

Lesson 6 --- Married to Christ

1. Read and re-read chapter 7 of Romans. This lesson focuses on verses 1-13.
2. Following are brief introductory questions that catapult our study of Romans 7.
 - a. Romans 7 focuses on:
 - b. In verses 1-6, Paul uses marriage as an illustration to help us understand freedom from the Law in order to be joined with:
 - c. In verses 7-25, Paul wrote of his own intense struggle against:
 - d. The mentality we tend to drag into sanctification is:
 - e. One good way to get out from under the Law is to:
3. Based on the marriage illustration Paul gives in the first section of Romans 7, provide specific parallels as to what ought to motivate and/or characterize our relationship to Christ. Also, honestly evaluate what *does* motivate and/or characterize your walk with Christ.
4. Read Romans 7:4-6. First, tell what is the *therefore* there for in verse 4; and second, give the contrast *but now* makes in verses 5 and 6. (not found in notes)

5. Define *flesh* and explain the role the flesh plays in our sanctification.

6. In order to better understand the Holy Spirit's role in our sanctification, provide a summary of promises made to believers in the New Covenant.

Notes for Lesson 6

Question 2 (“Married to Christ” Romans 7:1-4)

Romans 7 is an exciting chapter to study verse by verse because it concentrates on sanctification and the everyday struggles of a believer. It is one of the best-known chapters in the Bible and one of the most important in Scripture because of this focus on sanctification.

When this chapter is studied, it should be approached with reverence and with a certain amount of trepidation because it has generated much heated controversy. From verse 14 to the end of the chapter, Paul wrote of his own intense struggle against sin. The controversy has centered around the period of his life about which he was writing. Was Paul writing of a time before his conversion? Or was he describing himself at the time of his writing, after his conversion? Furthermore, how are we to understand some of his statements about sin and the Law?

Romans 7:14 *For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.*

Romans 7:17 *So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.*

Chapter 7 continues to generate debate because some people use it to justify the concept of the “carnal Christian” referring to the possibility that a person can be saved and yet continually living in sin. This chapter has bearing on the whole lordship argument that has gone on for decades. The lordship debate questions whether a person can accept Jesus as Savior and not take Him as Lord or Master of his life.

The first section of chapter 7, verses 1-6, can be somewhat confusing. Paul introduced the illustration of marriage law to show how Christians have been freed from the Law in order to be joined to Jesus. The illustration seems simple on the surface, but it is puzzling for many. The illustration refers to a wife who is bound to her husband as long as he lives but is freed to marry another if he dies. It illustrates how the believer has died to the Law in order that he or she might be joined to Christ.

Some questions arise concerning the illustration. For example, what does the husband in the illustration represent? One pastor believes that the husband represents Adam. Augustine and other reformed theologians thought that he represents the old man. One theologian, C.H. Dodd, recommended that we should “ignore the illustration and ask what it is that Paul is really talking about in the realm of fact and experience.” It is never a good idea, however, “to ignore” a portion of Scripture.

In this chapter, Paul will address the importance of the Law and the role of the Law. He has already taught in Romans that we are justified by God apart from the Law. To the Jews, that teaching would seem to make the Law useless. The Law had been the center of God's interaction with the Jews for thousands of years. The whole Old Testament surrounds the Law given to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Jews rightly regarded the Law as God's great gift to man. So how can it now be said that God's avenue of salvation is accomplished by faith and not by the Law? Is the Law worthless, or worse, is it harmful?

The role of the Law in the Christian church was on the cutting edge during this time. You recall how Peter spoke at the Jerusalem Council as recorded in Acts 15 concerning whether the newly converted Gentiles were under the Law. (See Acts 15:1-2, 4-11)

There were people at the Jerusalem Council who wanted to impose the Old Testament Law on Gentile believers as part of salvation and sanctification. Paul and Peter were in agreement that this was a wrong thing to do. Peter communicated the clear fact that neither salvation nor sanctification included the yoke of the Law.

Misunderstanding of the role of the Law continues to be an issue today, just in a slightly different way. Many in the Christian church still strive to live by some kind of standard, a variety of rules that they raise up as God's standard. Many in churches today are no different than the Jews in Paul's time, trying to live according to a works system, a performance-based religion.

All that the Law can do is reveal sin. It cannot help man to *stop* sinning. We have seen that salvation is not through the Law but through faith in Christ. The Law cannot save us. In the same way that the Law cannot save us, it cannot sanctify us either. However, we tend to drag this law-keeping mentality into sanctification. That tendency is what Paul addressed in chapter 7.

How does one get out from under the Law? Well, one good way is to die. Dead people are no longer under the Law. Paul first shows how the believer is dead to the Law in the first few verses.

Question 3 (“The Flesh v.s. The Spirit” Romans 7:5,6)

The first section of Romans 7 focuses our attention on the husband/wife relationship between Christ and believers to show that we are not under the Law and to show that our motive for sanctification is love for Christ.

A wedding ceremony is the most natural way to picture the Gospel because it clearly illustrates what it means to be a Christian. The Bible portrays Jesus as a passionate lover, a devoted bridegroom, and a faithful husband of His bride, the Church. The Church (that is, we believers) is portrayed as the bride. This is the illustration that Paul has been unfolding in this first part of chapter 7.

As Christians, we take on the name of Jesus Christ just as a woman traditionally takes on the name of her husband when she marries him. When we are married to Christ, it will have an impact on how we live. If it does not, then it is fair to question whether or not there was a true marriage. We are given the very name of Jesus Christ as a term that should define who we are and how we live.

What is typical, or should be typical, is the love expressed by a newly married couple. There is a newness of life and an expectation to see one another when there has been separation. That is the liveliness that believers should have toward Christ.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones puts it this way, "If you would know the love of Jesus, give Him opportunities to tell you. He will meet you in the Scriptures, and He will tell you. Give time, give place, give opportunity. Set other things aside, and say to other people, 'I cannot do what you ask me to do. I have another appointment. I know He is coming and I am waiting for Him.' Do you look for Him, are you expecting Him, do you allow Him to woo you, do you give Him opportunities to speak to you and to let you know His love for you?"

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

As the bridegroom of the church, Christ desires to sanctify you, to make you holy and blameless in this life and the life to come. We begin the process here on earth, and it is completed in our glorification.

Question 5 ("The Law in the Christian's Life" Romans 7:5-13)

The phrase "*but now . . .*" is in this text, and it accentuates the contrast between two important terms that will be mentioned repeatedly for the rest of this chapter into the next; to be specific—the flesh and the Holy Spirit.

A key word introduced in verse 5 is "flesh." In the context of verse 5 and following, it is a reference to our unregenerate, old nature as mentioned in Galatians 5. The flesh sets its desires against the Spirit; and the Spirit, against the flesh.

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Our struggle in sanctification is not between the old man and the new man, since the old man is dead. Our struggle is putting to death the deeds of the flesh by the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

Question 6 ("The Law in the Christian's Life" Romans 7:5-13)

Paul refers to the Holy Spirit in 7:6, "*But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.*"

The promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit was foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament as they referred to the New Covenant. The New Covenant has everything to do with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, new life, and the forgiveness of sins.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt [the Law was the old covenant between Israel and God], My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. ³³"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after

those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Woven in this New Covenant is the promise of the Holy Spirit as mentioned in Ezekiel 36:26-28.

"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. 28You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God."

Basic to the New Covenant is the forgiveness of sin, a cleansing from sin, and the coming of the Holy Spirit who will cause God's people to be careful to walk in righteousness.

There is a contrast between serving Christ by the enabling of the Holy Spirit on one hand, and the abject slavery to the Law and the deeds of the flesh, on the other hand. Under the Law, states verse