

Thank God for Husband # 2

Romans 7:1

August 23rd, 2009



We will be studying Romans chapters 7 and 8 in the next several lessons. The title of this chapter is not just the title of this study, but the title of these two chapters.

Scripture

“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? 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.”

Better Off Dead

This prolonged recession has brought great bondage to many people. Not just here, but literally around the world. Imagine if you were one of those people who, for years, continually spent more than you brought in. You could continue to do that with the bank and the credit card companies because what you own continued to accelerate in value. The bank was never worried because you were not upside down yet. But then, all of a sudden you cannot keep up any longer because of the interest payments, or a reduction in hours at work. So now, when the credit card bill, house payment, or electric bill comes, there is just not enough. Sometimes when a person gets in that kind of financial crisis, when they look at that mounting bondage with seemingly no way out, they think, *I would be better off dead*. We know that is not true, but it is a real pressure for some. Now, imagine you are one of those people and you incurred a debt by the choices you made. You get laid off and cannot pay the debt. But you remember the life insurance policy you bought when you were young and things were going well. You realize that the insurance company would pay off all of your debt if you died and you would be debt-free. Do you see why a person might think they would be better off? But now we are thinking, wait a minute, you would be dead! Now stick with me...imagine that the moment the insurance company paid off your last debt and deposited the rest into your bank account, you could come back alive and still have all of your stuff! You wouldn't have a mortgage, you wouldn't have to make good on all the stuff you got by making bad financial choices. Life would be different, amen!

That is what Paul is going to talk about in this passage. The only way you can truly be free from your debt of sin is to die. The only way you can be released from the bondage that has held you is to die. In chapter 7:1, Paul continues his theme that a believer is dead to sin and cannot continually practice sin because a believer is no longer under the Law of Moses, but under the grace of God.

If you were a Jewish believer raised under the law, you could have been in that Roman congregation thinking the law still played a part in either your justification or your sanctification and glorification. We know there was a Jewish population in the Roman Church, though we don't know how large it was. We know they were adamant to the Gentiles about the Mosaic Law. Paul said "*Do you not know...*", and then he hints at who he is writing to; those "*who know the law.*" In verse 6, when he concludes this introductory thought, he says the law is the old written code of conduct. It is referring to the Mosaic Law, the Law that God gave Moses on Mount Sinai. So in verse 1 of chapter 7, Paul is identifying that he is talking to people that have the Jewish law as a background. Primarily, he is addressing a problem in the life of the Jewish believer, as well as the Gentile who has become a proselyte to the Law of Moses.

Paul said that you are only bound by the law as long as you live. A man is only bound by the law, only as long as he lives. In other words, as long as you are alive, you are in bondage to the law. But the flip side is that the only way to be free is to be dead. The moment you die, the law no longer has jurisdiction over you. So Paul will teach in Romans 7 and 8 that true freedom in Christ only comes to those who die to the law. In chapter 6, we were dead to sin, but in chapter 7, we are dead to the law.

He will give us an example in verses 2 and 3, but don't push this example too far. There are some false teachings that use these verses as the only teaching in the Bible concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage, and teach things that are untrue of Scripture and of God. These verses are not giving an exposition about marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Paul is appealing to marriage as an example, but just one part of marriage. If you want to study what the Bible teaches on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, you need to read 1 Corinthians 7, Matthew 5 and 19. You have to take the whole of Scripture into account.

Freedom through Death

Those who were under the Mosaic Law knew what Paul was talking about when he said that as long as a woman's husband is alive, she does not have the right to live with another man. If she does, she will be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, it changes everything. Then if she remarries, she cannot be called an adulteress. A woman is under the law of her husband as long as he is alive. If he dies, she is free. Therefore, the teaching is she is freed by death.

Let me give you an example. My wife Celisa has been married to me since July 18th, 1980. She stood before God, Ledbetter Baptist Church, and me and took a vow to stay married to me until death do us part. It is evident that I am still alive. My wife is out of town right now with a good friend of hers, and I promise you that not one time will she look around while she is there, because I am alive. I am not dying anytime soon, I hope. Therefore, husband number two is not even on the radar yet. Husband number one is doing the best job I can to take care of myself to make sure I live a long, long time. Now, if while married to me, Celisa starts living with someone else, she will get a bad reputation. But if I die tomorrow, everything changes. Now, she will probably wait a couple of hours, but after a couple of hours, if she starts looking around, you will not say a thing about my wife, even though I am dead. Once I die, the covenant is over. Don't look at her and say how long she should mourn, or how she should do it, because everything changes when a death occurs. But until that death occurs, things will not change. That is freedom through death.

- **Death to the Law**

Now, verse 4 tells us that likewise, you have died to the law. Church, hear this! This is talking about the Law of Moses. As a believer in Christ Jesus, you are dead to the Law of Moses. In the illustration, the wife gets released from her husband when he dies. But we know the law of God is not dead. It is still in effect to this very day. So the law didn't die; God killed the wife. Husband number one is still alive, but the sinner (the wife)

dies. She dies through the body of Christ and is set free from the law. This is a reference to what Paul has been teaching. A sinner is made right with God and dies to the old way of living to become new in Christ by repenting of a lifestyle of sin. You come to that place, under the convicting of God's Holy Spirit, to put your faith and trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior. The moment you do that, you die with Christ.

Married to Another

You not only die to the power of sin, you die to the law, so that you might be married to another. We can now live with another. That another is Jesus, who was raised from the dead. Paul is using the metaphor of marriage to say a sinner started out his life, from birth, in a marriage relationship to the Law of God or the natural revelation he was given. That law binds him and has power over him. It condemns him, and he cannot get out from under it. He is married to the law. Since husband number one (the law) is never going to die, his only hope is for him (the sinner) to die.

The way the sinner dies is to die with Christ, and be raised with Him. When you die with Christ, all of your past life is forgiven. But Jesus didn't stay down, He got back up! When He got back up, you got back up too. In faith, you say goodbye to the world you knew of debt and sin and the law. You wake up saying hello to a brand new husband, and His name is Christ!

- **To Bear Fruit**

God wants you to be married to husband number two in order that you might bear fruit to God. But Paul gets so excited in writing that he switches from second person plural to first person plural. He says "*we*." He identifies himself with this group of people who are married to Christ, when he says, "*...that we might bear fruit to God.*"

- **To Point to God**

At Hardin Baptist, we call ourselves a God-centered church. We say we have a God-centered gospel. We renounce man-centered churches and a

man-centered gospel because we do not believe the ultimate aim of God, the gospel, and the Church, is for us. The ultimate aim of God is for God. God did not do what He did for you, for you. What He did for you was for Him. Therefore, God didn't save you so you would go to Heaven. He saved you to bear fruit for Him. Your fruit will draw attention to what He has done, because the only hope for sinners is God.

Misled by the Law

Now, it is important for us to stop and understand what is going on here, or we will get lost. In college, when writing a research paper, you normally have to submit a thesis statement first. First, it has to be approved by the professor and then when you write the paper, you put the thesis statement at the beginning. The thesis expounds on what you say you will write about, and proves what you say you will prove. Verses 5 and 6 are a thesis statement. If you do not see this, you will miss verses 7 and 8. Paul tells us in verses 5 and 6:

"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. But now we 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."

Paul is expounding his metaphor, telling us what life was like when we were married to husband number one, and what it is now like being married to husband number two. Husband number one is the law. Husband number two is Christ. He will show is the contrast.

I love my wife. One thing I love about her is because she is an encourager, and God knew I needed that. If you could just hear some of the conversations in our house, you would see what an awesome lady she is! I am not exaggerating. Many times throughout the day, she just reminds me what a great, awesome, unbelievable, irresistible husband I am! I just soak it in! I am always casually dropping remarks about just how bad most

husbands are, so she thinks I am unbelievable! Now, we have always talked about how she thinks that I will die first because I couldn't live without her but she could live without me. So for the last several months I have been telling Celisa that I will outlive her. I have been running, bicycling and exercising. I have been trying to eat right and get my cholesterol down. She had a grandmother that lived to be one hundred and one, so I have to do this thing right! I will outlive her because she believes she is married to the best husband in the world, and if I dropped dead tomorrow and she remarries, she will find out that I wasn't the best husband in the world. You see, right now I am the only one she has to compare to, so I am winning this contest hands down! But if I die and she gets ten years with someone else, she might suddenly discover that she was misled all of those years.

Do you see what Paul is doing? He wants people to know they have been misled. If you have never married Christ and are still married to the law, you think life is good. It is all you know. Before Paul goes on to talk about the glorious life we have in Christ that is empowered by the Spirit of God, he has to first say that while we were in the flesh, our sinful passions were stirred up by the law. It produced fruit for death in us.

Do you remember that old lifestyle? Do you remember when you did what you didn't want to, and couldn't do what you really wanted to? The more you tried to get it right, it just seemed like you always came up short. Every time you thought you had it made, you blew it. Verse 5 is not talking about a believer who still has an unredeemed flesh. This is talking about a person who has never been set free from sin. It is talking about a sinner who is married to the law.

He will contrast that in verse 6 with a believer who is married to Christ. We don't serve under the old written code of conduct. We don't get up in the mornings and look at a list to see what we have to do today, and what we are supposed to stay away from because the Bible says to do this and this,

and don't do this and this. No, we now serve God in the new life of the Spirit that He brings to us.

Life with the Law

So many commentaries I have read for this study said that Paul could have immediately gone from chapter 7:6 to 8:1-4, which says:

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

I want to scream no! If Paul had done that after verses 5 and 6, he would have totally failed. He would have given us a thesis and then not developed it. This is crucial! If you don't get this, you will misunderstand chapters 7 and 8. Paul gave us two statements from his thesis of verses 5 and 6, and now he will develop verse 5. He will talk about what life was like when you were married to the law. He begins in verse 7 and doesn't quit talking about that bad marriage until verse 25. Paul is teaching that instead of bringing out the best in you, the law brought out the worst in you.

The Blame Game

When you are in one of those marriages where the worst is brought out in you, there is a tendency to want to blame your husband. Paul could have easily had the husband being the one to divorce his wife, but he used the example of the wife divorcing her husband, so that is how I will pursue this. Paul knew, and I know, that wives always blame their husbands. I know that you guys cannot say amen, but you are wanting to! It is always all our fault. Even if we are away on a business trip and something happened, it is our fault because we were out of town at that moment!

The tendency is always to blame. But Paul is saying in verses 7:7-25, the problem was not the law, the problem was you. We will come to understand that we can never blame the law for the bad relationship between a sinner and the law.

The blame is on the sinner. The law is holy, good, and righteous. The law is spiritual, but we are carnal, sold under sin. Paul is not blaming the problem on the law, he blamed himself. If you are still married to the law, you cannot blame the law. As a matter of fact, the law's responsibility is to reveal what is holy, good, and righteous. But when the law steps in and tells you what you cannot do, have you ever noticed that is the very thing you want to do? When the law tells you what you should do, that is not what you want to do at all.

Law Reveals

I was out of state with a friend this week, and we were coming home late in the evening. It was dark and we were in a town that we hadn't been in before. We were talking and having a good time, but I noticed that my friend had a tendency to break the speed limit. Every once and a while I would say, "Man, there are cops all over the place." We were coming through a little town and the speed limit was 40 mph. Now, that is unusual. Most of the time, they are always 35 or 45 or 55 mph. But this was a 40 mph speed limit, so I am trying to be lenient to my brother. He was not paying attention, but he had this tendency to think he could drive 10 mph over the speed limit, so he was going 50 mph. I saw a cop sitting in the median, and I said, "There is a cop!" Now, when your friend tells you there is a cop and you are speeding, your natural reaction is to hit the brake and ease up a little bit. When the cop sees the tail lights, he at least knows you respect him as an authority figure. But my friend didn't hit his brakes at all! He looked up in the mirror and said, "He got me!" He pulled over and the cop pulled in behind us. My friend said, "I'm just going 50!" I said, "But it's a 40 mph speed zone!" He said, "I thought it was a 45 mph zone. He can't give me a ticket, I'm just going 50 mph in a 40!" I said, "What about this

don't you understand?" My friend rolled the window down and the cop said, "Did you know you were going 50 mph?" My friend said, "I thought I was going 45." Liar, liar, liar! What is it about seeing a 25 mph sign that makes us have to go 35?

- **Law is the Standard**

You see, that is what the law does. The law never steps in when you want to do what you are doing and tells us we are doing a great job! The law steps out in front of you and says this is not the time. That is how the law keeps a sinner. Now my friend is not a sinner, he is a saint who occasionally sins. But if you are married to the law; that is what the law does, and you cannot blame the law. The law is holy, just, and good. The problem is that the law brings out your worst. If God had not married us to the law, some of us would have never admitted that we were a sinner. We would have thought we were ok because we wouldn't have compared ourselves to God, we would have compared ourselves to each other. When we do that, we look pretty good. But we are not the standard. When you compare most of your life to part of your life and you have more good than bad, we think that is passing. That doesn't cut it with God. God put us in a marriage relationship with the law to bring us to see that when we were born, at our very core, we were born in sin. We were spiritually separated from God and there is no hope for us outside of Christ. We can never live up to the demands of our first husband. But if you will die with Christ, you will get a new husband.

The Solution: Husband Number Two

Paul begins to talk about that new life with your new husband in chapter 8:1 when he tells us there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. He tells us that the law of the Spirit of Christ has set us free from the law of sin and death. In the next lesson, we will talk about a life lived that is free from law of sin and death. Paul knows that we will never truly know what we have in Christ unless we remember from time to time what it was like being under the law that demanded absolute perfection.

You will never get out from under the law until you die. The way you die is to repent of sin and put your faith in Jesus. You will get a new husband and the Spirit of almighty God will take up residence in your life. He will live through us and we will live a changed life. The problem isn't the law, it is you. The fallacy is, since you were the problem in marriage number one, you think the solution is to do better and to try to get it together. That is what a lot of people try to do. They stop their vices and now think they have it together. In reality, they don't. The solution is husband number two. What husband number one could not do, husband number two does by taking up residence in your life and living the Christian life through you. That is why there is a radical change in your life when you become a child of God. It will be painful, but we will have to relive living in the flesh before we can understand the beauty of being married to Christ.