

Some teachers are uncomfortable with this, so they redefine the Cross as moral influence, and the demonstration of love only or cosmic victory without legal satisfaction.

But if no penalty was actually executed, then no substitution occurred.

The Cross is not God calming Himself, it is God judging sin in the flesh of His Son so mercy could flow Righteously.

“God condemned sin in the flesh” (**Romans 8:3**)

To deny penalty is to deny justice.

To deny justice is to deny Righteousness.

And God only speaks, works and makes war in Righteousness (**Proverbs 8:8, Revelation 19:11**).

## 3. To Keep the Law as a Tool for Sanctification

Many distort penal substitution because they still want believers governed by law. If Christ truly bore the full penalty, the law has no claim, Sin has no dominion and death has no authority (**Hebrews 2:14**).

So penal substitution gets twisted into, “He paid for past sins only”, “You must now keep the law to stay right”, and “Grace gets you in, but law keeps you going.”

This denies what the Cross actually accomplished. Death ended the law's authority.

**Wrong teaching protects religious systems that need law to function.**

#### **4. To Separate the Cross from The Holy Spirit**

When penal substitution is taught correctly, it leads to the Truth that The Holy Spirit only works within the finished work of the Cross. Many reject that, so they redefine the Cross as only forgiveness, an entry point only, or just some historical event.

But Scripture teaches that "Christ was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification" (**Romans 4:25**) and that through one's Faith in the Cross there will "Always be a bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" (**2 Corinthians 4:10**).

When the Cross is removed from daily dependence, penal substitution becomes a doctrine, not a living moment by moment reality.

#### **5. To Avoid True Humility**

The Cross is the most humbling place God recognizes. Penal substitution says, we deserved death, we could not help and Christ alone satisfied God (**Isaiah 53:10-11**, **Hebrews 1:3**).

Wrong teaching arises when humility is replaced with Self-effort, Self-improvement always resulting in Self-righteousness.

Grace only flows where self has been crucified.

In Simple Terms, Penal substitution is taught wrongly when the Cross is minimized, the flesh is preserved, the law is retained, and The Holy Spirit is detached while the offense is softened.

When the Cross stands alone, penal substitution remains pure:

Jesus Christ bore the full judgment of sin, in our place, unto death, and that death is the only doorway into Life. Anything added to that will always distort it. Let us look now at how false penal substitution produces powerless Christianity and how true penal substitution governs sanctification, not just justification.

## **Part 4**

Those who teach penal substitution wrongly do so because they want the victory of the Cross without acknowledging the judgment of the Cross. In other words, they want Christ's triumph but not God's penalty as the alternative. And once the penalty is taken out of view, the Cross is redefined from judicial substitution into cosmic conflict only.

### **1. Because "Victory Without Penalty" Protects a False View of God**

If Christ defeated sin, the world, and Satan without paying the penalty, then Sin was a problem of power only, Satan was the main obstacle and God did not require His satisfaction of justice among men.

This subtly shifts the problem away from God's holiness and places it on external enemies.

But Scripture says the primary issue was not Satan; it was sin before a Righteous God:

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (**Ezekiel 18:4, 20**).

“Without shedding of blood is no remission” (**Hebrews 9:22**).

Victory language without penalty removes God’s Righteous judgment from the Cross.

## **2. Because It Makes Satan the Central Problem Instead of Sin**

Those who deny penalty often frame the Cross like this: Satan held humanity captive, Christ outwitted or overpowered Satan and Humanity is now free.

But Satan had authority only because Sin gave it to him. When Satan came into the Garden in the beginning as a serpent, Adam had dominion over him until he disobeyed God, then the power reversed. Remove the penalty, and Satan becomes the main actor. Keep the penalty, and Satan is exposed as already defeated because sin was judged. Satan lost his power when sin lost its claim.

## **3. Because Penal Substitution Ends All Law-Based Religion**

If Christ truly paid the penalty The law has no authority.

### **Romans 10:4**

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Condemnation is finished.

### **Romans 8:1**

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Self-effort is exposed as dead and that is deeply threatening to religious systems that still need rules to govern behavior, fear to motivate obedience and Law to maintain control.

So, the Cross is reframed as victory over enemies, not death under judgment. Victory sounds empowering. Penalty sounds humbling. The flesh prefers victory language without crucifixion.

#### **4. Because They Confuse Outcome With Mechanism**

It is true that Christ defeated Sin, the world and Satan, but how did He defeat them?

Not by avoiding penalty, but by submitting to it. Sin was defeated because it was judged. The world was defeated because its system crucified Him. Satan was defeated because death exhausted his authority.

### **Hebrews 2:14**

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

Remove penal substitution and you remove the means by which victory occurred.

#### **5. Because Penal Substitution Demands Union With His Death**

If Christ paid the penalty, then His death must be shared by Faith. The Believer must reckon themselves dead and there the flesh will find nothing at all to boast in.

**But many want resurrection power without death participation.**

So, the Cross becomes something Christ did for us, and not something by which we are joined to Him by Faith.

The Simple Truth is that Christ did not defeat sin, the world, and Satan instead of paying the penalty. He defeated them by paying it.

No penalty paid = no justice satisfied

No justice satisfied = no real victory

No real victory = only moral inspiration

The Cross was not a battlefield first. It was a courtroom, a place of execution, and then a tomb. And only after judgment was finished was victory won.

The bottom line is that those who deny the penalty want triumph without judgment, power without death and glory without the Cross, but God is only known (**Psalm 9:16**) and saves through judgment executed in Righteousness (**2 Corinthians 5:21**).

“Christ died for our sins” (**1 Corinthians 15:3**)

“He was made sin for us” (**2 Corinthians 5:21**)

“It is Finished” (**John 19:30**)

## Part 5

The writings of Colossians and Hebrews demand and reveal penal substitution, and once that foundation is seen, it becomes obvious why “victory-only” theology weakens daily Christian living.

### I. How Colossians Demands Penal Substitution

#### Colossians 2:13-15

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his Cross;

15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

The victory over principalities and powers (v.15) is grounded in what happens first in verses 13–14.

Let us look at the clear layout of this great Truth:

“Handwriting of ordinances” = Legal debt

“Against us / contrary to us” = Judicial condemnation

“Blotted out” = Removed by what satisfied God (**Isaiah 53:10-11**)

“Nailed to His Cross” = Executed in death

That is penal substitution language. Satan is not defeated by power alone. He is defeated because the legal case against the sinner is closed “by the power of Christ” through His Cross.

Victory is the result, not the cause.

If the penalty were not paid, there would be no debt to blot out, no law to remove, nor any basis to disarm Satan.

Colossians does not allow a “victory-only” Cross. The triumph happens because judgment occurred.

## **II. How Hebrews Demands Penal Substitution**

### **Hebrews 2:14-17**

14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

The devil is destroyed through death, but the reason for death is reconciliation for sins. That word “reconciliation” means appeasement, satisfaction and settlement of the offense.

Hebrews never separates death, sin, judgment and the priestly offering.

### **Hebrews 9:22**

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

## **Hebrews 10:12**

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

A sacrifice for sins is meaningless unless a penalty is being satisfied. Hebrews demands penal substitution because death is required, blood is required, sin is the issue, God's justice is in view, and only one offering fully satisfies.

There is no category in Hebrews for, "He won the victory, but didn't pay the penalty."

### **III. How "Victory-Only" Theology Weakens Daily Christian Living**

This is where it becomes practical, and dangerous.

#### **1. It Leaves the Conscience Unsettled**

If no penalty was paid, then forgiveness feels temporary, condemnation creeps back in, and failure feels final.

People then live by feelings, performance and spiritual ups and downs.

But when the penalty is paid the conscience is purged because judgment is finished.

Hebrews says that plainly.

## **Hebrews 9:14**

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?

#### **2. It Replaces Faith with Effort**

Victory-only theology says, “Christ won, now you must maintain it”, “Stand strong”, “Live victorious.”

That sounds spiritual, but it quietly shifts focus to self-strength, self-discipline and self-confidence which can only result in self-righteousness.

Penal substitution says:

You live by Faith in His death, not confidence in “your” victory. Daily Christian living flows from reckoning oneself dead, not trying harder.

### **Romans 6:11**

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Remember, the Believer is being made conformable unto the death of Christ, the very thing that was the solution for their victory and freedom.

### **3. It Disconnects the Holy Spirit from the Cross**

The Spirit does not work on vague victory language, abstract triumph, or motivational Christianity.

The Spirit works only in truth (**Psalm 33:4**), and the truth is that Sin was judged, death was executed, and righteousness was satisfied. When the penalty is denied, The Spirit is replaced with psychology while growth becomes a very deceitful behavior modification and grace becomes encouraging words, not power.

### **4. It Removes the Cross from Daily Life**

Victory-only theology keeps the Cross in the past instead of DAILY as Jesus taught (Luke 9:23, 14:26-27). Victory-only

theology keeps the Cross at initial Salvation as just another doctrine among many.

Penal substitution keeps the Cross present, active and governing our daily Faith.

### **2 Corinthians 4:10-12**

10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

11 For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

Without death, resurrection power becomes theoretical.

We hear our Lord telling us through Colossians that victory came because the legal debt was nailed to the Cross.

### **Colossians 2:13-15**

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

We hear our Lord telling us through Hebrews that deliverance came because blood satisfied God's justice.

Victory-only theology says, "Christ won, now try to live like it."

Penal substitution says, “Christ died in your place now live by faith in that death.”

Only one produces humility, peace of conscience, true sanctification, dependence on The Spirit and lasting fruit.

## **Part 6**

This connection is unavoidable and ever so subtle, deceitful and deceptive for those who do not know that the penalty, though paid by Christ, still binds those who refuse His payment as the object of their Faith.

When the penalty is denied, the law must return, and when the law returns, self-effort becomes the only means of living yet it is only carnal living.

Remember, there are only two options of which to choose to be FOUND yielded to and serving with the heart for the Christian.

### **Romans 6:16**

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

#### **1. If No Penalty Was Paid, the Law Still Has a Claim**

The law does only one thing for those who are FOUND trusting in it.

It defines sin and demands death for not keeping it, for if Christ did not bear the penalty of the law, then the law is not satisfied, not fulfilled, nor is it silenced.

### **Romans 3:19**

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

That means the Believer must still answer to it if they are not trusting in the Cross of Christ.

### **Romans 6:14**

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Notice the order:

The dominion of sin ends only because we are not under law but now through Faith in Christ Crucified, we are under Grace.

Being “not under law” requires that law’s penalty was fully executed.

If the penalty is denied, one is still under law, and if one is under law, sin (The Sin Nature) will rule.

There is no middle ground.

## **2. Denying Penalty Forces the Law to Become the Guide for Sanctification**

When teachers deny penal substitution, they still must explain how believers live, how holiness happens and how victory is maintained.

Since the Cross no longer governs daily life, they reach for the only tool left, which is law and its principles.

This shows up as, rules for growth, disciplines for victory and men's standards to maintain Righteousness.

Paul warned of this explicitly.

### **Galatians 3:3**

Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Why does this happen?

Because when the penalty is denied, the Believer must now attempt to control sin, suppress their flesh and maintain their standing.

And only self-effort can attempt that with no success.

### **3. Without Penalty, Death Is No Longer the Doorway So Effort Replaces Faith**

Penal substitution says, "You died with Christ; therefore sin lost its dominion."

Denying penalty says, "Christ helped you, now manage sin yourself."

That immediately shifts the Christian life from reckoning to striving, while trusting to performing and believing to maintaining.

Paul contrasts these two approaches clearly.

### **Romans 6:6**

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

No death shared = no freedom experienced.

**Romans 6:11**

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Galatians 2:20**

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

**Philippians 3:10**

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

So, teachers who deny the penalty must tell believers to resist harder, discipline more, try again and don't give up trying.

**That is law, even if the word is never used.**

**4. Denying Penalty Makes the Conscience a Monitor Instead of the Cross**

Hebrews explains why law always returns.

**Hebrews 10:1-2**

1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

If the penalty was truly paid, the conscience is purged, the condemnation ends and blessed assurance begins and remains.

If the penalty is denied, the conscience must still accuse as the performance must still be measured and the behavior must still be monitored.

So, Believers become self-policing, constantly asking, “Am I doing enough?” “Am I living victorious?” “Am I keeping the standard?”

That is law-driven living, not grace-driven Faith.

## **5. The Holy Spirit Will Not Operate in a Law-Effort System**

The Spirit works only where sin has been judged, Christ’s death has been accepted and “being” trusted in.

### **Galatians 5:18**

But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Remove the penalty, and the Spirit has no lawful ground to work because God will not empower flesh to do what only the death of His Son can end.

So, what replaces the Spirit? Techniques, motivation, accountability systems and spiritual coaching among many other fleshly attempts to serve God without Faith in the Cross.

**That is not grace. That is religious self-effort.**

## **6. The Inevitable Cycle**

When penalty is denied, this cycle always follows: Law returns (even if it is renamed “principles” or “standards”). Self-effort increases, failure continues and condemnation grows and Grace becomes a slogan, not power.

Paul described this exact outcome.

### **Romans 7:24**

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Deliverance only comes when death is embraced, not avoided.

The Scarlet Thread is this:

Denying the penalty always leads back to law because the law’s claim remains, sin’s power continues, death is avoided because Faith is replaced by effort.

Penal substitution ends the law because judgment was executed, and the death of Christ satisfied God (**Isaiah 53:10-11**). Sin lost dominion and The Spirit now works freely.

The Christian life is not lived by trying to be victorious, but rather it is lived by faith in Christ’s death that has already judged sin and made us victorious.

### **Galatians 2:20**

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

## Part 7

Modern “discipleship models” often sound grace-based, but because they deny or minimize the penalty being fully executed at the Cross, they inevitably re-introduce law, just under new names. This happens not by malice, but by misunderstanding how God actually produces holiness. Let us look at this biblically and practically, which will always be in the Light of Christ and Him crucified.

### 1. When Death Is Removed, Instruction Must Replace It

True biblical discipleship flows from the truth that the Believer has already died under judgment with Christ (Romans 6:3-7, Galatians 2:20). If that is denied or softened, distorted or rejected, discipleship must answer the question of, “How do we now live?” Since death is no longer the governing reality, teachers must now supply certain steps, principles, habits and disciplines in the attempt to steer and empower the hungry, yet confused Child of God.

These become the failed attempts of growth instead of Faith in Christ’s death. That is law even if no commandments are quoted.

#### **Romans 6:7**

For he that is dead is freed from sin.

If death is not central, freedom must be managed, not received.

### 2. Law Returns Wearing New Clothes

Modern discipleship rarely says, “Keep the law.” Instead, it says, “Practice spiritual disciplines”, “Build holy habits”, “Live out your identity”, “Apply biblical principles”, “Partner with the Spirit.”

These are presented as neutral tools, but they quietly function as legalistic measurements of spirituality, standards of maturity and means of progress while deceiving us all along.

Paul warned against this very shift.

**Galatians 3:3**

Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Any system that tells believers what to do without grounding it in union with Christ's death is asking the flesh to improve itself. That is law, even when wrapped in what seems to be the language of Grace.

**3. Discipleship Becomes Behavior Management**

Because the penalty is denied, sin is treated as habits to break, behaviors to curb and struggles to manage.

So, then discipleship focuses on accountability groups, checklists, progress tracking and performance language.

But Scripture treats sin differently.

**Romans 6:6**

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

God did not reform the old man. He executed him. When discipleship ignores the execution of Calvary, it must resort to management.

**4. The Conscience Becomes the New Law**

Hebrews tells us what happens when the penalty is truly paid.

### **Hebrews 10:2**

For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

But modern discipleship often produces the opposite which resorts to constant self-evaluation, ongoing guilt over “not doing enough”, fear of stagnation and pressure to “be consistent.”

This means the conscience is still acting as judge, monitor and motivator instead of The Holy Spirit.

That is exactly what the law does.

Grace removes condemnation because judgment is finished.

Law keeps pressure alive because judgment is assumed incomplete.

## **5. The Holy Spirit Is Reduced to a Helper of Self-Effort**

When penal substitution governs faith, The Holy Spirit applies Christ’s finished and victorious death to the Believer so the Believer can express the Life of Christ.

### **2 Corinthians 4:11-12**

11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

When it is denied even if we claim we Believe it, The Spirit is asked to help us do better, so discipleship language becomes, “Partner with the Spirit”, “Cooperate with Grace” and “Allow God to work through your effort.”

But Scripture says something far more humbling.

### **Galatians 5:18**

But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

The Holy Spirit does not empower flesh to obey better as He bears witness to a death already accomplished. When death is removed, The Holy Spirit is reduced to a supposed coach instead of our Witness and Guide into all Truth.

### **6. Why These Models Feel Busy but Remain Powerless**

Much activity, no transformation, cycles of enthusiasm and burnout will always surface without holiness and will not be able to bring the inward rest which the Child of God needs.

If we are not fighting the good fight of Faith to maintain our Faith in the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ moment by moment (**Job 7:17-18, 2 Corinthians 4:11-12**), we will find ourselves being instructed by the Law because the Law can motivate, and the Law can pressure, but it can never produce the fruit which can only come through Faith in the Cross of Christ.

The death of Christ and our death with Him through Faith ends Sins dominion.

### **Romans 8:3**

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

Discipleship that bypasses God's one Way of the Cross will always default to self-effort, no matter how biblical it sounds.

The final Word on this is that MOST modern discipleship models unknowingly preach law again and again because they deny or minimize the penalty paid at the Cross, they replace death with instruction, they replace Faith with fleshly application, they replace the Spirit's witness with techniques, all the while replacing rest with effort.

True discipleship is not learning how to live better. It is learning to live by Faith in Christ's death which has already judged sin. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."