

INTRODUCTION

Many people think these verses in Romans 7 are confusing and very hard to understand. In fact, some people say, "You ought to just go from Chapter 6 on into Chapter 8, because Chapter 8 is so great!" But I don't believe you ought to do that, I think every verse and every word in the Bible is inspired of God and is there to teach us something.

Paul has been comparing and contrasting in the previous six chapters. He has been comparing a non-Christian (or a person before Christ) to what it means to be a Christian. He has used a lot of different analogies. He has said, "Well, a person who is not a Christian is associated with Adam (as in the Garden of Eden). But now that you are a Christian, you're not 'in Adam,' you are 'in Christ.'" He has used the analogy of a king ruling over. He said before you became a Christian, sin was like a tyrannical king who reigned over you—now, however, you have a new king—king Jesus. He has already used the example of a master and a slave. He said before you were a Christian it was like sin was your master and you were a slave to sin, but you now have a new master and you are a servant to Jesus Christ.

Well, he's going to use this analogy again. He's going to compare a person who is not a Christian—like someone who is married and it's a bad marriage—to someone we're going to call today "Mr. Law." When I say someone is married to "Mr. Law" I mean they are still bound up in the concept they can appease God, they can get God's acceptance by what they do. By keeping the rules, "Thou shalt," "Thou shalt not," "Do this, don't do that." Some people are married to Mr. Law and they think that's how they can relate to God. Well, the Bible says that's a bad marriage.

Instead, we're going to see today where the Bible says there is another marriage! You can be married to Jesus Christ. You can have the relationship with Jesus that is like a marriage and that's the one you should strive for. Now, you have to understand he's using an analogy here, and if you miss the point of the analogy, you've missed it all. In other words, he's not necessarily saying something about marriage; rather he's saying something about the Christian life.

Paul uses the word "law" 28 times in this chapter and as we read through it I'm going to use this analogy of a marriage.

Romans 7:1-6. "Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to men who know the law." Let's back up now, verse 1, Do you not know, brothers, for I am speaking to men who know Mr. Law. Mr. Law has authority over a person for as long as he lives. For example. By law, a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive. But if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an "adulteress." But, if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man. Now, before you think verses 2 and 3 are the doctrine about divorce and re-marriage (which they aren't), note he only uses that as an example. So keep reading verse 4. So my brothers, you also died to Mr. Law through the body of Christ that you might belong (that means in the sense of being married) to another. Now who is this 'other?' To him who was raised from the dead, (we know that to be Jesus) in order that we might bear fruit to God. For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passion

aroused by Mr. Law, they were at work in our bodies so we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from Mr. Law so we serve in the new way of the spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

I think about everyone in this room has studied English grammar and you understand different expressions and uses of speech. Do you understand what a metaphor is? A metaphor is when you're taking one thing and compare it to another to make a point. And you make a mistake if you pay attention to the metaphor itself instead of the meaning. Perhaps one of the most famous metaphors in all of English literature is when the English poet John Donne wrote these words, "No man is an island." Now, do you get the meaning of that? You'll miss the meaning if you pay much attention to "an island." If you hear "No man is an island," and you say, "Oh yes, I know what an island is, and you begin thinking of islands, where they are, what makes up an island," and you spend all of your time thinking about that, you've missed the meaning. The meaning of the metaphor is that no person can live in isolation. All right, here's another metaphor. Actually it's a simile (they say it's a simile if you use the word "like"). Some of you are familiar with this one: "Like sand through the hourglass go the days of our lives." Now there's a meaning there, but you make a mistake if you pay too much attention to an hourglass, to the point of the metaphor. You miss the meaning. That's not a metaphor about hourglasses and sand; it's a statement about how our lives just keep on moving on. All right, I've said all of that to say this. If you read Romans, Chapter 7, and you pay all your attention to what it says about marriage, you're missing the point about what it's saying about the Christian life.

I agree with John McArthur, who says this about verses 2 and 3: "This passage has absolutely nothing to say about divorce and cannot be used as an argument from silence to teach that divorce is never an option for any Christian, and only the death of the spouse give the right to remarry." In other words, Dr. McArthur is saying don't take verses 2 and 3 and say, "Well that's what the Bible says about marriage!" No. What the Bible is teaching us in this passage is what it means to be a Christian. Before a person is a Christian they are married to the law. Once they come to Christ, they are in a relationship with him that can be compared to a marriage. Don't get so tied up in the metaphor that you miss the meaning.

I. OUR BAD MARRIAGE TO MR. LAW

So let's talk about these two marriages. First of all let's talk about our "bad" marriage to Mr. Law. Before you become a Christian you are in a relationship with The Law, and when I say The Law, do you know what I'm talking about? I'm talking about the Ten Commandments. Thou shalt not. I'm also talking about those thousands of other detailed requirements in the Old Testaments about what you can eat, what you can't eat, how you get clean, how you are unclean, the days of the week, and things like that. There are so many of them. And before you become a Christian, most people are bound up in the idea that "God accepts me by what I do. I do good, I be good, and God accepts me." That's what it means to be married to the law. Let's talk about why this is such a bad marriage, such a bad deal. Let me tell you two things about old man "law."

1. Old Man Law demands perfection—he never forgives

Mr. Law says, "Alright. Here is a list of things that you've got to do every single day. And here is a list of things you cannot ever do. If you ever break one of these rules, buddy I'm not going to forgive you—there's no excuse, no forgiveness, you just keep them!" He demands perfection.

Now remember I'm not talking about marriage here, but ladies wouldn't it be awful to be married to a man that all he ever did was make demands of you, give you a list of things you have to do today, and give you a list of things you can't do today, and here's a list of what you have to do tomorrow and a list of the things you cannot do tomorrow. And to make matters worse, he himself is perfect! Wouldn't it be terrible to be married to a man like that? Sure. And that's what it means to be married to the law, because the law is perfect, there's no fault with the law, but there's a demand: "Be Perfect."

2. Old Man Law condemns—he never compliments

Here's the second reason this is a bad marriage. He condemns, he never compliments. That is the nature of Law! The Law always points out what you've done wrong, but never has the time or the energy to compliment when you do things right! Let me give you a modern day example. Have any of you ever been driving down the road and look in your rear-view mirror and see a police car behind you with its lights flashing? You know what that means! When there's a police car behind with its lights flashing, you pull over. Well, you pull over and you're looking in your rearview mirror and a state trooper or policeman gets out and walks up to your window and says, "I want to congratulate you because you have driving the speed limit for the last 10 miles! And I want to give to you a free gift certificate for a dinner at one of the local restaurants! Here you go! Congratulations. You're keeping the law." Has that ever happened to anybody in this room? I didn't think so. The only time you ever deal with the law is when you break it! Now the law is there, but it condemns, it never compliments.

Wouldn't it be terrible to be married to a man who only condemned you, or criticized you, he never complimented you. Ladies, can you imagine being married to a man who only ever said to you is "I hate your hair. It looks ugly. You're overweight. Those clothes don't look good. You stink." He never says, "Honey you look nice. That's a pretty dress. You look so pretty today. Your hair looks great." Never any compliments. That's what's wrong with being married to the law. And you say, "How did I ever get in a marriage like this in the first place?" You didn't have anything to do with it. It was pre-arranged by your family. Particularly by that family member named Adam, remember him a few generations ago? When Adam broke God's law he entered into a relationship with the law that all of us are in by our birth. In other words, you grow up pre-arranged in a marriage to Mr. Law and you need to get out of it!

It's no fun to be married to somebody who is no good. I heard a story about a man who was an awful husband. He always criticized his wife, never showed her affection, never gave her any gifts, came home from work and he would just plopped down with all of his stinky work clothes on and watched television. After awhile, he'd come into the kitchen yelling, "What's for supper?" Then go back and watch television. Never any real sharing and affection. One day, the Lord convicted him about it. Somebody gave him a book about "How to be a Good Husband," and he began reading this book and said, "Y'know, I need to do this!" So one afternoon, he took some clean clothes to work and after work took a shower and got cleaned up, put on cologne so

he smelled nice. On the way home, he stopped by the florist and bought some flowers and stopped by other store and bought some candy and instead of coming in the back door, he walked to the front door of his house, rang the doorbell, and his wife opened the door. There he was, all clean, smelling nice, he stepped through the door, handed her the flowers, handed her the candy, put her in his arms and gave her a Hollywood kiss! Well, she came up for air and he thought she'd be pleased, and she just broke down and wept uncontrollably. He said, "Honey, what's wrong?" She said, "It's been the worst day of my life. This morning the washing machine broke down and flooded the basement, Johnny broke his hand at school and they had to put it in a cast, and your mother called this afternoon and said she's coming for a two week visit, and now here—look at you—you've come home drunk!"

I tell you, it's no good to be in a marriage where you don't get any support or love or acceptance. Well, that's what it's like to be married to the law. He is a cruel husband! So, the whole point of this message is I want to try and convince every one of you to get out of this marriage! Get out of this first marriage, and get into a much better marriage, and here's the second marriage

II. OUR BLESSED MARRIAGE TO KING JESUS

Here is a beautiful analogy. In the New Testament, the Church is described by three words—all of them that start with 'b.' The Church is called the Body of Christ, just like a physical body with Christ as the head. Secondly, the Church is described as a Building with Christ being the chief cornerstone and we are living stones, or living bricks. But the third beautiful picture in the New Testament of the Church is the one we're using today—the Church is the Bride of Christ and He is the groom, and it's like all of us male and female are the Bride! And so, it's a beautiful analogy and, you know, I think it's beautiful because when you are married to someone you have a personal relationship with them.

When I married my wife Cindy almost 25 years ago, I didn't get a "marriage relationship," I got a wife. She and I know each other, we relate to one another, she's my best friend, I talk to her just about every day and she talks to me every day, I love her, she loves me; we're talking about the Christian life here. I'm not talking about a 'religion' where you view Jesus as some religious leader. I'm talking about you having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that is just like a wife to a husband, where he's your best friend, where you talk to each other daily, where you love him and you are secure in his love for you. It's a beautiful picture; it is a blessed marriage!

You say, okay, "How can I get into it?" Well, obviously, you've got to get out of the first marriage before you can get into this one. So here's the first thing I want to say about our blessed marriage to Christ

1. Mr. Law is dead—we must die to him

Don't miss this one—Mr. Law has died, so you're free to marry again but first you've got to die to him. Look at Romans 7. When I read it a few minutes ago, did you catch what some people see as the breakdown in the analogy? For instance, in verses 2 and 3, Paul is saying that in a marriage when the husband dies, his widow can legally marry again. But look at verse 4. He doesn't say that. He doesn't say the *husband* died, he says, "So my brothers, *you* also died to the

Law." Now, I need to say he infers Mr. Law has died, and I believe he has, if you want to write down a scripture reference, Colossians 2:14 says Jesus Christ took the law (the written ordinances against us) out of the way, nailing it to his cross. But I want you to think about what I believe he's trying to teach here.

Before a widow or a widower is free to marry another, not only must his or her mate be dead but they've got to die themselves to that first marriage. I've known some ladies who, when their husbands died were still married to his memory. There was still an allegiance there and they probably never are going to be free again to marry somebody else. In a sense, they are still married to their dead husband. And I want to say that may be fine. It's not God's will for every widow to remarry, but for sure before a widow can ever consider remarriage, she has got to die to that first marriage.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee had a broadcast for years called "Through the Bible." He tells a story related to this verse of scripture. He says he doesn't think it's a true story, and I don't either, but it illustrates the point. Years ago, in the antebellum South, there was a very wealthy man named Frank, a plantation landowner, who was married to a woman with whom he had a wonderful marriage. But Frank died in his 40s. His wife was so broken-hearted and couldn't bear the thought of being without her husband, so instead of burying him, she had his body embalmed and placed inside an air-tight case right there in their house! Instead of letting go of him, she would sit there for hours on end looking at his dead corpse saying, Frank, I miss you so much, Frank, this is what I did today, Frank what should I do about this? Finally some of her friends convinced her saying, "Look, that's not very healthy! You need to go and travel." And so she left, and traveled to Europe. In the course of her travels she met another man and fell in love. When the man asked, "Are you married?" She said, "No, my husband's dead." He said, "Well, I want you to marry me," and she said, "Well, I'm not ready to marry you yet—there's something I've got to do." So she traveled back to the plantation, walked in there where Frank was laid out. She said, "Frank, I love you but you're dead. And the nicest thing I can do for you honey is to bury you!" And so she buried Frank. And once she died to him and died to that first marriage, only then was she free to marry again. And that's the point Paul is making here. The law is out of the way! Jesus took care of that. But you know the problem with a lot of Christians is they are still tied into the law. They still feel the attraction of the law, because this idea of moral goodness to be accepted by God is the most popular belief in America today!

You and I know that outside the church if you go out there among people who aren't Christians and you ask them, "What does it take to go to Heaven when you die?" The vast majority of them will say, "Do good. Be good. Keep the commandments." Right? That's what it means to be married to the law, to a moral code, and you've got to die to that. In Galatians 2:19, Paul writes, "For through the law, I died to the law, so that I might live for God." You're not ready to live for God until you die to the law. A dead person no longer can be controlled by the law. Once you die to the law, it has no control over you whatsoever.

2. This is a permanent union

Well talk about what it means to be married to Jesus. Not only must you die to the law, but this is a permanent union. I think God wants every marriage to be permanent. That's why when a

husband and a wife stand up before a preacher or judge they usually say something like, "'Till death do us part.'" This is going to be a permanent marriage. I assure you, although in human terms there are divorces and there are marriages that end, your marriage (as it were) to Jesus Christ is permanent. Do you know what breaks up marriages? Divorce and death.

a. Divorce is not possible

When you are entered into a beautiful relationship of intimacy with Jesus Christ (that could be compared to a marriage) there will be no divorce. I assure you Jesus is not going to divorce you. Do you know why? It's against the nature of God. Divorce is not in his vocabulary. That is why he says in the book of Malachi, "I hate divorce." Now, I assure you folks once you are entered into this union with Jesus he is never going to leave you or forsake you. As the Bible says, "He's not going to walk out on you." He's there. Divorce is not possible. My own marriage—you've heard me say this before—but my wife and I have already made the decision divorce is not going to be an option for us. I took an X-acto knife, and I cut the word divorce out of our dictionary at home a number of years ago. It's just not an option for us. But like I said before, we don't ever talk about divorce. Jesus is not going to divorce you.

You say, "Pastor, I'm following you here in this little analogy thing, but isn't it true there have been some people who have had a relationship with Jesus and they walked out on him? They, in a sense, divorced the Lord? Why I even know brother so-and-so who used to be so active in the church, used to teach Sunday School, used to tithe, used to sing in the choir. Now he doesn't even darken the doors of the church. It looks to me like he walked out on Jesus and divorced Jesus." I don't think so. You know, you can wear a wedding ring and not even be married. Any single could put on a wedding ring and say, "I'm married!" But it takes more than a wedding ring for you to be married. In the Christian life, baptism similar to a wedding ring. It's the identification of your commitment to Jesus. Folks get baptized all the time who have never truly been born again. It's like this: I do believe once saved, always saved, because I believe once you enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ he's not going to break it, and you can't break it. Well, you say, "It looks like to me like some have." I don't think they were ever truly united with Jesus. I've said it like this before, "The faith that fizzles before the finish was faulty from the first!" They never were truly in relationship with Jesus Christ, because you're in relationship to Jesus, married to him, and you can't walk out on him. I'll tell you why. There's no where you can go to get away from him! A husband may walk out on his wife and she might know where he is but folks, there's no where you can walk out on Jesus and he can't find you! He's going to be right there with you. He says, "Okay. You can walk out, but I'm going with you. If you descent down into Hell (according to Psalm 139), he says I'm there. If you ascend to the highest heights of Heaven, he says I'm there. You can't get away from me." That's why you'd better consider very carefully your commitment to Jesus Christ, because it is a permanent relationship. Divorce is not going to happen.

b. Death will never break it

Death will never break the relationship. In this scenario, the groom can't die because he's already died and he came back from the dead and is alive forevermore! "What about me?" you wonder? If Jesus carries, I'm going to die." Well, yes you are, but the beautiful thing about this

marriage friend is death will only sweeten it. Death will only make it better. Paul says, "For me to live as Christ and to die is gain." Right now my relationship with Jesus, according to 1 Corinthians 13:12 is like looking through a clouded mirror. It's like when you step out of the shower and the fog on the mirror makes it hard to see your reflection. It's obscured. But the Bible says when we die we will be face to face. So death is only going to sweeten it.

About this time, after I've been ranting and raving for awhile, some of you are thinking now pastor, aren't you pushing this marriage analogy a little hard? Does the Bible really teach it? Well would you look at the next scripture, Ephesians 5:31-32. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh." What is Paul talking about? This is a profound mystery, but he's talking about Christ and the church. Folks, it's a mystery. I can't understand it. But when you become a Christian you enter in to a union, a relationship with Jesus, that's like a marriage. What are some other things about this marriage?

3. We receive a new name and a new family

Isn't that what happens when a person gets married? You get a new name and a new family. I know there are some women who retain their maiden names, and I'm not going to argue with any of you about that. I'll just tell you I'm glad when Cindy Chapin married David Dykes 25 years ago, she was willing to change her name to Dykes. Because do you know what she was doing? She was identifying with me. She was saying, "I have a new identify. I am a new person. I have a new relationship, and so I'm going to take on a new name." When you become a Christian you take on a name, and by the way, in the Bible, in the book of Acts it says they call the believers "Christians." You know what that word means? It means a little Christ. An imitation of Christ. That's what we ought to be called, "Christians." Are people calling you that, or are they still calling you by your spiritual, maiden name, because they can't see Jesus in you?

You also get a new family. When I married Cindy I got a new father and a new mother. Mother-in-law and father-in-law, I even got a brother-in-law. Not only did I get that immediate family; I got all the aunts, uncles and cousins! Some of my wife's family is pretty weird but I didn't have any choice whatsoever in that--this was the deal--all right, you marry me, and you get my family. I had no choice in the matter, right? And the truth of it is, when you become a Christian you have no choice in the matter, and you get a whole new family. You know who they are? Brothers and sisters in Christ. Are there any of you in this room who have families in which there are *not* some weird people in it? Not on your side, of course, but on your mate's side? Sure you do. But that's also true in the church. There are some kinda weird people in the church. That's just part of it when you're married to Christ; you get all of them, brothers and sisters alike. You get a new name and you get a new family.

4. We are eligible for a rich inheritance

This was before prenuptial agreements, but in the Episcopal marriage ceremony these words are still quoted, "All my worldly goods I thee endow." Now when Cindy and I married, what we said was, "What's mine is yours and what's yours is mine." And the same thing happens when we are united with Christ. Look at Romans 8:17, "Now if we are children (meaning children of God) then we are heirs. Heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ."

Did you hear about the lady who said, "Oh I love my husband. In fact I worship the very ground his father discovered oil on." There may be some cases like that, but in truth, you married Jesus because he loves you and you love him and a fringe benefit of that is all the blessing of Heaven—a rich inheritance.

5. We enjoy a fruitful union with Jesus

The final benefit I want to talk to you about in your new blessed marriage is the fruitful union with Jesus. Romans 7:4, "So my brothers you also died to (Mr.) law through the body of Christ that you might belong (be married) to another, to him who was raised from the dead." And here's the purpose of that union, "In order that we might bear fruit to God." What does that mean? Let's just take the analogy a step further. When a husband and a wife come together, very often the fruit of that union is children, right? That's what God told Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, he said, "I want you to become fruitful." He wanted them to have babies. A man and a woman come together and the result of that marriage is fruit: children. I know when Cindy and I were married the first fruit of our marriage was a daughter named, Jennifer Christian. In her there was part of me and part of Cindy, part of her grandparents...you know how that works. A few years later, there was more fruit, Laura Grace. Part of me, part of Cindy, part of the grandparents, maybe even part of the great-grandparents. You know how that works. Part of my DNA and part of her DNA united together. A baby's birth is so exciting! The happiest part of a hospital is the obstetrics department. That's the part I always like to visit, because everybody's always happy there. I had a friend in one church who was a charge nurse of an obstetrics wing. She said, "Funny things always happen! One night I was on duty and this father frantically called on the phone and said he was on the way—that his wife was having a baby—was having contractions. And I told him to calm down and asked if this were her first child. He said, after a pause, 'No. This is her husband!'"

The reason you were united with Jesus Christ in a relationship that can be compared to marriage is not just so you can be happy or so you can go to Heaven when you die. The reason is Jesus is interested in producing some fruit in your life. The two of you. Some of you and some of Jesus. Mostly Jesus. Because I want you to see in Galatians 5, nine children that would be born into every true Christian life. "But the fruit of the spirit is: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Against such things, there is no Mr. Law's child. There are no little Law children. This is not produced in the law, but is produced in a relationship with Jesus Christ. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness. We need all of those things. I once told someone I live in fear every Sunday morning that folks are going to kill themselves leaving the church parking lot. People run out and jump in their cars. That's when we need to show kindness, love and peace. It takes the spiritual DNA of Jesus to do these things. You know why? Jesus is love. Jesus is joy. Jesus is peace, he is patience, he is kindness, faithfulness, goodness, gentleness and self-control. And folks, he wants to produce that in your life.

CONCLUSION

What's the difference between living under law and living released from law in a relationship with Jesus? The law of Texas says if you've got a small child you must put him or her into a restraint in the car when you are driving. It breaks my heart to drive around and still see some people with a toddler standing on the front seat. I want to just grab the parent and shake them and say, "Don't you love that child enough to restrain them in the car?" This is what the law says—restrain your children. There may be some people who put their child in a safety seat because the law says to do it and they're afraid that if they get stopped and their child is not in the correct seat, they may get a ticket. You know what motivates them? Fear of being caught. That's what it's like to live under the law. But I know this is true of all of you who have children. You know the reason you put your little child in that safety seat is not because the law of Texas says to do it, but because you love that child. You do it because the very last thing in the world you'd ever want to happen to that child is for him to be hurt. This person does it out of fear—this person does it out of love. I obey the law of God not because I'm afraid, but because I love Jesus. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

OUTLINE

I. OUR BAD MARRIAGE TO MR. LAW

Old Man Law:

1. Demands perfection—he never forgives
2. Condemns—he never compliments

II. OUR BLESSED MARRIAGE TO KING JESUS

1. Mr. Law is dead—we must die to him

For though the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. *Galatians 2:19*

2. This is a permanent union.
 - a. Divorce is not possible
 - b. Death will never break it

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the Church. *Ephesians 5:31-32*

3. We receive a new name and a new family

4. We are eligible for a rich inheritance

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ...*Romans 8:17*

5. We enjoy a fruitful union with Jesus

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. *Galatians 5:22-23*



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes