



St. Paul's Lutheran Church
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The Epistle of Romans

The Justification of the Ungodly

Romans 7:1-6

The Apostle Paul uses an example for us to consider in verses 1-6. He uses the illustration of marriage to apply the profound point that we have been covering in previous lessons. And what point is Paul trying to convey? Let us examine his point and his illustration in the following paragraphs.

Without Christ, we are joined and underneath the commands, threats, and accusations of the Law. Like a married woman joined to her husband through marriage, we are joined to the Law.

Regarding Husband Law, even though the Law is good, it points out sin because we are sinners. In other words, Husband Law is *always* standing over mankind waving its finger, condemning, and enslaving.

More specifically, Husband Law always pursues us telling us what we should and should not do, bringing condemnation upon our consciences. Husband Law rules over us and there is no escape from its tyranny, because there is no escape from our sin and death itself.

We must keep in mind that there are some very definable characteristics of living under Husband Law. Let note several characteristics below.

Living underneath Husband Law will lead to Pride or Despair. This is so important to understand. There are only two options in our disposition/attitude if we live underneath Husband Law. Either we deceive ourselves thinking that we are fulfilling and pleasing Husband Law resulting in pride (*e.g., I am doing great; everyone else needs to step it up*), or we realize the enormous demands of Husband Law and shrink in despair (*e.g., I can't do it; I wish I could die*). As stated in the Lutheran Study Bible,

"If we think we are living a fairly good life—not like the people we read about in the papers—we become proud and self-satisfied. This was the attitude of the Pharisees in Jesus' day. On the other hand, if we realize the true enormity of our sins—how they daily color our thoughts, words, and actions – we can easily fall into complete despair."

Living underneath Husband Law also brings about a shame-based identity. Shame is a result of guilt and is used to compel ourselves and others to satisfy guilt. Practically speaking, when a person or group of people operate underneath Husband Law, they will feel constant guilt because they are never meeting up to the demands of Husband Law. As a result, they will try to alleviate this guilt by enforcing shame on themselves and others. Shame then becomes a powerful tool to motivate persons to 'apparently' appease guilt. (The problem is that the guilt of sin - underneath Husband Law - is never satisfied. Only the blood of Christ can satisfy guilt.)

Special Focus: As a result of Husband Law's shame, shame-based systems, people, and churches are created. However, what does a shame-based person/system/church living under Husband Law look like?

- Preoccupations with Fault and Blame – Offsetting Vengeance: To be good spouses to Husband Law, one must always cross their T's and dot their I's. And if a person doesn't do this and their neighbor doesn't do this, the fault is identified, and fingers are pointed, so that things can be remedied to not upset Husband Law's vengeance.
- Performance Driven People/Systems – No Rest for the Weary: There is no rest for the weary underneath Husband Law. *"If only I can do XYZ, I will satisfy the demands of Husband Law and others, resulting in no shame."* Under Husband Law, there is always competition to do things better than someone else; that way, if there is shame, it won't be placed upon the person doing things better than everyone else.
- The Can't Talk Rule – Trying to Conceal Sin: When a person fails or sins, they have to keep their sin secret and keep it safe. They can't talk about their sin and failure, for if they do, Husband Law will be there to crush them with shame.
- Defensive Spirits – Escaping Shame: Shame hurts. It cuts to the heart. Therefore, spouses to Husband Law must become experts as self-defense techniques to protect themselves against shame. For example, hiding in the shadows, trying not to be noticed, blaming others, denying failure, anger, fear, and so forth, are all examples of trying to escape Husband Law's shame.

So, what do we do with Husband Law? Well, that is what the Apostle Paul is trying to help us understand. If we stay underneath Husband Law, things are not good (as we heard above). And if we divorce Husband Law, we will be chased around with the stigma of divorce. But thanks be to God that by our baptisms, we die to Husband Law and Husband Law dies to us. In other words, baptism terminates the relationship and enslaving power of Husband Law. In baptism, Husband Law (with sin and death) is dead to us, and we are alive to Christ.

Therefore, since we have been baptized with Christ, we are disassociated from Husband Law and now belong to Husband Christ. As the church, we are the bride of Christ. And with Christ? 1) We don't go the way of pride or despair but the way of repentance and faith. We do not believe the myth that we can keep the Law, and we do not fall into despair from not keeping the Law. We confess boldly where we don't keep the Law and believe even more boldly that Christ has kept the Law for us and forgives us of our sins. 2) We are not controlled by a shame-based identity but our baptismal identity. So, instead of being motivated by shame to fulfill guilt, we are motivated by love because Christ has appeased the guilt of sin on our behalf. 3) And because the enslaving power of Husband Law is dead to us, we never rush to fault and blame as a way to enact vengeance. We always put the best construction on every situation, only identifying fault and blame so that we might aid and assist our neighbors to do better. 4) As far as performance? We don't do good works to appease Husband Law, but we do good works because everything has already been appeased in Christ. We work from a position of rest in Christ, not from a perspective to obtain rest from Husband Law. Good works under Husband Law are tyrannical burdens; good works in Christ are wonderful gifts and joys to serve a neighbor. 5) Failures and Sin? We confess those boldly because we know that there is more grace in Christ than we have sin. We don't celebrate our sins, and we don't conceal them, but we confess them. 6) And finally, there is no such thing as a defensive spirit in Christ. Since our esteem is in Christ, we are quick to apologize, admit failure, forgive, and amend. The fruit of Husband Law is guilt, shame, pride, despair, fault, blame, defensiveness, and performance. The fruit of Husband Christ is forgiveness, assurance, confession, compassion, rest, etc. Two different Husbands; one dead and the other one alive to the Christian – because of baptism.

