

19. Learning What It Means to Be United with Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what it means to be set free from the control of sin because they are no longer under the law. We saw that we want to help them understand that they are no longer under the control of the law. In our topic today, we are going to see that Paul illustrated this principle by the marriage relationship. As we help our children to understand this illustration, it will make it much easier for them to explain to others what it means to be set free from the control of the law.

Romans 7:1-2 says, “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? 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.” Most of the Christians in Rome were Gentiles. However, because many Gentiles had attended Jewish synagogues to learn the moral values of the Old Testament, they were familiar with the law even though they were Gentiles. In addition, all of the Jewish Christians had learned the Old Testament law in the synagogues before they became Christians. As a result, Paul said that he was speaking to those who knew the law. In addition, all countries have a code of laws which has power over the people of that country.

According to the Old Testament law, the law had dominion over a person as long as that person lived. The word translated “dominion” was used twice in Romans 6. There we saw that “dominion” means *to have power over someone*. In Romans 6:9, we saw that death did not have dominion over Christ any longer once He rose from the dead. Then, in Romans 6:14, we saw that sin no longer has dominion over Christians because we are no longer under the law. Instead, we are under grace. Here, we see this principle illustrated by the law of marriage.

When a couple marries, they are bound together by the law of their country. This is due to the fact that laws regarding marriage for any country have their roots in the principle given in Genesis 2:24. That verse says, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” This universal law of marriage means that a couple is bound together by the law as long as both partners live. A woman is bound to her husband as long as her husband lives. However, once the husband dies, the wife is no longer under that law, because the husband has died. When the husband dies, that woman is released from the law of her husband.

The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ. Galatians 3:24-25 says, “Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” Here, we see that the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ but once we come to Christ we are no longer under the law. That is why Romans 6:14 says, “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” Once we died to sin and were raised to new life in Christ, we are no longer under the law of sin. As a result, we are no longer controlled by a sin nature because we have been given a new nature. We can still choose to sin but we are no longer slaves to the sin nature.

Romans 7:3 illustrates this further when it says, “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.” A woman who marries a second husband while her husband is still living is called an adulteress. In the same way, a man who marries a second wife while his wife is still living is called an adulterer. In fact, if either of them has sexual relations with another person while their partner is still alive, they are guilty of committing adultery. In contrast, if the husband dies, a woman is now free to marry another man. In the same way, if a wife dies, a man is now free to marry another woman. They are both dead to the law of their partner because the partner has died.

In the same way, as Christians, we have been set free from the law of sin because we are dead to it. Galatians 5:1 says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” Christ set us free from the law of sin. If we choose to get entangled in the law of sin, we are actually bringing ourselves into a yoke of bondage. That is why Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Here, we see that we have been set free from the law of sin and are now able to serve one another in love.

That is why Romans 7:4 says, “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.” As Christians, we have become dead to the law through the body of Christ so that we can be married to another. In John 3:29, John the Baptist described himself as the friend of the bridegroom. That verse says, “He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.” John the Baptist was filled with joy because people were turning to Christ who is the bridegroom. Then, Ephesians 5:23 says, “For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.” Christ is the head of the church and the Savior of the body because the church is the bride of Christ.

That is why Romans 7:4 says that we have been married to another—to Him who has been raised from the dead. As the bride of Christ, we are dead to the law of sin and alive to Christ who was raised from the dead. That is why we no longer have to yield our lives to sin because we are dead to sin. Instead, we are now free to present ourselves to Christ. We have also been given the power to live this new life in Christ, because we have been raised up together with Christ. Ephesians 2:4-6 says, “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus.” We are made alive through Christ and He has given us the Holy Spirit to give us the power to live a righteous life as we yield to the Holy Spirit.

The last phrase of verse 4 says that we are now able to bear fruit to God. Galatians 5:22-23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” The Holy Spirit causes our lives to bear

this fruit as we yield to Him. No law has ever been written that says it is illegal to bear this fruit.

Romans 7:5-6 says, “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. 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.” Before we became a Christian, we were walking in the flesh instead of walking in the Spirit. At that time, the sinful passions that were a part of the sin nature caused us to choose to do what the law said was sin. The law never caused us to do what was right. It only stirred up our desire to live to satisfy ourselves. As a result, we used our physical bodies to satisfy the desires of the flesh. As a result, we chose to satisfy the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. In satisfying our sinful desires, we showed that we were spiritually dead.

In contrast, we have now been delivered from the law. Just as a woman is no longer under the law of her husband when he dies, we are no longer under the law of sin. As Romans 6:13 says, “And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.” We are now able to present ourselves to God because of the fact that we have been made spiritually alive. As Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” We have been given new life so that we can bear fruit to God.

This new life that we have been given makes it possible for us to serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. It is important to help our children understand what it means to serve in the newness of the Spirit. Galatians 5:25 says, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” Since we now live in the Spirit, we see that we are now able to walk in the Spirit. That has a powerful impact in our lives. Galatians 5:16 says, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” As we show our children how to walk in the Spirit, we will show them that as we walk in the Spirit, our lives do not fulfill the sinful desires of the flesh.

Then, Galatians 5:18 says, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” Here, we see that the Holy Spirit also leads us so that we know the things that are pleasing to God. One of the key things that we want to help our children understand is that we are now led by the Spirit instead of being driven by the sin that controlled our lives for so long. The Spirit leads us in love and 1 John 4:18 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” We want to help our children see that as we walk in the Spirit, He will lead us in love. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children fully understand what it means to be united with Christ.