

The Gospel According to the Laws of Marriage

The Struggle

Introduction:

As God designed it, marriage sets in motion depths of motivation that surge in waves of joy. Each wants to please the other. Each feels an enthusiasm to do and to be what fulfills the other. If such surrendered devotion does not exist, the parties to marriage weary of acting the part, of trying to do what love would do apart from the motivating power of a genuine love. In Ephesians 5 Paul compares genuine love in marriage to the ultimate love story. "And they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:31, 32.)

In Romans 7 Paul contrasts genuine and pretentious love by identifying the laws of cause and effect that attend each. In his allegory describing marriage to these two different "laws" Paul summarizes the true and false gospels, emphasizing the necessity of entering into a genuine love relationship with Christ, becoming one through deep surrender, rather than attempting to be one with Him by acting out works that do not proceed from love.

In his writings, the apostle Paul uses the term "law" in reference to more than just the moral law of the ten commandments. Let's look at some of these other usages.

In the following verse, he refers to two laws, the law of works and the law of faith. Both produce works, one by pretentious love, the other by genuine love. The "law of works" is mis-motivated by pretentious love, being also called, "the works of the flesh," which leads to death which Paul calls the "law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2.)

Romans 3:27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

The "law of faith" produces works of righteousness that is motivated by genuine "love."

Galatians 5:5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. 6) For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Romans 7:1

Paul has been building a gospel theme throughout his message to the Romans, and in chapter 7 he uses an allegory of marriage to help clarify what he has been attempting to convey up to this point, especially in chapters 5 and 6. He continues in Romans chapter 8 by concluding with the remedy for the struggle he is experiencing in chapter 7.

Romans 7:1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

What law is it that has dominion over us as long as we live? The answer can be found in verses 2 and 3.

Romans 7:2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. 3) So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

In Romans 7:1-3 we acknowledge that Paul refers to the law's forbidding adultery, as found in the ten commandments in Exodus 20:14.

Exodus 20:14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

How do we know that the moral law of ten commandments has dominion over us as long as we live? Romans chapter 6 tells us three times that sin, transgression of the law leads to death.

Romans 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Romans 6:21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We know that sin in the transgression of the law.

1John 3:4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

We also know that if there is no law, there is no sin.

Romans 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Romans 4:15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

Romans 5:13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law).

Logically speaking then, if there is death, there has to be sin, and if there is sin, there has to be a law. It stands to reason then that the law has dominion over us as long as we live. Just as there are consequences if we transgress the laws of the land, there are also consequence if we transgress the laws of God. There are consequences when we transgress the laws of health which leads to disease, and natural death, but it is also true that the consequence of transgressing the laws of God, leads to eternal death.

Romans 7:2

Romans 7:2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

• “Law of her husband”

In the above verse, Paul refers to “the law of her husband.” We have already discovered in verse one, Paul referred to the moral law. Now we need to ask ourselves, is the moral law the same law as “the law of her husband?” If Romans 7:1 states that the moral law of ten commandments has dominion over all as long as they live, how can “the woman” be “loosed” from that moral law just because her husband dies? Let’s go on and discover just what “the law of her husband” is.

Romans 7:3

Romans 7:3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

• “but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law;”

The moral law states that a woman cannot be married to two husbands at the same time. In the above verse, Paul states that if her husband dies, she is free to marry another without breaking the moral law of adultery.

Romans 7:4

Romans 7:4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

- “Dead to the law”

Paul has chosen the allegory of one woman being married to two husbands to further illustrate what he taught in Romans 6, that we cannot serve two masters at the same time, one must die if we are to be married to another, that other being Christ. It is only through Christ that the old husband can die.

Romans 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

But Romans 7:4 is often misunderstood to say that we are no longer subject to the law because Christ fulfilled the law in our place, knowing that we cannot keep the law. Does “dead to the law” really mean we are no more subject to the law, or does it mean that we are no more “servants of sin?” Does it mean that the law has no more dominion over us in contradiction of Paul’s initial words, “the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth.”

In Romans 6:14, Paul tells us that we are no longer “under sin” because we are “under grace.” In other words, sin no longer dominates you, because you are under grace, under the power of God to save you from sin. However that beautiful truth is misunderstood to say, “the law shall no longer have dominion over you for you are not ‘under the law’ but ‘under grace.’”

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

The following verse is also used to suggest that the law has no more dominion over us.

Romans 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

But again, this verse is misunderstood. The greek word for “end” is “goal.” It is the law that reveals sin and our need for grace, for a Saviour from sin. It is only when we feel a need for a Saviour, will we seek Him. In the verse below, Paul describes the “goal” of the law is to lead us to Christ. The law teaches us our need.

Galatians 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

In the context of Galatians 3:19–29, which by the way, demands its own time and space to unpack, we discover that the law was added to reveal sin but could not save us, but the purpose of the law was to lead us to Christ who could save us from transgressing it. Romans 3:9 tells us that “all are under sin,” if that is so, all must be “under the law” or subject to the law. Consequently, all need Christ to save them from sin that leads to death.

Once we by faith believe in the One who can save us from sin, we no longer need to focus on the law but to focus on Christ and His power to save us from all sin, and allow Him to work in us to fulfill righteousness.

Paul likens the experience of dying to self in order to be a born again Christian to Christ’s death and resurrection. The old man or “carnal” nature must die, being no longer bound to “the law of sin and death,” but loosed from that law, being raised into “newness of life,” not yielding to sin but unto righteousness. These terms, “carnal,” which means, “fleshly,” and “the law of sin and death,” which are introduced in Romans 8, are useful to help us understand the allegory in Romans 7. Romans 8 reveals the remedy for the struggle Paul experiences in Romans 7.

Romans 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? 4) Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5) For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His

death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: 6) Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

The “old man” must die “that the body of sin might be destroyed,” which is called “the law of sin,” such that, “sin shall no longer have dominion over you.” Paul inquires, “who shall deliver me from the body of this death, this “law of sin and death?” In other words, who shall deliver me from the dominion of sin over me and its deadly consequences? Notice that Paul asks not “*What*” but “*Who* shall deliver me,” confessing his need of a Saviour.

Romans 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Christ is the answer to the sin problem!

Romans 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. ...

Christ has made the provision for us to be saved from death by grace through faith, and He has also made provision to save us from the sin that leads to death, and from a sinful world. These provisions are often stated as;

- Christ has saved us from the penalty of sin.
- Christ can save us from the power of sin.
- Christ has promised to save us from the presence of sin.

All these provisions have been made, and they are gifts, but they must be received in order to accomplish their purposes. We have a part to play in their fulfillment by acting in faith. We must kill that “old man,” that “fleshly” nature, “that body of death,” by allowing the Spirit of God to work in us. If we through the Spirit, do “mortify” that “old man,” we “shall live” and if we don’t, we “shall die.”

Romans 8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

In Romans 7, it is the “husband” or the “old man” that must die if we are to be married to the new husband, which is Christ.

Paul says the same thing in yet another, clearer way in Galatians.

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.

If we choose to die to self and let Christ reign in us, we shall no longer be slaves to sin, but to righteousness.

Romans 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Romans 6:18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

The provision to be freed from sin has been made, and by choice we can be willing servants to God and the end, everlasting life.

Romans 6:22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

The “old man” that “sinful nature,” must die and we must become partakers of a new nature if we are to live forever. That new nature is the new husband, called “the divine nature.” It is only then that we can escape sin and its consequences.

2Peter 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

2Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Jesus partook of our “sinful nature” that we might “be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust,” “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Romans 7:5

Romans 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

- **“For when we were in the flesh”**

Paul is here referring to being married to the “old man,” the first husband. This marriage to the flesh produces sinful “fruit unto death.”

- **“the motions of sins, which were by the law”**

In other words, our sins are identified by the moral law they transgress.

Romans 7:6

Romans 7:6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

- **“delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held”**

We have been “delivered” from the consequences of transgression of the law, which is death. If we have been “crucified with Christ,” we are now married to Christ, and under grace, therefore we are no longer bound to the first husband in which we were “held” in bondage.

- **“newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter”**

The moral law which is protective of the marriage between Christ and His church, is no longer just written in stone, but in the heart, as represented by “circumcision” of “the heart.” When it is written in the heart, the commandments are kept through a deep intimate relationship with Christ.

Romans 2:29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

Romans 7:7

Romans 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

- **“Is the law sin?”**

Throughout Paul’s writings, he emphasizes that the moral law cannot save us, but it does have a purpose, and that is, to lead us to Christ who can save us through faith.

Romans 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

“Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea,” we “hold up” or “stand by” the law.

Romans 7:16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

Galatians 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

Galatians 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

Galatians 5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Romans 7:8–11

Romans 7:8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence [longing, desire, lust]. For without the law sin was dead. 9) For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. 10) And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. 11) For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

- **“For without the law sin was dead”**

Paul at one time believed that he was blameless concerning the law as he states in the following verse.

Philippians 3:6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

But after reflecting on the law of covetousness, he realized he was in fact a sinner and not blameless but subject to the consequences of sin which is death. The commandments were given to protect us from sin and death. While we are married to the old nature, the laws are not seen as protective but forbidding.

1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.

Romans 7:12

Romans 7:12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Paul concludes that the law is not sin, but “holy, and just, and good.” The law doesn’t need changing, he does.

Romans 7:13, 14

Romans 7:13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

In the above verses, Paul states that the purpose of law was not to condemn him, but to reveal to him his sinful nature and how destructive sin is.

Romans 7:14, 15

Romans 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15) For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

In the above verse, Paul restates the fact that it is not the spiritual law that needs to be done away with or changed, but the carnal [fleshly] nature which binds him that needs changing. He begins explaining the

struggle he is having. Keeping with the allegory, the old husband to which he is enslaved, needs to die so that he can be married to Christ.

Paul is not in this spiritual condition as he writes his letter to the Romans, as is shown by the very start of his letter.

Romans 1:1 Paul, a servant [slave] of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

In Romans 7, Paul is reflecting on the previous struggle he was having in being crucified with Christ, and becoming a new creature. He encourages us to “reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” Romans 6:11.

Romans 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Galatians 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

2Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.

Colossians 3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3) For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4) When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.

Romans 7:16

Romans 7:16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

In the above verse, Paul again is stating that the law has convinced him of his sin.

Romans 7:17

Romans 7:17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Paul is continuing to develop the struggle between what his inner man wants to do, and what his carnal nature wants to do, that old husband that controls him.

Romans 7:18

Romans 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

Paul is recognizing that it is impossible in his flesh, his carnal nature, to do that which is good. His desire is to do good but he does not know how to perform righteousness. At this point in his experience, it appears that he is unfamiliar with the truths in the following verse.

Mark 10:27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

I love the analogy that sin is like quicksand. Once you are in it, you can will to get out and you can work to get out, but it ain't gonna happen. Someone must help you get out, and that someone is Christ. The old husband, the old nature has to die and you must be married to Christ and have that intimate relationship the Scriptures portray.

Ephesians 5:31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32) This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Paul has a burden for souls to realize the gospel truths that he has come to understand, both by experience and by being taught of the Lord.

2Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Romans 7:19

Romans 7:19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

Romans 7:20

Romans 7:20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

All the while I desire to do good, and yet I do not mortify the old nature, sin has the dominion over me.

Romans 8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Colossians 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

Romans 7:21

Romans 7:21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22) For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

• I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

Paul is reiterating the fact that he is not able to perform the good that he desires to do. He continues to describe this condition in the following verse.

Romans 7:23

Romans 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

He sees “the law of sin,” the fleshly nature, that old husband warring against his desire to be freed from sin.

Romans 7:24, 25

Romans 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25) I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Paul cries out for deliverance from this sin condition, “the law of sin,” that dwells in his flesh, recognizing that just desiring this deliverance is not enough. He desires to be a “new creature,” to be delivered from the sinful nature, realizing the end is death. He concludes Christ is the answer to his struggle. The old husband must die and he must marry Christ and allow Christ to live in him in order to free him from “the law of sin and death” by allowing a new nature, a new law, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ” to set him free from “the law of sin and death.”

Romans 8:1, 2

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.