



The New Way of the Spirit

Romans 7:1-6 | Mar 15, 2020

Union with Christ: it's the greatest thing in the history of the world. Even better than the sinless state in Eden before the Fall. There's no relationship more secure. The whole of the Christian life is just working out the implications of this great reality. And we've been processing some of them:

One implication, from Romans 6:1-14, is spiritual warfare with our "flesh"—the sinful passions lodged in our fallen bodies. In Christ, everybody is a **soldier** in this battle. Another implication, discussed on our midweek podcast is that everybody is a **slave**, whether to sin or to righteousness. And in Romans 7 we see a third image: everybody is a **spouse**. Each of us is married either to the law or to Christ.

But as the Bride of Christ, our church as a whole and we as individual Christians, experience three more happy realities, taken here in reverse order from which they appear in our text:

We serve in the new way of the Spirit. (7:6)

We're not in the kindergarten of religion anymore, where there is a rule for everything, and constant threat of consequences for misbehavior. We've grown up. We've come of age. We're married to Christ now. Before the law was written on tablets of stone, external to us, pressing down, constraining and threatening us. But under the new covenant, the law is written on our hearts and the Holy Spirit of God is placed within us, to empower our sanctification—our growth in holiness. Just as we were saved by grace in the past, we continue to be transformed by grace in the present.

We bear fruit to God. (7:4-5)

Before, we bore fruit to death—and that in two ways. We bore fruit that led to death ("the wages of sin is death"); and we bore fruit *to death*, tons of it, everyday, a bumper crop of sin. But now with the Spirit inside us we quite naturally—or maybe we should say *supernaturally*—bear the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). That's "character fruit." We also bear "conversion fruit," new babes in Christ who experience new birth through our gospel.

In these days of anxiety and fear, who knows how many hearts are being softened and prepared? Who knows how many people, earmarked for salvation by God's electing love, will finally come into an experience of it? May we live in the new way of the Spirit, bear both kinds of fruit in these challenging days!

We belong to another—to Christ. (7:4)

We're not married to the law anymore. The old ball-and-chain is gone. Not because we broke up with it; not even because we divorced it. No, we died to it! That marriage covenant has been severed forever. Now we belong to Christ, not merely as soldiers in his army or slaves in his household, but as spouses in his heart.

Marriage is not a mere metaphor here, as if to say, "Christian, you can have a personal relationship with Jesus so solid its almost like being married." No, the analogy runs the other way. It's more like, "Hey married people, your bond of covenant love is so intimate and permanent it's almost like being a Christian." Marriage is about Christ and the church (Ephesians 5). Our relationship with him is the reality; marriage is the analogy. Could we be more secure? Could we have a better partner, provider, or protector? He loves us with all his might!

Discussion Guide

1. Read Romans 7:1-6
2. How do you feel about the idea of being married to Christ? It seems men and children sometimes struggle with it—especially since Christians are always cast in the role of the bride. How do you process it?
3. What does it mean for people, apart from the gospel, to be married to the law? What is that like? What was it like for you?
4. Talk through the three main implications of being married to Christ that we read about in Romans 7:

We serve in the new way of the Spirit

- Read Jeremiah 31:33-34 and Ezekiel 36:26-27. Do you have a sense of God’s law being written on your heart and God’s Spirit moving you to obey it? Are these just ideas or realities? How do you experience them?
- We said that the Holy Spirit’s work to make us *holy* and *spiritual* is not like a monkey with its baby but like a cat with its kitten. What did that mean? Do you experience the Spirit in this way?



We bear fruit for God

- Read Galatians 5:22-23. In which of these nine qualities do you see growth in yourself? What about in the other members of your group? How has the Spirit cultivated this fruit?
- We said there is “character fruit” and “conversion fruit.” Who are the people in your world who are far from God but close to you? What would it take for you to talk about Jesus and his gospel with them?

We belong to Christ

- Are you enjoying a sense of satisfaction and security in Christ? How so? What could enhance it?
- Recall the story of Winston Churchill and FDR right after Pearl Harbor. Compare and contrast this to our relationship with Christ. What is the same? What is different?

FDR’s words: “Well, Winston, I guess we’re all in the same boat now.”

Churchill’s thoughts: “Now at this very moment I knew that the United States was in the war, up to the neck and in to the death. So we had won after all! ... How long the war would last or in what fashion it would end no man could tell, nor did I at this moment care ... We should not be wiped out. Our history would not come to an end ... Hitler’s fate was sealed. Mussolini’s fate was sealed. All the rest was merely the proper application of overwhelming force ... Being saturated and satiated with emotion and sensation, I went to bed and slept the sleep of the saved and thankful.”