

Title: Bound Together

Text: Romans 7:2

Date: May 12, 2013 – Mother's Day

Place: Decatur Church of God

Have you heard these words before?

“Will you have this woman to be your wife, and will you give yourself to her in all love and honor, in all duty and service, in all faith and tenderness, to live with her and cherish her as long as you both shall live?”

This is part of God's intent for love, marriage and motherhood. God designed our bodies with a need for each other, male and female, drawn to each other and initially bearing a responsibility to procreate.

On this Mother's Day, let's allow ourselves the opportunity to reflect on God's intent and thus our responsibility.

Romans 7:2

For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage.

* In 2000, at the end of his 40-year political career, Senator Patrick Moynihan said, "The biggest change [that I've seen] is that the family structure has come apart all over the North Atlantic world." The change has occurred in "an historical instant," Moynihan said. "Something that was not imaginable 40 years ago."

A new [State of Our Unions report](#) (December 2012) concludes that things have gotten even worse. The report notes the following statistics:

- ♥ More than 40 percent of children are born out of wedlock.
- ♥ Between 1970 and 2012, the annual number of marriages per 1,000 unmarried adults decreased by more than 50 percent.

- ♥ The divorce rate today is about twice that of 1960 (although it has declined since peaking in the early 1980s).
- ♥ More than 25 percent of all children live in single-parent homes, compared to only nine percent in 1960.
- ♥ The number of unmarried couples has increased seventeen-fold in the last 50 years.

The study concluded that we are "witnessing a striking exodus from marriage." The distinguished historian Lawrence Stone noted, "The scale of marital breakdown in the West since 1960 has no historical precedent At no time in history, with the possibility of Imperial Rome, has the institution of marriage been more problematic than today."

* On November 10th, 1972, I stood before a gathering of people in the sanctuary of the First Church of God in Houston, Texas. Rev. Bill Heerlein asked me if I would take Debbie Dade to be my lawfully wedded wife. I said yes!

In my mind, when I said I would, I was making a lifelong commitment. No ifs, no ands, no buts, I was choosing, before God, to be Debbie's husband. I was bound to her and she to me.

Since that time I have talked with Debbie and she has confirmed my understanding. She does not believe in divorce! She does believe in murder, so she says.

You get the idea.

So Paul is using this well-understood example to say something more to the Church at Rome.

Romans 7:1-6

Do you not know, brothers--for I am speaking to men who know the law--that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? [2] For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. [3] So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an

adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.

[4] So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. [5] For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. [6] But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

I. Through Christ we died to the law.

Romans 8:2

Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

- A. Paul is saying that death dissolves a connection from which obligation resulted.

* Dr. Boyce Blackwelder translated the verse this way,

“Just so, my brothers, you also were rendered dead to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might belong to another-to him who was raised up from the dead-in order that we might bring forth fruit for God.”

* The word “death” here is from the Greek word “thanatoo,” meaning you were made dead, put to death. Using this word instead of “apethanete” (you died) indicates this ethical death is fellowship with Christ’s death, which was by violence.

- B. The death of the Christian to the law prepares the way for another union, a union with Christ, from which a new and more efficient obligation results.

Col. 1:22

But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation--

II. Now we belong to Christ.

- A. Not under the control of the flesh (the sinful nature).
- B. Now we are saved and under the control of Christ.

* Having died to that in which we were constantly being held down, the Christian is more alive than ever.

- 1. Satan seeks to have control over us.
- 2. But the power of the evil nature has been broken.

* It was Simon the Sorcerer who wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:20-22

Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! [21] You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. [22] Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart."

- 3. We can choose to serve our selfish desires or we can yield our hearts to Christ.
- 4. Perhaps God will forgive us!

* We wouldn't dare to try and buy the power of the Holy Spirit but we might be willing to try a program started by Willow Creek, or Saddleback and believe that it will make us a great church, a popular church, or a large church.

The real question must be, is our heart right before God?

III. In that new relationship we are to bear fruit.

* If our heart is right before God, we will have a natural desire to bear fruit.

* An apple tree doesn't experience an ethical dilemma but follows its natural bent and bears apples. A cherry tree doesn't quiz itself but rather, by its nature, bears cherries. Open a COKE can, you will not discover Pepsi.

A. Because we belong to Christ, our nature is to bear spiritual fruit.

B. No fruit indicates a problem.

* The American missionary Adoniram Judson arrived in Burma, or Myanmar, in 1812, and died there thirty-eight years later in 1850. During that time, he suffered much for the cause of the gospel. He was imprisoned, tortured, and kept in shackles. After the death of his first wife, Ann, to whom he was devoted, for several months he was so depressed that he sat daily beside her tomb. Three years later, he wrote: God is to me the Great Unknown. I believe in him, but I cannot find him.

But Adoniram's faith sustained him, and he threw himself into the tasks to which he believed God had called him. He worked feverishly on his translation of the Bible. The New Testament had now been printed, and he finished the Old Testament in early 1834.

Statistics are unclear, but there were only somewhere between twelve and twenty-five professing Christians in the country when he died, and there were not churches to speak of.

At the 150th anniversary of the translation of the Bible into the Burmese language, Paul Borthwick was addressing a group that was celebrating Judson's work. Just before he got up to speak, he noticed in small print on the first page the words: "Translated by Rev. A. Judson." So Borthwick turned to his interpreter, a Burmese man named Matthew Hia Win, and asked him, "Matthew, what do you know of this man?" Matthew began to weep as he said,

We know him—we know how he loved the Burmese people, how he suffered for the gospel because of us, out of love for us. He died a pauper, but left the Bible for us. When he died, there were few believers, but today there are over 600,000 of us,

and every single one of us traces our spiritual heritage to one man: the Rev. Adoniram Judson.

But Adoniram Judson never saw it!

And that will be the case for some of us. We may be called to invest our lives in ministries for which we do not see much immediate fruit, trusting that the God of all grace who oversees our work will ensure that our labor is not in vain.

IV. Under the sinful nature we bore sinful fruit.

- A. As sinners, we naturally produced a fruit from our sinful DNA.
- B. Lives of selfishness, deceit, frustration and anger were the norm.

* If that is still the norm...what does that tell you?

V. Through Christ we have been released from the law to serve a new way of the Spirit.

- A. We have been given a new DNA.
- B. Our nature is reworked and reorganized.
- C. The nature of our living is changed which results in a new kind of fruit.

* A team of researchers from three universities have identified a phenomenon that they call "The Ikea Effect." The name derives from the love millions of Americans feel for Ikea, the wildly successful Swedish-based company whose products usually arrive with some assembly required. In a series of experiments, the researchers had participants assemble Ikea products, fold origami projects, and build sets of Legos. The study concluded, "[Participants experienced] the increase in valuation of self-made products [They] saw their amateurish creations ... as similar in value to the creations of experts." In other words, the researchers found that when we get personally involved in a project, we have a greater affection for the end product—even when we know it isn't perfect.

One of the researchers for the study described the Ikea Effect this way:

Imagine that you built a table. Maybe it came out a little crooked. Probably your [spouse] or your neighbor would see it for what it is—a shoddy piece of workmanship. But to you that table might seem really great, because you're the one who created it. It's the fruit of your labor. And that is really the idea behind the Ikea Effect.

Being bound together with your spouse makes you a different person. Your very nature changes!

Being bound together with Christ and the Christian community makes you a different person. Your very nature changes! This is the way our Christian lives should be lived.

How is it working for you? Is this true? Why not?