

Free From the Law, O Happy Condition!

sermonaudio.com

Studies in Romans

By Dr. Alan Cairns

Bible Text: Romans 7:1-6

Preached on: Sunday, September 19, 2004

Faith Free Presbyterian Church

1207 Haywood Road

Greenville, SC 29615

Website: www.faithfpc.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/faith

Now, continuing our studies in the Book of Romans, we come this evening to Romans 7 and we're going to read together the first 6 verses of the chapter. Romans 7, reading together verses 1-6,

“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 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, 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 sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead,” or having died to that, “wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”

Amen. The Lord will add his blessing to the reading of his own precious Word for his names' sake.

I know I said the same thing as we came to Romans 5 and then to Romans 6 and it will tend to lose its value as I said it again as we come to Romans 7 and I'll have to say it again when we get to Romans 8, but this is a hugely important chapter. Romans 7. These were some of the most practical, real-life issues that God's people are called upon to face. The great thing about it is, that it deals with those issues not as most preachers try to deal with them today, as issues in themselves, attacking them from a statistical, analytical, sociological, emotional or any other kind of way that they can possibly attack them. It doesn't do it like that, it rather comes to these issues in the best way. Namely, by deepening our understanding of the gospel of free justification. It is Paul's thesis throughout this section in Romans that if we just really grasp the gospel, then we are in a position to apply that message to each and every situation that we face and to each and every problem that may perplex us.

Now, as in most parts of the Bible, certainly here, the key to the proper understanding of this chapter is to pay very, very close attention to its context. By ignoring its context, people have used Romans 7 in ways that the Apostle would have thought absolutely unimaginable. Certainly, bringing out of it things that he never saw in it. Reminds me of a story of my late friend and colleague, the Reverend John Wiley. In Ulster we have a Protestant organization known as the Orange Order. It's nothing to do with Florida or citrus or anything else, it is taking its name from the Royal Dutch House which became the Royal British House, the House of Orange, though that's long in our past. But, anyway, we have the Orange Order. And being a Protestant organization, many Christians would be members of it, other Christians feel they shouldn't be members of it and when I was trying to convince John Wiley that this was all something he should be in and said, "You know, Mr. Wiley, this is taken out of the Bible." And he said, "Well, you know, I think you're right. It must've been taken out of the Bible for I have never been able to find it in the Bible."

Well, there's a lot of people and when they come to dealing with Romans 7, they are certainly taking it out of the Bible because it's not in the Bible as they treat it. You will find that people who have a desire to teach what is known as the second blessing or entire sanctification and their own particular theory of Christian victory, will isolate Romans 7 along with some of Romans 8, they will isolate that from the entire context and then they will teach that the man in Romans 7 is immature, he has not come into victory, he's living in defeat. There's not much of any mention of the Holy Spirit. He hasn't got on to the ground of victory and it's when he comes out of Romans 7 and comes into Romans 8 that he really begins to live the Christian life. Now, I'll deal with that more fully in due course, but you can only come to that conclusion if you ignore the context of Romans 7. Otherwise, that whole theory has nothing to commend it.

Similarly, others are going along a very similar line. See here in Romans 7 the carnal Christian. You go on down this chapter and come to this carnal Christian who somehow or other doesn't yet know the Lordship of Christ and he has got to get out of Romans 7 in order to get into the Lordship of Christ. The whole theory being, of course, that you can be a carnal Christian, you can have Christ as your Savior while deliberately repudiating him as your Lord. You're still a Christian, you're just not mature.

I think as we go through this chapter you'll see that in a very real sense, a Christian never gets out of Romans 7 until he gets to heaven. This is not an immature Christian. This is not a carnal Christian. Actually, the example given to us in the latter part of this is the mature Apostle Paul and if Paul was a carnal Christian then I say, "Lord, make me a whole lot more carnal for that's what I need." But if Paul is a carnal Christian, I don't know where that puts the rest of us. No, no, these are things that are drawn from the words but the words divorced from their context.

Take another issue, this comes out of our initial Bible reading tonight: one of the great crises that we have to face today in the church is that of marriage break-ups. Divorce is a hot topic. It's sad but it's true. People come to this passage of Scripture and they take what we have just read tonight and they're going to base their whole biblical teaching of

divorce on this passage or on this and maybe another passage. Now, let me say that this has something to say about marriage and divorce but you've got to realize here the Apostle Paul is not dealing with the subject of divorce as such. He is simply giving an illustration. His theme here is not divorce, his theme is fundamental to the gospel and if you want to appreciate why he even uses an illustration to marriage here, you've got to get back to the context.

Understand first and foremost that Romans 7 is inseparably connected with Romans 6. In other words, it's a vital part of the discussion that Paul had been conducting through Romans 6. Remember, we have gone through this again and again and some of you will be saying, "Why does he keep repeating himself?" Well, because it needs to be repeated. But the Apostle in Romans 6 is answering the slander that his gospel of a free justification, saved by righteousness imputed, saved by the merits of Christ, received by faith, without any works of his own, is an invitation to sin. It makes sinning easy. If I'm secure because of what Christ did without regard to any merit of my own, then the theory goes: that means I can live whatever way I like and I can go on into sin. This is a license to sin.

Paul answered that in two ways. Because he had taught "where sin abounds, grace superabounds," he got this broadside. So what was his answer? Verse 1-2, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Then later, in verse 14 and 15, you find the Apostle saying this, "sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." Now, here's his answer, and having gone into what he means by having died to sin in Christ, he takes up the second thing, what it means not to be under the law but under grace. And that's what Romans 7 is all about. It's a description and an exposition of the great truth that Christians are not under the law but they are under grace. Many very good commentators and preachers take the whole message of Romans 7 to be the function and limitations of the law. I think there's a lot of truth in that, but personally I think that we're better to focus on this, that Paul is really expounding here what he means by a Christian not being under the law. I'm not going to go into the whole subject of the law of God again, I've preached, I think, many messages on that just a few years ago and I know you've all got good memories, so I'm not going to go into it all again.

This chapter 7 is one of the vital passages in the Word of God on the relation of the believer to God's law. To some people, not being under the law means that they can live as antinomians but Paul says, "While we are not under the law, we are under the law to Christ." As we saw last week why we're not slaves to sin. Under the law in Adam, we are slaves to grace in holiness under grace in Christ.

So, under the law and not under the law is not speaking about having to obey God or not having to obey God. It means something totally different. So, this is a passage that's expounding what it means to be under the law. Now, the chapter in itself is not difficult as far as analyzing it goes. It's one of those things that most people are fairly well agreed on, even though they're not agreed on what each section says, they know where the

sections falls. The first section is the first six verses, the second section is verse 7-13 and then the third section is verse 14-25.

In the first six verse, Paul shows us that the law works as a covenant in which it holds dominion over all those who are under it but believers have been freed from that covenant by the death of Christ, it's the opening six verses. Then, verse 7-13, the law works as a convicter of sin which shows that the problem is not with the law but with us as sinners, the law convicts of sin. And then, verse 14-25 it says that the law shows us what is good but it cannot enable us to do what is good. In fact, the law is as powerless to sanctify us as it is to justify us, only grace can do that. Now, those are the three sections.

We come to the first one tonight, these first six verses. Now, remember here, Paul is defending and explaining and applying his statement that you are not under the law but under grace. In doing so, he makes a general observation. Verse 1, "the law hath dominion," or the law lords it "over a man as long as he liveth." He makes a general observation. He then follows that with an illustration: the illustration of a woman and a man bound legally together in marriage. If the woman breaks her marriage vow and marries another, she's an adulteress. If her husband dies and she marries another, she's not an adulteress. So, he gives an illustration of the fact that the law binds you as long as you live. Then, beyond that, he makes his application in verses 4-6. The application to prove that believers are not under the law, that they're under grace and that being free from the law does not lead to sin but it's the very first essential to true holiness. Now, that's the picture.

Tonight, what I want us to do is look at these six verses, the subject is very simple. It's why we sang our last hymn, "Free From the Law, O Happy Condition." That's what Paul is talking about here in the first six verses of Romans 7. Now, I have three very simple things to say about it. The old hands here will know not to get euphoric about it being very brief because there may be a few things under the three, but we are going to look at three very simple statements.

First, I want you to understand the basic point that Paul is making here and that is that the law holds all men in a covenant that only death can break. That's his point. The law holds all men in a covenant that only death can break. The law is a covenant binding all of us in Adam, all of us by nature. And it binds a man as long as that man lives. Nothing that man does can ever break that covenant. He may dispute it, he may deny it, he may struggle against it, he may do whatever he will. He may seek by righteousness and holiness in some way to change it but he cannot do anything about that covenant. The only thing that can break it is death. And Paul gives us the example of this in that illustration that I have mentioned of a woman married legally to a man. A wife who breaks her marriage covenant does not set herself free. A wife who breaks her marriage covenant and marries another, far from setting herself free, she is binding herself doubly to the condemnation of the law because now she's condemned as an adulteress as well.

You see, here is a stark description of the state of all men by nature: they are bound to the law of the covenant of life. They are bound to the law as a way of salvation. By nature,

they are bound to the law and it holds them in its grip, "Do this or perish." Their obligation is to satisfy the entire law, both its precept and its penalty. Of course, they can never fulfill its precept, so they lie under its penalty, but they can never satisfy its penalty so the condemnation goes on forever. The point that is being made here is, that the law is a living force against all who are out of Christ. Put it this way: the law has claims on man something like the claims of a betrayed husband.

Put yourself back in ancient times when the penalty for adultery was death. Put yourself back in those ancient Jewish times. See the fury of a husband whose wife has adulterously broken her marriage vow. See him as he hunts for her, hauls her before the magistracy, sets her at the judgment bar and sees her condemned to death for her sin and when you've got a picture of all that in your mind, you've a picture of how a sinner stands under the law. The law holds that sinner in a covenant. Now, an adulteress wife may plead with the judge, "But judge, I have done many other things that are good and right. I may be living in adultery, but I cook the best Mexican dish you can get." Could you imagine that in the Jewish days? "But I do some things nice. I do his washing. Did ever a man be turned out better than this?" Hold on a second, whatever you've done, you've broken the covenant of your marriage. You're under condemnation.

You see, what I'm trying to say by this simple illustration is, a sinner under the condemnation of the law tends to come to God and say, "But Lord, I've done this and I've done that and I've done the other thing. Do you not see?" Yes, I see. But you see, the law would leave you, that no matter what you do, you've never done enough, you've never done anything right. You can do nothing right. You can never do enough. And everything you do is stained with the ultimate sin of being a law breaker. So, you stand condemned and under judgment and every effort to justify yourself only adds to your calamity. That's the natural state of sinners who are under the law. Under the law, pressed down by the law, tyrannized, lorded over by the law.

But we may go further as Paul does. Not only is it clear that sinners under the law can find no justification but it's equally clear that they can find no sanctification and no victory over sin. The slander that Paul was answering, that slander against the gospel, was that it gives a license to sin. The Jews believed that the law helped to keep man from sin. Paul argues that it does not. The law doesn't keep man from sin. I don't want to get off on a tangent here, but let us all keep this in mind, when you've Christians making the big argument that what America needs is the Ten Commandments back in the schools, now, I understand that there's a deeper thing here. There is fighting a whole culture of bias and I am all in favor of fighting that bias. And it is iniquitous to ban the Bible or the Commandments or the Lord's Prayer or the name of Jesus Christ or anything else Christian from the school systems or any other system in this nation, it's an iniquitous thing and it will damn the country. I understand that, but the problem I see is that Christians tend to make the next so-called logical step, "If we can only get the Commandments back, things will be so much better." When did the Commandments ever make anybody holy? It's the gospel we need to get into those people, that's what we need to get. Nothing else will do the job. You see, verse 5, Paul says by the law the motions or the passions of sin work in the sinner's members. The passions of sin work, they are

stirred by the very law that condemns them. We'll come to that somewhat later as we look down Romans 7.

As I looked at this, I realize here you have a picture of a disastrous marriage. The sinner married to the law. The sinner joined to the law in a marriage covenant for life. And it's a disastrous marriage. On the one hand, you have a righteous but tyrannical husband, the law. On the other hand, you have an ungodly and rebellious wife, the sinner. The law exposes and condemns and commands but the sinner reacts by plunging ever more deeply into the very passions that the law threatens. And from all this you know one thing is clear, the law produces neither the peace of acceptance with God nor the practice of holiness in the life. It's only fruit, the fruit of the marriage of a sinner to the law is dread and death. The law holds every man in that covenant.

I want you to stop there. If you're in this meeting tonight outside of the Lord Jesus Christ, that's where you stand before a holy God, wedded to the law as a covenant of works. No hope of heaven except by your own personal perfect obedience to God's law and your own personal perfect satisfaction of the penalty you've already incurred for every infraction. The case is hopeless with the result that the condemnation of the law mounts against you every day and your own bitter rebellion mounts against God and his law every day. And yet, that's where you're bound without any way out as far as human ingenuity or ability go.

The second thing I noticed is this: that by virtue of the death of Christ, believers have been set free from the covenant of the law. This is the real force of Paul's marriage and remarriage illustration. If a woman marries illegitimately, while she's married to a husband, she's an adulteress. It doesn't matter what the law of the land says, by the way. If she marries unbiblically, she's an adulteress. But if her husband is dead, she's free to marry and she's not an adulteress though she marries again. And Paul is using that as an illustration of us, that now by the body and the death of Christ, we are free from the law to be married to Christ.

Now, this illustration has come in for a lot of criticism. Paul's been castigated and condemned. One leading English scholar, the man who was the leader of the translators of the New English Bible, C. S. Dodd, spoke of Paul being confused here, telling people really to ignore the illustration as far as they could for the simple reason it made no sense. Even Orthodox people complain of a faulty or confused or incomplete analogy and there is a problem as you see it here, a problem the critics see as Paul appears to use the husband and the wife analogy to stand for the law and the sinner. The law represents the husband, the wife represents the sinner, that's how they see it. So, a wife may be married when her husband dies and she's not an adulteress. Now, you would expect after that that Paul would say that the law as our husband died and we were, therefore, set free to be wed unto the Lord Jesus Christ. But Paul doesn't say that, what he says is that we were put to death to the law by the body of Christ. Even in verse 6, and you'll notice that I give a rereading of verse 6 deliberately where it says, "That being dead." What it should read is, "We having died to that wherein we were held." So, you can see, the key is there's an incomplete analogy. If Paul's illustration is to be unconfusing, it should be the

husband, the law, that dies but in the illustration it's the husband that dies. In the explanation, it's not the law it's we who die.

But, you know, the problem is not Paul's. As usual Paul has more interest in truth and theology than he has in mere literary form and beauty. And I'm with Paul every time. The problem lies with the critics because we're trying read too much into the illustration. Paul never meant to use the husband and wife relationship as an allegory of the sinner's relationship with the law giving precise spiritual meaning to every detail. All Paul intended was an illustration of a simple fact that as death dissolves a marriage and leaves the surviving spouse free to marry again, so by our death, our relationship to the law has been, by our death in Christ, that is, our relationship to the law has been ended and we are now, therefore, legally wedded to Christ.

But, you know, the more I looked at this, the more I saw something else. Paul was a whole lot more accurate than his critics. The claim is that he should have said for literary precision, he should have said, "the law died." And even John Calvin took the opinion that it was out of deference to the Jews so that it would raise unnecessary obstacles to the gospel, out of deference to the Jews, he didn't make that statement though his illustration demanded it. He didn't actually say so, but, you know, that's not the case. Paul would not and could not ever have thought of making the statement that the law died. To say that the law died would've contradicted his entire doctrine of justification and his view of the law. It would've indicated, for example, that the real problem between man and God is the law. Just get rid of that and everything will be alright. If the law needs to die, then it's the law that's the problem, not me. But the law is not the problem. Paul says it's good. It's spiritual. It was ordained to life.

So, the problem is not with the law, the problem is with me. Not only so if Paul had said that the law died, he would've been preaching justification by the destruction of the law which is the very opposite to what he was teaching. In Romans 3:31, you remember, he addressed this very thing, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." And I want you to understand this for this is the genius of Paul's gospel, we are not saved by the destruction of the law. We are not saved by setting aside the law. We are not saved by the lowering of the standards of the law. We are not saved by trimming the law or cutting away from the law. We are saved by the entire absolute perfect satisfaction of the law. That's Paul's gospel.

So, we're not saved by killing the law, but by Christ in dying, paying the full penalty of the law which was death. So, here then is the gospel: Christ died, Christ satisfied the law, we died in Christ and rose again in Christ. Isn't that what we were studying through chapter 6 in the initial part of that chapter? We died in Christ, we rose again in Christ, therefore, we are free from the law as a covenant of life by the body of Jesus Christ. That is what Paul's establishing.

So, follow carefully: 1. The law holds all men by nature in a covenant that can be broken only by death. 2. Believers have been set free from their covenant with the law, by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. 3. Now having died to the covenant of the law, believers

are wedded to Christ in a covenant of grace in order to produce fruit unto God. Follow me carefully: having died to the covenant of the law, having been made free from the law as a covenant of life, believers are now wedded to Christ in the covenant of grace and God does not intend – follow this, mark it, never forget it – God never intends the marriage of sinners to Christ to be a fruitless or a childless union. That union is in order to produce the fruit unto God that genuine holiness is.

Look in verse 4 and verse 6, “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law,” or “ye were put to death 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.” Verse 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.” These are two wonderful texts and I’m going to try to sum them up as briefly and simply as I can. Here is the joyous state of a believer.

I didn’t know Dr. Barrett was going to exercise his papal authority tonight and choose the hymn that he did. If I’d been thinking straight last night when I was choosing the hymns I would no doubt have chosen the same hymn myself. The bride eyes not her garment, I am my beloved’s. These are the expressions and they are taken from this and similar passages. We are wedded to Christ in the covenant of grace. Here’s the joyous state of believers.

Notice these three particulars: by the death of Christ we have been put to death as far as the claims of the law are concerned so that it has no more claim on us. You were put to death to the law by the body of Christ. Now, that “by the body of Christ” has called forth of a lot of varied opinion, but I think the whole testimony of Scripture is simply this, that it’s a reference to the crucified body. You are dead, you are put to death by the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider this, Colossians 1:21, “You hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death.” Hebrews 10:10, “We are sanctified,” that is, set apart unto God, “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Ephesians 2:15 says that Christ “abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances.” And Colossians 2:14 says that he “Blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” So, the body of Christ here is a reference to his dying. By the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ you have been put to death.

Do you understand that? We have said it again and again and yet it’s so absolutely fundamental to the gospel and yet we can overlook it and we can struggle with it and fail to get it in our minds. We’re talking now about our standing with God, how a person comes to be accepted by God. We once were wedded to the law. Being wedded to the law we were under it’s tyranny, “Do this, do this, do this.” We were under it’s absolute dominion. We could never do enough. We could never do anything and we fell more and more and more under its condemnation. We were like the adulteress wife. That’s it.

But Christ has come and Christ has died. And Paul says we died in him. Such is the union between Christ and his people, that the grace of God kicking us out of Adam and putting

us into Christ means that in his dying we died to the claims of the law. God, by the death of the believer in Christ, has shattered the covenant we've had with the law in order that now the law should have no more claim upon us, so that that law that once condemned us is now silent. Just as the law was silent to a woman who otherwise would've been counted an adulteress when her husband died and she marries again, the law has nothing to say in condemnation. It has no claim on her in that regard. So, similarly, we have died in Christ, the entire covenant with the law as a basis of our acceptance with God is gone forever, satisfied and there's no claim now.

I want you to understand, for Paul is going to take this up and come to it in Romans 8, "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." This is what he's saying: the law has nothing to say to condemn a believer in Jesus Christ. The law has nothing to say in condemnation of the believer in Jesus Christ. Keep learning it. Get it into your heart and get it into your head. O, the devil will condemn, the devil will accuse, but when you have an accusation against a believer in Jesus Christ, understand it is not the voice of God or his law. For Christ in his dying has slain our obligation to the law by fulfilling it. There's nothing left to be done. He has done it all. We have died to the law by our dying in Christ so that there's now no legal covenant that the law can hold us to.

That means you don't have to obey God to be saved. Now, I didn't say it doesn't mean that a Christian doesn't have to obey God, I say that you don't have to obey God to be saved. For example, if you went to a woman who was married for the second time legally, you'd say to her, "Your first husband is dead. You don't have to obey your husband." Try telling that to her second husband.

You see, what we're saying here is we are not under bondage to the law but we're now in covenant with another. We're saved by another. We are wedded to another. Not that we don't obey God, we don't obey God in order to be saved. We're saved by the obedience of Christ and we obey God as the product of a union of love. We are wedded to Christ.

That's the second thing then: believers are united to Christ in a covenant of marriage. Now, there you have one of the great themes of Scripture that I will not take off on tonight for it would be really too large. You remember the words of the bride in the Song of Solomon 2:16, "My beloved is mine and I am his"? We were singing that tonight. It's why I got you to sing it again. It's an awful thing when we can sing things like that with hardly a thought. It's an awful thing when we can read things like this with hardly a thought. I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine.

I think of the words of Hosea, the prophet, to Gomer, his adulteress wife. The words of God to Israel, his adulteress spouse. And I believe in the very words of Christ to his believing people in Hosea 2:19-20, "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD." It's the marriage union between Christ and his people. We have at every marriage practically, heard the words of Ephesians 5 read, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and

cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Christ loved his church.

I wonder, do we ever keep our attention going in that Bible reading down to the end of it, verse 30-32, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 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." One flesh. One body. We are members, Paul says, of his body. Of his flesh. And of his bones. Don't ask me to explain those words. I can't do it. And I don't know anybody else can either.

Here we have a statement of the union of the bride with the bridegroom. Christ is the husband of his church. In the Book of Revelation you have that wonderful picture of the Lamb's wife. The sinner who believes in Jesus becomes a member of that body, a member of that Christ and they are joined together in a union of life. Notice that verse 4 of our Bible reading says that we 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." It's a union of life. The covenant with the law issued in death. Didn't Romans 6 end with the statement, "the wages of sin is death"? "The soul that sinneth," Ezekiel tells us, "it shall die." Paul writes to the Galatians, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." That the marriage of the sinner with the law issues always in death. But the marriage of the believer with Christ issues always in life. It's a union of life. It's a union of love.

Who can tell the love of Christ toward his church? He loved his church and he gave himself for it. Who can describe that love? How can we ever come to any appropriate conception of that love? We can use human terminology, get as close as we can, but when we have done so, we're like a little child with a little bucket and spade and we're at the edge of the great Atlantic Ocean and we're trying to put the ocean in the bucket. We can't ever come to a true conception of the magnitude and the majesty of the love of God in Jesus Christ. That God's dear Son would be wedded to us. That's amazing.

Have you ever read that Book of Hosea? You know, the Book of Hosea, it's so radical. To this day, commentators and translators and scholars argue over whether Hosea actually had to marry a harlot or whether he didn't. But, whatever is happening to Hosea, do you see the message: God came down into the world, he didn't effect a marriage between his Son and the holy angels. He didn't set up a wedded bliss between Christ and heavenly beings who had never sinned. He went down into the cesspool of their sin and he found them in their filth and their wickedness and their hellish ungodliness and he took them out and he purchased them in his blood and he washed them in his blood and he sanctified them with his blood and then he united them to himself. Meeting their covenant with the law and shattering it by death, he united them to himself in a union of everlasting life and everlasting love.

O, that love that Jesus had for me,

To suffer on that cruel tree,
Is more than tongue can tell.

In that love, he gives us his name. I know that in this day of antichristian apostasy women assert their “freedom.” Actually, it’s their bondage by effecting marriages but never taking their husband’s name. It’s just an indication that the marriage union and the family bond is almost unknown to them. But when we are wedded to Christ, we take his name. We are known in heaven by his name. Would you want any other name? He not only gives us his name, he enriches us with his possessions. Just as he died to take all my ill dessert upon himself, so he gives to us all that he deserves. What has Christ earned by his living and by his dying? What has Christ earned? There is a glory that belongs to him essentially as the second person of the Trinity. That glory can never be ours. We can never participate in that glory for it belongs to deity.

But, there is a glory that he has earned. There are possessions that he has deserved by his living and by his dying. Now, what did Christ earn? Understand this, he needed nothing. He didn’t earn it for himself, he earned it for his people and he now enriches his bride with all the possessions that he has earned by his righteousness unto blood.

Then, he invests her with all his righteousness. In the words of Isaiah, “he clothes her with the garments of salvation and with the robe of righteousness.” He gives us a description of her prophetically through the Psalmist when he speaks of the king’s daughter and he says concerning her that the king “shall greatly desire thy beauty.” Can you imagine that? Can you imagine that? That the King of Glory would ever look at you or me and see any beauty that he would desire? “The king shall greatly desire thy beauty for he is thy lord and worship thou him. The king’s daughter is all glorious within. Her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework, the virgin’s her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.” He invests us with the very righteousness of Christ.

He has broken our covenant with the law by his dying and our dying in him. He has wedded us to Christ in a union of love and life and real liberty. O, yes, we are slaves to grace but that is real liberty. As you see from the final thing that I want to say and it’s this: that the purpose and the product of this union is fruit unto God which is genuine holiness. You see, far from this doctrine of free justification leading to lax views of sin, it alone can produce true holiness. Union with Christ is the key to holiness of life. Do you remember John 15? Jesus says, “I am the vine, ye are the branches.” That’s union. He says, “Abide in me.” That’s communion. And what’s the result? Fruit. Fruit. More fruit and much fruit. Jesus said, “Without me ye can do nothing.” The only fruit unto God that can be seen in a Christian’s life is the result of union with Jesus Christ. Being wedded to Christ, we produce the fruit of the Spirit.

And you’ll notice what it says at the end of verse 6, this is done, we’re united to Christ that “we should serve in newness of spirit.” Now, that’s a precise translation. The word “spirit” in the Greek text has no definite article in front of it and yet I believe that it’s not speaking of newness of spirit that is with a new attitude which is what this would lead to

believe. I believe this is a reference to the Holy Spirit. It's the newness that the Holy Spirit communicates. "Not in the oldness of the letter." Now, let's understand this: many people take this and similar statements about the oldness of the letter as meaning that we don't anymore have to serve in strictness. You know, if you have strict standards nowadays, you're a legalist. You hear that all the time. You're a legalist if you have strict standards. You want to go out and drink beer, you're a Christian and you want to say, "I'm a teetotaler," well, you're a legalist. How cockeyed and crazy have people become? I take it you understand the word cockeyed, it's not a British one. I see Susan saying, "Yes," so, yes, you do. After nearly 25 years I still don't speak the same language.

But, let me get this to you, this oldness of the letter has nothing to do with strict obedience. I mean, is there a Christian anywhere who can honestly sit down and think this through and say, "Oh, yes, the Lord wants me to be generally obedient to him but not strictly so." I mean, is there anybody that can actually think that way? Come on, you husbands, "Well, I expect my wife to be generally faithful to me, but not strictly so." Come on. I have not yet met a husband that crazy.

Serving in the oldness of the letter is not serving strictly. It is serving under the covenant of the law, using your service as a way of acceptance and we're free from that but we should serve now in the new life that comes by the ministry of the Spirit of God as he applies Christ to our hearts. We are called to a life of fruit bearing. We now serve him because we're saved not to be saved. We serve him because we live in the liberty of the spouse of Christ. We're free from the law. We're married to another. He is my beloved. He is mine and I am his forever.

Let me ask you tonight, Is this your testimony? Is this your testimony? Have you ever been delivered from the law? Have you ever been brought beyond doing what you can to get to heaven? Have you ever been brought to an end of yourself and your own righteousness and your own merit before God to be wedded to Christ? Let me ask you honestly tonight, Are you wedded to Christ? Is he your beloved? Are you in union with Christ? How do you get into union with Christ? "We are all the children of God," Paul tells us and tells the Galatians, "through faith in Jesus Christ. We are justified by faith in Jesus Christ." That's how you become united to Christ. The old Puritan-type preachers would've spoken of faith as a uniting grace. That the Holy Ghost produced faith unto God in you. Our fruit unto God and you because that's the major reason why he wed you to Christ.

This is the beginning, then, of Romans 7. Let's get this first thing clearly in our mind because from this, the rest will flow. We once were bound as a wife to a husband, we were bound in covenant to the law, to our death and damnation. Only death could sever that. If it was our death naturally, it would be a death that would lead to the second death and hell with the precept and the penalty of the law unsatisfied. But when Christ died, he satisfied the law. We died in him, severing the connection with the law as a covenant of works and establishing our union with Christ. That, my friend, that is what God does when he sets a believer free from the law. That's why I call that, as did P. P. Bliss, a happy condition.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Let's all pray.

Just a moment and the meeting will be over.

I wonder tonight, is there any answer from your heart to the reality of what we've been singing and talking about tonight. We have sung the words,

O I am my Beloved's
And my Beloved is mine!
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into his house of wine

Have you any experience of that? Any reality of that in your life? We have sung, Free from the law, do you know what that means? Have you ever been brought to that freedom in Jesus Christ? Make sure tonight that you know the Savior. Make sure tonight that by faith you're wedded to Christ. We can help you in the things of God. We do invite you to remain as the others leave and let's open the Book of all books with you and help you to the Savior.

Father in heaven, do bless thy Word to every heart we pray. We thank thee for our heavenly Bridegroom. We bless thee, Our Father, that the Lord Jesus Christ satisfied God's law. We bless thee that he fulfilled it, he established it but he set us free from the covenant that for us was a covenant of death. And we thank thee that he brought us into the bliss of a wedded union with himself of life and of love and of liberty. O God, grant that thou wilt make our union with Christ a fruitful one. We pray, produce much fruit, holiness unto the Lord. That fruit of the Spirit. That love and joy and peace. That blessed fruit of Christ likeness in the life. That fruit of the life in a world of sin that reflects the beauty and the glory of our heavenly Bridegroom. O Lord, we thank thee that nothing can break this union with Christ. We thank thee, Our God, that it is a union that lasts forever. We have thought tonight of that great vision in the final book of the Bible, of the Lamb's wife. We think of the beautiful picture of Christ sitting down with his people at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. O Lord, we thank thee that this union is forever. We pray that thou wilt bless thy Word, therefore, to every heart. And if there are those here without Christ, Lord, bring them to the Savior. O God, break their covenant with death and bring them into the covenant of life and grace in Christ. And, O Lord, we pray for those who are saved, that we may learn to live in the liberty becoming the spouse of Christ. Part us now with thy blessing and keep us in thy fear. Grant that the grace, mercy and peace of our Triune God will be our portion now and evermore. We pray in Jesus' name giving thee our thanks. Amen.