

LESSON EIGHT
THE BONDAGE OF THE LAW IN OUR FLESH (1)

Scripture Reading:

CHAPTER 7

C. Bondage in the Flesh by the Indwelling Sin

7:1-25

1. Two Husbands

vv. 1-6

- 7:1 Or are you ignorant, brothers (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law lords it over the man as long as he lives?
- 7:2 For the married woman is bound by the law to her husband while he is living; but if the husband dies, she is discharged from the law regarding the husband.
- 7:3 So then if, while the husband is living, she is joined to another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if the husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man.
- 7:4 So then, my brothers, you also have been made dead to the law through the body of Christ so that you might be joined to another, to Him who has been raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit to God.
- 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, the passions for sins, which acted through the law, operated in our members to bear fruit to death.
- 7:6 But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were held, so that we serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter.

OUTLINE:

I. Two Husbands—7:1-6

- A. Man's Original Position—a Wife's Position—Isa. 54:5
- B. The Self-assuming Position of Fallen Man
- C. The Law of the Old Man—Rom. 7:2
- D. The Position of the Regenerated Man—a Genuine Wife's Position
 - 1. Having the Old Man Crucified—6:6
 - 2. Freed from the Law of the Old Man—7:3, 4, 6; Gal. 2:19
 - 3. Married to Christ, the New Husband—Rom. 7:4
 - 4. Taking Christ as the Head—Eph. 5:23
 - 5. Bearing Fruit to God—7:4
 - 6. Serving the Lord in Newness of Spirit—7:6

QUESTIONS:

SECTION 1:

1. Why does Paul in Romans 7 expose the bondage of the law in our flesh?
2. What is man's original position according to the Bible and what is man's self-assuming position after his fall?
3. What was God's intention in giving man law, and how was it supposed to function?

SECTION 2:

1. What are our two statuses after being saved?
2. Please compare Romans 7:4 and 6:6 to explain how our old man is put to death.
3. Galatians 2:20 says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live." How can we be crucified persons and continue to live?

SECTION 3:

1. How are we being freed from the law of the old man?
2. What does it mean to take Christ as our husband and Christ as our head in our experience?
3. What is the spiritual significance of Hagar and Sarah and how does it apply to our daily living?

SECTION 4:

1. Based on Romans 7:4, how do we bear fruit to God by being in the position of a wife?
2. What qualifies us to serve the Lord in the newness of the spirit?
3. What is the difference between serving the Lord in the oldness of the letter and in the newness of our regenerated spirit?

[Section 1]

In Romans 5:12-21 we saw that the gift in Christ surpasses the heritage in Adam. Romans 6 revealed our identification with Christ. In order to have a genuine experience of our identification with Christ, we must pay attention to two negative items found in Romans 7—the law and the flesh. Romans 7 exposes the bondage of the law in our flesh. Although we have been identified with Christ through baptism, and although we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death and are now growing together with Him in the likeness of His resurrection, the law and the flesh continue to exist. We may present ourselves as slaves and our members as weapons of righteousness to God that we may be sanctified and enjoy the riches of the divine life, yet the law of God outside of us and our flesh within us still exist.

Why does Paul in chapter 7 speak in such detail about the law and the flesh? Because Romans 6:14 says, “you are not under law but under grace.” In Romans 5 and 6 Paul explained clearly that we are now under grace, not under law. However, he has not yet explained how it can be that we are not under law. Because in 6:14 Paul said, “you are not under law,” he must write another chapter to explain how we are not under law. Without Romans 7 we could never be clear about this matter. Although the law continues to exist, we are not under it; we have nothing to do with it any longer. Has God recalled the law? Has He annulled or abolished it? The answer to these questions is no. How then can we say that we are not under the law? How can we be outside of the law and discharged from it? How can we be freed from the law? The answer to these questions is found in Romans 7, especially in the first six verses. This portion of the Word gives us a full definition and explanation of why we are no longer under the law. If we understand Romans 7:1-6, we will know how we have been discharged from the law.

I. TWO HUSBANDS

If we are to understand how we have been freed from the law, we must know the two husbands in Romans 7. In Romans 5 we have two men, two acts, and two results with the four reigning things. In Romans 7:1-6 we have two husbands, and in 7:7-25 we have three laws. What are the two husbands in Romans 7?

We must approach this question with the entire Bible in view, for we should understand one verse of the Bible according to the Bible as a whole. Let us now adopt such a view regarding the first husband in Romans 7.

A. Man's Original Position— a Wife's Position

In God's creation man's original position was that of a wife. Isaiah 54:5 says that God our Maker is our husband. Thus, according to God's creation, man had the position of a wife. As a wife to God, we must depend upon Him and take Him as our head. This was our original position.

B. The Self-assuming Position of Fallen Man

When man fell, he took another position, the self-assuming position of the old man. The fallen man assumed the position of a husband. The man created by God was a wife; the fallen man became a husband. Assuming the position of the husband, the fallen man became independent of God and made himself the head as the husband.

C. The Law of the Old Man

Since fallen man wanted to be the husband, God gave him the law. The law is not intended for the wife, but for the fallen husband. Thus, this law becomes the law of the old man, the law of the husband (7:2). However, God did not intend that the old man keep the law, because the old man cannot keep it. The law was given that the old man might be exposed. People make a great mistake when they think that God gave man the law that he might keep it. On the contrary, God gave the law to man that he might break it and that, by breaking it, he might be completely exposed.

This thought is scriptural. Romans 3:20 says, “by law is knowledge of sin.” The law gives us the knowledge of sin. If man had no law, he would continue to commit sins, but would not recognize them as such. Man would excuse his sinful deeds, using favorable terms to describe them. However, the law identifies sin as sin. Moreover, Romans 4:15 says, “where no law is, neither is there transgression.” You may think that the law prevents transgression, but this verse says that the law exposes transgression. Furthermore, Romans 5:20 says, “But the law entered that the offense might abound.” The law did not enter that the offense might be reduced or restricted. This is our natural concept and thought. Paul says that the law entered that the offense might abound, meaning that it might increase plentifully. Thus, the Bible indicates that the law was not given for us to keep, but for us to violate.

You may say, “I will not try to break the law.” Whether you want to break the law or not means nothing, for you will break the law. You cannot help but break the law. The law says, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Although you may try to

love your neighbor, you cannot do it. Even the children in school cannot love their classmates as themselves. Everyone reading this message has broken and continues to break at least one of the ten commandments. Who can keep the law? No one. The law entered that the offense might abound.

According to Romans 7:7, we would not have known sin except through the law. In this verse Paul says that he would not have known coveting except the law had said, “You shall not covet.” As a summary we may say that the law works that the offense might abound. Once the offense abounds, the law exposes it as sin. In this way the law leads us to the knowledge of sin.

[Section 2]

D. The Position of the Regenerated Man— a Genuine Wife’s Position

The position of the regenerated new man is a genuine wife’s position. Regeneration restores us to our original position.

1. Having the Old Man Crucified

The first husband of Romans 7:2-3 is not the flesh or the law, but the old man of Romans 6:6, which has been crucified with Christ. If we read Romans 7:1-6 carefully, we can see a correspondence between it and Romans 6:6.

Many Christians have had difficulty understanding the first husband mentioned in Romans 7 because most of them neglected the fact that we, the believers, after being saved, have two statuses—the old and the new. Due to the fall we have the old status; due to regeneration we have a new one. Because of the fall we are the old man, and because of regeneration we are the new man. As the old man we were the husband; as the new man we are the wife. Hence, we have two statuses.

Let us explore this further by considering Romans 7:1-6 in relation to Romans 6:6 and Galatians 2:19-20. Romans 7:1 says, “The law lords it over the man as long as he lives.” This verse presents no difficulty. In 7:2 we are told that the “married woman is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives; but if the husband dies, she is discharged from the law of the husband.” Please notice that it does not say “she lives,” but “he lives.” If the husband dies, the wife is discharged from the law of the husband. Romans 7:3 tells us that if, while the husband lives, the wife marries another husband she will be called an adulteress. However, if the husband dies, she is freed from the law and may be married to another.

The next three verses in Romans 7 present some difficulties. The point of crisis is in 7:4. Let us examine this verse very carefully. “So that, my brothers, you also have been made dead to the law through the body of Christ.” We were not put to death as a result of suicide, but through the body of Christ, meaning that we died on the cross of Christ. The phrase “through the body of Christ” modifies death, indicating what sort of death it was. It was not a suicide; it was a co-crucifixion with Christ. When Christ was crucified, we died with Him. We need to compare this with Romans 6:6, which says, “Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him.” Do you not believe that this verse which says that our old man has been crucified with Him corresponds with Romans 7:4 which says that we were made dead through the body of Christ? We must admit that these two statements correspond with one another. No doubt, the “you” that “have been made dead to the law through the body of Christ” in 7:4 is the “old man” who “has been crucified with Him” in 6:6. To put it simply, the “you” in 7:4 is the “old man” in 6:6.

Romans 6:6 says that the old man has been crucified with Him that the body of sin might be made of none effect. The old man, not the body, has been crucified. If you say that your body has been crucified, you need a funeral and burial. What then has happened to the body? The body has been made of none effect; it has been rendered useless. The old man has been crucified, but the body remains. Since the old man has been crucified, the body is jobless. Nevertheless, Romans 6:6 continues with the phrase “that we should no longer serve sin as slaves.” The old man has been crucified, yet we still live. We should no longer serve sin as slaves.

Now let us turn to Galatians 2:19. This verse says, “For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” Are we dead or living? Are we two persons or one? By this verse we can see that we have two statuses, that there are two I’s—an old “I” and a new “I.” The old “I” is dead that the new “I” may live. This is not my interpretation; this is my quotation of Galatians 2:19. Galatians 2:19 says that I am dead that I might live. If I am not dead, I can never live. I need to be dead in order to live. I die to live. To what am I dead? According to Galatians 2:19, I am dead to the law.

Galatians 2:20 follows by declaring, “I am crucified with Christ,” a phrase which undoubtedly corresponds to Romans 6:6 and 7:4. These three verses correspond to one another. Galatians 2:20 says, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live.” How can we be crucified

persons and continue to live? Are we dead or alive? Both are true. As the old man I am dead; as the new man I live. Although I live, yet it is not I, but Christ who lives in me. I like the three words “nevertheless,” “yet,” and “but.” If we concentrate on these three words, we will be clear about our dual status. I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. This is marvelous. This is the emphatic teaching of the Bible. Then, Galatians 2:20 says, “and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.” This verse reveals that a believer has two statuses—the status of an old man and the status of the regenerated new man.

We were troubled by the old husband in Romans 7:4 because we did not pay attention to a Christian’s dual status. As the old man we were the husband; as the new man we are the wife.

Now we return to Romans 7:4. “So that, my brothers, you also have been made dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you might marry another, even Him Who has been raised from among the dead, that we might bear fruit to God.” In this verse Paul puts together a funeral and a wedding. On the one hand, we were buried; on the other hand, we were married. We have been made dead that we might marry another. In Romans 7:4 we are dead to marry; in Galatians 2:19 we are dead to live. If we did not have two statuses, how could this be possible? We were made dead according to our old status that we might marry another according to our new status. According to our new status, we marry Him who has been raised from among the dead, that we might bear fruit to God.

Now we come to Romans 7:5-6. Verse five says, “For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sins, which were through the law, operated in our members to bear fruit to death.” This verse speaks of what we were. Verse six says, “But now we are discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were held, that we should serve as slaves in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter.” When we were in the flesh (v. 5), we were the old husband. When we were discharged from the law (v. 6), we became the wife. We have been discharged from the law of the old husband, having died to that in which we were held.

By now it should be very clear who is the old husband. The old husband is our old man. The wife is our regenerated new man. As the old man we are dead, and as the new man we are alive. We were dead as the old husband, but now are alive as the wife. As we shall see, the wife does

two things— bears fruit to God and serves in newness of spirit.

[Section 3]

2. Freed from the Law of the Old Man

The regenerated man, having the old man crucified, is now free from the law of the old man (Rom. 7:3, 4, 6; Gal. 2:19). The law was given to the old man, but the old man, the old husband, is dead. Since my old husband is dead, I, as his wife, am discharged from his law. Paul says that the law of the husband governs the wife as long as her husband lives. However, when the husband dies, the wife is free. Our old husband was our old man. Now we are the regenerated new man. Since the law was given to the old husband and since he died on the cross, we are discharged from his law. This is why we are no longer under the law.

3. Married to Christ, the New Husband

Now we are married to Christ, our new husband. We have seen that Romans 7:4 says that we are married to Christ, “even Him Who has been raised from among the dead.” In 2 Corinthians 11:2 Paul also says that he has espoused us to one husband, Christ. Christ is our new husband.

4. Taking Christ as the Head

As regenerated beings, both male and female believers are a part of the wife. Since Christ is our husband we must depend on Him and take Him as our Head (Eph. 5:23). If we do this, we will bear fruit in resurrection to God (7:4) and serve the Lord in newness of spirit (7:6). We will no longer be in the flesh, but in the newness of the spirit.

The deep thought here corresponds to the depth of God’s justification seen in the example of Abraham. In God’s justification He called His chosen people out from everything other than God back to Himself. He called them out of their fallen state back to Himself, that His called and chosen people should not depend upon themselves for their living, but depend upon God for everything. This means that as they come back to God they take Him as their husband. To take God as our husband means to terminate all that we are, have, and do and to trust in God for everything. Taking Christ as our husband also means that we believe in Christ. No longer should we live by ourselves but by Christ. We must let Christ live for us. Hence, the deep thought in Romans 7:1-6 corresponds to the deep thought concerning justification in Romans 4: God’s intention is to bring us back to Himself and cause us to place our full trust in Him. No longer should we live by ourselves, act by

ourselves, or be anything in ourselves. We must be totally terminated, and our head must be completely covered. We are no longer the husband. We, as the old man, have been crucified. Christ is now our husband.

In any wedding ceremony the bride's head is always covered. Thus, at a wedding there are two persons but just one head. The wife's head is covered by the husband, and the husband is the head. What has become of the wife? She is no longer independent. She has been reduced to being nobody in herself. Do you like to hear this? I do. I do not like to hear it because I am a husband, but because I am a part of the wife. I have been completely nullified and I am nobody. Christ is my husband and my head. I have no head of my own. My head has been covered.

Christ is not only my head—He is also my person. The wives must take their husbands as their person, not only as their head. We must even take Christ as our life. Christ is our husband, our head, our person, and our life. We have been terminated and have become nobody. Christ lives in us and for us. I have been fully called out of everything else and called into Him. I believe in Him and put my whole trust in Him. Christ is everything to me. He is my husband, my head, my person, and my life. Therefore, I am fully under grace, no longer under law in any way. The law has nothing to do with me, and I have nothing to do with the law. "Through the law I am dead to the law" (Gal. 2:19). Now in grace I am alive to God.

Are you still loaded with all the old teachings which command you to do so many things? Whenever you try to do anything on your own, it means that you, as the old man once again, are turning to Hagar. All you can produce is Ishmael. Do not join yourself to Hagar, divorce her. Put her aside and tell her that you have nothing to do with her. Then, as the new man, come to Sarah, the grace of God, and in union with her you will produce Isaac, Christ. You will experience Christ and enjoy Him. This is not only correct doctrinally but wonderfully true according to our experience.

Let us consider Galatians 4:21-26 a little further. In this passage Paul allegorizes Hagar and Sarah as two covenants: Hagar as the covenant of the law and Sarah as the covenant of grace. By this we can understand that Hagar typifies the covenant of law and that Sarah typifies the covenant of grace. Thus, Ishmael was produced by the work of the law, and Isaac was brought forth by grace. Galatians 4:31 says, "So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free." This means that we are not

children of the law, but children of grace. Therefore, if we go to Hagar we turn to the law, but if we come to Sarah we turn to grace. We all must come to Sarah and be under grace that we may experience Christ more and more.

[Section 4]

5. Bearing Fruit to God

As a wife we bear fruit to God. What does this mean, and why does Paul mention it in Romans 7:4? When we were in the flesh—that is, when we were the old husband—everything related to us was death. All we could produce was death. Everything we brought forth was a fruit of death and to death. Now as a regenerated person—that is, as the wife—we bear fruit to God. This simply means that everything we do now is related to God. Formerly, whatever we were and whatever we did was death. Therefore, in these verses we see a vivid contrast between death and God, between bearing fruit to death and bearing fruit to God. This proves that when we were the old man and the old husband, held under the law, everything we were and did was death. The result was fruit to death. As a new man and the wife, married to a new husband, whatever we are and do is related to God. We bear fruit to God. What does the phrase "bear fruit to God" mean? It means that God comes forth, that God is brought forth as fruit. Thus, all we are and do must be the living God. We must bring forth God as an overflow of God. In this way we have the living God as our fruit and we bear fruit to God.

6. Serving the Lord in Newness of Spirit

As a wife we must also serve the Lord in newness of spirit, not in oldness of the letter. The word spirit in this verse denotes our regenerated human spirit in which the Lord as the Spirit dwells (2 Tim. 4:22). We may serve in newness of spirit because God has renewed our spirit. Our regenerated, renewed, human spirit is a source of newness for our whole being. With our regenerated spirit everything is new, and everything that comes out of it is new. Oldness is not with our regenerated spirit; it is with the old law, the old regulations, and the old letters. Therefore, we do not serve the Lord in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of our regenerated spirit.

We all must learn how to exercise our spirit. When you come to the meetings of the church, do not exercise your memory. Exercise your spirit. If you exercise your spirit, you will have something new to offer the brothers and sisters. This is also true in giving a message. If I retain a great deal of information in my memory and try to give a message according to this memorized material,

that message will be old, filled with the oldness of dead knowledge. However, if I forget my memory and exercise my spirit as I give the message, something new will burst forth.

We need to exercise our spirit continually because our regenerated spirit is a source of newness. The Lord, the divine life, and the Holy Spirit are all in our regenerated spirit. Everything in our regenerated spirit is new. Do not remember the law, for with the law there is nothing but oldness. In our regenerated spirit there is nothing but newness.

As regenerated people who have been married to Christ as the new husband, we must bear fruit to God. Whatever we do, are, and have must be God Himself. God overflows from our being to become our fruit to God Himself. We must also serve the Lord in newness of spirit, not in oldness of letter, not in oldness of the law. We have nothing to do with the law any longer. We have been freed from it. Now we are under grace, living with and by our new husband, who is Christ.