

GRACE TO YOU

ROMANS 7:1-6

# FREED FOR FRUIT



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**FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

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# INTRODUCTION

Every Christian has been married twice and the second marriage is always better than the first. Our first marriage is always terrible. Our second marriage is always not only better, but the best. How can we get out of our first and worst marriage and get into our second and best marriage? **How can we remarry for the better?**

## BACKGROUND

American law has authority and dominion over us as long as we live but death frees us from the law's authority and our obligation to obey it. That's true whether it's criminal law, civil law, tax law, etc. When we die, our relationship to the laws of America dies, it comes to an end. American law has no more concern with us and we have no concern with it. The general principle is that death ends the law's relationship to us and ours to it.

What's true of American law, is also true of God's law, as the Apostle Paul explains: "**The law is binding on a person only as long as he lives**" (1). He uses the example of marriage to prove his point: "**A married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage**" (2). Therefore "**if she lives with another man while her husband is alive**" then "**she shall be called an adulteress**" (3). The law condemns her and sentences her. "**But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress**" (4).

The basic legal and biblical principle is that death ends the law's authority, our relationship to the law, and our obligation to obey the law, and any penalty of the law for our disobedience." That's true of our relationship to human laws (like marriage laws) and our relationship to God's laws. **How can we get free from the demanding and condemning authority of God's law?** We are married to it as long as we live. As long as we are alive we are married to God's law. We are bound to it, in a marriage relationship with it as long as we live, and only death can release us from this marriage and give us the freedom to enjoy a second and better marriage.



What is our first marriage like?



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# 1. OUR FIRST MARRIAGE IS OUR WORST MARRIAGE (5)

For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death (5).

## It's a loveless marriage

We are born in an unhappy relationship with the law. The law commands, criticizes, convicts, condemns, and curses, and hates us. It never praises, never compliments, never supports, never encourages, never appreciates, never rewards, and never loves. As a result, we hate it, argue with it, fight it, oppose it, ignore it, and even provoke it by doing the opposite.

## It's a lawless marriage

"Living in the flesh" means living in a human nature that is controlled and directed by sin. There's a difference between "flesh" being in Christians and being "in the flesh." Christians will have "flesh" in them as long as they live, but non-Christians are "in the flesh." It's not just that sin is in them but they are in sin.

When someone is "in the flesh" their "sinful passions [are] aroused by the law.." In other words the law provokes lawlessness. That's not the law's fault, that's our fault. Because of our flesh, the law arouses, motivates, empowers, and encourages our sinful passions into hotter and greater sinful passions. Just like the dunghill smells worse when the sun shines on it, so our flesh smells worse when the law comes into contact with us. Just as the gentle stream turns into a raging torrent when the gorge is narrowed, so the law increases the power and current of sin. The law produces lawlessness. A law-marriage is a lawless marriage.

## It's a fruitless marriage

Because our flesh was rotten, the fruit of that flesh was rotten too, so rotten that it was deadly. It reeked of death, was worthy of death, and would end in eternal death. However good the fruit looks in an unbelieving life, it is dead and rotten to God (Rom.8:8).

## CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

**Are you still married to the law?** Do you not see how awful this marriage is: loveless, lawless, fruitless? How's it working out for you? Do you not want a happy marriage, a better life?

**Do you want out of this marriage?** The only way out is death, but it's a certain kind of death. It's by union with the death of Christ. We "have died to the law through the body of Christ" (4). When Christ died, he was released from the law's condemning power and authority. He was made under the law but satisfied all the demands of the law in his life and all the penalties of the law in his death. We cannot live that life or die that death, but Christ can and did. When we unite to him by faith, we are regarded as having lived his life and died his death. We are separated from the law as a way of salvation or sanctification. The law's hold on us is dead. The law's condemnation is dead. The law's sentence is dead. We "have died to the law through the body of Christ" (4). The law is silenced. Its mouth is stopped. It's claims are dismissed.

A LAW MARRIAGE  
IS AN ABUSIVE MARRIAGE



What does this second marriage look like?



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## 2. OUR SECOND MARRIAGE IS THE BEST MARRIAGE (4, 6)

It's a loving marriage

**Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another (4).**

When death ends a marriage, the living partner is free to remarry, the law opens the door to a second marriage. When the law dies, we are free to remarry and belong to another. In this case, we are freed to be married to Christ and belong to him. We are his, happily his, all his. And he is mine, happily mine, all mine.

It's a powerful marriage

**But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code (6).**

When we are married to Christ we are not only released from weakness, we are married to the one who rose from the dead, with all the power involved in that. The result is that we then "serve God in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code." When we were married to the law, we had no power to keep the law, satisfy the law, or escape the law's captivity. When we marry Christ, he sends his Holy Spirit into our hearts with new light, love, and life. That completely transforms the way we serve and obey God. We have power instead of powerlessness. The law-marriage produced law-disobedience. Christ-marriage produces law-obedience. We obey not as a bargaining tool but out of love and gratitude to God. We are freed from the law to serve God with spiritual power.

It's a fruitful marriage

**In order that we may bear fruit for God (4).**

Instead of grace killing good works, it produces them. Our first marriage had a barren womb, our second one has lots of children. Our first marriage was a bare orchard of dead trees, our second marriage is packed full with all kinds of fruitful trees.

### CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

**Do you want to remarry?** Why stay in such a loveless, lawless, fruitless, abusive marriage one day longer? There's a new marriage waiting for you. Just say, "I do!" and it will change everything.

**Do you want a fruitful life?** Don't be a bigamist. Many Christians are bigamists. They are truly dead to the law and united to Christ, but they live as if they are married both to the law and to Christ. They grasp Christ's grace but often go back to the law's clutches too. They have access to Christ's forgiveness of sin and power to serve God, but they can still resort to their old marriage when they wallow in guilt or try to serve in their own strength. Trying to keep two marriages going is such a stressful and unproductive way to live. Be exclusively committed to Christ and you'll enjoy full and free forgiveness and spiritual power to serve God and produce much fruit.

**OUR FIRST MARRIAGE WAS FRUIT-STAPLING,  
OUR SECOND MARRIAGE IS FRUIT-BEARING.**



Hear God's Story > Change your story > Tell the story > Change others' stories



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## SUMMARY



## A NEW CHAPTER

**The lonely.** There's an epidemic of loneliness in the world which has many damaging physical, social, economic, psychological, and moral effects. Here's God's wonderful help for lonely Christians (singles, the bereaved, the forgotten, the abused): building and strengthening your marriage to Christ.

**The weak.** Are you spiritually defeated? Is temptation winning and you are losing? Does serving God feel like a burden rather than a delight? Do guilt and condemnation get you down? Marry Christ exclusively and avoid all bigamy for a powerful, enjoyable life of fruitful service.

**Prayer.** Heavenly Husband, thank you for marrying me and giving me such a loving, powerful, fruitful marriage.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was your first (spiritual) marriage like?
2. Can you describe a time when the law made you sin more not less?
3. What's your second (spiritual) marriage like?
4. How would you explain the place of the law in your Christian life?
5. What fruit has marriage to Christ produced in your life?
6. How else would you apply this message? What people would benefit from hearing it?

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