



UNION with CHRIST

Study 8a: BARREN BONDAGE or FRUITFUL UNION? (7:1-6)

7:1-3 *How does the Law's view of marriage illustrate the liberty (and previous enslavement) of the Christian?*

Persons who have no understanding of the Christian doctrine of sin, or Christians uninstructed from Rom. 7, may go through experiences that can leave them bewildered and thoroughly drained. -- **B. Ramm**, *op.cit.*, p.148

7:4-6 *Why is she who is married to Law (i.e. works) perpetually unfruitful? (John 15:1-11,16; cf. Isaiah. 53:10-54:1) By which vital (living) power do Christians bear*

lasting fruit? (cf. v.6 with 6:4)

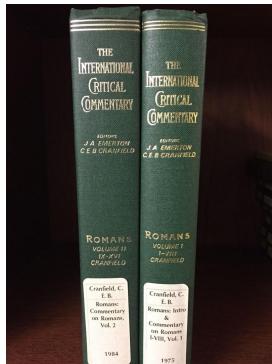
... as death breaks the bond between a husband and wife, so death -- the believer's death-with-Christ -- breaks the bond which formerly yoked him to the law, and now he is free to enter into union with Christ. -- **F.F. Bruce**, *op.cit.*, p. 145

Just as the sun's rays call forth the possibilities that are in the seed and bring them to full growth, so the law calls forth the sin that slumbers. Now it has opportunity to develop its inherent possibilities; and the result is conscious opposition to God. *It is in relation to the law, that sin grows powerful in man.* -- **A. Nygren**, *op.cit.*, p. 279

Study 8b: The LAW -- LIGHT, but not LIFE (7:7-13)

7:7-13 *May a Christian neglect the Law because he is under grace?*

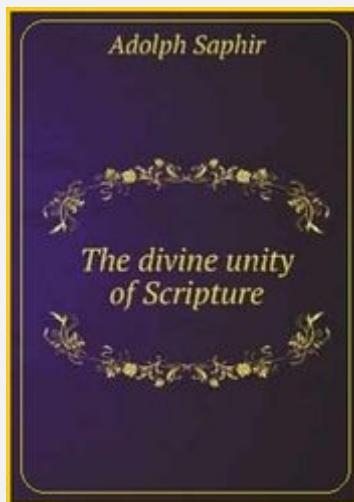
Paul seems to have in mind here the narrative of Genesis 3, in which the divine commandment which is God's good and gracious gift for man's preservation is seen to be also an opportunity which the serpent can exploit in order to ruin man. Sin has wrought man's death through the commandment. So a true understanding of the situation with regard to the law must include the recognition of the fact that it has been effectively exploited by sin for sin's purpose, but must never lose sight of the fundamental truth, which is affirmed with emphasis in v. 12, that in itself the law is God's law, holy, righteous and good ... The verses which follow depict vividly the inner conflict character-



istic of the true Christian, a conflict such as is possible only in the man, in whom the Holy Spirit is active and whose mind is being renewed under the discipline of the gospel. In the man who understands the law not legalistically but in the light of Christ and so recognizes the real seriousness of its requirement, and who truly and sincerely wills to obey it, to do what is good and to avoid the evil, the man in whom the power of sin is really being seriously and resolutely challenged, in him the power of sin is clearly seen. The more he is renewed by God's Spirit, the more sensitive he becomes to the continuing power of sin over his life and the fact that even his very best activities are marred by the egotism still entrenched within him. **C.E.B. Cranfield** Vol.1 pp.341,342

The Divine Unity of Scripture

And when the apostles went to the idolaters, how remarkable is it that unto them also they preached the Scriptures, so that we find that in all the epistles which afterwards they directed to the congregations which had been formed from among the heathen, they proved every doctrine from the Old Testament Scriptures. Justification by faith was proved from the prophet Habakkuk, from the example of Abraham, and from the experience of David. And the apostle Paul was so anxious that in that world-wide epistle to the Romans there should be given light to the Gentiles, as to the true position of the Old Testament, that he shows in it how Jesus Christ was the minister of the circumcision to fulfil the promises which were given to the fathers, and how the Gentiles were brought in, in accordance with the prophetic word. He was afraid of that congregation in Rome, and of all the Gentile



congregations, falling into what I may call Gentilising error ... so he writes to the Corinthians that the experience of Israel in the wilderness was to be a guide and a warning unto them. And when the apostles were near the end of their earthly course, and saw the dangers to which the Church of Christ would be exposed, they with all emphasis directed men again to the Scriptures, which were to be a light shining to them in darkness, and which were profitable to them, and able to make them perfect, furnishing them to every good work ... The glory of the Old Testament is great. The glory of the New Testament is still greater. But it is not by depreciating the one that we shall be able to see the true magnitude and excellence of the other. **Adolph Saphir** *The Divine Unity of Scripture* p.114

SANCTIFICATION

The Struggle with Sin

"As often as my attentive bookseller sends me on approval another new commentary on Romans, I immediately turn to the seventh chapter. And if the commentator sets up a man of straw in the seventh chapter, I immediately shut the book. I at once send the book back and say 'No, thank you. That is not the man for my hard-earned money.'"

-- Alexander Whyte, in F.F. Bruce, *op.cit.*, p. 151

Study 9a: The CHRISTIAN "I" PROBLEM -- INDWELLING SIN (7:14-25)

7:14-20 How does God's Law illuminate the truth of man's two natures?

Do verses 14-25 depict the experience of a regenerate or an unregenerate man? Is this a normal Christian experience or a sinner's experience? The great names are found on both sides; for the former, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Beza, etc., and for the latter, Meyer, Godet, Stuart, Tholuck, etc. -- **J.Stifler**, *op.cit.*, p.132

The faithful often refuse this natural interpretation on the ground that it involves -- so they argue -- a gross belittling of the victory vouchsafed to the believer, and hanker after an interpretation which regards 7.14-25 and chapter 8 as describing two successive stages, before and after conversion. **C.E.B. Cranfield** *op.cit.* p.356

The entire New Testament clearly testifies that believers are spiritually united to Christ by faith and by the Holy Spirit. But how is the sinner related to Adam? If too much emphasis is put on biological succession from Adam, sin takes on the shape of a biological substance not unlike a defective gene. Even worse, Augustine believed sin was passed on by sexual intercourse. Sin is not a biological substance nor a defective gene. Sin belongs to the categories of the moral and spiritual. -- **B. Ramm**, *op.cit.*, p. 51

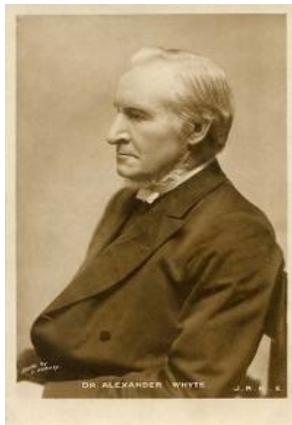
Oh, how the false philosophy of Aristotle has deceived our theologians (*the medieval Scholastics*)! They teach that sin is entirely destroyed by baptism or repentance, and so regard it as absurd that the Apostle should here confess: "Sin ... dwelleth in me." As a converted, or spiritual man, they say, he could no longer have any sin in him; therefore, they argue, he here speaks of himself as a carnal (*or unconverted man*). But sin remains in the spiritual man, in order that he might exercise himself in grace, put off his pride and check his arrogance. -- **M. Luther**, *op.cit.*, p. 100

7:21-25 What disaster may befall the Christian, if these verses be misunderstood? (Gal. 5:17; 1 John 1:8-10)

Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? One can find no lack of verbal parallels to this exclamation in classical literature and elsewhere. Philo -- a truer disciple of Plato than of the prophets -- speaks of the body as "that composition of clay, that moulded statue, that house so close to the soul, which it never lays aside, but carries like a corpse from the cradle to the grave -- what a grievous burden!" (*On Husbandry* 25.) Epictetus speaks of himself as "a poor soul shackled to a corpse" (fragment 23). Some commentators have tried to illuminate Paul's words by reference to Virgil's account of the Etruscan king Mezentius, who tied his living captives to decomposing corpses (*Aeneid* viii. 485 ff.). But Paul is not thinking of the body of flesh and blood; the evil was more deeply rooted. "The body of this death", or "this body of death," (RSV), is, like the "body of sin" (vi. 6), that heritage of **human nature** subject to the law of sin and death which he shares with all sons of Adam, that *massa perditionis* in which the whole of the old creation is involved, and from which, for all his longing and struggling, he cannot extricate himself by his own endeavours. -- **F.F. Bruce**, *op.cit.*, p.155 (bold added)

The key to the meaning of the entire section is found in the repetition of "I" 30 times in the chapter, without a single mention of the Holy Spirit. It indicates what "I" am struggling to do, and utterly fail to do in my own strength. The contrast between this and the succeeding chapter is most striking. In ch. viii. there are at least 20 references to the Holy Spirit, and while in ch. vii. Law is mentioned 20 times, in ch. viii. it is found only 3 or 4 times. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *op.cit.*, p.44

Where has he said that the man of whom he here speaks has a desire for the evil? It is here declared that he hates it. ... As long as this life last, there continues the tension between the old aeon and the new, between the heart and the members, in the life of the Christian. As long as he still lives "in the flesh," and is thus a member in the body of death, which mankind under Adam, its head, is, there remains the tension between being "in Christ" and being "in the flesh." **Anders Nygren**, p. 290-301



Alexander Whyte

Who is more sensitive to sin -- the sinner or the saint?

Many commentators, including -- surprisingly -- not a few in the Reformed tradition, have stated quite dogmatically that it cannot be a Christian who speaks here. But the truth is, surely, that inability to recognize the distress reflected in this cry as characteristic of Christian existence argues a failure to grasp the full seriousness of the Christian's obligation to express his gratitude to God by obedience of life. The farther men advance in the Christian life, and the more mature their discipleship, the clearer becomes their perception of the heights to which God calls them, and the more painfully sharp their consciousness of the distance between what they ought, and want, to be, and what they are. **C.E.B. Cranfield** *Romans* Vol.1 pp.365-366