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**BIBLE STUDY.****LETTER TO THE ROMANS. — NO. 11.**

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"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? For a 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, 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; that ye should be married to another even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin, which were by the law, did work in our bodies to bring forth fruit unto death. 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." Rom. 7:1-6.

The ground covered by this seventh chapter is really gone over twice. The first part lays the broad facts before us; the latter part goes into the details and particulars of what is given in the beginning.

In the six verses that have been read, there is given us an illustration and the application. The illustration is easily understood. The simple fact of marriage is taken. A woman having a husband is bound to that husband so long as he liveth. By what is she bound? By the law. It is contrary to the law for her to have two husbands at the same time; but if the first husband be dead, the same law will allow her to marry another man. This is but a plain illustration, and if it is kept in mind throughout the study of the chapter, it will be a great help to us in understanding it.

There is no need of any argument in this chapter for the perpetuity of the law. That is not the question under consideration. The apostle is not making a special argument to prove that the law is not abolished. His argument starts from that point as one already settled, and shows the practical working of the law in individual cases. He brings it right home to the hearts of men that they are under the law; and if they are under it, how can it be abolished? He urges its claims upon the hearts of men, and by the Spirit of God they feel its working power upon them, and therefore know that it is not abolished.

Note the class of people to whom Paul is writing. "I speak to them that know the law." This epistle is addressed to professed followers of Christ. We find that in the second chapter, commencing with the seventeenth verse: "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God."

Now to the illustration: While the law will not allow the woman to be united to two husbands at the same time, it will allow her to be united to two in succession. It is the law that *allows* her, and it is the law that *unites* her. The same law that unites her to the first husband, also allows her to be united to the second, after that the first is dead. This is easy to be understood, and there is no need to consider it further.

Now to the application: "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 ye should bring forth fruit unto God." We can determine who the two husbands are by beginning with the second one. The "another" to whom we are to be married, is the one who has been raised from the dead, and that is Christ. *We* are one of the parties in the second marriage, and *Christ* is the other. He is the second husband.

The question now arises, who was the first husband that died, in order that we might be united to the second? The sixth chapter has answered that. Compare Rom. 7:5 with Rom. 6. "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." The law held us in the first union, and now to what were we united? What were we in? We were in union with the FLESH. In the sixth chapter we found that the body of sin is destroyed by Christ. By what means is it that the body of sin becomes destroyed? By the man being crucified with Christ.

In the first place we are joined to sin,—the sinful flesh. We cannot serve two masters. Here are two figures. We are servants to one master,—united to one husband. We cannot serve two masters at the same time, and we cannot be united to two husbands at the same time. But we can be united to two in succession. The first one of these, to whom we have all been united, is the body of sin; the second is Christ, who is raised from the dead.

The question arises, what is meant by our being *dead to the law* by the body of Christ? That brings us to the point where the illustration fails us. The illustration fails us,—why? Because it is utterly impossible to find anything in life that will correctly represent in every particular divine things. There is no illustration that will serve in every particular. That is why we have so many types of Christ. No one person could serve as a complete type of him. We have Adam in one place as a type of Christ; we have Abel; we have Moses; we have Aaron; David; and Melchisedek, and many others who

represent different phases of Christ, because there is no one of them who could represent him in every particular.

So when the apostle would represent the union of all people with the house of Israel, he says, "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this *mystery*." It is a mystery, it is something unnatural. He says that it is a grafting process, but that it is contrary to the natural method. Therefore this illustration of marriage cannot be considered as complete in every particular. And yet, after all, the illustration does not fail, if we choose to consider that the union with the first husband is a criminal connection. It is so in the application. Those who are united to the flesh are guilty of a capital crime. The law holds them in that connection,—i.e., it will not allow them to lightly dissolve the union, and pass it by as though nothing had taken place,—but it demands their life. With this explanation we can understand what follows.

We find that we are united with sin, and with the body of sin. Then Christ comes to us and he presents himself as the one altogether lovely. And in reality he is the only one who has any real claim upon us. "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." The apostle is writing to those who know the law, and who have left their first love; and what applies to them, will also apply in larger measure to those of the world. Christ comes to the door of our hearts, and knocks, and begs that we will come to him. He has spread out his hands all the day unto a rebellious people, "which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts." How deep, how unfathomable is the love of God!

In Jer. 3:1 we read, "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; *yet return again to me, saith the Lord*." Paul in writing to the Corinthians says, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

Now we desire that loveliness of character, which can be found only in Christ. We find that this union in which we are held—with the flesh—is not a pleasant union, but the husband to whom we are wedded is a task-master, he is a tyrant who grinds us down so that we have no liberty. The flesh is tyrannical, and it holds us down, and makes us do, not as we wish to do, but as it wishes us to do. When we by the aid of Christ come to feel that this union is a galling bondage, then we awake to the real state of our condition, and realize that whereas it may have satisfied us for a time, now we hate it and desire to rid ourselves of it, and become united to Christ.

But here is where the difficulty comes in. It is expressed in the words of James 4:4. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Do you think that it is vain that Christ hath said, "What communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" Now while we still remain in the flesh we desire to take the name of Christ. Of course it is impossible for us to really be joined to Christ and still cling to the body of sin, although to outward appearance we may be able

to do it. We cannot actually be united to Christ and the world at the same time. We cannot have Christ for our husband, and at the same time be living with the world.

But we can take the *name* of Christ and at the same time retain the sins of the flesh. But the law will not justify a person who does this,—who takes the name of the one man, and at the same time lives with another. The law of God does not justify us in taking the name of Christ, and in living with the flesh. Are we justified then in taking the name of Christ,—in saying that we are united to Christ, and at the same time in living in union with the body of sin? No, certainly not.

Here again we find how the law is guarded at every step in this matter of justification by faith in Christ. Here every possibility is cut off for a person to say,—I am Christ's and Christ is mine, and no matter what I do, it is Christ that does it in me. No; that is not so. We cannot charge any sin to Christ; he is not responsible for any sin, for the law does not justify us in committing any sin. So we see that justification by faith is nothing else but bringing a person into perfect conformity to the law. Justification by faith does not make any provision for transgression of the law.

But we will proceed to consider the case of those who have been unconscious of the claims of the law, while professing it. Paul speaks to those who know the law, and who make their boast in the law, and profess to exalt the law, and at the same time they are so blind to the requirements of the law, that they have thought they could profess Christ, and live in sin. It is not always those who profess to fear that the honor of the law will be lowered, that realize its claims to the fullest extent. Some have even preached the law, and have at the same time thought that they could live in the indulgence of the lusts of the flesh, while thinking that they were united with Christ.

Now Christ has been set before us, and we see that we cannot be united to Christ and the body of sin at the same time. Then we say that we will give up that first husband,—the body of sin, and become united with Christ. But how can we get free from this body of sin,—this first husband? We cannot cause it to die by simply saying that we wish it were dead. The woman who has a loathing in her heart for her husband, because he is a brutal tyrant, cannot cause herself to be separated from him by simply desiring it. It is a good thing to want to serve Christ, if we have counted the cost, and know that we are sick and tired of the old life, and want to begin a new life, and live with Christ; for when we come to that point, we can easily find out how it can be done.

Christ comes to us, and he proposes a union with us. That is lawful, because he is the only one who really has any claim upon us, and therefore while we are living in this base connection with the body of sin, he can lawfully come to us, and beg us to be united with him. But here we are united with this body of sin, and the law will not justify us in becoming united to Christ till that body of sin is dead.

For note again what is implied in the figure of the marriage. When two persons are united in marriage, they become one flesh. This is a mystery. Paul says that it is: "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. *This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*" This is the thought that is held before us in this figure of marriage. For

we twain—ourselves and the flesh—are so completely joined together that we are no longer twain, but one flesh, and our life is just one.

Look back over your life and see if there is any time in it where you can see that it has been separated from sin. It has been a life of sin. Sin has ever been a part of your life. We have only one life, and that has been sin. Therefore, so closely have we been united with sin, that there has been only one life between us,—we twain have been one flesh. Then the only way by which we can get rid of this body of sin,—which is one with us, is to die too. That is how it is that the apostle says,—that we are become dead to the law by the body of Christ. For that union with the flesh was really unlawful, and the law had a claim against us for that union. It will put us to death for that union. We are dead in Christ, and the body of sin dies also.

In chapter six we read, "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." Christ in his own flesh bare our sins in his body on the tree. He takes our sins that they may be crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed. We consent to die. We acknowledge that our life is forfeited to the law, and that the law has a just claim upon us. Then we voluntarily give up our lives so that this hated body of sin may die. We loath the union with it so much that we are willing to die in order that it may die too.

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto 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." *Therefore as we die with Christ, we are raised also with Christ.* But Christ is not the minister of sin, so while he will crucify the body of sin, he *will not raise it again, and the body of sin is destroyed.* Thus we rise, the union between us and Christ complete, that henceforth we should bring forth fruit unto God.

"Now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held." What is dead? The body of sin! It was because we were united to that body of sin that the law had somewhat against us. Notice; God does not have any hatred against us. God does not have any desire to punish us, but he cannot endure sin. His law must condemn sin, and since we have identified ourselves with sin, so that we were one with it, in condemning sin, he necessarily condemned us; and so long as we lived a life of sin, that condemnation necessarily rested upon us. But as we have already shown, we have a choice as to when we will die, and we have chosen to voluntarily give up our lives to him, while we can have his life instead.

When our lives have been given up to the law, the claim that the law had against us is satisfied, because now, the body of sin being dead, we are delivered from the law, just as the woman whose husband is dead, is loosed from the law of her husband, so that she can be united to another. But the same law that held her to that first husband, unites her to the second. So it is in this case. The same law that bound us to the body of sin, now witnesses to our union with Christ. Rom. 3:21. That perfect law witnesses to the union with Christ, and justifies it. And so long as we remain in Christ, it justifies us in that union, showing that union with Christ is conformity to the law.

And the power of Christ is able to hold us in that union. "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him." Rom. 6:8. We became united to Christ in the act of death. By that death, the bond that united us with our first husband,—the body of sin, was broken,—the body of sin was destroyed, and now we rise with Christ.

*We believe that we shall live with him? Why do people get married? That they may live together. Then, because we have been united by death with Christ, we believe that now since we are risen with him, we shall live with him. Notice further,—when two are united, they two are no longer twain, but one flesh. Christ "makes in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." Eph. 2:15. We are his, Christ and we are one, and therefore together we make one new man. Now who is the one? Christ is the one.*

Well might Paul say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Gal. 2:20. It is Christ now, not we. Thus we are the representatives of Christ on earth. This is why Christ in his prayer in the garden, prayed, that "they may be made perfect in one: and that the *world may know* that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

How may the world know this? From the Bible?—No; for the world does not read the Bible; and therefore God hath put us in the world as the light of the world. The Bible is a light and a lamp, but not to those who do not take it. We take the word of Christ, we feed upon it in spirit, and bring Christ into our hearts, and thus affect the union; and then the light shines forth to the world, and the world knows that Christ has been sent as a divine Saviour.

We pass over a few verses. The apostle shows that while the motions of sins were by the law, it is not because the law is sinful, but because the law is holy. By the law is the knowledge of sin. Paul was once alive in carnal security, serving God, as he thought; but when the commandment came, then sin abounded, and he died; and this law which was ordained for life, because it justifies the obedient, he found had nothing but death for him, because he had not really been obeying it. That is why he says, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just, and good."

But note; before this time Paul had been one who honored the law, he had made his boast in the law, and therefore he writes to those who know the law,—to those who have been striving with all their might to keep the law; and yet, they are the ones who have to be delivered from the law. Why? Because while making their boast in the law, through breaking it, they dishonored *God*.

Now we shall still serve, but how?—not the way we did before, in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit. That means that our very service to the law is something that we have got to be delivered from. Why?—Because it has been simply a forced service; it has been simply in the oldness of the letter; there has not been spirit and life in it. It has not been of Christ, therefore it has been sin. We boasted in the law, and we professed to keep the law, yet that very service was sin, and we must be delivered from that kind of service to the law, to serve in the right way. So now we serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

In the latter part of the chapter, the apostle shows what that oldness of the letter is from which we must be delivered. "I am carnal, sold under sin." We do great violence to the apostle Paul, that holy man, when we say that in this he is relating his own Christian experience. He is not writing his own experience now that he is united with Christ. He is writing the experience of those who serve, but in the oldness of the letter, and while professedly serving God, are carnal, and sold under sin.

A person sold under bondage is a slave. What is the evidence of this slavery? "For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. . . . For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." Have we ever had any such experience as that in our so-called Christian experience? Yes; we have fought, but with all our fighting, did we keep the law? No, we have made a failure, and it is written upon every page of our lives. It is a constant service, but at the same time it is a constant failure.

I fail, I make a new resolution,—I break it, and then I get discouraged, then make another resolution, and break that again. We cannot make ourselves do the thing we want to do by making a resolution. We do not want to sin, but we do sin all the time. We make up our minds we will not fall under that temptation again, and we don't—till the next time it comes up, and then we fall as before.

When in this condition, can we say that we have hope, and that we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God"? We do not hear such testimonies,—it is solely of what we want to do, and what we have failed to do, but intend to do in the future. If a person has the law before him, and acknowledges that it is good, and yet does not keep its precepts, is his sin any less in the sight of God than the sin of the man who cares nothing for the law? No.

What is the difference between the would-be Christian, who knows the law, but does not keep it, and the worldling who does not keep the law, and does not acknowledge that it is good? Simply this: We are unwilling slaves, and they are willing slaves. We are all the time distracted and sorrowful, and getting nothing out of life at all, while the worldling does not worry himself in the least.

If one is going to sin, is it not better to be the worldling, who does not know that there is such a thing as liberty, than to be the man who knows that there is liberty, but cannot get it? If it has got to be slavery, if we must live in the sins of the world, then it is better to be in the world, partaking of its pleasures, than to be in a miserable bondage, and have no hope of a life to come.

But thanks be unto God, we can have liberty. When life becomes unbearable because of the bondage of sin, then it is that we may hope, for that leads to the question, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Mark; there is deliverance. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Christ came that we might have life. In him is life. He is full of life, and when we are so sick of this body of death, that we are willing to die to get rid of it, then we can yield ourselves to Christ, and die in him; and with us dies the body of death. Then we are raised with Christ to walk in newness of life, but Christ who is not the minister of sin will not raise up the body of sin; so it is destroyed, and we are free.

Let all your sinful passions go, and believe that Christ will give you something so much better than they are, that you will have an unspeakable joy. Not only will there be joy now, but there will be joy through all eternity, a song of joy for the precious gift that he has given.

Christ has condemned sin in the flesh, and by faith we take him and live with him. That is a blessed life. Take hold of Christ by faith and live with him.

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