

Romans

Romans Chapter Seven

Romans 7: 4 {2}

June 20, 2010

This is lesson number 45 in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

Title: “Married to Christ”

Rom 7:1-6

7:1 Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? 2 For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. 4 **Therefore**, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be **married** to another-- to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should **bear fruit to God**. 5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. 6 But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

In Chapter 6, we learned that the believer is one who is baptized by the Holy Spirit into Jesus Christ; into His death, burial, and resurrection. The believer is one who has **died to sin** and therefore can no longer continue in sin.

To continue in sin means that a person continues to sin willfully in thought and deed when they know it to be sin. If a man is dead to sin he can no longer continue in sin. His life will not be characterized by something that he knows to be sin. If a man claims to have received grace and yet continues in willful sin he is deceived.

If a person is a believer he will quit his habitual sin. If he is deceived about his relationship to Christ, he will rationalize his behavior and he will make excuses and he will continue in sin.

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But you say, I still sin. Of course, we all sin, all day and every day, and that is what Paul wrestles with later in this chapter.

“O, wretched man that I am....”

Then in Chapter 7 we learn that a believer should know that he has also **died to law** so that he may be married to Christ. The believer has died to any law system, to any set of rules by which he can be measured as to whether or not he is a believer.

The Greek verb tense used in “died to the law” indicates an event that happened once in the past. When the believer died with Christ, it is Christ who died and the believer is in Christ. Dying to sin and dying to law is **not a process** whereby you strive to die to sin and to law. The believer has died to sin and he has died to law.

Galatians 2:19-21

19 For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."

Dr. Lloyd-Jones says that the law has done all that it can do to the Christian.

We do not dismiss the law of God, as expressed in the Ten Commandments, as being irrelevant. It is God's Law and it is holy and just and good; it will not pass away til heaven and earth have passed away, says Jesus. But when the law has driven us to Christ, it can no longer condemn us. Romans 8:1

Rom 8:1

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

The problem with the churches in Galatia was that after hearing the Gospel of the sufficiency of the blood of Jesus Christ, they were willing to submit to the Law; to go back under law - how utterly foolish!

The **reason and purpose** that we are dead to law is so that we can be married to Christ and bear fruit unto God. This relationship is forever! Do you know why being married to Christ is forever? Because in order to sever this marriage Christ would have to die again.

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The Lord Jesus has died once for all, never to die again - and the believer has died in Christ.

Romans 6: 8-11

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, **dies no more**. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Christ cannot die again and we are in Christ!

Let's look again at this marriage relationship of the believer with Christ. Being married to Christ that we should bear fruit to God.

We briefly looked at this last week, but there is much more to see.

The context of Ephesians 5:22-33 is about the church and relationships and submission to God's order in the church and in the family and in society. And there are some statements in this passage about Christ and the church that should cause us to shout for joy.

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, **just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.** 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." **32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.** 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Ephesians 5:22-33

Did you hear what the church, the body of Christ; what believers should be?
but that she {the church} should be holy and without blemish.

The fruit to God, that is the result of being married to Christ, is holiness.

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What is holiness? Holiness is not a feeling; something subjective. Holiness is not keeping your arms covered, holiness is not refusing to wear makeup, holiness is not letting your hair grow long. Do or don't do those kind of things if you wish, but don't imagine that being under such a law system will make you holy.

Holiness is a life lived to the glory of God and to His praise.

The fruit to God is holiness and the fruit of the Spirit is love:

Galatians 5:22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, {joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control}. Against such there is no law.

Now my list of the characteristics that I suggested last week define a Christian and may sound like a contradiction to what I have said about any set of rules. These are things that I believe will characterize everyone who is married to Christ.

Why is this not a contradiction? Why is my list not a law system?

Because godly obedience comes from the heart in a desire to please God;
“we love Him because He first loved us.”

Legalism produces an obedience out of fear; if I don't do this, God will not bless me; if I do something else, God will punish me. The legalist expects God to reward him or punish him based on what he does or does not do.

The following quote may help us to answer Brother Gables' request to go further into verse 6.

“But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”

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“The Suffering of the Christian”

“When a child of Adam is renewed through the gospel and made a member of the new humanity of which Christ is the head, a great deal changes. The believing sinner is the repentant sinner who seeks to forsake his former ‘no’ to God. He believes the word of God about sin and the forgiveness which is through Christ. He hears the word of God which assures ever believer of sonship freely given on the grounds of the perfect sonship of Jesus Christ. Consequently he wants to live as a son of God and begins the struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. He longs for the return of Christ which will mean his own perfecting and entry into final glory of the kingdom of God.

“But while there are radical and immediate changes that take place for the sinner the moment he believes the gospel and trusts Christ for salvation, there are also many things that remain the same. The believer is not perfected in this life. He remains a sinner, though forgiven. He remains a sinner even though he seeks to eliminate sins. Conversion does not remove us from this world but rather puts us into conflict with it. Salvation is not instantaneous, and the reason is not hard to find. It has pleased God to bring in His kingdom through the gospel which must be preached throughout the world. We shall see later on that this is a perspective which is distinct to the New Testament which modifies quite drastically the perspective of the Old Testament on the coming of the kingdom.

“Thus the believer becomes a child of God, but remains a sinner. He becomes an inheritor of the new age, but remains a dweller in the old age. He receives eternal life but unless Christ comes first, he will suffer sickness and death before he is resurrected to life. The Christian not only does not escape the woes of this sinful world, but he must also be content to lose favour with the world through non-conformity to its standards. Suffering then, is the norm of Christian experience. Far from removing suffering from us, becoming a Christian compounds it. That is why we walk by faith and not by sight. That means that we live according to what we know by faith to be true – that we are the children of God and that our salvation is sure. It means that we do not live by what we experience. Reality cannot be gauged by what we feel or by the circumstances of our lives. What we now possess by faith is in Christ in heaven: ‘Your life is now hidden with Christ in God’ {Colossians 3:3}. That is why John says, ‘Now we are the children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.’ {1 John 3:2}.”

The Goldsworthy Trilogy: The Gospel in Revelation, Graeme Goldsworthy,
Paternoster Press, 2008, pages 183-185

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With that quote I want to emphasize that my list of characteristics, that define a Christian, is not a new law to enslave you, but simply suggestions to help examine ourselves, as we read in 1 Corinthians 11 on the Lord's Supper.

“Let a man examine himself ...” How?

So for the purpose of helping us to examine ourselves, I have come up with seven characteristics that seem to me to be essential in the identification of “Who is a Christian?” A better question: “Who is married to Christ?”

1. A personal knowledge and relationship with Jesus Christ.
2. Authority and Sufficiency of the Scripture; all Scripture.
3. A private prayer and devotional life.
4. Love for God above love for self.
5. Love for others as much as love for self.
6. Fellowship with the saints; meeting with the church.
7. Generous financial support of the local church.

It is not my intention to belabor each of these characteristics because there are volumes written on each of them. Besides, I could preach a series of messages on each one. However, we can distill the essence of each characteristic.

Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:1 ff , Paul uses a pastor as an example.

2 Cor 4:1-6

Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. ² But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. ³ But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

1. **A personal knowledge and relationship with Jesus.**

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By this I mean that Jesus is not an abstract concept, or a set of historical facts to which you subscribe on some intellectual level. Neither am I thinking about some witless idea that Jesus talks directly with you apart from the Scripture.

One time in Tennessee, a man said to me, "Jesus told me to go to Texas." Then he told me, "I told Jesus that I didn't want to go to Texas." But if I would loan him \$50 he would buy a bus ticket and go.

Another time a woman said to me that Jesus told her to divorce her husband.

I told both of them that I thought they were deluded by Satan at best and lying at worst.

What do I mean then? That through the Scriptures, Jesus is the most real person that I know. And all that I know about Jesus is to be found in the Scriptures. He speaks to me in loving encouragement and yes, in loving chastisement, as I meditate on His word.

John 8:31-32

"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

If I am married to Christ, I will have thoughts of Him all of my waking hours.

2. Authority and Sufficiency of the Scripture; all of it.

This characteristic follows closely with the first. If the Scriptures are authoritative in the fullest sense, they will affect your life - the way you think and act - or they are not worth the paper they are written on.

You can accuse me of bibliolatry, making an idol out of God's Word, but you would be wrong.

Answer a question for me. Is the Bible God's word?

If it is God's Word, the written revelation of God in Christ, it must be true!

I have told you before about how the Holy Spirit arrested my mind with the truth. Before I was saved I sat under an expositor of the Bible for nine months. I did not

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want to believe what he preached, and I am not now sure that he believed it, but I could not overcome the power of the Holy Spirit and the truth. I didn't want to believe it, but I knew it was the truth.

Since I was saved nearly 42 years ago, I have studied the Bible almost every day and I have never doubted that it was the Word of God. I still have a lot to learn and my greatest joy is learning more and more about the grace of God.

If I am married to Christ I will desire to know what is written about Him.

3. A private prayer and devotional life.

This obviously follows the second characteristic. If I believe that I have in my possession the Word of God, why wouldn't I find the time to read it?

Personally, I make very little distinction between prayer, where I verbalize my thoughts to the Lord, and reading His Word in a meditative fashion. Read slowly and capture each thought. Pray as you read.

My sister sent me this in an e-mail:

When praying don't give God instructions, just report for duty.

In the Reflections page of the June 10, 2002 issue of Christianity Today, I found this quote:

I AM REMINDED that one old saint was asked, "Which is the more important: reading God's Word or praying?" To which he replied, "Which is more important to a bird: the right wing or the left?"

A.W. TOZER, Jesus, our Man in Glory

As a teacher of the Scriptures, and as a preacher of the Gospel, it is difficult to find the time to read the Bible and not be reading it for the purpose of preaching and teaching. But all of us, especially preachers, must prioritize our life so that there is time for quiet prayer and meditation on the Word of God.

But there is a happy consequence of finding the time for meditative reading.

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Each week as I prepare to teach or preach I have my text in my head. As I read the Bible completely apart from preparing the message, very often the Holy Spirit speaks to me through the Word and I find the most appropriate connections in the Bible to the text that I am working on for that message.

The same thing is true when I am burdened with a pastoral concern. When I least expect it, a word from God will come to me through the Scriptures. And I emphasize: through the Scriptures, not in direct verbal input from God to my brain. The Word speaks to your soul.

I envy, I hope in a good way, men who have been trained in a good seminary. But I would not trade a D Min degree from all the seminaries in the world for 42 years of reading the Bible. And, by God's grace, I will continue to abide in His Word as long as God gives me the mind to do so.

Don't rob yourself of one of the greatest blessings in this life: a daily session of prayer with the Lord in His Word.

If I am married to Christ, I will find the time to commune with Him without the distractions of the cares of the world.

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4. Love for God above love for self.

Something will happen when you are living in God's Word and being led by the Holy Spirit. You will have less resistance to putting the love of God before anything that your sinful nature desires to think about.

Matt 22:34-38

34 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" 37 Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and great commandment.

None of us do this very well. But every believer will want to do this.

The test will come when we have a desire and we know God does not approve and we have to see if we love God more than self.

If I am married to Christ, I will love His heavenly Father more than self.

5. Love for others as much as love for self.

If you can love God above self, it will not be too difficult to love others as much as self.

39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Gal 5:14-15

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

The Apostle John writes: **1 John 4:19-21**

19 We love Him because He first loved us.

20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him:

that he who loves God must love his brother also.

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Some people I know, who claim to be Christians, hate black people. They usually begin a reference to a black person with, “Now I am not prejudiced, but you know those people....” The Bible says that they are liars. And there are black people who claim to be Christians who hate white people. White or black, they cannot think like that and be a genuine Christian.

It is inconceivable to me that a person who has truly experienced the grace of God in being justified, and knowing the miry pit from which he was dug, to think that they are in any way better than another person. Such a person is simply lost.

If I am married to Christ, I will love the people He loves.

6. Fellowship with the saints.

Yes, I'm talking about going to church!

Preacher, do you mean to say that you really expect me to come and meet with the church every time it meets for worship and prayer? Well, yes I do!

What does the Bible say about meeting with the church?

Heb 10:24-25

24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

There are cases where people have jobs that conflict with the times of worship. There is sickness and other reasons that will hinder someone from time to time.

But I am not interested in hearing that you are too tired to come to church. Just face the truth, a person will do what they want to do.

Sister Sara Southard said that she was so glad to be in church, that missing church was like missing a meal.

What about priorities?

Now don't get mad at me for telling the truth. If this is not the truth; convince me from the Word of God that this is wrong.

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If your child has a ball game on church night, are you raising him in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, when your priority is a ball game over church? And when he is grown, and is not interested in attending church, who has taught him that church is not really that important?

You can substitute any other activity that you put above meeting with the church.

Please forgive another personal illustration, but I can stand here before God and you and tell you that since the Lord saved me nearly 42 years ago, that never even once has the question ever entered my mind on Sunday or Wednesday: Am I going to church today?

Henry Mahan, said, "If God saves a man you better build a pew for him." This is not legalism, going to meet with the church is what you should want to do.

If you don't think this is a serious matter, take about 10 minutes this afternoon and read what the risen Jesus said to the messengers of the seven churches in the Revelation 1-3.

But I did get some good advice from my sister when I was expressing my concern to her that so many people didn't seem to care about their church. She said someone told her when she was anxious over her children's lack of interest in spiritual matters; this was years ago and now her children are all involved in church: **"You can't be the Holy Spirit in their life."**

But I still want you to want to fellowship with the saints.

The same e-mail that I mentioned earlier said, "Don't wait for six strong men to take you to church."

If I am married to Christ I will desire to meet with His body which is the church.

7. Generous financial support of the local church.

Generosity in giving is not measured by a quantity, i.e., \$50, or \$100, or a \$1000. Generosity is measured by what you have left. The widow who gave her

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two mites gave more than all of the others because they gave out of their abundance and she gave all that she had.

Nor would I venture to tell another person how much to give except to show them that they should determine that for themselves and then give out of a cheerful heart.

2 Corinthians 9 is clear enough on the principles of giving.

2 Cor 9:6-7

⁶ But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

I can tell you this: Zero is not acceptable!

In my role as an officer of a credit union, where I see a list of bankruptcies every month and there is one thing that is common to all of them.

Priorities.

Some of these bankruptcies involve two income families with over a hundred thousand dollars of income a year. It is not the amount of income that is the problem. You can't convince me that a family can't make it on 75 to 100 thousand dollars a year.

When a person or a family does not have the correct priorities, they will never have enough money.

Now I surely am not a "health and wealth" preacher, like these false prophets on TV, who tell you to send them money so you can get out of debt.

The truth involves biblical principles of stewardship.

Biblical priorities are God first; save for yourself; and live on what's left.

If you spend what you have for "stuff," do not save anything, and give little or nothing to God, you will never have enough, I can guarantee it.

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Another preacher said,
“When God saves a man, he saves his pocketbook too.”

If I am married to Christ I will cheerfully support His church.

We have been looking at being married to Christ.

Isaiah 62:4

4 You shall no longer be termed Forsaken,
Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate;
But you shall be called Hephzibah [Palestine], and your land Beulah [married];
For the LORD delights in you,
And your land shall be married.

The Hebrew word ba` al (baw-al'); a primitive root; to be master; hence, to marry:
- have dominion (over), be husband, marry

Used 15 times in the Old Testament and translated Beulah only in Isaiah 62:4

Isaiah 64:1-5 The Son of God here assures his church of his unfailing love, and his pleading for her under all trails and difficulties. She shall be called by a new name, a pleasant name, such as she was never called by before. The state of true religion in the world, before the preaching of the gospel, no man seemed to have any real concern for. God, by his grace, has wrought that in his church, which makes her his delight. Let us thence learn **motives to holiness**. If the Lord rejoices over us, we should rejoice in his service.

(from Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2000 by Biblesoft)

The meaning of Beulah is to convey the blessing of being married to Christ.

And so I have suggested that a believer in Jesus Christ is characterized by these seven things.

1. A personal knowledge and relationship with Jesus.
2. Authority and Sufficiency of the Scripture.
3. A private prayer and devotional life.
4. Love for God above love for self.
5. Love for others as much as love for self.
6. Fellowship with the saints.
7. Generous financial support of the local church.

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Only when we live such a life can we bear the fruit of holiness to God.

The question then, is not so much do you think that you are a Christian, it is rather:
Are you married to Christ?

Where is your fruit of holiness to God?