

July 2, 2017
 Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
 St Peter Lutheran Church
 Bowie, TX
 Larry Knobloch, Pastor
 Romans 7:1-13

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Romans 7:1–13 (ESV)

Released from the Law

⁷ Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? ² For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. ³ Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

⁴ Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵ For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶ But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

The Law and Sin

⁷ What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” ⁸ But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. ⁹ I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. ¹⁰ The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. ¹¹ For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹² So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

¹³ Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

“Until death parts us.” Every married couple recognizes these words.

These words stand at the heart of the marriage covenant; they express the fundamental truth on which marriage is built.

God alone is able to unite the woman to the man in one flesh. Therefore, God alone can bring that union to an end. Jesus proclaims, “*What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate*” (Mt 19:6).

Marriage is not a union of human wills; marriage does not consist merely in the choice of the man or the woman. Rather, marriage is an act of the Creator, by which He joins the woman to the man in one essence; she is flesh of his flesh, bone of his bones. He who joined them is the only one possessing the authority to separate them.

As we’ve often heard from the Book of Ephesians, so also in today’s text St. Paul teaches us that marriage between a man and a woman is analogous to an eternally more important relationship, the marriage between Christ and His Church. We know that well.

Have we failed in our earthly marriages? Yes, many have. Some out in the open with divorce and adultery, others more quietly where husband or wife has emotionally abandoned the marriage, leaving the other divorced in every way except outwardly.

Is there a difference? Not really. Sinful people acting in a sinful world.

However, where we have failed. As we have in so many areas of our lives, Christ has overcome. Divorce, with confession and repentance, is no more an unforgivable sin than stealing or lying.

Christ has overcome all sin and paid for it on the cross. And in doing so has shown us the true meaning of commitment and marriage in how He treats and cares for His bride, the Church. Death still parts us, but in a much different way as Paul shows us in our text from Romans 7.

In the marriage of Christ and His Church, death does indeed part us—from someone—but it's also death that unites all believers to our Spouse, our Savior. The marriage of Christ and His Church isn't possible until death unites us, for marriage to Christ consists in a death to our old self and a resurrection to our new Identity in Christ.

Paul uses two images to express the reality of sin. Paul compares sin to a tyrant or dictator enforcing his will upon his slaves.

Sin reigns in death (Rom. 5:21) and man is a slave to sin. It is in our very nature. Outside of Christ, we continue to go back to our sinful ways, no matter how hard we try. (Rom 6:20) However, in Christ our salvation liberates us from the tyranny of sin (5:21; 6:6–14).

If sin is an oppressive tyrant, why do so few rejoice in the freedom of Christ?

Man is not forced to sin, but enjoys and embraces a life of sin. Paul likens sin to a groom whom mankind embraces. We are, so to speak, married to sin. We go back just like a spouse goes back to their mate.

It is comfortable to be with someone you know and even think that you love, mainly, because it is comfortable, even though it may be bad and harmful to you; like the person who stays with their abusive boy or girl friend.

Mankind's contentment with slavery prevents him from becoming a child of God.

The Law reveals sin's tyranny over mankind. The Law reveals sin's purpose and intent (v 7). *"What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin."*

Sin does not seek to serve mankind, but to rule over him (v 6). Sinning might bring us temporary pleasure, however, sin does not seek man's pleasure, but man's death (v 11). *"For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me."*

The Law makes mankind discontent with his present bondage (7:14–20). Again, it shows us our sin so that we know and understand that we are in the wrong, that we are separated from God.

The truth about sin makes us long for real righteousness, to remove that separation. And since we are bound to sin by our nature, it must come from outside of us.

The truth about sin makes us yearn for a new groom, a new husband. And the crucified and risen Christ is the new Husband for the Church.

The death of Christ ends man's marriage to sin (v 4). When Christ died, He made the Law, which sin uses to bind us to itself, of no effect because He fulfilled God's Law in our place.

It's as if our first husband, our old sinful self, has died, setting us free to marry another. Thus Christ's death also opens the way from slavery to sonship.

The resurrection of Christ begins man's marriage to God and His righteousness. The separation between God and man has now been removed. Not by any action our part, but only because of Jesus fulfilling the Law in our stead.

We are now married to the risen Christ, the man who rules over all things. He is without sin and therefore without death.

"Until death parts us." In the marriage ceremony, these words are a troublesome reminder that our earthly marital joy will end in grief; our beginning will one day have an end.

However, in the light of Christ's victory, we truly must modify the statement. Yes, Christ's death has parted us from our first husband, our old sinful self. But in Christ, we can now also say, "Until death unites us."

It is Christ's death that has united us to one another and to His Father in heaven.

It is our death in Holy Baptism that has annulled the power of the evil one so that we might be a holy Bride adorned with true righteousness for our true Bridegroom.

Finally, it is our death to this world that brings the full consummation of our eternal union with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, world without end.

Amen.

The Peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria

Sermon Outline

***Marriage to Christ is Death to the Old Self
and a Resurrection to Our New Identity in Christ.***

Romans 7:1-13

- I. Paul uses two images to express the reality of sin. A tyrant and a groom.
- II. The Law reveals sin's tyranny over mankind.
- III. The crucified and risen Christ is the new husband.