

Studies in Romans – Union with Christ

E. J. Waggoner, Chapter 7

The seventh chapter of Romans is really all contained in the sixth. He who understands the sixth chapter will have no difficulty with the seventh. Let us therefore, before beginning with the seventh chapter, recall briefly the points brought out in the last few lessons.

By Christ's obedience we are made righteous (II Corinthians 5:21). This is because His Life is now given to us, and He lives in us. The obedience of Christ which saves us is His present obedience in us. And the obedience is to the law.

This union with Christ we get by being crucified with Him. **In that death** the body of sin is destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin, or, in other words, that we should no more transgress the law. So closely are we identified with sin, it being our very life, that it can not be destroyed without our dying. But in Christ there is no sin, so that while we have a resurrection with him, sin remains dead. So, being raised with Him, we live with Him, a thing that was formerly impossible on account of sin; sin can not dwell with Him.

A Striking Illustration

“Know ye not, brethren (for I speak to them that know the law - instructions), how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? 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.

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, *then* she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ . . .

"for we are His body, yea, members of His flesh and of His bones". . . (Ephesians 5:25-30); that ye should be married to another, even to Him Who is raised from the dead, so that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

For when we were in the flesh, the motions (action) of sins, which were (classified as such) by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death (Romans 6:23). **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. **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 (carnal desire), except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Rom. 7:1-7.

Questioning the Text

To whom does the apostle speak in this chapter?

"I speak to them that know the law."

What are such expected to know about the law?

"That the law hath dominion over a man so long as he liveth."

What illustration of this is given?

"The woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth." What takes place when the husband dies?

"If the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband."

If while her husband was alive she should be married to another man, what would the law call her? "An adulteress."

But what if her husband be dead?

"She is no adulteress, though she be married to another man."

Why not?

"She is free from that law."

What personal application is made of this illustration?

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law" – (to its claims for my death).

By what means?

"By the body of Christ."

For what purpose?

"That ye should be married to another." To what other?

"Even to Him Who is raised from the dead."

To what end?

"That we should bring forth fruit unto God."

What fruit was brought forth when we were in the flesh?

"Fruit unto death."

What was it that produced this fruit unto death?

"The motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." What gave them that power?

"The law."

But now what has taken place, since we are married to him that is raised from the dead? "But now we are delivered from the law."

How is it that we can be married to another, and still be free before the law? "That being dead wherein we were held."

What is the difference in the service now and then?

"That we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." What shall we say then? Is the law sin?

"God forbid." Far from it. What proves that?

"I had not known sin, but by the law."

What special commandment revealed the greatness of sin?

"I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

The Illustration – It is a very simple one, and one which every one can understand. The law of God says of man and woman, "[They two shall be one flesh.](#)" It is adultery for either one to be married to another while the other is living. The law will not sanction such a union. For reasons that will appear later, the illustration cites only the case of a woman leaving her husband. **The law unites them.** That law holds the woman to the man as long as he lives. If while her husband lives she shall be united to another man,

she will find herself under the condemnation of the law. But if her husband dies, she may be united to another, and be perfectly free from any condemnation. She is then "free from the law," although the law has not changed in one particular.

Least of all has it been abolished; for the same law that bound her to the first husband and which condemned her for uniting with another in his lifetime, now unites her to another and binds her to him as closely as it did to the first. If we hold to this simple illustration, we shall have no difficulty with what follows. {April 16, 1896 EJW, SITI 243.47}

The Application

As in the illustration there are four subjects, the law, the woman, the first husband, and the second husband so also in the application. We are represented as the woman. This is clear from the statement that we are "married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead," which is Christ. He therefore is the second husband. The first husband is indicated in verse 5: "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." Death is the fruit of sin. The first husband, therefore, was the flesh, or "the body of sin."

"Dead to the Law"

This is the expression that troubles so many. There is nothing troublesome in it, if we but keep in mind the illustration and the nature of the parties to this transaction. Why are we dead to the law? In order that we might be married to another. But how is it that we become dead in order to be married to another? In the illustration it is the first husband that dies before the woman may be married to another. Even so it is here, as we shall see.

"One Flesh"

The law of marriage is that the two parties to it "shall be one flesh." How is it in this case? The first husband is the flesh, the body of sin. Well, we were truly one flesh with that. [We were by nature perfectly united to sin \(Romans 5:12-19 and 8:2-4\)](#). It was our life. It controlled us. Whatever sin devised, that we did. We might have done it unwillingly at times, but we did it nevertheless. Sin reigned in our mortal bodies, so

that we obeyed it in the lusts thereof. Whatever sin wished, was law to us. We were one flesh.

Seeking a Divorce

There comes a time in our experience when we wish to be free from sin. It is when we see something of the beauty of holiness. With some people the desire is only occasional; with others it is more constant. Whether they recognize the fact or not, it is Christ appealing to them to forsake sin, and to be joined to Him (I Corinthians 6:16-17), to live with Him. And so they endeavor to effect a separation. But sin will not consent. In spite of all that we can do, it still clings to us. We are "one flesh," and it is a union for life since it is a union of our life to sin. There is no divorce in that marriage.

Freedom in Death

There is no hope of effecting a separation from sin by any ordinary means. No matter how much we may desire to be united to Christ, it can not be done while we are joined to sin; for the law will not sanction such a union (ref: I John 3:9), and Christ will not enter into any union that is not lawful.

If we could only get sin to die, we should be free, but it will not die. There is only one way for us to be freed from the hateful union, and that is for us to die. If we wish freedom so much that we are willing to be crucified, then it may be done. In death the separation is effected; for it is by the body of Christ that "we" become dead. We are crucified with him (Romans 6:10-11). The body of sin is also crucified. But while the body of sin is destroyed, we have a resurrection in Christ. The same thing that frees us from the first husband, unites us to the second.

A New Creature

Now we see how it is that we are dead to the law (Romans 6:23). We died in Christ, and were raised in Him. But "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away (dead); behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God." 2 Cor. 5:17, 18.

Now we may be united to Christ, and the law will witness to the union, and sanction it.

For not only is the first husband dead, but we also died, so that, although alive, [we are not the same creature](#) that we were before. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Gal. 2:20. We are One (at-one-ment). The same law that formerly declared us to be sinners now binds us to Christ.

A Different Service

Now that the union with Christ has been effected, we serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. In marriage, the woman is to be subject to the husband. So when we were united to sin, [we were in all things subject to sin](#). For a time it was willing service; but when we saw the Lord, and were drawn to Him, the service became irksome. We tried to keep God's law, but were bound, and could not. But now we are set free. Sin no longer restrains us, and our service is freedom. We gladly render to Christ all the service that the law requires of us. **We render this service** because of the perfect union between us. His life is ours, since [we were raised only by the power of His Life](#) (Colossians 3:3). Therefore our obedience is simply His loyalty and faithfulness in us.

Sin by the Law

The apostle says that 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." [What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Far from it.](#) The law is righteousness. But it is only by the law that sin is known. "Sin is not imputed when there is no law." "The sting of (poison which causes) death [is sin](#); and the strength of sin is (it's power comes from) the law." 1 Cor. 15:56. "[Sin is the transgression of the law.](#)" So there can be no sin but by the law. But the law is not sin; for if it were, it would not reprove sin. To convince of sin is the work of the Spirit of God, and not of Satan. He would make us believe that sin is right.

"Thou Shalt Not Covet"

It once seemed very strange that the apostle should have quoted only this one commandment as the one that convicted him of sin. But the reason is plain. It was because [this one includes every other](#). We learn (Col. 3:5) that covetousness is idolatry. Thus the law ends just where it begins. It is a complete circle, including every

duty of every person in the universe. "I had not known lust," or unlawful desire, "except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

Now lust (carnal desire) is the beginning of every sin, for "when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." James 1:15. And sin is the transgression of the law. But the tenth commandment is that one which forbids lust or unlawful desire. Therefore, if it is perfectly kept, all the others must be. And if it is not kept, no part of the law is kept. So we see that in quoting the tenth commandment as that which convinced him of sin, the apostle really included the whole law.

Living with Him

Before leaving this portion we must call attention to the force of the eighth verse of chapter 6: "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him." We can see how apt this is when we know that [it is our death with Christ that frees us from the union with the monster sin](#), and unites us in marriage to Christ. People get married in order to live together. So we become united to Christ in order that we may live with Him here and in the world to come. If we would live with Him in the world to come, we must live with Him in this world. E. J. W. {April 16, 1896 EJW, SITI 244.10} The Signs of the Times 22, 16.

April 23, 1896 - "Studies in Romans. The Law of Sin" The Signs of the Times 22, 17. E. J. Waggoner

In the first seven verses of the seventh chapter of Romans we have had the relation which we by nature sustain to sin, and which by grace we afterwards sustain to Christ, represented under the figure of marriage to a first and second husband. The union with the second husband can not take place while the first husband is living; and in this case the marriage is so perfect, the two parties being literally one flesh and blood, that one can not die without the other; therefore we must needs die with sin, before we can be separated from it. But we die in Christ, and as he lives, although he was dead, we also live with him. But in his life there is no sin, and so the body of sin is destroyed, while we are raised. Thus in death we are separated from the first husband, sin, and united to the second husband, Christ. {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 259.1}

In the verses which follow the apostle has pictured the struggle with the sin that has become distasteful. It is really an enlargement of that which has been presented in the first verses. It is the story of {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 259.2}

The Struggle for Freedom

"Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. 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. For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is not more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 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. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; 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. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 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." Rom. 7:8-25. {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 259.3}

Altho [SIC] this is a long portion of Scripture, it does not need so long treatment as some shorter portions, since there are several repetitions. For instance, the statement in verse 15 is repeated in verses 19 and 20. Verses 17 and 21 are also the same thought, as also verses 18 and 23. The points, however, will doubtless appear very

much more clearly by the usual {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.1}

Questioning the Text

What does the apostle say that sin wrought in him? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.2}

"Sin. . . wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.3}

How did it do this? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.4}

"Taking occasion by the commandment." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.5}

What was the condition of sin without the law? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.6}

"Without the law sin was dead." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.7}

But what was the apostle's condition without the law? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.8}

"I was alive without the law." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.9}

What change occurred when the commandment came? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.10}

"When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.11}

What did he find the commandment to be? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.12}

"The commandment. . . I found to be unto death." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.13}

Yet for what was the commandment designed? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.14}

It was "ordained to life." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.15}

What did sin do? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.16}

"Sin. . . deceived me, and. . . slew me." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.17}

How had it the power to do this? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.18}

"Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.19}

What was it that deceived or slew him, the law, or sin? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.20}

"Sin. . . deceived me, and. . . slew me." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.21}

Wherefore what is true of the law? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.22}

"The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.23}

Was then that which was good, namely, the law, made death unto him? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.24}

No; "but sin. . . working death in me by that which is good." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI

260.25}

Why was this? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.26}

"That it might appear sin;" "that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.27}

What do we know of the law? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.28}

"We know that the law is spiritual." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.29}

But what about ourselves? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.30}

"But I am carnal." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.31}

And therefore in what condition? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.32}

"Sold under sin." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.33}

What do we call one who is bought and sold? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.34}

A slave. {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.35}

What is the evidence that the one who is carnal is a slave? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.36}

"That which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.37}

What is shown by the fact that he does the evil that he hates? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.38}

"I consent unto the law that it is good." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.39}

Therefore who is it in reality that does the evil works? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.40}

"It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.41}

To what law is such an one subject? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.42}

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.43}

In what does he delight? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.44}

"I delight in the law of God." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.45}

How does he delight in the law of God? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.46}

"After the inward man." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.47}

Then why does he not obey it? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.48}

"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." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI

260.49}

In what condition is such an one? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.50}

"O wretched man that I am!" {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.51}

What is his distressed cry? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.52}

"Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.53}

Is there any hope of deliverance? {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.54}

"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.55}

Sin Personified

It will be noticed that in this entire chapter sin is represented as a person. It is the first husband to which we are united. But the union has become distasteful, because, having seen Christ and having been drawn to him by his love, we have seen that we were joined to a monster. The marriage bond has become a galling yoke, and our whole thought is how to get away from the monster to which we are united and which is dragging us down to a certain death. The picture presented in this chapter is one of the most vivid in the whole Bible. {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.56}

The Strength of Sin

"The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." 1 Cor. 15:56. "Without the law sin was dead." "Sin is not imputed when there is no law." "Where no law is, there is no transgression." So it is that "sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." Sin is simply the law transgressed, "for sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4. Sin has no strength, therefore, except that which it gets from the law. The law is not sin, and yet it binds us to sin, that is, the law witnesses to the sin and will not grant us any escape, simply because it can not bear false witness. {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.57}

The Law of Life, and the Law of Death

"The commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." The law of God is the life of God. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matt. 5:48. His life is the rule for all his creatures. Those in whom the life of God is made perfectly manifest, keep his law. It is very evident therefore that the design of the law is life, since it is life itself. But the opposite of life is death. Therefore

when the law is transgressed, it is death to the transgressor. {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.58}

The Deadly Enemy

"For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." It is not the law that is the enemy, but the enemy is sin. Sin does the killing, for "the sting of death is sin." Sin has the poison of death in it. Sin deceived us so that for a time we thought that it was our friend, and we embraced it and delighted in the union. But when the law enlightened us, we found that sin's embrace was the embrace of death. {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.59}

The Law Cleared

The law pointed out the fact that sin was killing us. "Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." We have no more reason to rail at the law than we have to hate the man who tells us that the substance which we are eating, thinking it to be food, is poison. He is our friend. He would not be our friend if he did not show us our danger. The fact that he is not able to heal the illness that the poison already eaten has caused does not make him any the less our friend. He has warned us of our danger, and we can now get help from the physician. And so, after all, the law itself was not death to us, but its office was "that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.60}

"The Law Is Spiritual."

"For we know that the law is spiritual." If this fact were more generally recognized, there would be much less religious legislation among so-called Christian nations. People would not try to enforce the commandments of God. Since the law is spiritual, it can be obeyed only by the power of the Spirit of God. "God is Spirit" (John 4:24); therefore the law is the nature of God. Spiritual is opposed to carnal, or fleshly. Thus it is that the man who is in the flesh can not please God. {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.61}

A Slave

"But I am carnal, sold under sin." One who is sold is a slave; and the evidence of the

slavery in this instance is very plain. Free men do that which they wish to do. Only slaves do that which they do not wish to do, and are continually prevented from doing what they wish to do. "For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." A more disagreeable position can not be imagined. Life in such a state can be only a burden. {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.62}

Convicted, but Not Converted

"If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good." The fact that we do not wish to do the sins that we are committing shows that we acknowledge the righteousness of the law which forbids them. But conviction is not conversion, although a very necessary step to that condition. It is not enough to wish to do right. The blessing is pronounced upon those who do his commandments, and not upon those who wish to do them, or who even try to do them. Indeed, if there were no higher position for a professed follower of the Lord than that described in these verses, he would be in a far worse condition than the careless sinner. Both are slaves, only the latter is so hardened that he finds pleasure in his slavery. Now if one must all his life be a slave, it is better for him to be unconscious of his bondage than to be continually fretting over it. But there is something better; therefore it is a blessing that we are convicted of sin, and that our slavery is thereby made as disagreeable as possible. {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.63}

Two Laws

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; 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." Compare this with verse 5. Remember also that all this is written to them that know the law. It is not addressed to the heathen who have not the law, but to those who profess to know God. While knowing the law, we are united in marriage to sin. This sin is in our flesh, since they who are married are one flesh. It is the law that witnesses to the fact that we are sinners, and that will not grant us any escape from it. But we are slaves. Whosoever commits sin is the slave of sin. John 8:34. Therefore it is that the law that will not let us be anything but what we are, is really holding us in bondage. While we are in that condition, it is not to us a law of liberty. {April 23, 1896

A Body of Death

We are joined in marriage to sin. But sin has in it death; for "the sting of death is sin." Sin is that with which death kills us. Therefore the body of sin, to which we are joined when in the flesh, is but a body of death. What a terrible condition! Joined in such close union that we are one flesh with that which is in itself death. A living death! And "the strength of sin is the law." It witnesses to our union, and thus holds us in that bondage of death. If there were no hope of escape, we might curse the law for not allowing us to die in ignorance. But although the law seems to be pitiless, it is nevertheless our best friend. It holds us to a sense of the dreadfulness of our bondage until in anguish we cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" We must be delivered, or we perish. {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.65}

A Deliverer

The pagan proverb has it that God helps those who help themselves. The truth is that God helps those who can not help themselves: "I was brought low, and he helped me." No one ever cries in vain for help. When the cry goes up for help, the Deliverer is at hand; and so, although sin is working death in us by all the power of the law, we may exclaim, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 15:57. "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Rom. 11:26. "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Acts 3:26. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.66}

A Divided Man

"So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." That is, of course, while in the condition described in the preceding verses. In purpose he serves the law of God, but in actual practice he serves the law of sin. As described in another place, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye can not do the things that ye

would." Gal. 5:17. It is not a state of actual service to God, because we read in our next chapter that "they that are in the flesh can not please God." It is a state from which one may well pray to be delivered, so that he can serve the Lord not merely with the mind, but with his whole being. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." 1 Thess. 5:23, 24. E. J. W. {April 23, 1896 EJW, SITI 260.67}