

## ***MARRIED TO OUR MESSIAH, ROMANS 7:1-6***

Pax Romana #13

◆**Intro:** Dear Tech Support: Last year I upgraded from Girlfriend 7.0 to Wife 1.0. I soon noticed that the new program began unexpected child processing that took up a lot of space and valuable resources. In addition, Wife 1.0 installed itself into all other programs and now monitors all other system activity. Applications such as Poker Night 10.3, Football 5.0, Hunting and Fishing 7.5, and Racing 3.6 are all affected. I can't seem to keep Wife 1.0 in the background while attempting to run my favorite applications. I'm thinking about going back to Girlfriend 7.0, but the uninstall doesn't work on Wife 1.0. Please help! Thanks, - Troubled User.

◆**Dear Troubled User:** This is a very common problem that men complain about. Many people upgrade from Girlfriend 7.0 to Wife 1.0, thinking that it is just a Utilities and Entertainment program. Wife 1.0 is an OPERATING SYSTEM and is designed by its Creator to run EVERYTHING!!! It is also impossible to delete Wife 1.0 and to return to Girlfriend 7.0. It is impossible to uninstall, or purge the program files from the system once installed. You cannot go back to Girlfriend 7.0 because Wife 1.0 is designed to not allow this. Look in your Wife 1.0 manual under Warnings-Alimony-Child Support. I recommend that you keep Wife 1.0 and work on improving the situation. I suggest installing the background application "Yes Dear" to alleviate software augmentation. The best course of action is to enter the command C:\APOLOGIZE be-

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cause ultimately you will have to give the APOLOGIZE command before the system will return to normal anyway.

◆ Any married folk in the room who understand? Marriage is a whole deal, a comprehensive relationship. You need to be all in.

◆ The Bible uses the picture of a marriage between a husband and wife as the most important and prominent analogy of our relationship with Him. All through the Bible, marriage is the strongest picture of our connection with God. In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel is repeatedly spoken of as an unfaithful bride, and God is the jealous husband, pursuing her out of His deep and abiding love (this is especially prominent in the prophets, and explicit in Hosea). In the New Testament, Jesus is oft depicted as the groom and the church as His bride (Matt.25, Matt9, Eph.5.) Jesus refers to himself as the bridegroom! The final book of the Bible pictures Jesus and His people coming together in a huge, wonderful wedding feast of the Lamb. Our text today uses the marriage analogy to give a second answer to the question in 6:15

◆ "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!" Romans 6:15, NIV.

◆ In that section Paul used the *slave and master* analogy to point out that the Gospel does not leave a person free to live any way they want to. In our text he is teaching us the same thing: You can be either married to the law (that is, trying to do the right

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thing, impress God, earn your salvation, which Paul has also shown to be impossible in chapters 1-3), or you can be married to Messiah/Christ, but you cannot be unmarried. It's not easy reading in Romans. You have to read slowly and ponder to pick out the meaning. So let's get to it. What is Paul trying to tell us?

◆ **1. In the spiritual realm there is no singleness.** In the spiritual world there are no "free agents". We live either in sin and death, or in the righteousness of God and everlasting life. But there is no middle ground. Pretty good can never be enough. Paul has already made this point in chapter 6: everyone has a master, it's only a matter of which one it is.

◆ "*You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.*" Romans 6:18, NIV.

◆ "*But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" Romans 6:22, 23, NIV.

◆ A. Now in our text he uses marriage as the illustration to say that in the spiritual reality, you are either married to sin, or to God. No singleness. This is significant I think, because a lot of people think that as long as they aren't per se "against God" they are in a good, safe place. People think if they are not devil worshipers the door of heaven is wide open. People think that because they feel pretty good about themselves, when then God

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owes them salvation. They are wrong. Salvation is nothing less than being married to God.

◆“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” John 3:18, NIV.

◆B. Those who do belong to God are not OK with sin. They do not make peace with it. They make war with it. It bothers them more and more all the time. The Heidelberg Catechism says that they learn to hate it more and more just as parents hate drunkenness, or explicit films and foolish diets more than children do. The older they get the more they have seen the damage done to families by constant stories of free sex, or the damage done to bodies by high calorie or high alcohol intakes. So Christians naturally hate the darkness more and more.

◆But we didn’t used to hate the darkness! That’s one of Paul’s points too! We used to love it. It was in our nature to love it. It is God’s nature to hate it. It’s one of the other.

◆“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.” John 3:19, 20, NIV.

◆We call loving darkness the “sinful nature” or being “in the flesh” (v5 greek). What does it mean to be “in the flesh” or “controlled by the sinful nature”? Look at 8:7-9 where Paul describes the sinful nature in more detail.

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◆ “because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.” Romans 8:7-9, NASB.

◆ Here Paul defines “in the flesh” or “controlled by the sinful nature”.

- ◆ 1) it is hostile toward God,
- ◆ 2) it does not subject itself to the law of God
- ◆ 3) it doesn't even have the ability to do so,
- ◆ 4) it is unable to please God.

◆ Then he notes that the opposite of being “in the flesh” is being “in the Spirit.” One of the other. What does this tell us? Our sinful condition is not merely that you and I break some of God's rules here and there, kind of like a middle ground between holiness and horrific evil. “The essence of our sinful condition is the unwillingness to be told what to do” (Piper). We will not submit to God. We cannot submit to God. We will decide for our own sovereign selves what is good for us. We will be free to decide for ourselves how we are made, oriented or how we shall behave in this world. We will be our own god: that's the flesh. That's how we really are according to God's Word.

◆ And that's also why the Law of God actually arouses “sinful passions” (v5). We are our own boss. So don't tell me what to do! When you keep telling me what to do or how to be, I just

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want to do the opposite to prove that you can't tell me what to do or how to be. Know what "the flesh" or the "sinful nature" is? It's saying "Your not the boss of me!" So God's good law, in a bad heart actually leads to more bad in the end.

◆**C.** Realize the corruption we are dealing with in ourselves! It is not just a mistake here and there. It is bristling rebellion to being told how to be or what is good for us. Married partners would be wise to acknowledge that this human tendency to be repulsed by demand and instruction. Marriage takes quite a bit of bending to last. Haven't you seen this in your life? When your wife instead of complimenting you on a task, tells you how you should have done it. When your Dad puts you down or belittles you in an effort to control your behavior and now you just want to do the wrong thing all the more?

◆A little girl was locked in her mothers closet as punishment for spitting on her brother. Later when mom opened the closet door she asked what the little girl had to say for herself. She said, "Well, I spit on your clothes. I spit on your shelves. I spit on the door mirror. I spit on your shoes. And right now I'm waiting for more spit." That's what we're dealing with in ourselves, folks. That's our sinful nature.

Laws and rules have never conquered the sinful nature.

◆"Therefore no-one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin." Romans 3:20, NIV.

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◆“The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,” Romans 5:20, NIV.

◆You and I, our kids, and our neighbors, and our cities, and our nations need something far more than laws. What we need is to be married to the Messiah, to love God. Then we will love man as we ought.

◆D. The only really safe place to be is to be in love with (married to) God. Are you? Are you in love with your Creator? Does your heart long to know him more? Do you want to enjoy his beauties, his marvelous works? Do you smile when you think of who God is? These are important questions, because this is what it means to be a Christian (**v4**). It is to love God back for the love he already has for you, the love that caused him to send his Son, our brother, to bring us home.

### ◆**2. Our marriage with God is a whole operating system.**

A. Tim Keller puts it, “To be a Christian is to fall in love with Jesus and to enter into a legal, yet personal, relationship as comprehensive as a marriage. When you get married no part of your life goes unaffected.” In philosophy and theology we call this a “worldview”. Being married is the final answer to the question “Can a Christian live as he or she chooses?” No, because believing in Jesus is a love relationship, not a religious system of prac-

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tices. When you are married you have decided that you cannot live merely as you choose.

◆ In my marriage it is my love for my wife that binds and limits me. Yes there is a certain loss of freedom, and independence. To not recognize this is immature and if you can't abide this you should not get married. A marriage cannot be the beautiful thing God intended if the partners do not share even their inner selves, their pains, their hopes, their longings. A married person can never make completely self-governed decisions for they are no longer a single self. The Bible calls them "one flesh", one entity, almost like twins joined at the hip. This is why married people join their financial accounts; what his is hers and what's her's is his in a true marriage. Even your very bodies belong to the other. Listen to this text in Paul's letter to the early Corinthian church.

◆ "The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife." 1 Corinthians 7:3, 4, NIV.

◆ Sadly today many folks think of marriage as little more than a legal sex contract. They live separate lives. They have separate friends. They keep their own money. And eventually divorce and fight over the kids. That's not the union Paul is talking about here by a long shot. Marriage is a whole thing deal. Where a person out of love determines to care about another, bend for



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another, live for another, stick to another, seek the other's joy and well being, and lay down their life for the other. Nobody, but nobody could ever deserve such a thing as marriage. This is what we have been given in Christ.

◆B. As a consequence of marriage to the Messiah, Christians have a worldview that believes everything in their life belongs, and everything in their world belongs to the Messiah. That's why everywhere you find Christians you also find schools, and hospitals, and scientific research. People married to God want to find out everything they can about the one they love, and serve him in every occupation they have.

◆**Conclusion:** Paul's analogy with marriage isn't a perfect one. That's partly why it's hard to work through. So in a **nut shell** this first paragraph of Romans 7 is saying this about Christians: You and I were by nature married to the mob. We lived in fear of making the God-Father upset. But there was a death (Christ's and by faith, ours too) and that marriage ended. God's Son lost no time, rose from the dead, swept us off our feet and married us instead. Now we are so amazed and in love we couldn't even imagine not living to make him happy. Its just the way it is.

◆Lets return to that Wife 1.0 software we talked about earlier, you know, the one about it being a whole operating system, not just an add on software. Let me finish the letter from Tech Support:

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- ◆ "Wife 1.0 is a great program, but it tends to be very high maintenance. Wife 1.0 comes with several support programs, such as Clean and Sweep 3.0, Cook It 1.5 and Do Bills 4.2. However, be very careful how you use these programs. Improper use will cause the system to launch the program Nag Nag 9.5. Once this happens, the only way to improve the performance of Wife 1.0 is to purchase additional software. I recommend Flowers 2.1 and Diamonds 5.0 ! WARNING!!! DO NOT, under any circumstances, install Secretary With Short Skirt 3.3. This application is not supported by Wife 1.0 and will cause irreversible damage to the operating system. Best of luck, Tech Support."
- ◆ Nobody truly in love wants what might damage their marriage. Christian people love the Messiah! It's just the way it is.