

The Cheating Wife

Today we leave Romans chapter 6. Lessons from that chapter include the fact that only a Christian can live the Christian life. That means that a person must be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to become a Christian.

Someone who goes to church every Sunday, gives generously and does “good works” is not necessarily a Christian. Faith in Jesus Christ as savior is the only requirement. From mathematical lingo, you might say that faith in Jesus Christ is a necessary and sufficient condition for being saved.

At the point of salvation the new believer receives the Baptism of the Holy Spirit by which he or she is placed “in Christ.” Because of a believer’s position in Christ there are numerous advantages and assets available for living the Christian life. My plan is to have a lesson on some of these before Christmas.

An important aspect of salvation in the Christian dispensation is that the domination of the sin nature over the believer is broken. The believer has a choice to live the Christian life by faith dependence on the Holy Spirit or just continuing reliance on the sin nature. Production of divine good versus production of sin and human good. Your choice. But that choice has consequences. Production of sin in one’s life leads to divine discipline. Production of divine good by the power of the Holy Spirit results in blessing in time and in eternity. Which will you choose?

In Romans chapter 7, Paul uses the scenario of a divorced wife to illustrate the issue.

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Here is R.B. Thieme's brief outline of Romans Chapter 7. Herman recently gave me some notes from R. B. Thieme's Romans series. I started scanning them into my computer. As a result, as I read them, there will be quotes from them in these lessons.

"First of all we have the key to interpretation, the two marriages. Rom. 7:1-6, two marriages with a divorce in between."

"Secondly, the function of the law as a marriage counselor, Rom. 7:7-14."

"Thirdly, the attacks of the first husband, Rom. 7:15-21. The first husband makes a series of attacks. This is the inner conflict or part of it in the life of the believer."

"The fourth paragraph is the great inner conflict, Rom. 7:22-25. When we get into chapter 8 we get into all solutions, and answers, and blessings.¹"

R. B. Thieme Jr. had an interesting comment on this chapter.

"Remember again that the key to the interpreting of Rom. 6, 7, 8 is the divorce analogy, the concept of retroactive positional truth, while the old sin nature still resides in us, the old sin nature was divorced and is positionally dead to us because of identification with Christ in His spiritual death, physical death, and burial. This means divorce, this means that positionally the power of the old sin nature is broken though experientially (sic) he's very much alive and he's still using the same old routine, "come up for a drink, come up and help me redecorate my apartment" and other noises that ex-husbands make."²

He makes a point in other parts of his series of lessons on Romans that this is not a lesson on divorce for us. The people in Rome understood the

1 R. B. Thieme Jr, Tape series on Romans Tape#58 Message 4

2 R. B. Thieme Jr, Tape series on Romans Tape#58 Message 4

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principle of divorce. As a result, Paul could use divorce as an illustration of the unbeliever “married” to the sin nature, then “divorced” at the point of belief in Jesus Christ and being “married” to Christ. Paul said this particular “divorce” is caused by death on the cross. Thieme calls it “retroactive positional truth.” At the point of salvation, we are identified with Christ with His spiritual death on the cross.

The point becomes that the woman in the analogy, the believer, is never to go back to the “ex,” or the sin nature. Yet that is what the believer does when he sins or engages in “human good” from the sin nature. That is cheating on the new husband, Jesus Christ.

Let us open our Bibles and read through Romans chapter 7 to get a bird’s eye view of what we have before us. Note that Paul is not quoting from the Old Testament directly for his analogy. He is relying on the reader’s familiarity with the procedures which are based on the Torah.

Read Romans chapter 7.

Now let us start examining the verses of this chapter.

Romans 7:1 Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?

When looking at the Greek, it is evident that Paul is having fun with words as you will see.

Do you not know. One word based upon the root word *ginosko* for knowing experiential knowledge. It is *present active indicative*, but said as a question. “Are you not knowing?” or “Do you not know.” Thieme says this is perhaps a slap in the face. It is like “Are you stupid?” Yet, he

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uses a word based on *ginosko* because he is going to use that word again and so contrast. “You don’t know but to those who are knowing...”

Brethren. One translation (Moo) puts “brothers and sisters.” It is a single word indicating Paul is writing to fellow/brother believers. It includes sisters. When I was growing up in elementary school, “he” was used as a generic for person. Then someone decided it was unfair to women to not name them. Hence Douglas Moo is bowing to the current trend. I still revert to my childhood when writing. The Greek is a single word, “brethren” or in more modern English, “brothers.”

To those who know the law. Here is the fun. Paul just used an active verb form of *ginosko* for “not knowing.” Here he is using a *participle* of the same verb to address those who are familiar with the Law. Interesting how he has contrasted knowing with not knowing using the same verb.

Law. Used twice in this verse. It is a reference to the Mosaic law. I am not going into the reasons other than to say, in this context, speaking of spirituality and the sin nature, it is logical to refer to the Mosaic Law. It couldn’t be Romans law. Romans were under Roman law.

Robby Dean made an interesting observation. The U.S. constitution does not apply to the English in Great Britain. It is only valid for U.S. citizens. So the Mosaic Law was for Jews, not for Gentiles. Now I quickly add that it was applicable to Gentiles who converted to Judaism. But that is not what Paul is talking about. He is talking about people who have believed in Jesus Christ as saviors and are now “Christians.”

Paul is not quoting from the Torah. There are several passages that deal either directly with marriage or obliquely.

Just so we are somewhat familiar with the passages that apply, let us read the following quotes from the Torah (what we call the Pentateuch).

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Deuteronomy 24:1 “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce (Jews today call this a “get.” That is a Aramaic word not an English word. It means “document.”) and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house,

Deuteronomy 24:2 and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man’s wife,

Deuteronomy 24:3 and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife,

Deuteronomy 24:4 then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance.

Numbers 5:11-30 is the remedy for a man if he suspects his wife of cheating on him. The last three verses gives us a summary.

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Numbers 5:29 ‘This is the law of jealousy: when a wife, being under the authority of her husband, goes astray and defiles herself,

Numbers 5:30 or when a spirit of jealousy comes over a man and he is jealous of his wife, he shall then make the woman stand before the Lord, and the priest shall apply all this law to her.

Numbers 5:31 Moreover, the man will be free from guilt, but that woman shall bear her guilt.’”

The Torah does not outline all of the process that modern Jews must go through for a religious divorce. From one source on the internet:

“Surprisingly, divorce is one of the 613 mitzvahs, recorded in Parshat Ki Teitzei, But unlike mitzvahs like Shabbat, *tefillin*, and kosher, which we seek to fulfill, there is no imperative to divorce under normal circumstances. Rather, In the event that a couple must divorce, they must do so through a specific process as outlined in Jewish law.³”

It is my contention that there is importance to renew our understanding of the covenant relationship between God and the children of Israel. This relationship is sometimes couched in terms of marriage. So those familiar with the Law and the Prophets would have understood this analogy better than we do.

Take for instance the book of Hosea. It starts with God telling Hosea to marry a prostitute. As the narrative progresses it is obvious that God is using Hosea’s marriage to a prostitute as an analogy to God’s “marriage”

3 https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/6940840/jewish/10-Facts-About-Divorce-in-Judaism.htm

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to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. From the Ryrie Study Bible: “The theme of the book is God’s steadfast love for Israel in spite of her continued unfaithfulness, vividly depicted by Hosea’s marital experience.”

Hosea 1:2 When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, “Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the Lord.”

Hosea 1:3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

Hosea 1:4 And the Lord said to him, “Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.

Hosea 1:5 On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.”

Hosea 9:1 Do not rejoice, O Israel, with exultation like the nations! For you have played the harlot, forsaking your God....

The point is that there were books written on the Law, like the Talmud that dealt with interpretation of the Law and its application to daily life including marriage and divorce.

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Some would say that because Paul is referencing the Mosaic Law that he is only addressing Jews. But consider this. The only Scripture believers had prior to the assembly of the canon of the New Testament is Old Testament called by Jews the Tanach. So believers in the New Testament times had copies of the Old Testament probably in Greek translation (the LXX).

Jurisdiction. Now back to Romans 7:1. The word in the Greek surprised me. It is a verb based upon the same root as “lord.” Kurios.

Romans 7:2 For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.

Bound. This word is used of the legal bond between a husband and wife.

Romans 7:3 So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man.

Called an adulteress. The word called is not the usual word for to call. It is used as a title. Instead of Mr. or Mrs. she would be titled adultress.

Now, we know from reading various passages in the New Testament that Jesus Christ and the church have a “marriage.” Let us look at some of these passages.

Ephesians 5:22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

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Ephesians 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

Ephesians 5:24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

Ephesians 5:26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

Ephesians 5:27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

Ephesians 5:28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;

Ephesians 5:29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of His body.

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Ephesians 5:31 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

Ephesians 5:32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

Ephesians 5:33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

1 Corinthians 11:3 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:1 I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me.

2 Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.

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Paul is telling us, trying to convince us that our default status is domination by the sin nature resulting in sin and human good. He is pushing this point over and over. You don't have to sin. Faith reliance on the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of the Holy Spirit. This is expected of every Christian. Yet, we see very few who abandon their sin nature and rely upon the Holy Spirit. Won't you listen to Paul and just trust the Holy Spirit?