Pauls marriage analogy

I am listening to an audiobook from Watchman Lee, The Normal Christian Life, and he's got a chapter, Ageless Truth, I believe, where he talks about how a woman has a husband but desires to marry another but better husband, but due to covenant, she needs to stay with her first husband. The only way to be released is if that husband dies, but that husband never dies because that husband is the law, and the law is forever. So the only way would be if she dies, that would nullify the marriage covenant with the law. And therefore, he establishes the point that Jesus died, and when we die and are raised with him, we can now take on the new covenant of grace and of righteousness through imputation and have the better covenant. He said this is what Paul says. I don't remember Paul ever saying anything quite like that. I think what he's saying is Paul paints a picture and he's making a metaphorical story to embody and show this. Does Paul ever allude to a woman who has a husband who wants to marry another, or is that just him making a storyline that's relatable?

Great question — and your instinct is basically right.

Short answer:
Paul **does** use a **marriage illustration involving a woman bound to a husband until death**, but **Watchman Nee (often called Watchman Lee in the audiobook)** is **expanding Paul's illustration into a more vivid narrative**. Paul gives the **legal analogy**, not the emotionally detailed storyline.

Let's pin it down carefully.

Where Paul actually says this

The passage Nee is drawing from is **Romans 7:1–4**.

Paul writes (KJV-style summary):

- A **woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives**
- If the husband **dies**, she is **released from the law of the husband**
- If she belongs to another man **while the husband lives**, she is an adulteress
- But if the husband **dies**, she is free to belong to another

Then Paul immediately applies it:

"Wherefore, my brethren, **ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another**, even to him who is raised from the dead…"

Key observations

- Paul **does not** describe:
  - desire for a "better husband"
  - emotional tension
  - dissatisfaction
- Paul **does** describe:
  - a **legal covenant**
  - **death as the only release**

- remarriage being lawful **only after death**

So yes — **the woman/husband framework is Paul's**, not Nee's invention.

Where Nee goes beyond Paul

Watchman Nee **fleshes out** Paul's analogy to make the theological logic emotionally graspable:

- The **first husband = the Law**
- The **second husband = Christ**
- The Law **cannot die** (because it reflects God's righteousness)
- Therefore **the woman must die**
- Dying **with Christ** releases her from the first covenant
- Resurrection allows lawful union with Christ

Paul **says the logic**.
Nee **dramatizes the logic**.

That's a legitimate teaching move — **as long as it's recognized as illustration, not quotation**.

Is Nee's theology faithful to Paul?

Yes — *with one important precision* (which you already sensed).

Paul's emphasis is **not desire-driven** ("she wants a better husband"), but **jurisdictional**:

- The problem is **legal bondage**, not emotional preference
- The Law isn't "bad"
- The Law isn't the villain
- The Law simply **has authority as long as the person lives**

Paul's point:

You cannot fix the Law-relationship by reform.
Only death ends jurisdiction.

That fits perfectly with:

- Romans 6 (death with Christ)
- Galatians 2:19 ("I through the law am dead to the law")
- Colossians 2:14 (ordinances nailed to the cross)

So your conclusion is correct

- ✅ **Paul does allude to a married woman bound until death**
- ❌ **Paul does not tell the full "story" the way Nee does**
- ✅ **Nee is building a pedagogical metaphor on top of Paul**
- ⚠️ The metaphor works **only if kept subordinate to the text**

You weren't misremembering Paul.
You were correctly distinguishing **exegesis** from **illustrative theology**.

If you want, next we can:

- trace how this connects to **Jeremiah 31 / 32 covenant logic**
- compare this with **Galatians' pedagogue language**
- or examine whether Paul ever flips the image (spoiler: he does, slightly, in Ephesians 5)

Just say where you want to go.