

Romans Chapter 7

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{LEGAL EXPERIENCE / Lectures To Professing Christians / Charles G. Finney}

There are certain rules of evidence, which all men are bound to apply, in ascertaining the meaning of instruments and the testimony of witnesses, and of all writings.

1. We are always to put that construction on language which is required by the nature of the subject.

We are bound always to understand a person's language as it is applicable to the subject of discourse. Much of the language of common life may be tortured into any thing, if you lose sight of the subject, and take the liberty to interpret it without reference to what they are speaking of. How much injury has been done, by interpreting separate passages and single expressions in the scriptures, in violation of this principle. It is chiefly by overlooking this simple rule, that the scriptures have been tortured into the support of errors and contradictions innumerable and absurd beyond all calculation. This rule is applicable to all statements. Courts of justice never would allow such perversions as have been committed upon the Bible.

2. If a person's language will admit, we are bound always to construe it so as to make him consistent with himself.

Unless you observe this rule, you can scarcely converse five minutes with any individual on any subject and not make him contradict himself. If you do not hold to this rule, how can one man ever communicate his ideas so that another man will understand him? How can a witness ever make known the facts to the jury, if his language is to be tortured at pleasure, without the restraints of this rule?

3. In interpreting a person's language, we are always to keep in view the point to which he is speaking.

We are to understand the scope of his argument, the object he has in view, and the point to which he is speaking. Otherwise we shall of course not understand his language. Suppose I were to take up a book, any book, and not keep my eye on the object the writer had in view in making it, and the point to which he is aiming, I never can understand that book. It is easy to see how endless errors have grown out of a practice of interpreting the scriptures in disregard of the first principles of interpretation.

4. When you understand the point to which a person is speaking, you are to understand

him as speaking to that point; and not to put a construction on his language unconnected with his object, or inconsistent with it.

By losing sight of this rule, you may make nonsense of everything. You are bound always to interpret language in the light of the subject to which it is applied, or about which it is spoken.

{THE LAST CHECK TO ANTINOMIANISM / John Fletcher}

To take a scripture out of the context, is often like taking the stone that binds an arch out of its place: you know not what to make of it. Nay, you may put it to a use quite contrary to that for which it was intended. This our opponents do, when they so take Rom. vii, out of its connection with Rom. vi, and Rom. viii, as to make it mean the very reverse of what the apostle designed. St. Paul, in Romans fifth and sixth, and in the beginning of the seventh chapter, describes "the glorious liberty of the children of God" under the Christian dispensation. And as a skilful painter puts shades in his pictures to heighten the effect of the lights; so the judicious apostle introduces, in the latter part of Rom. vii, a lively description of the domineering power of sin, and of the intolerable burden of guilt: a burden this, which he had so severely felt, when the convincing Spirit charged sin home upon his conscience after he had broken his good resolutions; but especially during the three days of his blindness and fasting at Damascus. Then he groaned, "O wretched man that I am," &c, hanging night and day between despair and hope, between unbelief and faith, between bondage and freedom, till God brought him into Christian liberty by the ministry of Ananias; of this liberty the apostle gives us a farther and fuller account in Rom. viii. Therefore the description of the man who groans under the galling yoke of sin, is brought in merely by contrast, to set off the amazing difference there is between the bondage of sin and the liberty of Gospel holiness: just as the generals, who entered Rome in triumph, used to make a show of the prince whom they had conquered. On such occasions the conqueror rode in a triumphal chariot crowned with laurel, while the captive king followed him on foot, loaded with chains, and making, next to the conqueror, the most striking part of the show. Now, if in a Roman triumph, some of the spectators had taken the chained king on foot for the victorious general in the chariot, because the one immediately followed the other, they would have been guilty of a mistake not unlike that of our opponents, who take the carnal Jew, "sold under sin," and groaning as he goes along, for the Christian believer, who "walks in the Spirit," exults in the liberty of God's children, and always triumphs in Christ.

{REFUTING POPULAR PSEUDO-BIBLICAL EXCUSES FOR SIN / J. Patrick Johnston}

Let me introduce the seventh chapter of Romans by noting an unfortunate observation. Few professing Christians can relate to the personal victory over sin found in the sixth and eighth chapters of Romans. However, they do relate to the conflict found in the man in the latter part of the seventh chapter. Therefore, they assume that Romans 7:14-25 must describe the life of the true Christian, for that is the only "Christianity" with which they are familiar. I must admit, that at face value, the latter half of Romans 7 appears to

be a confession from Paul the Apostle that he is a chronically backsliding hypocrite who finds it impossible to abstain from sin and do right. But in order to hold to this interpretation of Romans 7:14-25, the passage must be taken out of its immediate context. Romans 6, the first half of chapter 7, and chapter 8, must be twisted and perverted in order to be reconciled to this popular interpretation of Romans 7:14-25, or else these passages are just ignored altogether.

Upon reaching this chapter in Romans, Paul has taught us about the salvation available to the sinner without the works of the law (chapters 3-4). He has also silenced all his critics who claimed that this teaching concerning grace was a license to sin. He made it clear that God's grace brings deliverance from sin and makes one a servant to righteousness (Romans 6 and also Titus 2:11-14). He has shown them how to be free from sin and warned them of the wages of returning to sin. Now Paul proceeds to show the purpose of the law and the fruitless desperation and discouragement of a convicted sinner who is under the law. He makes it clear that the law is powerless to do what Jesus Christ and the Gospel can do.

Let us get some things straight about rules of interpretation. One should always interpret language in light of the speaker's or author's subject of discourse. If a listener or reader loses sight of the topic, then speech or writing can be twisted in any way he wishes. Furthermore, we should always try to interpret a person's speech or writing to make him consistent with himself. It is by ignoring these simple rules of interpretation that the Scriptures have been tortured into the support of errors innumerable and contradictions unfathomable.

Summarizing verses 5-6, we can safely say that Paul's present spiritual state can be described as the following:

1. He is no longer in the flesh,
2. The motions of sins no longer work in his members to bring forth death,
3. He is delivered from the law and his spiritually dead state under the law, and
4. He serves God in the newness of spirit.

Remember this about Paul as we study chapter 7.

Romans 7:1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

{BENSON'S COMMENTARY / Joseph Benson}

Know ye not, brethren - The apostle, having shown that justified and regenerated persons are free from the dominion of sin, shows here that they are also free from the yoke of the Mosaic law, it being dead to them, verse 6; and they to it, verse 4: for I speak to them that

know the law - To the Jews or proselytes chiefly here; that the law - The Mosaic dispensation in general, to which you were espoused by Moses; hath dominion over man - Over a Jew married to it, and engaged to observe it; as long as he - Rather, as long as it liveth; But the rendering here is natural, and suits the connection with the following verses, in which the law is represented as their first husband, whose decease left them free to be married to Christ. The law is here spoken of, by a common figure, as a person to which, as to a husband, life and death are ascribed. It is as if he had said, The dominion of the law over particular persons can, at the utmost, last no longer than till it is itself abrogated; for that is, as it were, its death; since the divine authority going along with it was the very life and soul of it.

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

For I speak to them that know the law--This is a proof that the apostle directs this part of his discourse to the Jews.

{GO AND SIN NO MORE / Al Danks}

Notice that Paul is specifically addressing those who know the law. What he is writing pertains to the life of the man under the law, and how that God, through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ, has given to man a greater power to live without sin. Like much of the rest of the Bible, Romans 7 is written to show man how to "go, and sin no more", not to tell him he can't.

{PEOPLE'S NEW TESTAMENT / B. W. Johnson}

The argument of the Jews was that the law of Moses was of perpetual obligation, but they knew that death released a man from its power. It reigned only over the living.

{ROBERTSON'S N. T.WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{To men that know the law} (gin"skousin nomon). Dative plural of present active participle of ginwskw. The Romans, whether Jews or Gentiles, knew the principle of law. {A man} (tou anqrwpou). "The person," generic term anqrwpos, not aner.

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

The long arm of the law is an ever-present threat to those who are living sinfully, but, when a man is dead, the books are closed on any claim that the law might have against him. So it is with those that are dead to sin; the wrath of the law can no longer touch him.

{WESLEY'S NOTES ON THE N. T. / John Wesley}

The apostle continues the comparison between the former and the present state of a believer, and at the same time endeavours to wean the Jewish believers from their fondness for the Mosaic law. I speak to them that know the law - To the Jews chiefly

here. As long - So long, and no longer. As it liveth - The law is here spoken of, by a common figure, as a person, to which, as to an husband, life and death are ascribed. But he speaks indifferently of the law being dead to us, or we to it, the sense being the same.

Romans 7:2-4 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. (3) So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. (4) 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, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

{ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL Paul's Epistle to the Romans / Harvey P. Amos}

Paul had no intention of using this illustration to prove that the marriage relationship could be dissolved ONLY by death; rather, he is emphasizing the fact that physical death, WITHOUT ARGUMENT, does dissolve the marriage relationship. Paul was a New Testament Christian – an ambassador of Christ, but his Bible was the Old Testament and, not being ignorant of the precepts of the law, he was familiar with, and acknowledged the authority of such scripture as (Deut. 24:1-4), which definitely made allowance for legally dissolving the marriage relationship other than by death. In this second verse he specifically refers to the law that binds a woman and her legal husband in the marriage relationship while he is alive. But if her legal husband should die, definitely their marriage relationship is dissolved. She is as free, legally and actually, as if she had never been married.

{ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS / Joseph Agar Beet}

Through the body of Christ: nailed to the cross. Through Christ's death, we were set free from the divine law which condemned us, for our sins, to be slaves of sin. That ye might become another's: God's purpose in saving us from bondage to sin, viz. that we might be united to Christ. Inasmuch as we are saved by the death of Him to whom God designs us to be united, it is needful to add that He was raised from the dead: cp. Romans 6:4, 5, 9. Had He not died, we had not been released: had He not risen, he would not have become our husband.

Bear-fruit for God: practically the same as "fruit for sanctification" in Romans 6:22. We were united to Christ that we may live a life producing good results, such as will advance the purposes of God.

{BENSON'S COMMENTARY / Joseph Benson}

The law here referred to is not merely that particular branch of the law of Moses which respected marriage, but also and especially the law of marriage promulgated in paradise, Gen. 2:24; whereby our Lord declared marriages were appointed to continue for life,

except in the case of adultery, Matt. 19:6. This argument was peculiarly adapted to the Jews, whose connection with God, as their king, was represented by God himself under the idea of a marriage, solemnized with them at Sinai. But if the husband - To whom she was bound, be dead, she is loosed - From that law, which gave him a peculiar property in her.

So then, if while her husband liveth, - The apostle, says Theodoret, "does not consider here the permission given by the law of Moses to the women divorced to be married to another, as being taught by Christ not to approve of such divorces; but he seems only to intimate that she had no power to dissolve this bond by putting away her husband, or that this divorce rendered her husband dead in law to her, she being not to return to him again. Deut. 24:4." Perhaps we ought rather to say, he speaks in the general, not entering exactly into every excepted case that might be imagined. To infer, therefore, hence, as some have done, that adultery is not a sufficient foundation for divorce, is very unreasonable. But if her husband be dead, she is free from that law - Which bound her to be in subjection, and yield conjugal affection to her husband only; so that she is no more an adulteress - Subject to the shame and punishment of one; though she be married, becoming the property of another man; for death, having interposed between them, hath dissolved the former relation. He is dead to her, and she to him.

That ye should be married to another - (2 Cor. 11:2;) so that you must now give up yourselves to Christ, as your second husband, that you may be justified by faith in him. The apostle speaks of Christ as the husband of the believing Jews, because he was now become their Lord and head; and he calls him another husband, because they had been formerly, as it were, married to the Mosaic law, and relied on that alone for salvation. And the crucifixion of their old man, through the death of Christ, was a fit preparation of them for being espoused to Christ. Who is raised from the dead - Who is alive himself, and will bestow spiritual life on those that believe on him, and give up themselves to him; that we should bring forth fruit - Namely, of holiness and good works, Gal. 5:22; unto God - To his glory, Matt. 5:16; John 15:8; Phil. 1:11. In this passage the union of Christ with his people is represented as a marriage, as it is also Eph. 5:31, 32; Rev. 21:9; 22:17. The apostles probably took that idea from the ancient phraseology concerning the Jews. See on verse 2. But from whatever source it was derived, it is a strong representation of the friendship and endearment which subsists, between Christ and believers, and of the happiness which they will derive from his love to them, and from their entire subjection to him.

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY /Adam Clarke}

For the woman which hath a husband-- The apostle illustrates his meaning by a familiar instance. A married woman is bound to her husband while he lives; but when her husband is dead she is discharged from the law by which she was bound to him alone.

So then, if, while her husband liveth-- The object of the apostle's similitude is to show that each party is equally bound to the other; but that the death of either dissolves the engagement.

So-she is no adulteress, though she be married to another-- And do not imagine that this change would argue any disloyalty in you to your Maker; for, as he has determined that this law of ordinances shall cease, you are no more bound to it than a woman is to a deceased husband, and are as free to receive the Gospel of Christ as a woman in such circumstances would be to remarry.

Wherefore, my brethren-- This is a parallel case. You were once under the law of Moses, and were bound by its injunctions; but now ye are become dead to that law-a modest, inoffensive mode of speech, for, The law, which was once your husband, is dead; God has determined that it shall be no longer in force; so that now, as a woman whose husband is dead is freed from the law of that husband, or from her conjugal vow, and may legally be married to another, so God, who gave the law under which ye have hitherto lived, designed that it should be in force only till the advent of the Messiah; that advent has taken place, the law has consequently ceased, and now ye are called to take on you the yoke of the Gospel, and lay down the yoke of the law; and it is the design of God that you should do so.

That ye should be married to another-who is raised from the dead-- As Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, the object of God in giving the law was to unite you to Christ; and, as he has died, he has not only abolished that law which condemns every transgressor to death, without any hope of a revival, but he has also made that atonement for sin, by his own death, which is represented in the sacrifices prescribed by the law. And as Jesus Christ is risen again from the dead, he has thereby given the fullest proof that by his death he has procured the resurrection of mankind, and made that atonement required by the law. That we should bring forth fruit unto God-we, Jews, who believe in Christ, have, in consequence of our union with him, received the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit; so that we bring forth that fruit of holiness unto God which, without this union, it would be impossible for us to produce.

{THE RANDALL HOUSE BIBLE COMMENTARY / F. Leroy Forlines}

It is apparent that Dt. 24:1, 2 would imply that there were some case where divorce and remarriage were permitted under the Mosaic Law. In such cases the women would not be labeled an adulteress. Paul is not denying the possibility, under the Mosaic Law, for divorce and remarriage without the women being guilty of adultery. He is simply stating the rule without stating the exception. It should be obvious in the light of Dt. 24:1, 2 that Paul would not deny that an exception existed.

{A COMPLETE STUDY OF THE DOCTRINE OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE /
Ronnie Ingley}

The first thing we should keep in mind is, Paul's burden for bringing this thought up had nothing to do with marriage and divorce. He was simply trying to show the Jews how they were free from the Old Testament law.

Secondly, even if this was the issue at hand, Paul is not talking about women who are DIVORCED. He is clearly talking about MARRIED women. (For the woman which hath an husband)

There is not one single word said here about DIVORCED wives, as under the Law, being called adulteresses if they marry again. When a wife, under the law, was given a "bill of divorcement" according to the Law of Moses, she was no longer bound to her husband-- SHE WAS FREE.

There are five things we should keep in mind when we read Romans 7:1-3

1. Paul does not so much as hint here that a wife, under the Law, who had received a divorce from her husband, according to the law of Moses, was called an adulteress if she married another man during her first husband's lifetime.

2. Under the Mosaic dispensation, wives who were DIVORCED from their husbands were free to marry another man during the lifetime of the first husband (see Deuteronomy 24:1.2) and they were NOT called adulteresses.

3. In this passage, there is no mention of, or reference to, DIVORCED wives under the Mosaic dispensation.

4. In this passage reference is to wives under the Mosaic dispensation who had NOT been divorced from their husbands, but were still "bound" to them.

5. Paul does not so much as hint here that a wife under the Gospel dispensation who secures a divorce from her husband for UNFAITHFULNESS TO THE MARRIAGE VOW, will be called an adulteress if she marries again.

There is absolutely no reference, whatsoever, in this ENTIRE CHAPTER (Romans 7:1-25) to divorce and remarriage because unfaithfulness to the marriage vow under the Old Testament dispensation or under the Gospel dispensation.

{THE PEOPLE'S NEW TESTAMENT / B. W. Johnson}

For the woman who hath an husband. This principle of law is shown from the marriage relation. Death severs it, and after it the marriage covenant is not binding. A woman can marry again without committing adultery.

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are dead to the law. This principle, under the figure of marriage, is applied to those church members who were once under the law of Moses. They were then related to it as a wife to a husband. But in the chapter VI. it has been shown that all disciples of Christ had died, been buried, and risen with him (verses 2-5); hence, having died, they had been released from the law. As new creatures, they could, as those freed from the marriage to law, be espoused to another, even Christ. Christians are so united to Christ, living by vital union with him, being found in him, that whatever was

done to him is said to have been done to them in his person, or through his body. The church is spiritually the Body of Christ.

{REFUTING POPULAR PSEUDO-BIBLICAL EXCUSES FOR SIN / J. Patrick Johnston}

Paul uses the analogy of marriage to show the futility of the law now that Christ has called us into covenant with him. Believers are to die to the old system of the Mosaic law and approach God through the new and living way Jesus has made for us by His death on the cross. Believers in Christ do not live by the law, but neither do they transgress it. Believers live by the faith of the Son of God, which "works by love", and love is the fulfillment of all of the law of God (Galatians 5:6,14; Romans 13:8-10). This faith purifies the heart and renders us compliant to the moral law of God (Acts 15:9; Romans 3:31). Now we obey Christ, not simply because He has commanded that we do so, but because we love Him.

For instance, as I mentioned in the section on I Timothy 1:15, I do not need to make commandments for my wife such as: "Do not put cyanide in my food", "Do not maim my children", etc. What would that say about our relationship if I were forced to make such commandments for her so that she would not do these things? That would not be a very loving relationship, to say the least. Nevertheless, my wife does not harm us because of the love she has for us. Just like my wife does not "live by the law of her husband" as if my commandments were the sole moral influence which keep her treating me right, but rather she lives by love for her husband, so Christians do not "live by the law of God" but rather we live by the love of God. And as long as we do so we do not transgress God's law, for love is the sum of the law. The motive of the righteous to obey is not the law, but the cross. The written law was given because of wicked men. If men had loved God from the beginning, the written law would not have been necessary (I Timothy 1:8-11). The law cannot condemn those who have the first fruit of the Spirit, which is love (Galatians 5:22-23). Those who love God supremely and their neighbor as themselves do not sin against God or their neighbor, but are perfectly compliant with God's law (John 14:15,21-24; 15:10; Ps. 37:31; I John 2:9-11; 3:4-18; 4:7-8,20-21; 5:2-4).

We become married to Christ "that we should bring forth fruit unto God", and as Jesus said,

{Matthew 7:16-20} Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? (17) Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. (18) A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. (19) Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (20) Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

I have heard it proposed that since good trees do bear some rotten fruit, then good Christians may also bear some bad fruit as well. So they come to the opposite conclusion: "Good trees can bear bad fruit! Righteous Christians do commit unrighteous acts." But as the example given in verse 16 says, grape vines do not produce even one thorn, neither do

fig trees produce even a single thistle. "Good fruit" is not referring to ripe fruit and "bad fruit" is not referring to rotten fruit, as these assume. Good fruit refers to an edible species of fruit, while bad fruit refers to an inedible or toxic species of fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit!"

{Matthew 6:24} No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, or love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [worldly gain].

If one is serving sin, he cannot be serving God. If one loves sin, then he cannot love God, but actually he hates God! There is no acceptable lukewarm domain where one can be the friend of the world and the friend of God simultaneously, where one can bring forth both good fruit and bad (I John 2:15-17; James 4:4; Revelation 3:15-16). If one is not bringing forth good fruit, or if he is bringing forth bad fruit, then he is not married to Christ.

{THE IVP BIBLE BACKGROUND COMMENTARY N.T. / Craig S. Keener}

According to biblical law, both death and divorce severed previous relationships; Paul emphasizes the one that fits his analogy in the context. (Because one never spoke of a woman's former husband as her "husband" after the divorce, no one would have understood Paul's words here as ruling out certain kinds of divorce; cf. 1 Cor. 7:15.)

{ROBERTSON'S N. T. WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{Ye also were made dead to the law} (kai humeis eqanatwqete). First aorist indicative passive of qanatow, old verb, to put to death (#Mt 10:21) or to make to die (extinct) as here and #Ro 8:13. The analogy calls for the death of the law, but Paul refuses to say that. He changes the structure and makes them dead to the law as the husband (#6:3-6). The relation of marriage is killed "through the body of Christ" as the "propitiation" (#3:25) for us. Cf. #Col 1:22. {That we should be joined to another} (eis to genesqai heter"i). Purpose clause with eis to and the infinitive. First mention of the saints as wedded to Christ as their Husband occurs in #1Co 6:13; Ga 4:26. See further #Eph 5:22-33. {That we might bring forth fruit unto God} (hina karpophor^s"men twi qewi). He changes the metaphor to that of the tree used in #6:22.

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

Salvation could not be, nor was it ever, by the law. God has always had one way of saving man, and that is by the grace of God, through faith in the atonement of Christ. The animal sacrifices of the Old Testament typified Christ. There were various degrees of understanding by those offering the sacrifices; but when the people offered sacrifices in faith with a broken heart, they were affirming the insufficiency of their own works and need for a blood atonement.

Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:8) before the written law was given.

Paul used the example of Abraham to illustrate that man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith. Romans 4:3: For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Abraham believed that in his seed (Christ) all the nations of the earth would be blessed. When was righteousness counted to him? Before he was circumcised - before the deeds of the law.

As the body of Christ was broken on the cross and raised from the dead, believers are to become dead to the old legal system with the Priesthood and animal sacrifices as provision for the forgiveness of sin. Now we are to approach God through a new and living way. Not only are Christians dead to the rites and rituals of the law, but to its curses and penalties. We are no longer married to Moses, but to Christ. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

However, there are some similarities in the two covenants. Both the law of Moses and the law of Christ require obedience motivated by love to God and neighbor. Should the Christian return to sin, he again falls under the curses and penalties of the law. Christ has not set aside the moral precepts of the law, nor will he ever. The law of marriage remains the same with our new partner. Therefore, we must be faithful and obedient wives. But now we do have a much better husband, and we rejoice in being faithful wives. Under the old husband, we were adulteresses; and our marriage produced sin, misery, bondage and death. But now we have a new marriage, and the fruit of the new relationship is righteousness, peace, joy, freedom, and eternal life.

Paul appeals to the prophet Habakkuk to further his point that it has always been faith that reveals the righteousness of God, The just shall live by faith (Romans 1:17).

Righteousness is always present in saving faith. Faith is the will embracing the truth that has been revealed to the soul. Faith is acting on the Truth.

{WESLEY'S NOTES ON THE N. T. / John Wesley}

She is freed from the law of her husband - From that law which gave him a peculiar property in her.

Thus ye also - Are now as free from the Mosaic law as an husband is, when his wife is dead. By the body of Christ - Offered up; that is, by the merits of his death, that law expiring with him.

Romans 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

{ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS / Joseph Agar Beet}

In the flesh: the material of our body as the environment in which the spirit lives, moves, and acts, an environment controlling at that time our entire action and thought. It is not so now. The flesh is (see Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 10:3) the physical, but no longer the

moral, element of our life. For although we ever feel its influence, it no longer controls us. The emotions of sins: emotions of desire evoked by forbidden objects in those who yield to their influence, and tending to produce sinful acts. They were evoked by means of the Law: strange words designed to awaken surprise and to prompt the objection in Romans 7:7. They will be explained in Romans 7:7-11. When we were 'in the flesh,' these 'emotions' were at work (cp. 2 Corinthians 4:12; Ephesians 2:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:7) in our members, the various parts of our bodies, moving our lips, hands, and feet, to words, deeds, and ways, of sin. When the body with its appetites was the controlling element of our life, it was the seat of emotions prompting sin. In order to bear fruit etc: tendency and purpose of these emotions. They made us fruitful; but the fruit was poison. Of this, Paul's own earlier history was a literal and sad example. For death: as in Romans 6:16, 21, 23. 'Fruit for death': in awful contrast to "fruit for God," in Romans 7:4. Since these emotions, evoked by means of the Law, were at work with such deadly intent, we must needs die to the Law in order that we may bear fruit for God.

{BENSON'S COMMENTARY / Joseph Benson}

We ought now to be fruitful in good works, because we were formerly fruitful in evil: when we were in the flesh - Under the comparatively carnal dispensation of Moses before we believed on Christ and were regenerated. Thus, they that are in the flesh, and they that are after the flesh, (chap. 5: 8,) signify those that are influenced and governed by the fleshly principle, in opposition to the guidance and influences of the Holy Spirit; and to be in the flesh, (verse 9,) to live, to walk according to the flesh, (verses 12, 13,) bear the same sense.

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

For, when we were in the flesh-- When we were without the Gospel, in our carnal and unregenerated state, though believing in the law of Moses, and performing the rites and offices of our religion.

To bring forth fruit unto death.-- To produce those acts of transgression which subject the sinner to death, temporal and eternal. When the apostle says, the motion of sin which were by the law, he points out a most striking and invariable characteristic of sin, viz. its rebellious nature; it ever acts against law, and the most powerfully against known law. Because the law requires obedience, therefore it will transgress.

{LEGAL EXPERIENCE / Lectures To Professing Christians / Charles G. Finney}

"For when we were in the flesh," that is, in an unconverted state, "the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death:

{THE PEOPLE'S NEW TESTAMENT / B. W. Johnson}

For when in the flesh. When we were in an unconverted condition, under the influence of our carnal nature. The insufficiency of law to deliver us from its power is now shown.

The motions of sins. The sinful passions. Which were by the law.

{REFUTING POPULAR PSEUDO-BIBLICAL EXCUSES FOR SIN / J. Patrick Johnston}

In verse 5, Paul summarizes the experience upon which he will expound from verse 7 to the end of this chapter.

What does he mean by "in the flesh"? Most of what is taught in the church today about what it means to be "in the flesh" is absolutely wrong. We all "walk in the flesh" in the sense that we live in human flesh on this earth. We have bad breath, physical infirmities, mental deficiencies, and we make mistakes involuntarily. We do things we cannot help, like misspell, misread, misunderstand, miscalculate, and we forget to buy toilet paper at the grocery store. Jesus was "in the flesh" in this sense. He was "in all points" just like us (Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15). When "in the flesh" is used in this way, it is not sinful (II Corinthians 2:3-5). When "in the flesh" is used with a sinful connotation as it is in verse 5 and in Romans 8:1-13, then it refers to having our actions dictated not by God and by conscience, but by the desires of the flesh. This is a choice, a malicious crime against God. This is voluntary. So walking in the flesh in the sinful sense is a choice, not something which we cannot help.

How do the motions of sins use the law to bring forth death in one who walks according to the desires of the flesh? In the latter half of this chapter, he clearly shows us how sin employs the law to produce death. We will discuss this momentarily. But first let me emphasize the past tense of the sentence, "when we were in the flesh..."

{ROBERTSON'S N. T. WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{In the flesh} (en tei sarki). Same sense as in #6:19 and #7:18,25. The "flesh" is not inherently sinful, but is subject to Sin. It is what Paul means by being "under the law." He uses sarx in a good many senses. {Sinful passions} (ta path^mata t^n hamartiwn). "Passions of sins" or marked by sins. {Wrought} (energeito). Imperfect middle of energew, "were active." {To bring forth fruit unto death} (eis to karpophor^sai t^i qanatwi). Purpose clause again. Vivid picture of the seeds of Sin working for death.

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

The flesh is our natural or animal-like appetites. When we are governed by these appetites, instead of our moral and spiritual nature, we are said to be in the flesh, or carnally minded. The motions of sins (our undisciplined appetites or passions) which the law exposed, wrought in us the harvest of death.

[Verse 5 summarizes the experience Paul will expound on from verse 7 to the end of the chapter.]

{WHEDON'S COMMENTARY ON THE N. T. / D. D. Whedon}

When we were in the flesh ‐ When we were unregenerate, before our conversion.
Motions of sins ‐ These are spoken of as belonging to a past stage of experience.

Romans 7:6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

Hebrews 7:19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

{ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS / Joseph Agar Beet}

But now: introducing, as in Romans 6:22, the joyful contrast ever present to Paul's thought. Made-of-no-effect from the Law: as in Romans 7:2, which it recalls. Having died to that in which, etc.: event which released us from the Law 'in which' we were held-down, or 'held-fast': same word in Romans 1:18. So that we may serve: happy result of our liberation. [The infinitive with states not objective fact, as does the indicative, but a subjective view of cause and effect.] "Serve": same word as in Romans 7:25; Romans 6:6; cognate to 'servants' in Romans 6:16, 17, 19, 20, and to 'made-servants' in Romans 7:18, 22. This family of words is a conspicuous feature of Romans 6:6- Romans 7:6. Notice that we are still servants or slaves, but (Romans 6:22) to different masters and in a 'new' environment. Newness of Spirit: a 'new' order of things of which the characterizing feature is the animating presence of the 'Spirit' of God, in contrast to an old environment characterized by possession of a written letter. Same contrast of 'Spirit' and 'letter' in Romans 2:29; and, more fully developed, in 2 Corinthians 3:3, 6, where "the 'Spirit' of God" is contrasted with the letters written on the tables of stone. And this is probably the reference of the word 'Spirit' here and in Romans 2:29: for it is evidently a forerunner of "the Spirit of God" in Romans 8:9, 11, 14. If so, the 'letter' must be the written Law of Moses, in possession of which the Jews (Romans 2:23) boasted. The 'new' feature of our present service is that our Master has given us, not a mere written word bidding us do this or that, but an animating Spirit, who opens our minds to understand and approve the will of God, and enables us to do it. This gift of the Spirit makes our present service altogether 'new,' and our former service altogether 'old.' The above argument has less force for us than for Paul's readers.

For, that we are in Romans 7:4 said to be "dead to the Law through the body of Christ" can only mean that through His death is removed a barrier to salvation having its foundation in the Law of God.

{BENSON'S COMMENTARY / Joseph Benson}

But now - Being brought out of that carnal state; we are delivered from the law - Set at liberty from our subjection to it as a law, and our obligation to observe it, and from the condemning, irritating power thereof, and therefore from the sinful passions occasioned by it; that being dead wherein we were held - In subjection, as the wife to her living husband; that law being now made void, and having no further power to condemn us.

That we should serve - God and our generation; in newness of spirit - In a new and spiritual manner; and not in the oldness of the letter - Not in a bare, literal, external way, as we did before. The new service here enjoined implies, 1st, A freedom from the dominion of the flesh, by the power of the Spirit enabling us to mortify the deeds lusts of the flesh, chap. 8:13. 2d, The serving God, not chiefly with bodily services and carnal ordinances, but in the spirit of our minds, chap. 13:2; Phil. 3:3; having our minds renewed and transformed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, which are the fruits of the Spirit. 3d, The serving by the continual aid of his Spirit, strengthening us with might in the inner man, Eph. 3:16, so as to live and walk in the Spirit, or to live as those who are renewed by the Spirit, and possessed of his various graces. With regard to the believing Jews in particular, it implies, that being loosed from the Mosaic law, they were to no longer to worship and to serve God with rites and ceremonies pertaining to their flesh, but with services of their spirit, consisting in faith, love, and new obedience.

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

That being dead wherein we were held-- To us believers in Christ this commandment is abrogated; we are transferred to another constitution; that law which kills ceases to bind us; it is dead to us who have believed in Christ Jesus, who is the end of the law for justification and salvation to every one that believes.

That we should serve in newness of spirit-- We are now brought under a more spiritual dispensation; now we know the spiritual import of all the Mosaic precepts. We see that the law referred to the Gospel, and can only be fulfilled by the Gospel.

The oldness of the letter.-- The merely literal rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices are now done away; and the newness of the spirit, the true intent and meaning of all are now fully disclosed; so that we are got from an imperfect state into a state of perfection and excellence. We sought justification and sanctification, pardon and holiness, by the law, and have found that the law could not give them: we have sought these in them Gospel scheme, and we have found them. We serve God now, not according to the old literal sense, but in the true spiritual meaning.

{LEGAL EXPERIENCE / Lectures To Professing Christians / Charles G. Finney}

"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." Here he is stating the real condition of a Christian, that he serves in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. He had found that the fruit of the law was only death, and by the gospel he had been brought into true subjection to Christ.

{THE PEOPLE'S NEW TESTAMENT / B. W. Johnson}

But now we have been delivered from the law. By death. Having died in Christ (6:2-4), we are released from the dominion of the law. See verse 1. So that we should serve in the

newness of the spirit. This service of Christ is the new service of those living new lives. It is a spiritual service: "God must be worshiped in spirit and truth." God's law under the new covenant is "written in the hearts" (Heb. 8:10); hence it is not a bondage, but a free, willing service.

{REFUTING POPULAR PSEUDO-BIBLICAL EXCUSES FOR SIN / J. Patrick Johnston}

The "newness of spirit" he speaks of is the spirit of the law, or the law of love. A man serves in "the oldness of the letter" when he obeys simply because it is written that he must obey. The believer who serves in the "newness of spirit" has a different motive to obey. He obeys out of love which comes as a response to Christ's love toward us (I John 4:19). This new yoke under love is much lighter than the previous yoke under the law, and it is much easier to bear (Matthew 11:29-30). Take note that although we are delivered from serving in the oldness of the letter, we are constrained still to serve in the newness of the letter! Service has not been abolished. We are still obligated to love God, and love for God still constrains us to do His will and obey Him. Summarizing verses 5-6, we can safely say that Paul's present spiritual state can be described as the following:

1. He is no longer in the flesh,
2. The motions of sins no longer work in his members to bring forth death,
3. He is delivered from the law and his spiritually dead state under the law, and
4. He serves God in the newness of spirit.

Remember this about Paul as we continue to study the rest of chapter 7.

{ROBERTSON'S N. T. WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{But now} (nuni de). In the new condition. {Wherein we were holden} (en hwi kateichometha). Imperfect passive of katecw, picture of our former state (same verb in #1:18). {In newness of spirit} (en kainoteti pneumatos). The death to the letter of the law (the old husband) has set us free to the new life in Christ. So Paul has shown again the obligation on us to live for Christ.

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

Now that we are Christians and under grace instead of law, we have a spiritual relationship with our Father far superior to the old association. We are not self-righteous, but we have submitted ourselves unto the righteousness inspired by the life and sacrifice of Christ. Our motive and stimulus for obeying is love, not simply the fact that it is written that we must obey. When we love God by serving in the Spirit, His yoke is easy and His burden is light. If we merely fear the consequences of disobedience or hope for rewards of obedience, we are serving in the oldness of the letter, and His commandments

are an unbearable burden.

It is not difficult for the loving husband to be faithful to his wife, even when they are apart for an extended season, because he would not do anything to cause her grief. He refuses even to look at another women with wrong intentions. But the husband who merely fears the consequence of being exposed as an adulterer would find faithfulness in marriage a difficult burden. His eyes, very likely, would be wandering.

[Verse 6 prepares the reader for Paul's description of the believer under grace, which he develops in Chapter 8.]

{WESLEY'S NOTES ON THE N. T. / John Wesley}

Being dead to that whereby we were held - To our old husband, the law.

That we might serve in newness of spirit - In a new, spiritual manner.

And not in the oldness of the letter - Not in a bare literal, external way, as we did before.

{WHEDON'S COMMENTARY ON THE N. T. / D. D. Whedon}

But now we are delivered from the law – Delivered from it as our source of justification as the actuating power of our attainment in holiness, and as a condemning power.

Serve in newness of spirit – As we once served sin with all our heart most freely, so now we serve Christ with all our heart without legal compulsion and freely.

Romans 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

{BENSON'S COMMENTARY / Joseph Benson}

What shall we say then? - This, to the beginning of the next chapter, is a kind of digression, wherein the apostle, in order to show, in the most lively manner, the weakness and inefficacy of the law, changes the person, and speaks as of himself. This he frequently does when he is not speaking of his own person, but only assuming another character. See Rom. 3:7; 1 Cor. 5:30; 4:6. The character here assumed is that of an unrenewed, unregenerated man; first, ignorant of the spirituality and holiness of the law, then acquainted therewith, and convinced of his depravity and weakness thereby, and sincerely but ineffectually striving to serve God. To have spoken this of himself, or of any true believer, would have been foreign to the whole scope of his discourse; nay, utterly contrary thereto, as well as to what is expressly asserted chap. 8:2.

{LEGAL EXPERIENCE / Lectures To Professing Christians / Charles G. Finney}

What is the objection to this? "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

{THE PEOPLE'S NEW TESTAMENT / B. W. Johnson}

The experiences here given are his own, but what he says is applicable to all men. The experiences are those of Saul of Tarsus; not those of Paul the apostle. For I had not known lust. Greedy desire for the possessions of others. All evil desire is embraced.

{REFUTING POPULAR PSEUDO-BIBLICAL EXCUSES FOR SIN / J. Patrick Johnston}

Allow me to highlight here Paul's statement that the law is not sin. The law reveals sin for what it is, but it is not sin. If you even mention the word "law" or "commandment" in a positive light when preaching in your typical church today, you are likely to get labeled a "legalist" and a "heretic". But the law is not sin, and it is not sinful to preach the law in accordance with its lawful purpose. The written law was given to expose sin, and this is in accordance with the glorious Gospel of Christ according to Paul in I Timothy 1:8-11.

When the commandment "Thou shalt not covet" was understood by Paul when he was yet an unconverted sinner, immediately sin became "exceeding sinful". The commandment, "Thou shalt not covet" reminded Paul that he was disobeying God. It increased his awareness of his guilty state.

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

Paul vindicates the law against those who might argue that the law is something evil and therefore of no purpose, by explaining that the moral law is the standard or straight edge by which we judge ourselves and shall be judged. It reveals our responsibilities to god and man. Ultimately, all of the Bible is law. Every word of God, whether it be a specific command, a promise or doctrine, has some bearing on our behavior. God reveals nothing merely for the sake of information. He imparts knowledge that we might conduct ourselves in a manner that is pleasing in His sight. His law was meant to be obeyed. But when man failed to obey, the second function of God's law came into effect to bring a quick witness against sin. The more clearly we know our duty, the more penetrating will be our awareness of failure.

Use of the law is the missing link in modern evangelism.

Martin Luther said, in his preface to Romans, "The first duty of the Gospel preacher is to declare God's law and show the nature of sin."

To mend a torn garment, you need two instruments: a needle and a thread. You prick the garment with the needle, and then you pull through the thread. Having pulled the needle

through the garment, you break the thread from the needle and tie a knot, and you have a mended garment. Now, we are dealing with lives that have been torn asunder by sin. In order to mend these lives, we need two instruments: a needle and thread. The needle that we use to prick men's hearts, to show men their sin.

After pricking men's hearts with the needle of the law, we then pull through the scarlet thread of the gospel, that men might be justified by faith. Only then do we have a mended life; but we need both instruments: first the law, then the gospel.

Paul said, Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:19-20). We must make men see their guilt before we offer the pardon. The preaching of the law is the instrument that the Holy Spirit uses to bring conviction of sin to men's consciences.

Acknowledging sin is admitting that you have been totally wrong, and God is totally right. Seeing your sin is seeing that you have lived unintelligently, selfishly choosing your own interests over your neighbor's and God's and that you are without excuse, deserving Hell. And it is God's law - preached and proclaimed by those who raise it up as a standard - that will convict men's hearts.

In a room there are innumerable little particles of dust floating in the air that normally are not seen. But should a sunbeam shine through the window, those motes are revealed. The law is the sunbeam which exposes the wicked heart of the sinner. Normally, the sinner keeps his shades shut in order that neither he, nor anyone else, might see his sin.

Concerning the outward keeping of the law, Paul was blameless. When the true nature of the law through the Tenth Commandment was revealed to his heart, he had to admit that he was covetous. Covetousness is sin's perversion of love. He came to the knowledge of the root of sin, which is selfishness.

{WESLEY'S NOTES ON THE N. T. / John Wesley}

What shall we say then - This is a kind of a digression, to the beginning of the next chapter, wherein the apostle, in order to show in the most lively manner the weakness and inefficacy of the law, changes the person and speaks as of himself, concerning the misery of one under the law. This St. Paul frequently does, when he is not speaking of his own person, but only assuming another character, chap. iii, 5, 1 Cor. x, 30, 1 Cor. iv, 6. The character here assumed is that of a man, first ignorant of the law, then under it and sincerely, but ineffectually, striving to serve God. To have spoken this of himself, or any true believer, would have been foreign to the whole scope of his discourse; nay, utterly contrary thereto, as well as to what is expressly asserted, chap. viii, 2. Is the law sin - Sinful in itself, or a promoter of sin. I had not known lust - That is, evil desire. I had not known it to be a sin; nay, perhaps I should not have known that any such desire was in me: it did not appear, till it was stirred up by the prohibition.

{WHEDON'S COMMENTARY ON THE N. T. / D. D. Whedon}

Is the law sin? &endash; In thus making deliverance from law the Christian principle, do you identify the law as sin? Not only as satisfying the sensitive Jew, but as a neutralizer of all antinomianism, (which abolishes obligation to holiness) the apostle must honor the divine law.

Had not known sin &endash; So far from being sin, the law is the detector of sin, revealing its existence and odiousness to the moral consciousness of the unreflecting sinner.

Shalt not covet &endash; Shalt not entertain the evil desire of the heart.

Romans 7:8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

All manner of concupiscence.] It showed what was evil and forbade it; and then the principle of rebellion, which seems essential to the very nature of sins rose up against the prohibition; and he was the more strongly incited to disobey in proportion as obedience was enjoined. Thus the apostle shows that the law had authority to prohibit, condemn, and destroy; but no power to pardon sin, root out enmity, or save the soul.

The word epiqumia, which we render concupiscence, signifies simply strong desire of any kind; but in the New Testament, it is generally taken to signify irregular and unholy desires. Sin in the mind is the desire to do, or to be, what is contrary to the holiness and authority of GOD.

For without the law, sin was dead.] This means, according to Dr. Taylor's hypothesis, the time previous to the giving of the law. See before. But it seems also consistent with the apostle's meaning, to interpret the place as implying the time in which Paul, in his unconverted Jewish state, had not the proper knowledge of the law-while he was unacquainted with its spirituality. He felt evil desire, but he did not know the evil of it; he did not consider that the law tried the heart and its workings, as well as outward actions. This is farther explained in the next verse.

{ROBERTSON'S N. T.WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{Finding occasion} (aformen labousa). See #2Co 5:12; 11:12; Ga 5:13 for aformen, a starting place from which to rush into acts of Sin, excuses for doing what they want to do. Just so drinking men use the prohibition laws as "occasions" for violating them. {Wrought in me} (kateirgasato en emoi). First aorist active middle indicative of the intensive verb kateirgazomai, to work out (to the finish), effective aorist. The command not to lust made me lust more. {Dead} (nekra). Inactive, not non-existent. Sin in reality

was there in a dormant state.

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

The law says, Thou shalt not. Rebellion says, "I shall." Preaching the law to a rebel can be like pouring gasoline on flames.

When the true nature of the law is revealed unto the soul, it is bound to have an impact upon a man - either he will acknowledge his sin and seek deliverance, or else he will harden his heart. Usually, the latter takes place.

Jesus taught the spirit of the law; but instead of responding positively, the Pharisees stiffened their necks. Sin (selfishness) will take the law as an "occasion" (opportunity) to lustfully debauch man's soul. The Pharisees were adept at using the letter of the law, along with their rabbinical embellishments, as an "occasion" to make the word of God of no effect and to cover their hypocrisy. In Matthew chapter 23 Jesus unlooses a scathing denunciation of them for this very practice: Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.

These hypocrites constantly used leading questions from the law to try to trick Jesus. They even appealed to the law against blasphemy to justify murdering the very Embodiment of the law. They delighted in the law with their carnal minds, but they did not have the spirit of the law, so their legalistic practices were all vain shows. Going about to establish their own righteousness, they denied and hated the righteousness which Christ exhibited. He perfectly exhibited the spirit of the law, which is love. Why? Because they, in fact, hated the law's requirement of love. Since they claimed to know and understand the law, yet in spirit rejected it, their sin was greater. So the law became the very instrument which brought about their death.

Initially, the commandment stirred up in Paul (Saul of Tarsus) all sorts of selfish lusts which had been dormant in him. With self-righteous zeal, he vehemently persecuted the truth in a vain attempt to suppress his feeling of guilt. I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth ... with authority and commission from the chief priests (Acts 26:9-12). Again, sin used the law to rationalize its insane fight against God.

{WHEDON'S COMMENTARY ON THE N. T. / D. D. Whedon}

Wrought ...concupiscence – The demanded meaning is that sin, by means of the law, brought every variety of concupiscence or unlawful heart-sin into revelation and visible existence; for the apostle more than once vividly describes a bringing into sight as a bringing into existence.

Dead – Dead to all visibility or phenomenal existence.

Romans 7:9-10 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. (10) And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

And the commandment] Meaning the law in general, which was ordained to life; the rule of righteousness teaching those statutes which if a man do he shall live in them, Leviticus xviii. 5

{EXACTLY WHAT OUR SAVIOR TAUGHT ABOUT SIN / M.L. Dye}

This portion of the letter found in the seventh chapter is where the confusion usually starts. In the ninth verse of chapter seven, Paul speaks of his first experience of encountering the law of God; which was, of course, before his conversion.

{ALIVE WITHOUT THE LAW; SLAIN THEREBY / The Oberlin Evangelist 7-6-1853 /Charles G. Finney}

(9) This text does not profess to give the whole of Paul's conversion. It only gives us his conviction. "I was alive without the law once--(In my self-righteous hopes) but when the commandment came--(revealing God's holy law) then sin revived, and I died--(my hopes perished then). There he was till he gave himself up to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Substantially this experience of being slain by the law must always precede the acceptance of Jesus Christ as our own Savior. The reason of this is--men will not accept Christ's robe while their own apparel suits them better; they will not rely on another for salvation while they are strong in their self-dependence.

Paul was in a state of both moral and spiritual delusion. He supposed himself to be performing his duty to his fellow men, when really he was doing no such thing. He had only the idea of objective justice, justice viewed in its outward relations. If he did not cheat a man, it mattered in his view little or nothing how much he coveted his goods, or how utterly void his heart might be of true love to his neighbor. Consequently he never performed the duty which the law required of him, towards his fellow men.

The same was true of his spiritual relations to God. He regarded simply what the law required externally; went round and round with the routine of his outside duties, while his heart all this time was dead and cold, and as it showed itself subsequently, bitter as hell itself, towards the lovely and innocent Son of God.

Another consequence was a false hope. Supposing himself to be complying with the law of God, he expected to be saved as much as he expected anything whatever. Yet this expectation was altogether unfounded, for although he was very zealous yet he was also very bitter in his spirit, showing that his zeal sprang from any other source, rather than real benevolence. Indeed he showed that his spirit was bitter as the bitterness of the pit.

How then can it be supposed that his hope of heaven was anything better than a delusion?

Another result was a self-righteous performance of all he called his religion. But there I must explain; for I am afraid many are not well aware what the Bible means by self-righteousness; certainly it is the case that many professed Christians do not well understand this matter. For explanation of the point that is most important for discrimination, take the case of Paul. When he performed what he called his duties, and thanked God, Pharisee-like, that he prayed and fasted, and paid tithes, did he feel himself so utterly lost that he ascribed all his acceptable work to Christ, working in him? Far from it. He had done all these things himself.

When he came ultimately to know himself and then to know Christ, he could speak on this subject with intelligent discrimination, and ever wakeful interest. Then he dwelt much on the fact that the Jews depended on their own works and on themselves alone, to do their own works; while on the other hand he insisted that while left to themselves they never did anything but sin. He always maintained that the energetic power of the divine Spirit wrought in them all that was ever acceptable to God. Often does he illustrate this by his own experience. Before he was a Christian, he performed religious duties as regularly as now; says "I profited in the Jews' religion above many of mine equals," but all along, he regarded his obedience as in such a sense rendered in his own strength that he made no hearty acknowledgments of dependence on sovereign grace. Of that grace which comes through divine mercy, and first moves the heart to good, he seemed to know nothing. His own righteousness was self-originating, self-performed. There was nothing else of it but what came of himself. It had no spiritual life or power in it, for the reason that there was no power of God in its origin, no influence from God, molding its character. Paul did not truly recognize God's grace in this obedience, and God did not impart His grace to subdue selfishness and beget true love in his soul.

{LEGAL EXPERIENCE / Lectures To Professing Christians / Charles G. Finney}

(10) And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." The law was enacted that people might live by it, if they would perfectly obey it; but when we were in the flesh, we found it unto death.

{REFUTING POPULAR PSEUDO-BIBLICAL EXCUSES FOR SIN / J. Patrick Johnston}

Saul of Tarsus was not born spiritually dead. He said he "was alive without the law once". But when Saul of Tarsus sinned, he immediately died spiritually. God told Adam, that in the day that he sinned, he would die (Genesis 2:17). Yet Adam lived over 900 years after he sinned. But in the day that he sinned, he did die spiritually. So it was with Saul of Tarsus, and so it is with us. Spiritual death and sin go hand in hand. You cannot have one without the other. This truth is without exception, whether the transgressor be an angel or a man, a person in the Old Testament or a person in the New, a Christian or an unbeliever (Ezekiel 18:1-32). Sin is fatal to all and separates the transgressor from God (Romans 6:23; Isaiah 59:1-2; James 1:14-16; 2:10), for God is no respecter of

persons.

{ROBERTSON'S N. T. WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{I was alive} (ez"n). Imperfect active. Apparently, "the lost paradise in the infancy of menw (Denney), before the conscience awoke and moral responsibility came, "a seeming life" (Shedd). {Sin revived} (h^ hamartia anez^sen). Sin came back to life, waked up, the blissful innocent stage was over, "the commandment having come" (elthous^s t^s entol^s, genitive absolute). {But I died} (egw de apeqanon). My seeming life was over for I was conscious of Sin, of violation of law.

{this I found unto death} (heureqe moi--haute eis qanaton). Literally, "the commandment the one for (meant for) life, this was found for me unto death." First aorist (effective) passive indicative of heuriskw, to find, not active as the English has it. It turned out so for me (ethical dative).

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

God intended the law to benefit man by showing him his duties and responsibilities. It was a fence showing God's ownership or authority over man; but it was given also for man's protection from what would harm him, and grieve his Owner. It was intended to protect the basic rights of everyone and promote universal happiness. But then man leaped over the fence and was overcome by death.

The commandment revealed to Paul that he was lost, outside the fence of Divine authority and protection and dead in his trespasses and sins.

{WESLEY'S NOTES ON THE N. T. / John Wesley}

The commandment which was intended for life - Doubtless it was originally intended by God as a grand means of preserving and increasing spiritual life, and leading to life everlasting.

{WHEDON'S COMMENTARY ON THE N. T. / D. D. Whedon}

Sin Revived – A reversal takes place: sin was dead and I alive; but now, law having come, sin is alive an I am dead. I died – And the question is, who killed me? The answer is not law; but law waked up sin, and sin killed me.

Romans 7:11-12 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. (12) Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Galatians 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Ephesians 5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once

named among you, as becometh saints;

1 John 2:10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

(11) Sin, taking occasion] Sin, deriving strength from the law, threatening death to the transgressor, (see the note on "ver. 8",) deceived me, drew me aside to disobedience, promising me gratification honour, independence, &c., as it promised to Eve; for to her history the apostle evidently alludes, and uses the very same expression, deceived me, exhpathse me? See the preceding note; and see the Septuagint, Gen. iii. 13. And by it slew me.] Subjected me to that death which the law denounced against transgressors; and

rendered me miserable during the course of life itself. It is well known to scholars that the verb apokteinein signifies not only to slay or kill, but also to make wretched. Every sinner is not only exposed to death because he has sinned; but he is miserable in both body and mind by the influence and the effects of sin. He lives a dying life, or a living death.

(12) Wherefore the law is holy] As if he had said, to soothe his countrymen, to whom he had been showing the absolute insufficiency of the law either to justify or save from sin: I do not intimate that there is any thing improper or imperfect in the law as a rule of life: it prescribes what is holy, just, and good; for it comes from a holy, just, and good God.

The LAW, which is to regulate the whole of the outward conduct, is holy; and the COMMANDMENT, Thou shalt not covet, which is to regulate the heart, is not less so. All is excellent and pure; but it neither pardons sin nor purifies the heart; and it is because it is holy, just, and good, that it condemns transgressors to death.

{THE PEOPLE'S NEW TESTAMENT/ B. W. Johnson}

For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me. Sin is always a deceiver, however. I cannot explain this save by referring it to a period of life when he was self-deceived, and sinned, thinking he was doing God service. It exactly describes the persecuting Saul of Tarsus. Sin deceived him. When he found he was deceived, it slew him. He was convicted before God. Wherefore the law is holy.

{REFUTING POPULAR PSEUDO-BIBLICAL EXCUSES FOR SIN / J. Patrick Johnston}

When Saul sinned, rather than forsake that sin and walk in the light, Saul hardened his heart to the truth, would not come to the light lest his deeds be reproved, and his conscience became cold and his ignorance willful (John 3:18-21; Romans 1:18-22; Ephesians 4:18-19). Then the law was revealed to him. Once the law was comprehended, it exposed his sinful state and the judgments thereof foretold his agonizing destiny as a

sinner. The commandment exposed Saul's state of spiritual death, but the law did not literally make him spiritually dead. God gave the law not to curse, but to bless man and give him a long, happy life: Deuteronomy 5:29: O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever. Deuteronomy 10:12: And now, Israel, what doth the Lord require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the Lord, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

There are those who teach that the sole reason God gave the commandments to man was so that he would break them. That theory is unfounded and plain stupid! What kind of perverted justice is it to command someone to do the impossible and then condemn him to eternal torment when he doesn't do it? The law is holy, just, and good, not unholy, unjust, and bad. The commandment was ordained to life, not death. Just as America's laws are a reflection of the character of its citizens and legislatures, so the law of God is a reflection of the character of the Divine Lawgiver. With such nonsensical opinions as these going out from our pulpits and across the airwaves and through printed material, it is no wonder that unbelievers falsely judge God to be a tyrant. If He gave us a law that we cannot keep, then He is a tyrant! God makes it very clear that He ordained the law so that men might live in obedience to it and be blessed by it (Deuteronomy 5:29-33; 6:24; 8:1-3; 10:12-13; 11:26-33; 12:28; 27:14-26; 28:1-68; 29:9-28; 30:15-20; Psalm 119:1,44-45,93,165; Proverbs 7:2; Luke 4:4; II Timothy 3:16-17). The law provided the moral constraints by which man could live life to its fullest and reach his greatest potential for happiness in his life and his children's lives. Like the tracks of a train provide the beneficial restraints whereby the train can operate at its maximum potential, so the law of God provides the restraints whereby mankind can be happy, healthy, and free. Spiritual death and the curses of God come as a result of transgressions of the law, not from the law itself. The law was "ordained to life". We do not sin that grace may abound, we repent of sin and "Go and sin no more" that grace may abound (Romans 6:1-2; John 8:11).

The law not only exposed the wicked heart of Saul of Tarsus, but it actually provoked all manner of lust within him. Isn't that the way of a rebellious heart? I know a man who had a son who was hard-hearted and rebellious. Whenever the father gave a commandment for the good of the son, it only gave the son another opportunity to disobey and break his father's heart. If the father never said, "Do not eat cookies before supper", the boy would have been much less likely to raid the cookie jar than if the father did give the commandment. The law has a way of stirring up all manner of sin and disobedience when it is given to one who has a rebellious, wicked heart. So it is for all sinners. The law is powerless to produce obedience in one who has no love, who is not compliant already with the spirit of the law. It only stirs up more rebellion. The sinner must change his heart (repent) and die to the law as a means of relating to God and be married to Christ. Then, out of love, the redeemed sinner can do what he found too difficult to do "under the law".

{ROBERTSON'S N. T.WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{Beguiled me} (exepatesen me). First aorist active indicative of exapataw, old verb, completely (ex) made me lose my way (a privative, patew, to walk). See on 1Co 3:18; 2Co 11:3. Only in Paul in N.T. {Slew me} (apekteinen). First aorist active indicative of apokteinw, old verb. "Killed me off," made a clean job of it. Sin here is personified as the tempter (#Ge 3:13).

{Holy, and righteous, and good} (hagia kai dikaia kai agaqe). this is the conclusion (wherefore, hwste) to the query in verse #7. The commandment is God's and so holy like Him, just in its requirements and designed for our good. The modern revolt against law needs these words.

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

(11) Paul reiterates his point of verse 8 that sin, like a military strategist, made the law a sort of "base of operations" to deceive its victim.

Oh! The deceitfulness of sin! Will man never learn? The sting of death is sin (1 Corinthians 15:56). Man's great enemy is not death, but sin. If sin had not entered first, death could not have entered the world. We have all been stung. All have been deceived into believing that self-indulgence brings happiness, freedom and life, when, in fact, righteousness is the source of all that is good and agreeable to man.

The strength of sin is the law. The condemnation of the law provides sin its power to destroy by forbidding all transgression, and condemning those who sin to temporal and eternal death. When the moral law is broken, it can only curse the sinner; it cannot forgive him or change him; and if nothing else intervenes, man must remain ever in the kingdom of death and Hades.

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. But somebody does intervene - the Son of God who died and rose again to give us victory over sin, Satan, death, the grave and Hell.

Jesus is the light, above the brightness of the law, that Paul saw on the road to Damascus. He heard a voice saying, Saul, Saul, Why persecutest thou Me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. Paul finally realizes that, in his self-righteous zeal, he had been resisting the very truth that could set him free from the inner turmoil which the law had wrought in his soul. And coming to true repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he is set free from the dominion of sin and death.

(12) Having explained that the law can neither save sinners, nor set sinners free from its power, Paul reassures us that the law is good as a rule for action revealing man's duty and responsibility. God's law is like the banks of a river - as long as the river flows within its banks it is a blessing to man. It irrigates his crops, it quenches his thirst, it is a source of power. But should heavy rains come, and floods result, it can become a curse. It may pollute his water supply, destroy his crops and flood his home. Each life is like a river. As

long as one flows within the wholesome moral restraints of God's law, his life is a blessing to himself and others. But should the floods of sin enter his life, and he overflow the banks of the river, his life becomes a curse to himself and others.

{WESLEY'S NOTES ON THE N. T. / John Wesley}

The commandment - That is, every branch of the law, Is holy, and just, and good - It springs from, and partakes of, the holy nature of God; it is every way just and right in itself; it is designed wholly for the good of man.

{WHEDON'S COMMENTARY ON THE N. T. / D. D. Whedon}

(11) Taking occasion &endash; Law was the occasion, sin the author of the murder. Deceived me &endash; Deluded me, as all temptation does with some false good. So did the serpent Eve. Slew me &endash; As sin and serpent did both Adam and Eve.

(12) Wherefore &endash; The conclusion is that the law stands vindicated in its divine perfection. Law &endash; The eternal law universally taken. Commandment &endash; The law manifested in some special requirement, as to Adam, in the ten commandments, and in the details of the Mosaic requirements

It is now demanded whether by this narrative (8-12) it is to be understood that this holy thing, the law, is responsible for his death. The answer is By no manner of means. And to show this he goes over the same story again of 8-12, with fuller particulars, so stated as to show that it was sin, not law, that formed for him the body of this death above described in verse 11. From this it is plain, and must be specially noted, that 13-25 narrates the same period as 8-12. And this is a very important fact, as we shall now show.

It has for ages been debated whether 13-25 described the case of an unregenerate or regenerate man. For the first three centuries the entire Christian Church with one accord applied it solely to the unregenerate man. It seemed to low a moral picture for a professor of a new Christian life, as the apostle in the main current of thought is describing. Its application to the regenerate man was first invented by Augustine, who was followed by many eminent doctors of the Middle Ages. After the reformation the interpretation by Augustine was largely adopted, especially by the followers of Calvin.

If, however, it be true, as we have above stated, and as we think will appear in our comment, that this passage does but tell the story of 8-12 over again, this question is settled, for all are unanimously agreed that 8-12 is the narrative of an unregenerate man.

Moreover, as 7-12 is but an expansion of 5, and 13-25 and expansion of 7-12, it is clear that all three passages do describe but one thing: how with the man in the flesh under the law the motions of sin bring forth death.

If, now, the reader will with a pair of scissors cut out the entire passage 7-25, (which the apostle flung in to discuss the two questions,) he will find a continuous train of thought.

The paragraph from chapter 7:1-6 describes the Christian's emancipation from law, and 8:1-39 describes his blessed state as thus emancipated. The passage 7-25 is therefore parenthesis.

Romans 7:13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

Galatians 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

{ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS / Joseph Agar Beet}

Good: beneficial in its working. Such is whatever is 'holy,' i.e. belonging to God. The word 'good' sounds so strange to one to whom the Law has been the means of death that at this point Paul breaks off and asks a question which will become a starting-point for other teaching. In the answer to this question, he will state more fully the result of the foregoing argument. THE LAW REVEALS THE BADNESS AND POWER OF SIN

But sin: a subject without a predicate, which must be supplied from the context, followed by a nearer, and then an ultimate, purpose. In these purposes, we find evidently the chief matter of this verse, viz. the purpose for which the Law, "the good thing," was given. It is true, as Paul stated in Romans 7:10, that the Law, which he has just declared to be "good," had become to him a means of "death." But this is not the whole case: for in that death there was a further purpose, and this purpose changes completely the whole aspect of the sad calamity which befell Paul. This will appear as the argument proceeds.

The above-described calamity happened in order that "sin" might be seen to be sin: i.e. in order that its real character might be manifested. Through the good thing, to me working out death: mode of this manifestation. Galatians 3:24: "that we may be justified by faith." But this is not yet in view.

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

Was then that which is good made death unto me?] This is the question of the Jew, with whom the apostle appears to be disputing.

"Do you allow the law to be good, and yet say it is the cause of our death?" The apostle answers:-God forbid! genoito, by no means: it is not the law that is the cause of your death, but sin; it was sin which subjected us to death by the law, justly threatening sin with death: which law was given that sin might appear-might be set forth in its own colours; when we saw it subjected us to death by a law perfectly holy, just, and good; that sin, by the law, might be represented what it really is:-kaqÆ uperbolhn amartwlov, an EXCEEDING GREAT and deadly evil.

Thus it appears that man cannot have a true notion of sin but by means of the law of God.

For this I have already given sufficient reasons in the preceding notes. And it was one design of the law to show the abominable and destructive nature of sin, as well as to be a rule of life. It would be almost impossible for a man to have that just notion of the demerit of sin so as to produce repentance, or to see the nature and necessity of the death of Christ, if the law were not applied to his conscience by the light of the Holy Spirit; it is then alone that he sees himself to be carnal, and sold under sin; and that the law and the commandment are holy, just, and good. And let it be observed, that the law did not answer this end merely among the Jews in the days of the apostle; it is just as necessary to the Gentiles to the present hour. Nor do we find that true repentance takes place where the moral law is not preached and enforced. Those who preach only the Gospel to sinners, at best only heal the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly. The law, therefore, is the grand instrument in the hands of a faithful minister, to alarm and awaken sinners; and he may safely show that every sinner is under the law, and consequently under the curse, who has not fled for refuge to the hope held out by the Gospel: for, in this sense also, Jesus Christ is the END of the LAW for justification to them that believe.

{LEGAL EXPERIENCE / Lectures To Professing Christians / Charles G. Finney}

Now he brings up the objection again. How can any thing that is good be made death unto you?--"Was, then, that which is good made death unto me?--God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might be exceedingly sinful." And he vindicates the law, by showing that it is not the fault of the law, but the fault of sin, and that this very result shows at once the excellence of the law and the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Sin must be a horrible thing, if it can work such a perversion, as to take the good law of God and make it the means of death.

{REFUTING POPULAR PSEUDO-BIBLICAL EXCUSES FOR SIN / J. Patrick Johnston}

The holy commandment did not bring death; but his disobedience to it did. His sin, that it might appear sin, used the good law to make his sin "exceeding sinful" to him. The commandment simply increased his awareness of sin in his life, and magnified the exceeding sinfulness of his sin.

The rest of the chapter is the passage of controversy. From verse 14 to 23, Paul describes the battle between what he knows he should do and what he actually does. The writing style is quite confusing, but rightly so, for what he is describing is a very disturbed and frustrated state of mind. There is a war between his body and his mind, and the prize is his soul. Let us read it.

{ROBERTSON'S N. T. WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{Become death unto me?} (emoi egeneto qanatos?). Ethical dative emoi again. New turn to the problem. Admitting the goodness of God's law, did it issue in death for me? Paul repels (me genoito) this suggestion. It was Sin that (But Sin, alla h^ hamartia) "became

death for me." {That it might be shown} (hina phan[^]i). Final clause, hina and second aorist passive subjunctive of fainw, to show.

The sinfulness of Sin is revealed in its violations of God's law. {By working death to me} (moi katergazomen[^] thanaton). Present middle participle, as an incidental result. {Might become exceedingly sinful} (genetai kaq' huperbolen hamartwlos). Second aorist middle subjunctive of ginomai with hina in final clause. On kaq' huperbolen, see on 1Co 12:31. Our hyperbole is the Greek huperbole. The excesses of Sin reveal its real nature. Only then do some people get their eyes opened.

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George (Jed) Smock}

The law is not at fault in condemning the sinner. It must sentence transgressors to death, because law without sanctions is not law, but merely advice or suggestion. The wages of sin is death. The law of God is holy, just and good, in that it promotes the highest well-being of all. It reveals how exceedingly wicked sin actually is. Had God given a law that was impossible to keep, as some teach, then sin would not be sinful. Man would have to be excused for his mere shortcomings. Moral obligation necessitates moral ability. Had God given a law to man which was not possible for him to obey, then the law would be profane, corrupt and evil. And God would not be benevolent and moral, but a tyrant and a despot.

{WESLEY'S NOTES ON THE N. T. / John Wesley}

Was then that which is good made the cause of evil to me; yea, of death, which is the greatest of evil? Not so.

But it was sin, which was made death to me, inasmuch as it wrought death in me even by that which is good - By the good law. So that sin by the commandment became exceeding sinful.

{WHEDON'S COMMENTARY ON THE N. T. / D. D. Whedon}

Might appear sin ‐ Death follows sin in order to unfold the accursedness of sin. The intrinsic, immutable, eternal execrability of sin is a lesson in theology that God is wisely unfolding to all in intelligence. Exceeding sinful ‐ He might have said exceeding bad; but what worse can be ascribed to sin than that it is intensely itself?

Romans 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Isaiah 50:1 Thus saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.

Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the

law of sin and death.

Romans 8:5-8 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. (6) For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (7) Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (8) So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. {Amplified} For those who are according to the flesh and are controlled by its unholy desires set their minds on and pursue those things which gratify the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit and are controlled by the desires of the Spirit set their minds on and seek those things which gratify the [Holy] Spirit. (6) Now the mind of the flesh [which is sense and reason without the Holy Spirit] is death [death that comprises all the miseries arising from sin, both here and hereafter]. But the mind of the [Holy] Spirit is life and [soul] peace [both now and forever]. (7) [That is] because the mind of the flesh [with its carnal thoughts and purposes] is hostile to God, for it does not submit itself to God's Law; indeed it cannot. (8) So then those who are living the life of the flesh [catering to the appetites and impulses of their carnal nature] cannot please or satisfy God, or be acceptable to Him.

Romans 8:12-13 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. (13) For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. {Amplified} So then, brethren, we are debtors, but not to the flesh [we are not obligated to our carnal nature], to live [a life ruled by the standards set up by the dictates] of the flesh. (13) For if you live according to [the dictates of] the flesh, you will surely die. But if through the power of the [Holy] Spirit you are [habitually] putting to death (making extinct, deadening) the [evil] deeds prompted by the body, you shall [really and genuinely] live forever.

{THE WORKS OF ARMINIUS / James Arminius}

But as in the Scripture, a spiritual man and a carnal man are opposed to each other in their entire definitions, [for the former of them is one who walks according to the Spirit, and the latter is he that walks after the flesh, and as the one is mentioned for the opposite of the other,) in this respect indeed, the same man cannot be said to be at once both spiritual and carnal. And thus I reject, according to the Scriptures, this distinction of carnal persons, by which some of them are called carnal, in whom sin has dominion on the predominant part;

The same man about whom the apostle is here treating, is also said, in this, the fourteenth verse, to be sold under sin, or, (which is the same thing,) the slave of sin, and become its servant by purchase, which title can, in no sense whatsoever, be adapted to men placed under grace--a misappropriation of epithet, against which the Scriptures openly reclaim in many passages:

{ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS / Joseph Agar Beet}

A conspicuous change from past to present. In order to explain a bygone event in his own

experience, Paul now describes the constitution of the Law, and of himself; and his own bondage to "sin."

Sold: recalling a slave-market, and thus giving vividness to the picture. Under sin: as in Romans 3:9: the slave-master in whose power Paul now legally is. Cp. 1 Kings 21:20, 25; Isaiah 50:1.

Spiritual: as in Romans 1:11: pertaining to the "Spirit" of God, who is frequently contrasted with the 'flesh:' see Romans 8:4-9. "The Law" expresses the mind of the Holy Spirit.

Man-of-flesh, or "fleshen": same word in 1 Corinthians 3:1; 2 Corinthians 3:3; Hebrews 7:7, and (LXX.) 2 Chronicles 32:8; Ezekiel 36:26. See note under Romans 8:11. Paul's entire personality was dominated by his material side.

Notice the practical result of being, while "the Law is spiritual," a man of "flesh." The flesh is not bad: for it is a creature of God. But it is the lower side of man's nature, where sin erects its throne and whence it rules the man. Consequently one who is under control of his own body is a sold slave of sin. He therefore cannot (Romans 8:7, 8) obey a law expressing the mind of the Spirit of God, who is utterly adverse (see Galatians 5:17) to the rule of the body.

The only possible immediate consequence of the gift of such a law to a man of flesh is a revelation of his bondage. And this inevitable consequence is in Romans 7:13 described as the purpose of the sad experience described in Romans 7:11.

{BENSON'S COMMENTARY / Joseph Benson}

But I am carnal - That is, man destitute of the regenerating grace of God, is carnal. See note on verse 5, where to be in the flesh is evidently of the same of the same import with the word carnal here, as are also similar expressions, chap. 8:5, 8, 9, &c., expressions which, all are agreed, solely respect the unregenerate; and in which the person that is in the flesh, or carnally minded, is represented as being in a state of death, and enmity against God. Very different, surely, from the spiritual man, whom this same apostle represents as living in a state of favour and friendship with God; minding chiefly the things of the Spirit; yea, having the Spirit of God dwelling in him, and giving him dominion over all fleshly lusts, which through that Spirit, he is enabled to mortify; whose passions submit to government of reason, and whose reason is itself under the influence of grace; whose enjoyments are chiefly of a spiritual nature, and his great employment to work out his salvation with fear and trembling. The Scriptures, therefore, place these two characters in direct opposition the one to the other; and the apostle begins this paragraph by informing us that it is his carnal state which he is about to describe, in opposition to the spirituality of God's holy law, saying, But I am carnal; and adding, as a still more decisive proof that his meaning is as is here stated, sold under sin - That is, sold as a slave, to remain under the dominion of sin, and to be compelled to do those evil actions. Those commentators, therefore, who suppose that in this and what follows, to the end of

the chapter, the apostle describes his own state, at the time he wrote this epistle, and consequently the state of every regenerated person, must be under a great mistake. Universally, indeed, in the Scriptures, man is said to be in this state of bondage to sin until the Son of God makes him free, and therefore they are free indeed; free especially from the power of sin, which has no longer dominion over them.

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

For, we know that the law is spiritual] This is a general proposition, and probably, in the apostle's autograph, concluded the above sentence. The law is not to be considered as a system of external rites and ceremonies; nor even as a rule of moral action: it is a spiritual system; it reaches to the most hidden purposes, thoughts, dispositions, and desires of the heart and soul; and it reproveth and condemns every thing, without hope of reprieve or pardon, that is contrary to eternal truth and rectitude.

But I am carnal, sold under sin.] This was probably, in the apostle's letter, the beginning of a new paragraph. I believe it is agreed, on all hands, that the apostle is here demonstrating the insufficiency of the law in opposition to the Gospel. That by the former is the knowledge, by the latter the cure, of sin. Therefore by I here he cannot mean himself, nor any Christian believer: if the contrary could be proved, the argument of the apostle would go to demonstrate the insufficiency of the Gospel as well as the law.

It is difficult to conceive how the opinion could have crept into the Church, or prevailed there, that "the apostle speaks here of his regenerate state; and that what was, in such a state, true of himself, must be true of all others in the same state." This opinion has, most pitifully and most shamefully, not only lowered the standard of Christianity, but destroyed its influence and disgraced its character. It requires but little knowledge of the spirit of the Gospel, and of the scope of this epistle, to see that the apostle is, here, either personating a Jew under the law and without the Gospel, or showing what his own state was when he was deeply convinced that by the deeds of the law no man could be justified, and had not as yet heard those blessed words: Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, Acts ix. 17.

In this and the following verses he states the contrariety between himself, or any Jew while without Christ, and the law of God. Of the latter he says, it is spiritual; of the former, I am carnal, sold under sin. Of the carnal man, in opposition to the spiritual, never was a more complete or accurate description given. The expressions, in the flesh, and after the flesh, in ver. 5, and in chap. viii. 5, 8, 9, &c., are of the same import with the word carnal in this verse. To be in the flesh, or to be carnally minded, solely respects the unregenerate. While unregenerate, a man is in a state of death and enmity against God, chap. viii. 6-9. This is St. Paul's own account of a carnal man. The soul of such a man has no authority over the appetites of the body and the lusts of the flesh: reason has not the government of passion. The work of such a person is to make provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof, chap. xiii. 14. He minds the things of the flesh, Romans viii. 5; he is at enmity with God.

In all these things the spiritual man is the reverse; he lives in a state of friendship with God in Christ, and the Spirit of God dwells in him; his soul has dominion over the appetites of the body and the lusts of the flesh; his passions submit to the government of reason, and he, by the Spirit, mortifies the deeds of the flesh; he mindeth the things of the Spirit, chap. viii. 5. The Scriptures, therefore, place these two characters in direct opposition to each other. Now the apostle begins this passage by informing us that it is his carnal state that he is about to describe, in opposition to the spirituality of God's holy law, saying, But I am carnal.

Those who are of another opinion maintain that by the word carnal here the apostle meant that corruption which dwelt in him after his conversion; but this opinion is founded on a very great mistake; Whatever epithets are given to corruption or sin in Scripture, opposite epithets are given to grace or holiness. By these different epithets are the unregenerate and regenerate denominated. From all this it follows that the epithet carnal, which is the characteristic designation of an unregenerate man, cannot be applied to St. Paul after his conversion; nor, indeed, to any Christian in that state.

But the word carnal, though used by the apostle to signify a state of death and enmity against God, is not sufficient to denote all the evil of the state which he is describing; hence he adds, sold under sin. It implies a willing slavery: Ahab had sold himself to work evil, 1 Kings xxi. 20.

And of the Jews it is said, in their utmost depravity, Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, Isa. l. 1. They forsook the holy covenant, and joined themselves to the heathen, and WERE SOLD to do mischief, 1 Macc. i. 15.

Now, if the word carnal, in its strongest sense, had been sufficiently significant of all he meant, why add to this charge another expression still stronger? We must therefore understand the phrase, sold under sin, as implying that the soul was employed in the drudgery of sin; that it was sold over to this service, and had no power to disobey this tyrant, until it was redeemed by another. And if a man be actually sold to another, and he acquiesce in the deed, then he becomes the legal property of that other person. This state of bondage was well known to the Romans. The sale of slaves they saw daily, and could not misunderstand the emphatical sense of this expression. Sin is here represented as a person; and the apostle compares the dominion which sin has over the man in question to that of a master over his legal slave. Universally through the Scriptures man is said to be in a state of bondage to sin until the Son of God make him free: but in no part of the sacred writings is it ever said that the children of God are sold under sin. Christ came to deliver the lawful captive, and take away the prey from the mighty. Whom the Son maketh free, they are free indeed. Then, they yield not up their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; for sin shall not have the dominion over them, because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made them free from the law of sin and death, Romans vi. 13, 14; viii. 2. Anciently, when regular cartels were not known, the captives became the slaves of their victors, and by them were sold to any purchaser; their slavery was as complete and perpetual as if the slave had resigned his own liberty, and sold

himself: the laws of the land secured him to his master; he could not redeem himself, because he had nothing that was his own, and nothing could rescue him from that state but a stipulated redemption. The apostle speaks here, not of the manner in which the person in question became a slave; he only asserts the fact, that sin had a full and permanent dominion over him. - Smith, on the carnal man's character.

I am carnal, sold under sin.] I have been the more particular in ascertaining the genuine sense of this verse, because it determines the general scope of the whole passage.

{BORN SINFUL? / Theodore W. Elliot}

You can only be sold into a state other than the one you are in. In other words, you can only be sold into bondage, if your original state is something other than bondage. There is a difference between being born into something and being sold into something.

{LEGAL EXPERIENCE / Lectures To Professing Christians / Charles G. Finney}

"For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." Here is the hinge, on which the whole questions turns. Now mark; the apostle is here vindicating the law against the objection, that if the law is the means of death to sinners, it cannot be good. Against this objection, he goes on to show, that all its action on the mind of the sinner proves it to be good. Keeping his eye on this point, he argues, that the law is good, and that the evil comes from the motions of sin in our members. Now he comes to that part which is supposed to delineate a Christian experience, and which is the subject of controversy. He begins by saying, "the law is spiritual but I am carnal." This word carnal he uses once and only once, in reference to Christians, and then it was in reference to persons who were in a very low state in religion. "For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men." These Christians had backslidden, and acted as if they were not converted persons, but were carnal. The term itself is generally used to signify the worst of sinners. Paul here defines it so; "carnal, sold under sin." Could that be said of Paul himself, at the time he wrote this epistle? Was that his own experience? Was he sold under sin?" Was that true of the great apostle? No, but he was vindicating the law, and he uses an illustration, by supposing a case.

{THE LAST CHECK TO ANTINOMIANISM / John Fletcher}

Whether therefore we consider Rom. vii, Rom. vi, or Rom. viii, it appears indubitable, that the sense which our opponents fix upon Rom. vii, 14, &c, is entirely contrary to the apostle's meaning, to the context, and to the design of the whole epistle, which is to extol the privilege of those who are Christ's, above the privileges of those who are Noah's or Moses'; or, if you please, to extol the privileges of spiritual Christians, who serve God "in newness of the Spirit," above the privileges of carnal heathens and Jews, who serve him only "in the oldness of the letter."

IF the sense which our opponents give to Rom. vii, 14, be true, the doctrine of Christian

perfection is a dream, and our utmost attainment on earth is St. Paul's apostolic carnality, and involuntary servitude to the law of sin; with a hopeful prospect of deliverance in a death purgatory. It is therefore of the utmost importance to establish our exposition of that verse, by answering the arguments which are supposed to favour the Antinomian meaning rashly fixed upon that portion of Scripture.

ARG. I. "If St. Paul was not carnal and sold under sin when he wrote to the Romans, why does he say, 'I am carnal?' Could he not have said, I was carnal once, but now the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death? Can you give a good reason why, in Rom. vii, 14, the phrase, I am carnal, must mean, I was carnal? Is it right thus to substitute the past time for the present?"

ANSWER. We have already shown that this figurative way of speaking is not uncommon in the Scriptures. We grant, however, that we ought not to depart from the literal sense of any phrase, without good reasons. Several such, I trust, have already been produced, to show the necessity of taking St. Paul's words, "I am carnal," in the sense stated in the preceding section. I shall offer one more remark upon this head, which, if I mistake not, might alone convince the unprejudiced.

The states of all souls may in general be reduced to three: (1.) That of unawakened sinners, who quietly sleep in the chains of their sins, and dream of self righteousness and heaven. (2.) That of awakened, uneasy, reluctant sinners, who try in vain to break the galling chains of their sins. And, (3.) That of delivered sinners, or victorious believers, who enjoy the liberty of God's children. This last state is described in Rom. vii, 4, 6. The rest of that chapter is judiciously brought in, to show how the unawakened sinner is roused out of his carnal state, and how the awakened sinner is driven to Christ for liberty by the lashing and binding commandment. "I had not known sin," says he, "but by the law," &c. When he had described his unawakened state without the law, and began to describe his awakened state under the law, nothing was more natural than to change the time or tense. But having already used the past tense in the description of the first or the unawakened state; and having said, "Without the law sin was dead: I was alive without the law once: sin revived and I died," &c, he could no more use that tense, when he began to describe the second, or the awakened state; I mean the state in which he found himself when the commandment had roused his sleepy conscience, and slain his Pharisaic hopes. He was therefore obliged to use another tense; and none, in that case, was fitter than the present; just as if he had said, "When the commandment slew the conceited Pharisee in me; when I died to my self-righteous hopes; I did not die without a groan. Nor did I pass into the life of God without severe pangs: no; I straggled with earnestness, I complained with bitterness, and the language of my oppressed heart was, I am carnal, sold under sin," &c, to the end of the chapter.

{THE RANDALL HOUSE BIBLE COMMENTARY / F. Leroy Forlines}

If Paul is actually introducing the regenerate at this point, it is the strangest introduction of a regenerate person ever heard. Out of the clear blue sky he says, "I am carnal sold under sin." But if Paul is speaking of an unregenerate person all the way through, it is to

be expected that he would deal with the hard negative truth that the law shows the unregenerate about his bondage to sin. The time was ready to introduce this painful truth.

{THE PEOPLE'S NEW TESTAMENT / B. W. Johnson}

For we know that the law is spiritual. The apostle continues still further to show that, not the law, but sin is the source of death. The law is "spiritual," that is, is divine and adapted to our spiritual nature. While there were "carnal ordinances," its essential principles were spiritual. I am carnal. Paul describes his condition while under the law. It was spiritual; but he was carnal, and hence, there was a conflict. Sold under sin. Hence, in a state of slavery. Though Paul uses the present tense, in order to make the description more vivid, he describes his condition before he became a Christian.

{REFUTING POPULAR PSEUDO-BIBLICAL EXCUSES FOR SIN / J. Patrick Johnston}

His opening statement of the passage of controversy, "I am carnal, sold under sin" is the key to understanding the rest of the chapter. Superficially, it would appear that in this verse alone we see grave controversies with both the previous and the following chapter if he is saying that he is carnal and sold under sin at the time of his writing of the book of Romans.

According to the previous chapter, those who are "sold under sin" are under the sentence of eternal death. True Christians are free from sin and are servants to God.

If Paul is confessing he is a servant to sin, then he could not be the same servant of righteousness who is "free from sin" discussed in chapter 6! If he is "sold under sin" the same time he was the Apostle of Christ, death is his reward. Only if he yields unto obedience and is free from sin is he the servant of righteousness.

If the Apostle Paul was "carnal and sold under sin" at the same time he was the Apostle of Christ, and yielded to uncleanness and to iniquity, as many claim Romans 7:14-25 teaches, then he was "free from righteousness" and spiritually dead, and headed for the second death.

If the Apostle Paul was never free from sin during his life, but still served sin all of his days, and if he bore unholy fruit instead of holy fruit unto God, then he did not obtain everlasting life. Earning the wages of sin as a servant to sin, he was not a recipient of the gift of eternal life, but of eternal death.

Is the Apostle Paul walking in spiritual death, and not in the life of Christ at the time of his writing of the seventh chapter of Romans? Is he confessing to us that he, as an Apostle, is an enemy of God because of his carnality? It cannot be!

In the context of the surrounding passages, it becomes increasingly clear that Paul is not describing his experience as a mature Christian here in Romans 7:14-23, but he is

speaking of his life trying to serve God under the law before his conversion experience. This is a description of Saul of Tarsus, Pharisee of Pharisees and persecutor of the saints; not Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles and writer of half the New Testament. This is a description of a man who is at war with God, not at peace with God, with a guilty conscience, not a clean conscience. This is a man who is a slave to sin, not a slave to righteousness. He is alive to sin, not dead to sin through Christ. Remember Paul's purpose: to show the powerlessness of the law to destroy the sinfulness of man, not the powerlessness of the Gospel to destroy the sinfulness of man. Although he spoke in the past tense up to verse 14 in referring to his state of bondage under the law, he is referring to the same state when he speaks in the present tense from verses 14b-25.

I believe that he speaks in the present tense in the last half of Romans 7 simply for dramatic effect. This might seem to be a rather far-fetched excuse for a tense change, but if we will carefully consider the context it clearly becomes the only plausible explanation. When I first began to consider this as an alternative interpretation, I began to realize how frequently I use this form of speech in daily conversation. We do it all the time. For instance, "Hey everybody, I got a ticket on the way to work today. It was terrible! I am driving along on route I-75, enraptured in worship while listening to Hosanna's new praise album and finishing the last of my McDonalds french fries, and I do not see the bright orange construction signs in front of me. I look down at the radio, and when I look up, there is this fellow with a STOP sign right in front of me with this look of terror on his face. Ahhhh! I swerve the fellow and hit the curb, then jump the lane and crash right into a police car as the officer spills his hot coffee all over his lap!" I spoke present tense to describe a past event, just like Paul did in Romans 7:14-25 and I Timothy 1:15 - we do this all the time.

{THE IVP BIBLE BACKGROUND COMMENTARY / Craig S. Keener}

Many commentators have thought that 7:14-25 describes Paul's struggle with sin at the time he was writing the passage, because he uses present-tense verbs. But diatribe style, which Paul uses in much of Romans, was graphic in its images, and Paul in the context has been describing his past life under law (7:7-13). Thus it is more likely that Paul contrasts the spiritual worthlessness of religious introspection and self-centeredness (count the "I's" and "me's") in Roman 7 with the life of the Spirit by grace in Romans 6 and 8.

{THE ROMAN SEVEN MAN / Bruce Moylan}

Are we to believe that Paul in his converted state was unspiritual? That he was a slave to sin? Paul didn't understand what he was doing? It appears to be quite a stretch to harmonize the Christian experience with this verse. Why was Paul teaching anyone anything if he himself didn't understand what he was doing? Then he takes the bold step to admonish others to imitate his behavior. This is preposterous!

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

14a For we know that the law is spiritual. - Alas, few know this, because they only know the letter of the law (if that). They do not understand the spirit of the law. Paul served the law as a Pharisee for years before coming to an understanding of the spirit of the law. Now that he comprehends the spirit of the law, he begins a sincere struggle to obey; but he is doomed to failure without the indwelling of the Spirit of the Lawgiver.

The letter of the law deals with the outward keeping of the law. The spirit of the law is its purpose, which is to promote love to God and all beings in the universe. The letter considers only what the law actually reads; the spirit reveals its principles and meaning. The letter kills; but the spirit brings life. The letter commands, "Thou shalt not murder"; the spirit teaches whosoever hates his brother is a murderer. The letter dictates, "Thou shalt not commit adultery"; but the spirit teaches lust in the heart is adultery. Whatever the law forbids, the spirit commands the opposite. The letter of the Eighth Commandment forbids stealing; the spirit demands honesty, industriousness and generosity. The letter of the Ninth Commandment forbids bearing false witness; the spirit calls for truth.

Love to God and neighbor is the spirit of the law. By the grace of God, man can consistently obey the spirit of the law. On occasion, he may violate the letter of the law because sometimes the letter and the spirit conflict.

For example, the letter commands, Thou shalt not bear false witness. But Rahab the harlot lied when she hid the spies, violating the letter of the law. Nevertheless, God spared her, and the Scriptures commend her as a woman of faith. Love for Israel required her to break the letter and save the spies, thus keeping the spirit of the law. Also, Ehud, Gideon, and Jael intentionally deceived their enemies in order to execute God's judgment.

Jesus plucked ears of corn on the Sabbath to feed His hungry disciples and healed on the Sabbath, violating the letter of the Fourth Commandment but not the spirit, because, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.

This principle must be understood in the context of the limitations of the Biblical law of love, not some vague, undefined, wholly individualistic, born-of-the-situation, loving impulse. One must be careful he is not rationalizing away selfish motives when breaking the letter of the law. We must be careful to avoid the pitfalls of the humanists (the godless) who promote abortion and euthanasia in the name of population control and quality of life and oppose the death penalty.

The letter and the spirit forbid murder (unjustified killing) of the unborn, weak and infirm.

Indeed, every time God saves a sinner from eternal death, he does not enforce the letter of the law. Jesus made an atonement for sin, thus magnifying the spirit of the law.

14b ... but I am carnal, sold under sin. - The reader will note that Paul switches from the past to the present tense at this point. If he is referring to pre-Christian life, why is Paul writing in the present tense? The answer is that Paul is using a figure of speech in which a

writer will change tense for dramatic effect.

There are numerous examples of this literary device in Holy Writ. Christians agree that Isaiah 53 is a prophetic passage alluding to the atonement of Christ. But the writer refers to the event as if it were in the past. He hath borne our griefs ... we did esteem, Him stricken ... He was wounded ... was bruised ... the chastisement of our peace was upon Him. Isaiah is trying to convey the idea that in the mind of God the event was as good as done. But then the prophet dramatically changes to the present tense: with His stripes we are healed. Isaiah is vividly informing the reader that the atonement is so much a part of God's plan, that those who take hold of the promise now can receive its benefits before it actually takes place in history.

Paul uses the historical present tense in 1 Timothy 1:15: I am chief of sinners. But are we to presume that when Paul wrote this, he meant to be understood that he was the worst practicing sinner alive at the time? Of course not. That would make him the worst liar alive. How, then, could we be expected to believe a word he said? He is using hyperbole in order to impress on the reader how wicked and ungodly he had been without the grace of God. The next verse makes this clear when he says, Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy.

But there is another literary consideration in changing tense. From verses 7-13, Paul has been demonstrating how sin is more powerful than the law. But from verse 14 to the end of the chapter, he is explaining how sin is more powerful than unregenerate man. The change of tense indicates his shift in purpose.

The third rhetorical reason for switching the tense is to illustrate a climax in the phases of Paul's experience under the law. Sinners are at different stages. There is the careless and self-righteous sinner, who sees no need to be saved. Before the commandment came, Paul was a careless and self-righteous. Then "sin revived" and he realized his lost condition, which moved him to the stage of awakened sinner. As an awakened sinner, Paul comprehended the justice, goodness and holiness of the law. The change to the present tense in verse 14 dramatically indicates to the reader that Paul is moving to a very critical stage. His destiny is hanging in the balance. He is convicted of his sins and is desperately struggling for a way out of his bondage. He cries out, I know what I ought to do, but how can I? I am carnal, sold under sin.

We must keep this conclusion before us as we read because, in the following verses until the end of the chapter, Paul proves and demonstrates this point from his own experience.

In Romans 8:6, Paul writes, To be carnally minded is death. So we must conclude that Paul is reflecting on his experience under law, convicted, but not converted; still dead in his trespasses and sins. He is a slave under the dominion of the slave driver, sin. He is in desperate need of the Redeemer.

The next several verses with so many first person pronouns are rather confusing, and understandably so, for Paul is describing a very confused state of mind. Paul is describing

the inner conflict he was experiencing, since sin had revived in his life as a result of his mind being enlightened by the spiritual requirements of the law. His mind, including his reasoning faculty and conscience, affirmed the law of God, but his flesh (natural appetites) still served the law of sin.

{WESLEY'S NOTES ON THE N. T. / John Wesley}

I am carnal - St. Paul, having compared together the past and present state of believers, that "in the flesh," ver. 5, and that "in the spirit," ver. 6, in answering two objections, (Is then the law sin? ver. 7, and, Is the law death? ver. 13,) interweaves the whole process of a man reasoning, groaning, striving, and escaping from the legal to the evangelical state. This he does from ver. 7, to the end of this chapter. Sold under sin - Totally enslaved; slaves bought with money were absolutely at their master's disposal.

{WHEDON'S COMMENTARY ON THE N. T. / D. D. Whedon}

Spiritual &endash; The law is not only to be vindicated but extolled, and extolled not only by the good, but even by the man whom it condemns.

Carnal &endash; That is, in the flesh, (verse 5,) that is, unregenerate.

Sold under sin &endash; Reducing the hyperbole as much as we reasonably can, it is absolutely inadmissible to predicate this in any case of a regenerate man.

Romans 7:15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

James 1:8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

{THE WORKS OF ARMINIUS / James Arminius}

Therefore, the man who is in this place the subject of discussion, is the slave of another, that is, of sin; and therefore the same man is unregenerate, and not placed under grace.

{BENSON'S COMMENTARY / Joseph Benson}

Therefore he says, What I work, I allow not, or, approve not; for the word which literally signifies I know, is used in the sense of approving, Matt. 7:21. For what I would - That is, incline to, or desire, as Macknight renders, which, he observes, cannot here signify the last determination of the will, "actions always following that determination; but such a faint ineffectual desire as reason and conscience, opposed by strong passions, and not strengthened by the Spirit of God, often produce."

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

Who, without blaspheming, can assert that the apostle is speaking this of a man in whom

the Spirit of the Lord dwells? From ver. 7 to this one the apostle, says Dr. Taylor, denotes the Jew in the flesh by a single I; here, he divides that I into two I's, or figurative persons; representing two different and opposite principles which were in him. The one I, or principle, assents to the law that it is good, and wills and chooses what the other does not practice, ver. 16. This principle he expressly tells us, ver. 22, is the inward man; the law of the mind, Romans vii. 23; the mind, or rational faculty, ver. 25; for he could find no other inward man, or law of the mind, but the rational faculty, in a person who was carnal and sold under sin. The other I, or principle, transgresses the law, ver. 23, and does those things which the former principle allows not.

This principle he expressly tells us, ver. 18, is the flesh, the law in the members, or sensual appetite, ver. 23; and he concludes in the last verse, that these two principles were opposite to each other; therefore it is evident that those two principles, residing and counteracting each other in the same person; are reason and lust, or sin that dwells in us. And it is very easy to distinguish these two I's, or principles, in every part of this elegant description of iniquity, domineering over the light and remonstrances of reason. For instance, ver. 17: Now then, it is no more I that do it, but SIN that dwelleth in me. The I he speaks of here is opposed to indwelling or governing sin; and therefore plainly denotes the principle of reason, the inward man, or law of the mind; in which, I add, a measure of the light of the Spirit of God shines, in order to show the sinfulness of sin. These two different principles he calls, one flesh, and the other spirit, Gal. v. 17; where he speaks of their contrariety in the same manner that he does here.

And we may give a probable reason why the apostle dwells so long upon the struggle and opposition between these two principles; it appears intended to answer a tacit but very obvious objection. The Jew might allege: "But the law is holy and spiritual; and I assent to it as good, as a right rule of action, which ought to be observed; yea, I esteem it highly, I glory and rest in it, convinced of its truth and excellency. And is not this enough to constitute the law a sufficient principle of sanctification?" The apostle answers, "No; wickedness is consistent with a sense of truth. A man may assent to the best rule of action, and yet still be under the dominion of lust and sin; from which nothing can deliver him but a principle and power proceeding from the fountain of life." The sentiment in this verse may be illustrated by quotations from the ancient heathens; many of whom felt themselves in precisely the same state, (and expressed it in nearly the same language,) which some most monstrously tell us was the state of this heavenly apostle, when vindicating the claims of the Gospel against those of the Jewish ritual!

Passion, however, is more powerful than my reason; Which is the cause of the greatest evils to mortal men.

Thus we find that enlightened heathens, both among the Greeks and Romans, had that same kind of religious experience which some suppose to be, not only the experience of St. Paul in his best state, but to be even the standard of Christian attainments!

{LEGAL EXPERIENCE / Lectures To Professing Christians / Charles G. Finney}

He goes on, "For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I." It is a common use of language for persons to say, "I would do so and so, but cannot," when they only mean to be understood as desiring it, but not as actually choosing to do it. And so to say, "I could not do so," when they only mean that they would not do it, and, they could if they would. I asked a merchant to take a certain price for a piece of goods. He said, "I can't do it." What did he mean? That he had not power to accept of such a price? Not at all. He could if he would, but he did not choose to do it. Here you see the application of the principles I have laid down. In the interpretation of this word "would," we are not to understand it of the choice or will, but only a desire. Otherwise the apostle contradicts a plain matter of fact, which every body knows to be true, that the will governs the conduct. Professor Stuart has very properly rendered the word desire; what I desire, I do not, but what I disapprove, that I do.

{THE RANDALL HOUSE BIBLE COMMENTARY / F. Leroy Forlines}

We need to look at the word "would" (Greek *thelo*) before we put the meaning of the verse together. In vv. 15, 16, 19, 20, and 21, it is translated "would." In v. 18 it is translated "will." It appears that in these verses the meaning is to wish or desire rather than to will or make a choice.

Paul is saying, "I do not understand it. I wish to do one thing, but I end up doing another. I hate and deplore what I do." It appears that what we see here is utter defeat.

{Frederick Godet}

"indeed what I perform I know not : for what I would, that do I not ; but what I hate, that do I". This verse contains the proof from fact of the state of slavery which Paul has just affirmed. The slave knows not what he does, for he does the will of another. So Paul complains that his work is not the result of a distinct view in which he has, as it were, intellectually possessed himself beforehand of what he was going to do; it is the result of blind instinct, which drags him along as if without his knowledge, so that when he sees it realised, it is not what he wished ; it is, on the contrary, what he detests. The expression : I know not, should not be taken in the sense : "I do not own as good," a fourth sense, and one which is not necessary. - The will, which Paul does not execute, is of course the willing of good, and what he hates and yet executes is certainly evil. The moral tendency of his will to purpose good and hate evil, is connected with the acknowledgement of the perfection of the law of which he spoke in verse 14. But this will which puts itself on the side of the law is nothing more than a desire , a wish, a simple I should like, which gives way in practise. Such, indeed, is the frequent meaning of (greek) to will, in Paul (1 Corinthians chapter 7 verse 7 ; 2 Corinthians verse 4, 11, 20 ; Colossians 2 verse 18). The term (greek) to do, Has the meaning of working at, and expresses the idea that his practical activity does not follow the direction of his will. (greek)to hate here denotes moral reprobation; and (greek) to do, which has the sense of accomplishing, realising, refers not to activity in exercise (greek), but to the product of the activity, so that the exact paraphrase of the two last propositions would be this : "At the time when I act, I am not working in the direction of my desire to fulfil the law ; and when I have acted, I find

myself face to face with a result which my moral instinct condemns." It is asked how Paul could ascribe to himself this desire of good and hatred of evil, while speaking of the time when he was yet under the law? But we ask in turn of those who refer this verse to Paul in his regenerate state, how he could in this state ascribe to himself the powerlessness with which he charges himself especially if we compare the contrast he brings out between the state described here and the delineation of the Christian he draws in chapter 8? In fact, what this verse expresses is nothing else than what is contained in the words of Jesus, John 3 - 24 ; "He that doeth truth cometh to the light." To do the truth certainly denotes the loyal desire of goodness ; and this disposition precedes faith in the case of the men of whom Jesus is speaking, since the latter is its consequence : cometh to the light. We meet with the same thought in the parable of the sower, Luke 8 - 15, when Jesus speaks of the honest and good heart in which the gospel seed produces its fruit ; comp. also Romans 2 - 7 and Acts 10 - 34, 35. It is understood , of course, that such a disposition exists only as the work of him who is alone good.

{REFUTING POPULAR PSEUDO-BIBLICAL EXCUSES FOR SIN / J. Patrick Johnston}

Saul of Tarsus wanted to live in obedience to God's law, but it is not enough to desire to obey God and do right:

I John 2:17b: He that "doeth" the will of God abideth forever.

Matthew 7:21: Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven, but he that "doeth" the will of My Father which is in heaven. (See also I Peter 1:22 and Hebrews 5:8.)

Saul of Tarsus had the desire, but lacked the obedience. The conviction of the Holy Spirit was evident in Saul at this time, but we see no inner change. He was not yet born of the Spirit. The wretched condition that the Apostle describes here occurs before his experience on the road to Damascus.

{ROBERTSON'S N. T. WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{I know not} (ou ginwskw). "I do not recognize" in its true nature. My spiritual perceptions are dulled, blinded by Sin (#2Co 4:4). The dual life pictured here by Paul finds an echo in us all, the struggle after the highest in us ("what I really wish," ho qelw, to practise it steadily, prassw) and the slipping into doing (poi) "what I really hate" (ho mis") and yet sometimes do. There is a deal of controversy as to whether Paul is describing his struggle with Sin before conversion or after it. The words "sold under Sin" in verse #14 seem to turn the scale for the pre-conversion period. "It is the unregenerate man's experience, surviving at least in memory into regenerate days, and read with regenerate eyes" (Denney).

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

For that which I [my flesh] do I [my mind] allow not: for what I [my mind] would, that do I [my flesh] not; but what I [mind] hate, that do I [flesh].

Essentially, what Paul is describing is the conflict between the flesh (the lower part of the nature of man) and his spirit or his mind (the higher part of man's nature). What he wants to do, he does not do; what he does not want to do, he does.

Romans 7:16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

{BENSON'S COMMENTARY / Joseph Benson}

If then I do that which I would not, &c. - In willing not to do so far, though to my own condemnation, consent to the law, and bear my testimony to it that it is good - And do desire to fulfil it; though when temptations assault me, contrary to my resolution, I fail in my practice. This is inference from the former verse, the obvious sense of which is, that men, even in an unconverted state, approve of the law of God: they see its propriety and equity, consequently their judgment approves of it as good, though their passions oppose it.

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

If then I do that which I would not, &c.] Knowing that the law condemns it, and that therefore it must be evil. I consent unto the law; I show by this circumstance that I acknowledge the law to be good.

{THE MOFFATT NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY / C. H. Dodd}

First, he says, it is clear that when I act against my wishes, I agree that the Law is right. That is important to him, in view of the question with which he started in verse 7.

{LEGAL EXPERIENCE / Lectures To Professing Christians / Charles G. Finney}

Then comes the conclusion, "If, then, I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law, that it is good." If I do that which I disapprove, if I disapprove of my own conduct, if I condemn myself, I thereby bear testimony that the law is good. Now, keep your eye on the object the apostle has in view, and read the next verse,

{THE PEOPLE'S NEW TESTAMENT / B. W. Johnson}

If then I do. Rather, "But if I do." If he sins, against his purpose and inclination, he condemns his sin, and thus acknowledges the law, which he disobeyed, to be just and good.

{ROBERTSON'S N. T. WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{I consent unto the law} (sunfemi twi nomwi). Old verb, here only in N.T., with

associative instrumental case. "I speak with." My wanting (qelw) to do the opposite of what I do proves my acceptance of God's law as good (kalos).

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

If then I [flesh] do that which I [mind] would not [does not approve], I [mind] consent into the law that it is good.

He reluctantly affirms that he ought not to do, thereby, with his mind, he affirms the goodness of the law.

{WESLEY'S NOTES ON THE N. T. / John Wesley}

It is good - This single word implies all the three that were used before, ver. 12, "holy, just, and good."

Romans 7:17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Romans 6:6-7 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (7) For he that is dead is freed from sin. {Amplified} We know that our old (unrenewed) self was nailed to the cross with Him in order that [our] body [which is the instrument] of sin might be made ineffective and inactive for evil, that we might no longer be the slaves of sin. (7) For when a man dies, he is freed (loosed, delivered) from [the power of] sin [among men].

Romans 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? {Amplified} Do you not know that if you continually surrender yourselves to anyone to do his will, you are the slaves of him whom you obey, whether that be to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience which leads to righteousness (right doing and right standing with God)?

Romans 6:21-22 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. (22) But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. {NASB} Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. (22) But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

{BENSON'S COMMENTARY / Joseph Benson}

But sin that dwelleth in me - "As the apostle had personified sin, he very properly represents it as dwelling in him; because this suggests to us the absolute and continued influence which sin hath in controlling the reason and conscience of the unregenerated, and in directing all their actions. By distinguishing his real self, that is, his spiritual part,

from the self, or flesh, in which sin dwelt, and by observing that the evil actions which he committed were done, not by him, but by sin dwelling in him, the apostle did not mean to teach that wicked men are not accountable for their sins, but to make them sensible of the evil of their sins, by showing them that they are all committed in direct opposition to reason and conscience, the superior part of their nature, at the instigation of passion and lust, the lower part. Further, by appealing to the opposition which reason and conscience make to evil actions, he hath overturned the grand argument, by which the wicked justify themselves in indulging their lusts. Say they, since God hath given us passions and appetites, he certainly meant that we should gratify them. True, says the apostle; but God hath also given you reason and conscience are the superior part of man's nature, a more certain indication of the will of God may be gathered from their operation, than from the impulses of the other." - Macknight.

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

Now then it is no more I] It is not that I which constitutes reason and conscience, but sin-corrupt and sensual inclinations, that dwelleth in me-that has the entire domination over my reason, darkening my understanding, and perverting my judgment. So we find here that there is a principle in the unregenerate man stronger than reason itself; a principle which is, properly speaking, not of the essence of the soul, but acts in it, as its lord, or as a tyrant.

{LEGAL EXPERIENCE / Lectures To Professing Christians / Charles G. Finney}

"Now then it is no more that I do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Here he, as it were, divides himself against himself, or speaks of himself as possessing two natures, or, as some of the heathen philosophers taught, as having two souls, one which approves the good and another which loves and chooses evil.

{THE RANDALL HOUSE BIBLE COMMENTARY / F. Leroy Forlines}

Paul is not meaning that a person in such a condition is not responsible for what he does. Rather, he is pointing out: He is "being controlled" rather than "being in control."

{THE PEOPLE'S NEW TESTAMENT / B. W. Johnson}

Now then it is no more I. Not Paul as a freeman who sins, but Paul as the bond-servant of sin (see verse 15), and hence it is sin who reigns over him, who sins in him, as the instrument. He describes the sinful state as one of bondage. How often a man does what he "would not!"

{REFUTING POPULAR PSEUDO-BIBLICAL EXCUSES FOR SIN / J. Patrick Johnston}

What he wants to do and what he does differs greatly because of his selfish heart, also called the old man, the body of sin, or the body of death by the Apostle; some may call

this the "sinful nature". I do not mind labeling this "old man" the "sinful nature" as long as we understand that this wicked nature is acquired, not inherited.

Man is not born a slave to sin. Man becomes a slave to sin by his own free choice to commit sin (John 8:34; Romans 6:16-19), to do what he knows he should not do (James 4:17). They forsake the right way (II Peter 2:15). They go astray of their own free will (Isaiah 53:6). They are trained in greed (II Peter 2:14). They become servants of corruption when they are overcome by their temptations (II Peter 2:19). They teach their tongues to sin (Jeremiah 5:5). They become unprofitable (Romans 3:12). They become vain in their imaginations, and their hearts become darkened (Romans 1:18-21). Men become sinners when they choose to sin and refuse to know God of their own free will.

Men are not born sinners, but are born innocent. An "innocent sinner" is an oxymoron. Sin and guilt are inseparable, you cannot have the former without the latter. If babies are sinful, then they must be guilty, and if they are innocent, then they cannot be sinful.

If God made men sinners, then He would have the ultimate responsibility for sin, and not man; God would be the criminal and man the victim of God's cruelty. But "God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Ecclesiastes 7:29). God is not to blame for man's sin, and I pity the fool that makes that excuse before the Great White Throne on Judgment Day!

Neither did Adam make his posterity sinful and spiritually dead. Adam brought sin into the world and into the human race, but "death passed upon all men, for all have sinned", not "for Adam sinned" (Romans 5:12). Sin is not passed down by fathers. Sin is not genetic. Sin is not a congenital disease. Sin is a choice that only the individual can make. No one can make the choice to sin or not to sin for another. God made it clear that children cannot be guilty of their father's sin (Ezekiel 18:1-32). Babies are innocent, and children cannot be sinful nor guilty until their consciences are developed and they are able to sin, and then they choose to sin. Jesus said in Matthew 18:2-4 and 19:4 that men must become like little children in order to enter the kingdom of God. If children were sinful and alienated from God from birth, we would not be commanded to be like them to be saved, and the kingdom of heaven would not consist of such as these. We each intuitively know that babies are not sinful. The doctrine of original sin makes great strides against the consciences of men and the testimony of nature to insist that babies have a sinful nature and are sinful. It makes further strides against the teachings of the Bible to say that those sinful beings will go to heaven without repentance and faith.

{THE ROMAN SEVEN MAN / Bruce Moylan}

Talk about not accepting responsibility! This verse would make Clinton proud. Is Paul stating that post-regeneration we still have a sin nature and nothing good lives in us? I thought that the Holy Spirit lives in every Christian. Did Paul forget about this when he was addressing the Romans? Or maybe Paul is trying to tell us that the Holy Spirit is not good. I think that I would opt for Paul's memory lapse.

{ROBERTSON'S N. T.WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{So now} (nuni de). A logical contrast, "as the case really stands."

{But Sin that dwelleth in me} (all' he enoikousa en emoi hamartia). Paul does not mean to say that his whole self has no moral responsibility by using this paradox. "To be saved from Sin, a man must at the same time own it and disown it" (Denney).

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

He is not denying responsibility here, but using hyperbole to describe the strength of sin that still holds him in bondage. As he has done throughout this chapter, he personifies sin as a tyrant or despot that violently controls its subjects. Of course, sin is not an actual indwelling physical or even spiritual substance; but when indulged in, it seems to take on a strength of its own, until it completely enslaves its victim. Sin is choosing one's own gratification over the will of God. The problem in making self-gratification one's supreme intention in life, is that self's appetite is insatiable. The more self is given, the more it demands. Self makes increasingly unreasonable demands, until one is consumed by his own lust.

Romans 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. {Amplified} I have been crucified with Christ [in Him I have shared His crucifixion]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ (the Messiah) lives in me; and the life I now live in the body I live by faith in (by adherence to and reliance on and complete trust in) the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Galatians 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

1 John 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

2 Corinthians 5:14a For the love of Christ constraineth us;

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

1 Corinthians 10:33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

Acts 20:18-21 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

(19) Serving the LORD with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: (20) And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, (21) Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. {Amplified} And when they arrived he said to them: You yourselves are well acquainted with my manner of living among you from the first day that I set foot in [the province of] Asia, and how I continued afterward, (19) Serving the Lord with all humility in tears and in the midst of adversity (affliction and trials) which befell me, due to the plots of the Jews [against me]; (20) How I did not shrink from telling you anything that was for your benefit and teaching you in public meetings and from house to house, (21) But constantly and earnestly I bore testimony both to Jews and Greeks, urging them to turn in repentance that is due] to God and to have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ that is due Him].

Acts 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void to offense toward God, and toward men. {Amplified} Therefore I always exercise and discipline myself [mortifying my body, deadening my carnal affections, bodily appetites, and worldly desires, endeavoring in all respects] to have a clear (unshaken, blameless) conscience, void of offense toward God and toward men.

1 Corinthians 4:16-17 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. (17) For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church. {Amplified} So I urge and implore you, be imitators of me. (17) For this very cause I sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and trustworthy child in the Lord, who will recall to your minds my methods of proceeding and course of conduct and way of life in Christ, such as I teach everywhere in each of the churches.

1 Corinthians 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. {Amplified} PATTERN YOURSELVES after me [follow my example], as I imitate and follow Christ (the Messiah).

Philippians 3:17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. {NASB} Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.

Philippians 4:9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. {Amplified} Practice what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and model your way of living on it, and the God of peace (of untroubled, undisturbed well-being) will be with you.

1 Thessalonians 1:5-6 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. (6) And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost. {NASB} for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and

with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. (6) You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

1 Thessalonians 2:8-12 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. (9) For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. (10) Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: (11) As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, (12) That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. {NASB} Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. (9) For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. (10) You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; (11) just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, (12) so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-4 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. (2) For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. (3) For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: (4) That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor; {Amplified} FURTHERMORE, BRETHREN, we beg and admonish you in [virtue of our union with] the Lord Jesus, that [you follow the instructions which] you learned from us about how you ought to walk so as to please and gratify God, as indeed you are doing, [and] that you do so even more and more abundantly [attaining yet greater perfection in living this life]. (2) For you know what charges and precepts we gave you [on the authority and by the inspiration of] the Lord Jesus. (3) For this is the will of God, that you should be consecrated (separated and set apart for pure and holy living): that you should abstain and shrink from all sexual vice, (4) That each one of you should know how to possess (control, manage) his own body in consecration (purity, separated from things profane) and honor.

{THE WORKS OF ARMINIUS / James Arminius}

I prove the proposition from the proper effect of the indwelling Spirit; for the Holy Spirit crucifies the flesh with its affections and lusts, mortifies the flesh and its deeds, subdues the flesh to Himself, and weakens the body of the flesh of sin: And He performs all these operations by his indwelling. Therefore, good dwelleth in the flesh of a regenerate man.

For a regenerate man not only wills that which is good, but he also performs it; because "it is God who worketh in" the regenerate "both to will and to do." (Phil. ii, 13.) And

"God hath prepared good works," that the regenerate "might walk in them;" or, "he hath created them in Christ Jesus unto good works." (Ephes. ii, 10.) They are "new creatures;" (2 Cor. v, 17) are endued with that "faith which worketh by love;" (Gal. v, 6) and to them is attributed the observance, or "keeping of the commandments of God;" (1 Cor. vii, 19;) they "do the will of God from the heart;" (Ephes. vi, 6) "have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which they were delivered." (Rom. vi, 17) etc, &c. From these observations, it is apparent that the particle "only" must be added to the proposition;

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

When the apostle says, to will is present with me, he shows that the will is on the side of God and truth, so far that it consents to the propriety and necessity of obedience. There has been a strange clamour raised up against this faculty of the soul, as if the very essence of evil dwelt in it; whereas the apostle shows, throughout this chapter, that the will was regularly on God's side, while every other faculty appears to have been in hostility to him. The truth is, men have confounded the will with the passions, and laid to the charge of the former what properly belongs to the latter. The will is right, but the passions are wrong.

{LEGAL EXPERIENCE / Lectures To Professing Christians / Charles G. Finney}

Here "to will" means to approve, for if men really will to do a thing, they do it. This every body knows. Where the language will admit, we are bound to interpret it so as to make it consistent with known facts. If you understand "to will" literally, you involve the apostle in the absurdity of saying that he willed what he did not do, and so acted contrary to his own will, which contradicts a notorious fact. The meaning must be desire. Then it coincides with the experience of every convicted sinner. He knows what he ought to do, and he strongly approves it, but he is not ready to do it. Suppose I were to call on you to do some act. Suppose, for instance, I were to call on those of you who are impenitent, to come forward and take that seat, that we might see who you are, and pray for you, and should show you your sins and that it is your duty to submit to God, some of you would exclaim, "I know it is my duty, and I greatly desire to do it, but I cannot." What do you mean by it? Why, simply, that on the whole, the balance of your will is on the other side.

{THE RANDALL HOUSE BIBLE COMMENTARY / F. Leroy Forlines}

The picture here is that of a person who is in utter defeat. I insist that this kind of defeat, which is set forth here, is inconsistent with what, the N.T. says about a saved person.

{ROBERTSON'S N. T. WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{In me} (en emoi). Paul explains this by "in my flesh" (en tî sarki mou), the unregenerate man "sold under Sin" of verse #14.

{No good thing} (ouk--agaqon). "Not absolutely good." this is not a complete view of man even in his unregenerate state as Paul at once shows.

{For to will is present with me} (to gar qelein parakeitai moi). Present middle indicative of parakeimai, old verb, to lie beside, at hand, with dative moi. Only here in N.T. {The wishing} is the better self, {the doing not} the lower self.

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

Paul acknowledges his own depravity. The reason nothing good dwells within his flesh is that he is still committed to selfishness, not that his flesh is innately sinful. He recognizes that he is sold out to sin. And since his heart and mind are still committed (reluctantly now) to gratifying the lusts of the flesh, there is no motive within him strong enough to change his direction to perform what he knows he ought.

The expression to will is present with me is not to be understood in the literal sense of actually choosing to do something. Here will is used in the popular sense of expressing "I wish or I desire" to do good. Paul wills or desires to do good, but is still unwilling to pay the price of the self-denial that good requires. In verse 15 and 19 Paul uses the word "would" to express his wish to do the right and shun the wrong, and it is in this sense he uses will in verse 18. I may wish or desire to take a vacation on a far-a-way island, but I will not to do it because I have pressing responsibilities.

Sinners often say that they cannot go to church or they cannot give up a bad habit, when they know they should. But what they mean is that they will not, because the leisure time, or the self-gratification derived from the bad habit is more important to them.

In the last century an often-used term among theologians was the "incipiency of the will," which means that man has the ability to originate his own actions, apart from any outside or inside influence. He can reject or accept a good influence, or acquiesce to or refuse a bad influence. It is imperative that we understand the difference between a causation and an influence. One may not have a particular result. Under causation we are certain to have a particular result. Causation refers to the physical realm, but influence is in the realm of moral action.

What is caused cannot be free, responsible or accountable, and what is free cannot be caused or it is not free. Since man has a mind capable of feelings and perceptions, he is free, accountable and responsible.

It is truly amazing that we even have to use the term "free will," since it is redundant. By nature, the faculty of violation implies freedom. Men intuitively know their wills are free. They may deny it in theory, but not in practice. When denied philosophically, the bottom line must be men do not want to accept responsibility for their actions. If free will is removed, then there is no such thing as morality.

Reason and conscience are arousing Paul to obey the law of God, but his flesh (his feelings, emotions and natural appetites) are influencing him not to obey. His wicked heart (purpose) is still committed to self-gratification, which prompts his will to choose to

direct his mind to stay on course. He wishes to change, he desires to change, but the price of change is too great.

We must understand that there was nothing within Paul's constitution causing him to sin. It remained his choice. Ultimately, even a slave chooses to obey his master. Granted, the alternatives are not attractive. It may mean a beating. It may even be at the risk of his life; but nevertheless, there remains the choice to disobey. Paul was a slave to sin (his own selfishness), but he was not yet willing to die to self.

Romans 7:19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

1 Corinthians 10:21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

James 3:10-12 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. (11) Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? (12) Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

{"ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL" / Paul's Epistle to the Romans / Harvey P. Amos}

Whoever claims that Paul represents himself as being a justified believer in these verses, need to review the Bible teaching of sin. In the light of the preceding verses, this verse should need very little comment. Virtually, Paul is saying, "For the good that I would preferably choose to do, I do not do because, deceived by a compelling influence." (James says, 4:17, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.") And again Paul is saying "But the evil which I would preferably not do, that I do anyway." (John says, John 3:4.) "For sin is the transgression of the law." In brief Paul is simply admitting, "I am committing sin."

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

But the evil which I would not] And here is equally decisive proof that the will is against, or opposed to evil. There is not a man in ten millions, who will carefully watch the operations of this faculty, that will find it opposed to good and obstinately attached to evil, as is generally supposed. Nay, it is found almost uniformly on God's side, while the whole sensual system is against him. - It is not the WILL that leads men astray; but the corrupt PASSIONS which oppose and oppress the will. It is truly astonishing into what endless mistakes men have fallen on this point, and what systems of divinity have been built on these mistakes. The will, this almost only friend to God in the human soul, has been slandered as God's worst enemy, and even by those who had the seventh chapter to the Romans before their eyes! Nay, it has been considered so fell a foe to God and goodness that it is bound in the adamantine chains of a dire necessity to do evil only; and the doctrine of will (absurdly called free will, as if will did not essentially imply what is free) has been considered one of the most destructive heresies. Let such persons put

themselves to school to their Bibles and to common sense.

We know that the eye has a power to discern objects, but without light this power is perfectly useless, and no object can be discerned by it. So, of the person represented here by the apostle, it is said, To will is present with me, to gar qelein parakeitai moi. To will is ever in readiness, it is ever at hand, it lies constantly before me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not; that is, the man is unregenerate, and he is seeking justification and holiness from the law. The law was never designed to give these-it gives the knowledge, not the cure of sin;

{ROBERTSON'S N. T.WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{But the evil which I would not} (alla ho ou qelw kakon). Incorporation of the antecedent into the relative clause, "what evil I do not wish." An extreme case of this practise of evil is seen in the drunkard or the dope-fiend.

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

For the good that I [flesh] do not: but the evil which I [mind] would not, that I [flesh] do.

He reiterates his dilemma. What a miserable man!

So many appeal to their own experience and the testimony of other "Christians" in interpreting these passages of Scripture in order to claim that this experience is universal in all believers. But notice that the language Paul uses does not describe the life of a Christian under strong temptation, occasionally lapsing into sin. The rhetoric depicts the complete dominion of sin. Since so many professing Christians of our generation do relate to this verse, no wonder that so few take the church seriously any longer. If we cannot have victory over our own sin, how can we ever hope to bring salvation to the world?

Romans 7:20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

1 Corinthians 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

My will is against it; my reason and conscience condemn it. But sin that dwelleth in me-the principle of sin, which has possessed itself of all my carnal appetites and passions, and thus subjects my reason and domineers over my soul. Thus I am in perpetual contradiction to myself. Two principles are continually contending in me for the mastery: my reason, on which the light of God shines, to show what is evil; and my passions, in which the principle of sin works, to bring forth fruit unto death.

{THE MOFFATT NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY / C. H. Dodd}

In verses 17 and 20 Paul is not meaning to shuffle out of responsibility for his actions by ascribing them to the alien power. What he wishes to show is how completely he is under the thralldom of sin - so completely that he sins against his wish. Yet all the time there is another part of him which rebels against this thralldom, the inner self, which is here characterized as the mind - or better, "reason," for the Greek word is the one current in this sense in the philosophers.

{LEGAL EXPERIENCE / Lectures To Professing Christians / Charles G. Finney}

Is that the habitual character and experience of a Christian? I admit that a Christian may fall so low that this language may apply to him; but if this is his general character, how does it differ from that of an impenitent sinner? If this is the habitual character of a Christian, there is not a word of truth in the scripture representations, that the saints are those who really obey God; for here is one called a Christian of whom it is said expressly that he never does obey.

{THE LAST CHECK TO ANTINOMIANISM / John Fletcher}

ARG. III. "The carnal man, whose cause we plead, says, Rom. vii, 20, 'If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me,' that is, in my unrenewed part: and therefore he might be an eminent, apostolic saint in his renewed part; and a carnal, wretched man, sold under sin, in his unrenewed part."

ANSWER.

1. The apostle, speaking there as a carnal, and yet awakened man, who has light enough to see his sinful habits, but not faith and resolution enough to overcome them; his meaning is evidently this: If I, as a carnal man, do what I, as an awakened man, would not; it is no more I that do it, that is, I do not do it according to my awakened conscience, for my conscience rises against my conduct: but it is sin that dwelleth in me; it is the tyrant sin, that has full possession of me, and minds the dictates of my conscience no more than an inexorable task master minds the cries of an oppressed slave.

2. If the pure love of God was shed abroad in St. Paul's heart and constrained him, he dwelt, in love, and of consequence in God. For St. John says, "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. He that is in you, is greater than he that is in the world." Now if God dwelt in Paul by his loving Spirit, it becomes our objectors to show that an indwelling God and indwelling sin are one and the same thing; or that the apostle had strangely altered his doctrine when he asked, with indignation, "What concord has Christ with Belial?" For if indwelling sin, the Belial within, was necessary to nestle with Christ in St. Paul's heart, and in the hearts of all believers, should not the apostle have rather cried out with admiration, "See how great is the concord between Christ and Belial! They are inseparable! They always live in the same heart together: and nothing ever parted them, but what parts man and wife, that is, death."

3. If a reluctance to serve the law of sin be a proof that we are holy as Paul was holy, is there not joy in heaven over the apostolic holiness of most robbers and murderers in the kingdom? Can they not sooner or later say, "With my mind, or conscience, I serve the law of God; but with my flesh the law of sin. How to perform what is good, I find not. I would be honest and loving if I could be so without denying myself; but I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me?"

For can any thing be stronger upon this head than the words of the inhuman princess, who, being at the point of committing murder, cried out, "My mind, [that is, my reason or conscience,] leads me to one thing, but my new, impetuous passion carries me to another, against my will. I see, I approve what is right, but I do what is criminal."

{THE RANDALL HOUSE BIBLE COMMENTARY / F. Leroy Forlines}

This is a clear picture of bondage to sin. There is no denial of responsibility for sin. This recognition of bondage to sin prepares a person to desire deliverance by outside help. That is his only hope.

{THE ROMAN SEVEN MAN / Bruce Moylan}

The Christian has sin living in him? Maybe this is why the Holy Spirit cannot fit in there (hint: you are not saved). Do these verses seem to lead one to believe that the person referenced here is not a Christian? Could it be that Paul was addressing the Romans and recounting his condition prior to salvation? If this person is a Christian, then the Christian experience is pathetic.

{ROBERTSON'S N. T.WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{It is no more I that do it} (ouketi egw katergazomai auto). Just as in verse #17, "no longer do I do it" (the real Ego, my better self), and yet there is responsibility and guilt for the struggle goes on.

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

Now if I [flesh] do that I [mind] would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Paul desires to do good, but sin has such a hold on him that he does not do what he should. There was a time when he delighted to do his master's service; but since he is no longer enthralled with doing the will of sin, but is doing it reluctantly, he poetically blames sin (the selfish life) that still reigns over his whole being.

Romans 7:21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

Matthew 12:30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me

scattereth

abroad.

{THE WORKS OF ARMINIUS / James Arminius}

But I wish to see it explained from the Scriptures, how such an assertion as this can be made with truth concerning a regenerate man who is placed under grace; for, in every passage, the sacred records seem to me to affirm the contrary.

{BENSON'S COMMENTARY / Joseph Benson}

that, when I would - When I incline and purpose to do good, evil is present with me - To prevent the execution of such a purpose. The expression, when I would do good, intimates that this inclination to do good was not permanent; it only arose on particular occasions. This is another feature of an unregenerate man; his inclinations and purposes to do good, and live to the glory of God, are only temporary.

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

The word nomov, law, in this verse, must be taken as implying any strong or confirmed habit, sunhqeia, as Hesychius renders it, under the influence of which the man generally acts; and in this sense the apostle most evidently uses it in chap. vii. 23.

{LEGAL EXPERIENCE / Lectures To Professing Christians / Charles G. Finney}

Here he speaks of the action of the carnal propensities, as being so constant and so prevalent that he calls it a "law."

{THE PEOPLE'S NEW TESTAMENT / B. W. Johnson}

I find then a law. It is then the law of our unregenerate state that, even if we would do good, and purpose to be better, evil will be present, and will be practiced.

{ROBERTSON'S N. T. WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{The law} (ton nomon). The principle already set forth (ara, accordingly) in verses #18,19. this is the way it works, but there is no surcease for the stings of conscience.

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

God explained to Cain, If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it (Genesis 4:7, RSV). Cain did have enough regard for the good to offer to God a sacrifice of his own crops which represented his best works. But Cain's best was not good enough because it was tainted by his own selfishness. If he had been willing to sacrifice his pride and do well by getting a lamb (typifying Christ) from his brother and sacrificing it, he would have been accepted. Cain could have mastered sin through faith in the blood sacrifice; but

alas, it mastered him. Sin was couching at the door of Paul's heart or will, ready to attack whenever Paul attempted to break from his prison. Whenever reason and conscience would begin to influence his will, selfishness and prideful Pharisaism would raise its fierce head and beat down his intelligence.

Romans 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

{"ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL" / Paul's Epistle to the Romans / Harvey P. Amos}

This verse has been grossly misinterpreted by some who have dogmatically concluded that "the inner man," as used here, refers to the regenerate, justified soul when actually it simply means only the rational part of man as distinct from his physical body. It is this rational part of man which can consciously delight in any kind of experience, good or evil . "Delight" is the translation of synedomai, literally meaning "I take pleasure with" (others) or "I delight with" (others). This is a hedonistic pleasure. In fact, the word "hedonist" is derived from hedomai the primary part of synedomai. In view of the willful activities to which Paul confesses in the preceding willful activities to which Paul confesses in the preceding verses, he certainly did not delight in keeping the spirit of the law, which would be absolutely essential if he were a justified believer. His delight, along with his peers, was not the delight the Psalmist advocated in Ps. 119:165 – "Great peace have they which love thy law; and nothing shall offend them." No, for so far this passage is devoid of any indication that Paul had peace of heart. His delight was to revel in the prestige he attained among his peers by keeping the letter of the law.

{THE WORKS OF ARMINIUS / James Arminius}

To the proposition, I reply, first, that the inward man is not the same as the new man or the regenerate, either from the etymology of the word, or from the usage of Scripture; and the inward man is not peculiar to the regenerate, but that it also belongs to the unregenerate. Secondly, that to delight in the law of God, or, rather, to find a sort of condelectation in the law of God after the inward man, is not a property peculiar to the regenerate and to those who are placed under grace, but that it appertains to a man placed under the law.

That man, who delights indeed in the law of God after the inward man, but who, with the law of his mind warring against the law of his members, not only cannot prevail against the latter, but is also conquered by it and brought into captivity under the law of sin, while the law of his mind fruitlessly contends against it, is an unregenerate man, and placed, not under grace, but under the law; Therefore, the man [described] in this passage is unregenerate, and placed, not under grace, but under the law;

{BENSON'S COMMENTARY / Joseph Benson}

For I delight in the law of God - On this verse, chiefly, rests the opinion that the apostle, in the latter part of this chapter, is describing the character of a regenerate man. Its votaries think they find in this verse all the marks of a Christian. In general they assert,

"to have our inward man, our mind, delighted in a conformity to him; it is to love God himself, to love to be like him in the inward man, having his law written on our hearts, which they say is the sum of all religion." This is not reasoning, it is mere assertion; it is not to be inferred from this passage, and is plainly contradicted by the context. All judicious commentators will allow, that if any passage of the Scriptures appears obscure or susceptible of two senses, it must be explained in a consistency with what precedes and follows, and that interpretation must be chosen which agrees best therewith. Therefore, though it be true, in the fullest sense, that the regenerated persons delight in the law of God after the inward man; yet, since the general scope of the paragraph, and the connection of this sentence with the context, show that Paul is here speaking of his unconverted state, our interpretation of it must be regulated by its connection with the whole passage. Those who maintain that Paul is here speaking of his state after his conversion, assert, that by the inward man is meant, the new man, or man of grace, spoken of Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10. Did the context lead to that sense, it might be admitted. But the general sense of the whole passage leads us to understand the expression of the rational part of man, in opposition to the animal, which is its usual signification, as has been shown by several authors.

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

I delight in the law of God after the inward man] Every Jew, and every unregenerate man, who receives the Old Testament as a revelation from God, must acknowledge the great purity, excellence and utility of its maxims, &c.; and without the mercy of God, can never be redeemed from the curse entailed upon him for his past transgressions. To say that the inward man means the regenerate part of the soul, is supportable by no argument. If it be said that it is impossible for an unregenerate man to delight in the law of God, the experience of millions contradicts the assertion.

So far, then, is it from being true that none but a REGENERATE man can delight in the law of God, we find that even a proud, unhumiliated PHARISEE can do it; and much more a poor sinner, who is humbled under a sense of his sin, and sees, in the light of God, not only the spirituality, but the excellence of the Divine law.

{LEGAL EXPERIENCE / Lectures To Professing Christians / Charles G. Finney}

Here is the great stumbling-block. Can it be said of an impenitent sinner that he "delights" in the law of God? I answer, yes. I know the expression is a strong one, but the apostle was using strong language all along, on both sides. It is no stronger language than the prophet Isaiah uses in chapter lviii. He was describing as wicked and rebellious a generation as ever lived. He says, "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." Yet he goes on to say of this very people, "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God; they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they TAKE DELIGHT in approaching to God." Here is one instance of impenitent sinners manifestly delighting in approaching to God. So in Ezekiel xxxiii. 32. "And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant

voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." The prophet had been telling how wicked they were. "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." Here were impenitent sinners, plainly enough, yet they loved to hear the eloquent prophet. How often do ungodly sinners delight in eloquent preaching or powerful reasoning, by some able minister! It is to them an intellectual feast. And sometimes they are so pleased with it, as really to think they love the word of God. This is consistent with entire depravity of heart and enmity against the true character of God. Nay, it sets their depravity in a stronger light, because they know and approve the right, and yet do the wrong.

{THE LAST CHECK TO ANTINOMIANISM / John Fletcher}

ARG. IV. "The man whose experience is described in Rom. vii, is said 'to delight in the law of God after the inward man, and to serve the law of God with the mind;' therefore he was partaker of apostolic holiness."

ANSWER. Does he not also say, "With the flesh I serve the law of sin?" And did not Medea say as much in her way before she imbrued her hands in innocent blood? What else could She mean when she cried out, "I see and approve with my mind what is right, though I do what is criminal?" Did not the Pharisees for a time "rejoice in the burning and shining light" of John the Baptist? And does not an evangelist inform us that Herod himself heard that man of God (hoewV) "with delight," and "did many things" too? Mark vi, 20. But is this a proof that either Medea, the Pharisees, or Herod had attained apostolic holiness?

{THE CHRISTIAN AND ROMANS 7 / Shem Peachey}

Some say that the expression, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man," cannot be the experience of an unregenerate man. Why not? The Scriptures show the opposite is true. Were not the Jews, scribes, Pharisees, and priests so zealous for the law of God that they crucified Jesus? Did not Jesus say, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe and do"? Jesus recognized their "delight" and authority in the law.

Paul was a "Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church ... righteousness ... in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:5-6). But because he knew only the law, and not Christ, he persecuted Christ (Acts 9:4) and His church. He was lost. Yet he "delighted in the law of God after the inward man." But his "inward man" was lost with the outer man. He was unregenerated. Jesus told His apostles that those who kill them, will think they are doing God service. So did Paul.

Indeed, the Jews were entitled to reverence the law and delight in it, but not to refuse the Gospel. In fact, verse 22 in its context fits a Jew, not a Christian. The Christian speaks of the Gospel rather than the law. This point is here emphasized because verse 22 has been a

stronghold for those who say Roman 7 represents the normal experience of a regenerate man. Let no one say that any more. The "I" in verse 22 is the same "I" as all the other "I's" in this chapter and they all represent the experience of the unregenerate man.

{ROBERTSON'S N. T.WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{For I delight in} (sunedomai gar). Old verb, here alone in N.T., with associative instrumental case, "I rejoice with the law of God after the inward man" (kata ton es" anqrwpon) of the conscience as opposed to "the outward man" (#2Co 4:16; Eph 3:16).

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

With his mind he delighted in the law. This expression is very appropriate to the Pharisees among whom Paul was a leader. They received and venerated the law as the oracles of God. They were convinced that it was true. It was regularly read and expounded in their synagogues. But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:14-18). Paul is describing life under the law, when he, like other Jews, was still blinded by his sin because he had not yet turned to the Lord. His eyes were yet fixed on the glory of the old. But the veil, though not yet taken away, was beginning to be lifted by Christ, who was revealing to him the spiritual meaning of the law and the greater glory of grace.

Churches today are filled with people like the Pharisees. They delight in hearing the Word of God, sitting under it and talking about it, but they continue to refuse to obey it. They are hearers of the Word, but not doers. They boast of their fundamentalism, claiming to believe that every word of God is inerrant and inspired, but they still refuse to live by it. They insist that Christ died for our sins, but refuse to die with Him. They dare not question that He rose from the grave, but refuse to rise with Him to a new life of righteousness. They claim it is impossible for them to live daily according to the moral precepts of the law even under grace. They have the audacity to take Paul's experience under the law and claim that is the best that the most mature Christian can hope to achieve in this life. They refuse to believe the truth. For unto this day they read the New Testament with a veil covering their hard hearts, while claiming to be Christ's seed. In fact, they even read the Old Covenant with the veil over their hearts, because they know not that it is their schoolmaster to bring them unto the true Christ, who would set them free from their sins, that the glory of God might be revealed in them through the Spirit of the Lord.

The prophet Isaiah cried against rebellious Israel: They seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God

(Isaiah 58:2). Hypocrites claim to know God and with their carnal minds delight in His ways, but refuse to obey.

{HALF HOURS WITH SAINT PAUL / Daniel Steele}

It is asserted that an unregenerate man cannot form a high moral ideals and contemplate them with delight. Some even account their admiration of virtue as a very good substitute for its presence. Isa. 58:1-4. Drunkards admire temperance, yet yield to the clamor of the alcoholic appetite; rakes admire purity and seek it in marriage, while they still visit "her whose house is the way to hell."

{WESLEY'S NOTES ON THE N. T. / John Wesley}

For I delight in the law of God - This is more than "I consent to," ver. 16. The day of liberty draws near. The inward man - Called the mind, ver. 23, 25.

Romans 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

James 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. {Amplified} Come close to God and He will come close to you. [Recognize that you are] sinners, get your soiled hands clean; [realize that you have been disloyal] wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts [of your spiritual adultery].

{BENSON'S COMMENTARY / Joseph Benson}

warring against the law of my mind - Against the dictates of my judgment and conscience, which conflict is spoken of Gal. 5; The flesh lusteth against the spirit, &c.; and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin:

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

But I see another law in my members] Though the person in question is less or more under the continual influence of reason and conscience, which offer constant testimony against sin, yet as long as help is sought only from the law, and the grace of Christ in the Gospel is not received, the remonstrances of reason and conscience are rendered of no effect by the prevalence of sinful passions; which, from repeated gratifications, have acquired all the force of habit, and now give law to the whole carnal man.

Bringing me into captivity to the law of sin] He does not here speak of an occasional advantage gained by sin, it was a complete and final victory gained by corruption; which, having stormed and reduced the city, carried away the inhabitants with irresistible force, into captivity. This is the consequence of being overcome; he was now in the hands of the foe as the victor's lawful captive; and this is the import of the original word, aicmalwtizonta, and is the very term used by our Lord when speaking of the final ruin,

dispersion, and captivity of the Jews. He says, aicmalwtisqhsontai, they shall be led away captives into all the nations, Luke xxi. 24. When all this is considered, who, in his right mind, can apply it to the holy soul of the apostle of the Gentiles? Is there any thing in it that can belong to his gracious state? Surely nothing. The basest slave of sin, who has any remaining checks of conscience, cannot be brought into a worse state than that described here by the apostle.

Sin and corruption have a final triumph; and conscience and reason are taken prisoners, laid in fetters, and sold for slaves. Can this ever be said of a man in whom the Spirit of God dwells, and whom the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made free from the law of sin and death? See chap. viii. 2.

{BORN SINFUL? / Theodore W. Elliot}

In Romans 7:17, 20 Paul very plainly states that he had come to a point where it was no longer him doing it, but sin having the upper hand. Originally, it was Paul that was the sole author of his sin. Paul continued, (21, 23) "I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good...but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members."

{THE PEOPLE'S NEW TESTAMENT / B. W. Johnson}

But I see another law in my members. One law of our being is the approval of righteousness; another is the inclination of the flesh to do evil. This law wars against the law of the mind, the conscience and will, and brings it into captivity. It prevails. Hence, unregenerate man is a captive. There is a struggle in the nature of man; of the "inward man," with the flesh, with the result of captivity of the soul.

{REFUTING POPULAR PSEUDO-BIBLICAL EXCUSES FOR SIN / J. Patrick Johnston}

Paul speaks of a "law of sin" in his members which dominates over the powerless wishes of his mind. What is this law of sin? It is described in Romans 6:16: that unto whom a man yields, he gives power to enslave him, whether of sin unto death or obedience unto righteousness. So, in essence, his "indwelling sin" is nothing but an evil character which he has manufactured himself by submitting to the desires of his flesh unlawfully his entire life and developing evil habits. Ultimately, Saul of Tarsus forged his own chains through a life-long habit of making selfish choices in the pursuit of self-gratification.

Galatians 5:24: And they that are Christ's have [past tense] crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Romans 6:6: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7. For he that is dead is freed from sin.

8. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him:

9. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over Him.

10. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God.

11. Likewise [in the same way] reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Just as Christ died for sin one time, and now lives unto God, so we should die to sin once for all, and then reckon ourselves dead to sin thereafter and henceforth live unto God.

John 8:34: Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant to sin....

36. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

If committing sin makes us servants to sin, what is implied in being set free from sin? Does it mean that we sin less? What kind of counterfeit emancipation is that? What would the black slaves have thought about Abraham Lincoln's "Emancipation Proclamation" in 1863 which abolished slavery in the Confederacy if it had actually decreed that the black slaves still had to serve their slavemasters, but only less?? Would they have considered that true emancipation, true liberty? No way! Jesus is the Great Emancipator! He came to set us free indeed! Those who are set free from sin do not commit sin. Whatever "indwelling sin" that mastered us as sinners, we are freed from as saints. Whether you call it the "body of sin", the "old man", or the "sinful nature", it is critical that we understand that the Scripture says it can be forever slain and buried with Christ in this life.

Some say that the inherent natural desires for self-preservation and self-gratification are evidence of the sinful nature. If this is true, then wild animals have a sinful nature. It cannot be. The involuntary biological desires that are inherent within man are not sinful in and of themselves, although they will be a means to temptation. This becomes evident when you consider that each of these involuntary desires can be lawfully fulfilled within the confines of God's law, in the will of God. For instance, the desire for sex is not sinful in and of itself, but can become a means to temptation and sin. This desire can be fulfilled in holy matrimony, so it cannot be literally sinful. A sinful desire could never be lawful and compatible with God's will.

However, should that natural, God-given desire be unlawfully gratified, it could be said to be a "sinful desire", but this could only be true in a metaphorical sense. Literally, the natural, God-given desire is innocent in and of itself; the sin consists in the choice to gratify that desire unlawfully.

In Romans 7:17, 20, and 23, Paul personifies sin as a tyrant which dwells inside him making him do what his mind does not want to do and preventing him from doing what his mind wants to do. He is the tyrant's prisoner. What he poetically refers to as "sin living in me" is simply his tendency to disobey, the power of habit, the force of his acquired evil nature. Although the flesh and the appetites thereof do appear to take on a power of their own when the lusts of the flesh are unrestrained, in reality, sin is not a substance or power in the sinner, but rather, sin is a choice of the individual to gratify himself unlawfully. Paul appears to describe an inability to obey, but literally he had not an inability to obey but an unwillingness to obey. A man does not forfeit his free will once he sins. The sinner can do what he should do during any given temptation. But as long as his heart is wicked, he cannot make a clean break with sin. It is impossible for him to obey as long as the "old man" lives. But it is within his power to repent and believe and in so doing, put that old man to death. The law was unable to put that old man to death and bury him forever, but the cross of Christ had the power to win the love of the sinner (including that hard-hearted Pharisee on the road to Damascus), and make him perfectly compliant with God's law.

{ROBERTSON'S N. T.WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{A different law} (heteron nomon). For the distinction between heteros and allos, see #Ga 1:6f.

{Warring against} (antistrateuomenon). Rare verb (_Xenophon_) to carry on a campaign against. Only here in N.T. {The law of my mind} (twi nomwi tou noos). The reflective intelligence Paul means by noos, "the inward man" of verse #22. It is this higher self that agrees that the law of God is good (#12,16,22). {Bringing me into captivity} (aichmal"tizonta). See on this late and vivid verb for capture and slavery #Lu 21:24; 2Co 10:5. Surely it is a tragic picture drawn by Paul with this outcome, "sold under Sin" (#14), "captivity to the law of Sin" (#23). The ancient writers (Plato, Ovid, Seneca, Epictetus) describe the same dual struggle in man between his conscience and his deeds.

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

What is the law of sin? For an answer, let us go back to Romans 6:16: Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or obedience unto righteousness? It is a law that, when one yields his will to sin, sin so captivates the mind that it no longer has the will to follow the dictates of conscience and reason.

The law of sin is related to the law of habit. Our selfish purpose gives birth to evil acts, our acts become bad habits, our habits develop into a corrupt, immoral character and our character determines our destiny, which is eternal death. Thus men forge their own chains of slavery, as they madly pursue a life of self-indulgence. With the passage of time they become more and more bound, until they die in their sins.

Of course the law of habit can work to our advantage. If we yield to the law of righteousness by making the right ultimate choice in life - to love God supremely and our neighbor equally - then our good thoughts become good acts, our acts develop into proper habits, our habits produce a righteous, virtuous character, so that we are destined for Heaven.

It is crucial that we understand that a morally-depraved life is obtained as the result of the wrong ultimate choice in life. Human beings were not designed to live supremely for their own happiness, but for the glory of God. Reason affirms that our neighbor's happiness is as important as our own. It is contrary to the nature of things for men to live self-centered lives. The egocentric individual has chosen slavery. The God-centered person chooses freedom.

{WHEDON'S COMMENTARY ON THE N. T. / D. D. Whedon}

Another law ‐ So uniform and controlling is the mastery of this sin = I, that it has the absoluteness of a law in my members, a law of sin. It is a rebel law warring against the law of my higher mind, namely, the divine law.

Romans 7:24 --O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

1 John 5:2-3 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. (3) For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

{THE WORKS OF ARMINIUS / James Arminius}

For the apostle attributes a body to sin in the sixth verse of the sixth chapter of this epistle: "Our old man is crucified with him, that The Body of Sin might be destroyed," the destruction of which is followed by a deliverance from the servitude of sin, as it is expressed in the same verse. The phrase also occurs in Col. ii, 11: "In putting off the Body of the Sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." Wherefore, according to this mode of reading it, the meaning of the exclamation is, "Who shall deliver me from this tyranny of sin, which, reigning in me and dwelling in my flesh, bringing me into captivity and subjecting me to itself, brings certain death to me?"

Wherefore, from the 24th verse, when rightly understood, I argue thus for the establishment of my own opinion: Those men who are placed under grace are not wretched; But this man is wretched; Therefore, this man is not placed under grace.

He who desires to be delivered from the body of this death, that is, from the dominion and tyranny of sin, is not placed under grace, but under the law. But this man desires to be delivered from the dominion and tyranny of sin; therefore, this man is not placed under grace, but under the law.

The proposition is true, because regenerate men, and those who are placed under grace, are free from the servitude and tyranny of sin.

{HOW TO OVERCOME SATAN'S DECEPTIONS / Catherine Booth}

Satan has succeeded in deceiving people regarding the standard of Christian living. He has gotten the church to receive what I call an "Oh, wretched man that I am" religion! He has gotten people to lower the standard that Jesus Christ established in the Bible. Jesus' standard is not only to be aimed at, but to be attained. His standard is victory over sin, the world, the flesh, and the Devil, a real, living, reigning, triumphing Christianity! (Note: I highly appreciate what the "Mother of the Salvation Army" has written here, but it would have been more accurate to have written "professing church," rather than "the church.")

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

We may naturally suppose that the cry of such a person would be, Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this dead body? And how well does this apply to the case of the person to whom the apostle refers! A body—a whole mass of sin and corruption, was bound to his soul with chains which he could not break; and the mortal contagion, transfused through his whole nature, was pressing him down to the bitter pains of an eternal death. He now finds that the law can afford him no deliverance; and he despairs of help from any human being; but while he is emitting his last, or almost expiring groan, the redemption by Christ Jesus is proclaimed to him; and, if the apostle refers to his own case, Ananias unexpectedly accosts him with—Brother Saul! the Lord Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way, hath sent me unto thee, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. He sees then an open door of hope, and he immediately, though but in the prospect of this deliverance, returns God thanks for the well-grounded hope which he has of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

{THE WESLEYAN BIBLE COMMENTARY / Wilber T. Dayton}

No, this is not the conclusion. Paul is looking back on the plight from the position of a born-again person. This was his plight under the law &—; in sin. This would still be his plight and ours but for redemption.

{THE MOFFATT NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY / C. H. Dodd}

That this condition of division and impotence is a miserable one, everybody knows. It is particularly miserable for a religious man, such as Paul was before his conversion. He recognized the ideal as God's law. He knew that only in communion with God was there any happiness or satisfaction for him. Without Him, he was dead. But there is no communion with God in a merely intellectual homage to His law, while all the impulses and desires are organized into a body of death. As Paul, in his vivid description, recalls his condition in the past, he is overcome with the poignant emotions of his despair: Miserable wretch that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

ARG. V. "The person who describes his unavailing struggles under the power of sin, cries out at last, Who shall deliver me, &c, and immediately expresses a hope of future deliverance, thanking God for it, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. vii, 24, 25. Does not this show that the carnal man sold under sin was a Christian believer, and, of consequence, Paul himself?"

ANSWER. This shows only that the man sold under sin, and groaning for evangelical liberty, is supported under his unhappy circumstances by a hope of deliverance; and that when the law, like a severe school master, has almost brought him to Jesus Christ; when he is come to the borders of Canaan, and "is not far from the kingdom of God and the city of refuge," he begins to look and long earnestly for Christ; and has at times comfortable hopes of deliverance through him. He has a faith that desires liberty, but not a faith that obtains it. He has a degree of the "faith to be healed," which is mentioned Acts xix, 9; but he has not yet the actually healing, prevailing faith, which St. John calls the victory, and which is accompanied with an internal witness that "Christ is formed in our hearts." It is absurd to confound the carnal man who struggles into Christ and liberty, saying, "Who shall deliver me," &c, with the spiritual man who is come to Christ, stands in his redeeming power, and witnesses that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made him free from the law of sin and death." The one may say, in his hopeful moments, "I thank God, I shall have the victory, through Jesus Christ:" but the other can say, "I have it now. Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord," 1 Cor. xv, 67. The one wishes for, and the other enjoys liberty: the one has ineffectual desires, and the other has victorious habits. Such is the contrast between the carnal penitent described in Rom. vii, 14, and the obedient believer described in Rom. viii. "There is a great difference," says the Rev. Mr. Whitefield, "between good desires and good habits."

Many have the one who never attain the other." Many come up to the experience of a carnal penitent, who never attain the experience of an obedient believer. "Many have good desires to subdue sin, and yet, resting in those good desires, sin has always had the dominion over them;" with the flesh they have always served the law of sin. "A person sick of a fever may desire to be in health, but that desire is not health itself." (Whitefield's Works, vol. iv, page 7.) If the Calvinists would do justice to this important distinction, they would soon drop the argument which I answer, and the yoke of carnality which they try to fix upon St. Paul's neck.

What I say of St. Augustine may be said of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield. Before he had embraced St. Augustine's mistakes, which are known among us by the name of "Calvinism," he believed, as well as that father, that the disconsolate man who groans, Who shall deliver me? is not a possessor but a seeker of Christian liberty. To prove it, I need only transcribe the latter part of his sermon, entitled, The Marks of the New Birth:

"Thirdly," says he, "I address myself to those who are under the drawings of the Father, and are going through the Spirit of bondage; but, not finding the marks [of the new birth]

before mentioned, are ever crying out, [as the carnal penitent, Rom. vii,] Who shall deliver us from the body of this death? Despair not: for, notwithstanding your present trouble, it may be the Divine pleasure to give you the kingdom." Hence it appears that Mr. Whitefield did not look upon such mourners as Christian believers; but only as persons who might become such if they earnestly sought. He therefore most judiciously exhorts them to seek till they find. "The grace of God, through Jesus Christ," adds he, "is able to deliver you, and give you what you want; even you may receive the Spirit of adoption, the promise of the Father. All things are possible with him; persevere, therefore, in seeking, and determine to find no rest in your spirit, till you know and feel that you are thus born again from above, and God's Spirit witnesses with your spirits that you are the children of God."

{THE RANDALL HOUSE BIBLE COMMENTARY / F. Leroy Forlines}

It is obvious that the death referred to in 7:24 and the other occurrences in 7:7-25 is not the death believers died in Christ either to sin or to the law. To have died to sin with Christ or to the law is good. The death in 7:7-25 is bad.

If death in v. 24 is a reference to the penalty for sin, the case is settled on the side of understanding Paul to be talking about an unregenerate person.

{REFUTING POPULAR PSEUDO-BIBLICAL EXCUSES FOR SIN / J. Patrick Johnston}

The man described at the end of Romans 7 had a wicked character and sinful habits that dominated him; yet to be crucified with Christ. Therefore, he served sin. He cried in desperation, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" The "body of death" is synonymous with the "old man" and the "body of sin" mentioned in Romans 6. "Who shall deliver me from sin's dominion?", "Who shall give me victory in this war?", "Who shall save me from this cruel slavemaster?", he cried. Then he answered his own question, "Jesus Christ!" (verse 25a). Christ is able to do what the law could not do! When Saul of Tarsus turned to Christ and was born again and became Paul, the sinful man died with Christ, was buried, and the new man resurrected to walk in newness of life. Then he stepped out from underneath the condemnation of the law so prevalent in the conscience of this man described at the end of Romans 7 into the life of the Spirit mentioned in Romans 8.

{THE IVP BIBLE BACKGROUND COMMENTARY / Craig Keener}

"Wretched man that I am!" was a standard cry of despair, mourning or self-reproach; some philosophers complained that this was their state, imprisoned in a mortal body. When they spoke of being freed from their mortal bodies, however, they meant that they would be freed simply by death; Paul's freedom came by death with Christ (6:1-11).

{THE ROMAN SEVEN MAN / Bruce Moylan}

Again we can make the point that the person being referenced in this chapter is not a Christian. Are Christians wretched? Are we to be rescued, or have we already been rescued? Who is supposed to do the rescuing after Christ has already done so?

{ROBERTSON'S N. T. WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{O wretched man that I am} (talaipwros eg" anqrwpos). "Wretched man I." Old adjective from tlaw, to bear, and pwros, a callus. In N.T. only here and #Re 3:17. "A heart-rending cry from the depths of despair" (Sanday and Headlam).

{Out of the body of this death} (ek tou swmatos tou qanatou toutou). So the order of words demands. See verse #13 for "death" which finds a lodgment in the body (Lightfoot). If one feels that Paul has exaggerated his own condition, he has only to recall #1Ti 1:15 when he describes himself a chief of sinners. He dealt too honestly with himself for Pharisaic complacency to live long.

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

This is a contemptible and despicable man, who sold himself to the slavery of sin. Now he has realized what a hard taskmaster he has been serving, one who has enslaved him to serve the lust of the flesh. Despite his best resolutions to keep God's law, he remains a captive to the law of sin which is in his members. He has come to the end of himself, recognizing the utter futility in trying to set himself free from this living death. Who can help him? Paul must have been pondering his woeful condition and considering this profound question on the road to Damascus when, suddenly, the Lord appeared unto him as his Answer and Deliverer:

{WESLEY'S NOTES ON THE N. T. / John Wesley}

Wretched man that I am - The struggle is now come to the height; and the man, finding there is no help in himself, begins almost unawares to pray, Who shall deliver me? He then seeks and looks for deliverance, till God in Christ appears to answer his question. The word which we translate deliver, implies force. And indeed without this there can be no deliverance.

The body of this death - That is, this body of death; this mass of sin, leading to death eternal, and cleaving as close to me as my body to my soul. We may observe, the deliverance is not wrought yet.

{WHEDON'S COMMENTARY ON THE N. T. / D. D. Whedon}

Oh wretched ...I – Down to even this despairing cry, and in it, the duplication of the self appears in the I makes a convulsive effort to fling off this body at once of sin and of death, yet feels the impossibility without help from without. For this body of death is myself!

This death ‐ When we interpret the body of this death to be the old man, the carnal self producing this death, we bring out the completion and final point of the answer to the question at verse 13. It was not the law that produced the death herein depicted, but sin.

Romans 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

1 Corinthians 15:57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. {NASB} But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.

Colossians 1:12-13 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: (13) Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: {Amplified} Giving thanks to the Father, Who has qualified and made us fit to share the portion which is the inheritance of the saints (God's holy people) in the Light. (13) [The Father] has delivered and drawn us to Himself out of the control and the dominion of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

1 Thessalonians 5:15-23 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. (16) Rejoice evermore. (17) Pray without ceasing. (18) In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. (19) Quench not the Spirit. (20) Despise not prophesyings. (21) Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. (22) Abstain from all appearance of evil. (23) And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 John 3:3-10 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. (4) Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. (5) And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. (6) Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. (7) Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. (8) He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (9) Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (10) In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. {Amplified} (3) And everyone who has this hope [resting] on Him cleanses (purifies) himself just as He is pure (chaste, undefiled, guiltless). (4) Everyone who commits

(practices) sin is guilty of lawlessness; for [that is what] sin is, lawlessness (the breaking, violating of God's law by transgression or neglect--being unrestrained and unregulated by His commands and His will). {NASB} (5) You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. (6) No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. {Amplified} (7) Boys (lads), let no one deceive and lead you astray. He who practices righteousness [who is upright, conforming to the divine will in purpose, thought, and action, living a consistently conscientious life] is righteous, even as He is righteous. (8) [But] he who commits sin [who practices evildoing] is of the devil [takes his character from the evil one], for the devil has sinned (violated the divine law) from the beginning. The reason the Son of God was made manifest (visible) was to undo (destroy, loosen, and dissolve) the works the devil [has done]. {NASB} (9) No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. {Amplified} (10) By this it is made clear who take their nature from God and are His children and who take their nature from the devil and are his children: no one who does not practice righteousness [who does not conform to God's will in purpose, thought, and action] is of God; neither is anyone who does not love his brother (his fellow believer in Christ).

1 John 5:4-5 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. (5) Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? {Amplified 4-5} For whatever is born of God is victorious over the world; and this is the victory that conquers the world, even our faith. (5) Who is it that is victorious over [that conquers] the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God [who adheres to, trusts in, and relies on that fact]?

1 John 5:18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. {Amplified} We know [absolutely] that anyone born of God does not [deliberately and knowingly] practice committing sin, but the One Who was begotten of God carefully watches over and protects him [Christ's divine presence within him preserves him against the evil], and the wicked one does not lay hold (get a grip) on him or touch [him].

Matthew 6:21-24 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (22) The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. (23) But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! (24) No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Galatians 5:16-18 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. (17) For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. (18) But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

{THE WORKS OF ARMINIUS / James Arminius}

But this clause contains a thanksgiving, in which St. Paul returns thanks to God that he, in his own person, has been delivered from this body of sin, about which he had been treating, and to which that man was liable whose character he was then personating.

In the latter part of the same verse, is something resembling a brief recapitulation of all that had been previously spoken, in which the state of the man about whom the apostle is here treating, is briefly defined and described in the following words: "So then, with the mind, I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin."

{BENSON'S COMMENTARY / Joseph Benson}

I thank God, &c. - As if he had said, I bemoan myself as above, when I think only of the Mosaic law, the discoveries it makes, the motives it suggests, and the circumstances in which it leaves the offender: but in the midst of this gloom of distress and anguish, a sight of the gospel revives my heart, and I cry out, as in a kind of rapture, as soon as I turn my eyes, and behold the display of mercy and grace made in it. So then - He here sums up the whole, and concludes what he had begun, verse 7. I myself - Or rather, that I (the man whom I am personating,).

{CLARKE'S COMMENTARY / Adam Clarke}

I thank God through Jesus Christ; this is an answer to the almost despairing question in the preceding verse. The whole, therefore, may be read thus: O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? ANSWER-The grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus we find that a case of the kind described by the apostle in the preceding verses, whether it were his own, before he was brought to the knowledge of Christ, particularly during the three days that he was at Damascus, without being able to eat or drink, in deep penitential sorrow; or whether he personates a pharisaic yet conscientious Jew, deeply concerned for his salvation: I say, we find that such a case can be relieved by the Gospel of Christ only; or, in other words, that no scheme of redemption can be effectual to the salvation of any soul, whether Jew or Gentile, but that laid down in the Gospel of Christ.

So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God] That this clause contains the inference from the preceding train of argumentation appears evident, from the *ara oun*, therefore, with which the apostle introduces it. As if he had said: "To conclude, the sum of what I have advanced, concerning the power of sin in the carnal man, and the utter insufficiency of all human means and legal observances to pardon sin and expel the corruption of the heart, is this: that the very same person, the *autov egw*, the same I, while without the Gospel, under the killing power of the law, will find in himself two opposite principles, the one subscribing to and approving the law of God; and the other, notwithstanding, bringing him into captivity to sin: his inward man-his rational powers and conscience, will assent to the justice and propriety of the requisitions of the law; and yet, notwithstanding this, his fleshly appetites-the law in his members, will war against the law of his mind, and continue, till he receives the Gospel of Christ, to keep him in the

galling captivity of sin and death."

1. THE strong expressions in this clause have led many to conclude that the apostle himself, in his regenerated state, is indisputably the person intended. That all that is said in this chapter of the carnal man, sold under sin, did apply to Saul of Tarsus, no man can doubt: that what is here said can ever be with propriety applied to Paul the Apostle, who can believe? Of the former, all is natural; of the latter, all here said would be monstrous and absurd, if not blasphemous.

2. But it is supposed that the words must be understood as implying a regenerate man, because the apostle says, Romans vii. 22, I delight in the law of God; and in this verse, I myself with the mind serve the law of God.

These things, say the objectors, cannot be spoken of a wicked Jew, but of a regenerate man such as the apostle then was. But when we find that the former verse speaks of a man who is brought into captivity to the law of sin and death, surely there is no part of the regenerate state of the apostle to which the words can possibly apply. Had he been in captivity to the law of sin and death, after his conversion to Christianity, what did he gain by that conversion? Nothing for his personal holiness. He had found no salvation under an inefficient law; and he was left in thralldom under an equally inefficient Gospel. The very genius of Christianity demonstrates that nothing like this can, with any propriety, be spoken of a genuine Christian.

3. But it is farther supposed that these things cannot be spoken of a proud or wicked Jew; yet we learn the contrary from the infallible testimony of the word of God. Of this people in their fallen and iniquitous state, God says, by his prophet, They SEEK me DAILY, and DELIGHT to know my ways, as a nation that did RIGHTEOUSNESS, and FORSOOK not the ORDINANCES of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of JUSTICE, and TAKE DELIGHT in approaching to God, Isa. lviii. 2. Can any thing be stronger than this? And yet, at that time, they were most dreadfully carnal, and sold under sin, as the rest of that chapter proves. It is a most notorious fact, that how little soever the life of a Jew was conformed to the law of his God, he notwithstanding professed the highest esteem for it, and gloried in it: and the apostle says nothing stronger of them in this chapter than their conduct and profession verify to the present day. They are still delighting in the law of God, after the inward man; with their mind serving the law of God; asking for the ordinances of justice, seeking God daily, and taking delight in approaching to God; they even glory, and greatly exult and glory, in the Divine original and excellency of their LAW; and all this while they are most abominably carnal, sold under sin, and brought into the most degrading captivity to the law of sin and death. If then all that the apostle states of the person in question be true of the Jews, through the whole period of their history, even to the present time; if they do in all their prove that he, as a Christian and an apostle, had a widely different experience; an experience which amply justifies that superiority which he attributes to the Christian religion over the Jewish; and demonstrates that it not only is well calculated to perfect all preceding dispensations, but that it affords salvation to the uttermost to all those who flee for refuge to the hope that it sets before them. Besides, there is nothing spoken here of the state of a

conscientious Jew, or of St. Paul in his Jewish state, that is not true of every genuine penitent; even before, and it may be, long before, he has believed in Christ to the saving of his soul. The assertion that "every Christian, howsoever advanced in the Divine life, will and must feel all this inward conflict," &c., is as untrue as it is dangerous. That many, called Christians, and probably sincere, do feel all this, may be readily granted; and such we must consider to be in the same state with Saul of Tarsus, previously to his conversion; but that they must continue thus is no where intimated in the Gospel of Christ. We must take heed how we make our experience, which is the result of our unbelief and unfaithfulness, the standard for the people of God, and lower down Christianity to our most reprehensible and dwarfish state: at the same time, we should not be discouraged at what we thus feel, but apply to God, through Christ, as Paul did; and then we shall soon be able, with him, to declare, to the eternal glory of God's grace, that the law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, has made us free from the law of sin and death. This is the inheritance of God's children; and their salvation is of me, saith the Lord. professions and their religious services, which they zealously maintain, confess, and conscientiously too, that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good; and yet, with their flesh, serve the law of sin; the same certainly may be said with equal propriety of a Jewish penitent, deeply convinced of his lost estate, and the total insufficiency of his legal observances to deliver him from his body of sin and death. And consequently, all this may be said of Paul the JEW, while going about to establish his own righteousness-his own plan of justification; he had not as yet submitted to the righteousness of God-the Divine plan of redemption by Jesus Christ.

4. It must be allowed that, whatever was the experience of so eminent a man, Christian, and apostle, as St. Paul, it must be a very proper standard of Christianity. And if we are to take what is here said as his experience as a Christian, it would be presumption in us to expect to go higher; for he certainly had pushed the principles of his religion to their utmost consequences. But his whole life, and the account which he immediately gives of himself in the succeeding chapter,

{THE WESLEYAN BIBLE COMMENTARY / Wilber T. Dayton}

But it all is changed. With deep feeling he says, I thank God through Jesus Christ. How wonderful to be saved from this living death! But one must not miss the point of the chapter. The generalization is that one striving under law, apart from saving grace, finds neither justification nor sanctification. He finds only frustration and misery. He must admit, So then I of myself with the mind, indeed, serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

{THE MOFFATT NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY / C. H. Dodd}

Verse 25b, which follows here in Moffatt's version, re-states the same conclusion in slightly different words: Thus, left to myself, I serve the law of God with my reason, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. All our MSS. of Paul's epistles give the verse after 24-25a, but Dr. Moffatt is surely right in saying that its logical position is before the climax of verse 24. For it is scarcely conceivable that, after giving thanks to God for

deliverance, Paul should describe himself as being in exactly the same position as before

{LEGAL EXPERIENCE / Lectures To Professing Christians / Charles G. Finney}

Here the words, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord," are plainly a parenthesis, and brake in upon the train of thought. Then he sums up the whole matter, "So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."

It is as if he had said, My better self, my unbiased judgment, my conscience, approves the law of God; but the law in my members, my passions, have such a control over me that I still disobey. Remember, the apostle was describing the habitual character of one who was wholly under the dominion of sin. It was irrelevant to his purpose to adduce the experience of a Christian. He was vindicating the law, and therefore it was necessary for him to take the case of one who was under the law. If it is Christian experience, he was reasoning against himself, for if it is Christian experience, this would prove, not only that the law is inefficacious for the subduing of passion and the sanctification of men, but that the gospel also is inefficacious. Christians are under grace, and it is irrelevant, in vindicating the law, to adduce the experience of those who are not under the law, but under grace.

Another conclusive reason is, that he here actually states the case of a believer, as entirely different. In verses 4 and 6, he speaks of those who are not under law and not in the flesh, that is, not carnal, but delivered from the law, and actually serving, or obeying God, in spirit.

Then, in the beginning of the 8th chapter, he goes on to say, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death." He had alluded to this in the parenthesis above, "I thank God," &c. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Who is this, of whom he is now speaking? If the person in the last chapter was one who had a Christian experience, whose experience is this? Here is something entirely different. The other was wholly under the power of sin, and under the law, and while he knew his duty, never did it. Here we find one for whom what the law could not do, through the power of passion, the gospel has done, so that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled, or what the law requires is obeyed. "For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace: because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." There it is. Those whom he had described in the 7th chapter, as being carnal, cannot please God. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." But here is an individual whose body is dead.

Before, the body had the control, and dragged him away from duty and from salvation; but now the power of passion is subdued.

{THANKS FOR GOSPEL VICTORY / The Oberlin Evangelist 1-30-1856 / Charles G. Finney}

Our text gives us the true and only remedy. God in Christ is the only efficient and all-sufficient power to reach and remedy this direst of all things, sin. Everywhere else in the Bible, the condition of this victory over sin is declared to be faith in Jesus Christ. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith." Without faith the gospel never takes effect in us.

A conscious victory over ourselves and sin is the only evidence of a saving change. An apparent victory is the only evidence to others of our being savingly changed. This victory consists in being saved from sin, and in becoming like God. Nothing less than this is real salvation.

Love revealed to faith is the power of God unto salvation. The love of God revealed to faith, is the power of God to bring the soul out of its bondage.

None can appreciate our texts, and other passages of this class, except those who have had experience. "Thanks to God," cries Paul, "who giveth us the victory;" -- a song in which none can truly join but those who have gained this victory, and know its power and blessedness. What can an impenitent man know of such emotions? What can he say? Can he thank God for victory of which he knows and experiences nothing? No; he has been only vanquished, and Satan sings the peans of victory over the ruin of his soul. Many professed Christians spend their time and breath in brooding over their great weakness, talking it over, praying about it, and discouraging themselves and others as if the Lord were a hard master, who imposed heavy tasks and allowed only the least possible amount of grace to help His children perform them. Yet they do not usually quite despair of help in themselves; do not cease from legal efforts; are not dead to this class of efforts, as those who have utterly renounced them, and who trust in Christ alone. They still think they shall gain the victory by some work which they shall do in themselves. By efforts made without faith, they hope to get faith, and so work out their own righteousness. But it is only when self is really despaired of, that deliverance comes. When you see a sinner on the verge of despair in himself, then you may know he is near the kingdom of grace and mercy. When he has done everything he can do in himself, to save himself, and is compelled to despair of doing anything more, then he is ready to trust in Jesus. Who of us has not seen this experience in others, and felt it in ourselves? At first we thought we could get religion with little effort; we started off self-righteously, made some ineffectual struggles to pray, and soon learned that our case was far worse than we had supposed.

{THE RANDALL HOUSE BIBLE COMMENTARY / F. Leroy Forlines}

It is quite clear that the deliverance referred to in v. 25a is the deliverance from the penalty and power of sin. If so, regardless of the fact that the next words read, "So then

with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin," they must be understood as referring to that which is chronologically prior to the recognition of Christ as the deliverer, not a state remaining after the recognition of Christ as Lord and Savior.

It is quite clear that v. 25b is a brief summation of what is said in vv. 14-24. On the basis of reasons already given it is insisted that vv. 14-24 speak of an unregenerate person.

{THE PEOPLE'S NEW TESTAMENT / B. W. Johnson}

I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him the deliverance comes. So then with the mind I myself. I myself, that is, by myself and without Christ. In that state of mind delights in the law of God (verse 22), but the flesh is devoted to the service of sin. Hence the struggle, the captivity, the bondage, the cry for deliverance. Hence the failure of the law to deliver, and the need of Christ.

One of the best comments on the whole passage is Gal. 5:16-18: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh; for the desire of the flesh fights against the Spirit, and the desire of the Spirit against the flesh, for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would. But if ye are led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."

{THE IVP BIBLE BACKGROUND COMMENTARY / Craig Keener}

Paul summarizes 7:7-24 here: the dual allegiance of the person trying to achieve righteousness only by human effort, without becoming a new creation in Christ.

{ARE MEN BORN SINNERS? / A. T. Overstreet}

Many Christians have stumbled over the last part of verse 25, which says "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" and have concluded that after all the Apostle had said about being delivered through our Lord Jesus Christ, that he was still in bondage to sin. But the last part of this verse is merely his summing up of all he had said before about the bondage of the convicted sinner who is struggling to keep the righteousness of a spiritual law without Christ. This is a recapitulation to emphasize one more time that, without the deliverance that comes through the Lord Jesus Christ, the sinner will forever remain a slave to his fleshly lusts. He may be convicted by the law, he may see the exceeding sinfulness of his sins, he may make resolutions in his mind to do what is good and right, but he will forever remain a slave to his fleshly lusts unless delivered from sin by our Lord Jesus Christ.

{ROBERTSON'S N. T.WORD PICTURES / A. T. Robertson}

{I thank God} (caris twi qewi). "Thanks to God." Note of victory over death through Jesus Christ our Lord." {So qen I myself} (ara oun autos egw). His whole self in his unregenerate state gives a divided service as he has already shown above. In #6:1-7:6

Paul proved the obligation to be sanctified. In #7:7-8:11 he discusses the possibility of sanctification, only for the renewed man by the help of the Holy Spirit.

{WALKING IN THE SPIRIT / George E. (Jed) Smock}

25a Through Jesus Christ there is freedom from this body of death. Romans 6:6-7 says, Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with [Christ], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Yet, Paul is still very much alive to sin in Romans 7, verses 7-24. Why? Because he had not yet been crucified with Christ - he had not yet reckoned himself to be dead unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The body of sin and death had to be destroyed; to merely subdue or subject it is not enough. Paul, in his most vigorous efforts under the law, could not get the job done. Only by submitting his will to God, through faith in Jesus Christ, could the victory be achieved.

The body of sin and death is our natural appetites committed to self-indulgence. The body itself is morally neutral. The body of the unconverted person, under the law, is the instrument of sin. The body of the Christian, under grace, becomes an instrument of righteousness. Christians do not have a body of sin and death. We have a body of righteousness and eternal life.

25b The final sentence of this chapter reiterates the experience Paul expounded in verse 5 and verses 7-24: his will was devoted to gratifying his lower appetites. He was not governed by his mind; he was not governed by his intelligence; he was not governed by the law of reason; he was not yet governed by his spirit, submitted to the Spirit of Truth - but he was still governed by his own selfish, carnal desires. He had believed the lie that righteousness came by the law. Nevertheless he had become awakened from the slumber of self-righteous hopes under the law to see his sinful, condemned and perilous state. A great warfare raged between the mind and the flesh, between what he knew he ought to do and what he did. Sin, definitely, still had control; yet he was fighting to break from his bondage.

Paul taught in Romans 5, Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of glory of God. Paul clearly considered peace, joy and hope to be the fruit of justification (forgiveness of sins). But there is no peace, joy or hope in Romans chapter 7.

Paul's purpose in Chapter 7 has been to prove that there is no power in the law to set us free from the dominion of sin, even for those who are struggling with their best human efforts. If we are to understand that this passage represents his best experience under grace, then we would have to conclude that grace in this present life is no more advantageous than the law. Teachers who claim Romans 7 is a Christian life are trying to

put Christians back under the law. These teachers are, in fact, legalists! Why do they tempt God by trying to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear (Acts 15:10)? Romans 7 was an unbearable ordeal for Paul, much worse than any of his suffering for the cause of Christ. May it never be said that this is Christianity!

{HALF HOURS WITH SAINT PAUL / Daniel Steele}

Some who wish to adopt our interpretation are perplexed by the last verse of the chapter. If the two sentences of the verse were interchanged they would be relieved. But, in the present order, the doctrine seems to be taught that after victory, "through Jesus Christ our Lord," there is a lapse into the old struggle. Not so. The last sentence of the chapter is an epitome of the whole struggle between the "mind," or moral reason, and the flesh.

{WESLEY'S NOTES ON THE N. T. / John Wesley}

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord - That is, God will deliver me through Christ. But the apostle, as his frequent manner is, beautifully interweaves his assertion with thanksgiving; the hymn of praise answering in a manner to the voice of sorrow, "Wretched man that I am!"

So then - He here sums up the whole, and concludes what he began, ver. 7.

I myself - Or rather that I, the person whom I am personating, till this deliverance is wrought.

Serve the law of God with my mind - My reason and conscience declare for God.

But with my flesh the law of sin - But my corrupt passions and appetites still rebel. The man is now utterly weary of his bondage, and upon the brink of liberty

{WHEDON'S COMMENTARY ON THE N. T. / D. D. Whedon}

I thank ... through Jesus Christ – Of course this verse declares that Christ was the deliverer from this carnal and deadly incubus. We can either insert "I am delivered" before through, or may imagine that the deliverance has already taken place as soon as the cry is uttered, and this verse is the rapturous burst of gratitude.

So then – This is the summing up of the discord within the struggling in his convicted law state, and prepares by contrast for the sweet harmony that follows in the next chapter. There was once a false harmony by the complete and quite predominance of carnality; the Spirit, revealing the law, produced the discord; the Spirit, through Christ, subduing sin, bestows a harmony divine; and this harmony peals forth in a paean in the opening of the next chapter.

Final Remark of Roman 7 From Various Commentators

{"ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL" / Paul's Epistle to the Romans / Harvey P. Amos}

In the remaining verses (14-25) of this chapter, to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of depending on keeping the letter of the law to justify him before God, Paul presents himself as the classic example of a deluded, legalistic Jew in the grip of subtle sin. It has been carefully observed by many Bible scholars that in these verses Paul abruptly shifts from the past tense to the present tense. The Calvinists find no difficulty in this shift, for they simply use it as evidence that Paul was a sinning, justified believer at the time he wrote this epistle, thus substantiating the same concept they have of 3:10-18.

Consequently some Arminians have a bit of difficulty refuting the eternal security concept of the Calvinists in this passage while they are trying to convince themselves that what the Calvinists call committed sins are ONLY evidences of original sin remaining in the heart of the initially justified believer. Yet, using skillful mental gymnastics, they arrive at the "indisputable" conclusion that Paul is referring to himself as a justified believer, dead to Sin - not serving Sin - not committing sin, but seeking destruction of the dethroned sinful nature - dethroned Sin. Then too, these same Arminians have somewhat of a problem reconciling the "justified," unhappy, distressed, defeated Paul of this passage with the same justified, peaceful, victorious Paul of 5:1 ("Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"). Is dethroned Sin an act or an evil principle? In these verses is Paul referring to any evil activities or ONLY to evidences of evil activities? Are Paul's admissions, admissions of guilt? Or, are they admissions that he might become guilty? Is his use of the present tense referring to his spiritual experience at the time he wrote this epistle? Or, is he referring to his past life as if he were back there involved in self-righteous, legalistic practices? There is an old dramatic practice called historical present tense by which a speaker or writer takes his hearers or readers back with him in their thinking to things that are history. In his gospel, Mark uses this practice copiously. One who gives honest, intelligent consideration to this passage can hardly do other than conclude that Paul is using the historical present tense.

{ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS / Joseph Agar Beet}

Does Romans 7:14-25 describe a JUSTIFIED man, or one STILL UNFORGIVEN? The latter view was held by Origen, the earliest Christian commentator, and by the Greek fathers generally: the former, by Augustine and the Latin fathers generally. It was received in the West during the middle ages, and by the Reformers; and has been held in our day by most who have accepted Calvin's teaching on predestination. Among those who reject this teaching, the view of the Greek fathers prevails. It is worthy of note that this is the earlier opinion, and was accepted by nearly all who spoke as their mother-tongue the language in which this epistle was written.

That in Romans 7:14-25 Paul describes his own experience before justification, I hold for the following reasons.

In Romans 7:9-11 we saw a great and sad change take place in Paul, a change from life to

death. This change is described in order to explain the condition described in Romans 7:5. But in Romans 7:6, as in Romans 6:22; 8:2; Ephesians 2:5, 6, and elsewhere, we read of a subsequent change, as glorious as the earlier one was sad, wrought in Paul and his readers by the power of God, a transition from bondage to liberty, from death to life. Paul is now dead to sin, set free from its service, and dead to the Law which formerly bound him to a cruel master. The second change must be located between Romans 7:13, which gives the purpose of the first change, and Romans 8:1, 2, which describes the state of those who enjoy the second. And, since Romans 7:14-25 deal evidently with one subject, we must put the second change either between Romans 7:13 and 14 or between Romans 7:25 and Romans 8:1. Now between Romans 7:13 and 14 we have no hint of a change: indeed, Romans Romans 7:13, and therefore cannot be separated from it by an event which completely changed Paul's position. But in Romans 8:1 the change takes place before our eyes, and is written in characters which no one can misunderstand. The words "made me free from the law of sin" proclaim in clearest language that the bondage of Romans 7:23, 25 has passed away. Again, Romans 7:14-25 absolutely contradict all that Paul and the N.T. writers say about themselves and the Christian life. He here calls himself a slave of sin, and groans beneath its bondage, a calamity-stricken man.

Contrast this with Galatians 2:20, "I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me;" and with 1 John 3:14, "we know that we are passed out of death into life." If the words before us refer to a justified man, they stand absolutely alone in the entire New Testament.

What Paul says elsewhere about his religious state before his conversion confirms the description of himself here given. He was a man of blameless morality, zealous for God, a Pharisee of the strictest sect, in ignorance persecuting the Church:

Philippians 3:6; Acts 22:3; 26:5; 1Timothy 1:13. Of such a man we have a picture here. Paul's conscience approves the Law: he makes every effort to keep it; but his efforts only prove his moral powerlessness, and reveal the presence of an enemy in whose firm grasp he lies: he seeks to conquer inward failure by strict outward observance, and perhaps by bloody loyalty to what he considers to be the honor of God. In the conscientious Pharisee, we have a man who desires to do right but actually does wrong. And the more earnestly a man strives to obtain the favor of God by doing right, the more painfully conscious will he be of his failure. Thus the harmony of this passage with the character of Paul is no small mark of the genuineness of this epistle. At the same time it describes more or less correctly all sinners, except perhaps some in whom long bondage to sin has almost destroyed the better principle.

That these verses describe the experience of many justified persons is no proof or presumption that they describe Paul's experience while writing this letter. If our present state corresponds with that portrayed here, this only proves that in us, as in the men referred to in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4, the change is not complete. On the other hand, there are thousands who with deep gratitude recognise that Romans 7:14-25, while describing their past, by no means describe their present state. Day by day they are more than conquerors through Him that loved them. And, though their experience be of little weight to others, it is to themselves an absolute proof that these words do not refer to Paul's state

while writing the epistle. For they are quite sure that what they enjoy the great apostle enjoyed in far higher degree.

Then why did Paul puzzle plain people by using a present tense to describe a past experience? This question may be answered by attempting to rewrite this paragraph in the past tense: "I was a man of flesh, sold under sin. I did not know what I was doing. I hated my own actions. I saw another law in the members of my body carrying on war against the law of my mind. I cried, Calamity-stricken one, who shall rescue me? "

The life and strength of the paragraph are gone. To realise past calamity, we must leave out of sight our deliverance from it. The language of Romans 7:9, 11 made this easy. Paul's description of his murder by the hand of sin was so real and sad that he forgot for the moment the life which followed it. When therefore he came to describe the state in which that murder placed him, it was easy to use the present tense. Hence the transition from the past tense in Romans 7:11 describing the event of death to the present in Romans 7:14 describing the abiding state of the murdered one.

Similarly, in Romans 3:7 Paul throws himself into the position of one guilty of falsehood, and sets up for himself an excuse. In Romans 4:24, he stands by the writer of Genesis and looks forward to the justification of himself and his readers as still future. In Romans 5:1, he urges them to claim peace with God through justification. In Romans 7:14, after contemplating the reign of death from Adam to Moses, he looks forward to the future incarnation of Christ. In Romans 6:5, he speaks in the same way of the resurrection life in Christ. We shall also find him, in Romans 8:30, throwing himself into the far future and looking back upon the nearer future as already past. The past and present tenses are distinguished, not only in time, but as different modes of viewing an action. The past tense looks upon it as already complete; the present, as going on before our eyes. Consequently, when the time is otherwise determined, the tenses may be used without reference to time. In the case before us, the entire context, foregoing and following, tells plainly to what time Paul refers. He is therefore at liberty to use that tense which enables him to paint most vividly the picture before him. This mode of speech, common to all languages, is a conspicuous feature of the language in which this epistle was written. So Kuehner, 'Greek Grammar' 382. 2: "In the narration of past events the present is frequently used, especially in principal sentences, but not unfrequently in subordinate sentences, while in the vividness of the representation the past is looked upon as present. This use of the present is also common to all languages. But in the Greek language it is specially frequent; and in the language of poetry appears not merely in narration but also in vivid questions and otherwise, frequently in a startling manner."

It has been suggested that we have here a description of one who has only partly appropriated by faith the salvation offered by Christ. Every defective experience (and whose experience is not defective?) has elements in common with that of those without Christ. Consequently the language of Romans 7:14-25 is appropriate to many who have a measure of saving faith. But we have here no hint of any salvation received by faith in Christ. It is therefore better to understand it as referring to a man yet justified.

If the above exposition be correct, we have here the fullest description in the Bible of man unsaved. Even in the immoral there is an inner man which in some measure approves the good and hates the bad. But this inner man is powerless against the enemy who is master of his body, and who thus dictates his conduct. In spite of his better self, the man is carried along a path of sin. This is not contradicted, nor is its force lessened, by Paul's admission in Romans 2:26, 27 that even pagans do sometimes what the Law commands. For their obedience is only occasional and imperfect; whereas the Law requires constant and complete obedience. A man who breaks the laws of his country is not saved from punishment by occasional performance of noble actions. Although men unforgiven sometimes do that which deserves approbation, they are utterly powerless to rescue themselves from the power of sin and to obtain by good works the favor of God. Chapter 7 reconciles the teaching of Romans 6, with the divine authority of the Law. Romans 7:1-6 prove that our complete deliverance from sin asserted in Romans 6:22, is in harmony with the essence of law: for the death of Christ puts us beyond the limits affixed by the Law to its own domain.

Romans 7:7-12 prove that, though salvation is possible only through deliverance from the Law, yet the Law is not bad: for it is only a passive instrument through which sin slays its victims. And from Romans 7:13-25 we have now learnt that, although its immediate effect was death, yet the Law has not failed in its purpose of life: for our death by its means has made known to us the power of our adversary, and has driven us to One who is able to save.

Man's relation to the Law is now sufficiently expounded, and the Law sufficiently vindicated. It remains only to describe the new life with which, in Christ Jesus, the Spirit of life makes free the adopted children of God.

{TOWARD UNDERSTANDING ROMANS / Boyce W. Blackwelder}

The use of the historical present tense to relate graphically a past experience was common among Koine writers. There are many examples of such a grammatical form in the New testament. Therefore the verbs in Romans 7:14-25 may be considered as historical present used by Paul to describe forcibly his pre-Christian struggle.

It is clear that the unregenerate state under the Law is depicted in Romans 7:3-13. In verse 14, as Paul proceeds with his narration by changing from the historical tenses to the present tense, the conjunction *gar*, for, which introduces the new section, may be interpreted as explanatory and thus indicates a continuation of the thought of the preceding section. It is also worthy of note that the change of tense in verse 14 is made while Paul is still speaking of the Law.

{THE MEANING OF SALVATION / Charles Ewing Brown}

Our explanation is very simple: we revert to the doctrine of the ancient church. Paul is describing the condition of a man before his conversion, and yet not the condition of every man but only of those who are striving against sin. The present tense used in that

passage is only an example of the historical present wherein the writer uses the present tense for the sake of emphasis.

{CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY / Russell R. Byrum}

Romans 7:14-25, "The evil which I would not, that I do" (v. 19), is pointed to as the experience of the apostle Paul and therefore it is reasoned that we cannot hope to live a better life than the one there described. That this was Paul's experience when seeking righteousness by the works of the law before his conversion is evident from the context. In preceding chapters he seeks to show justification is only by faith. Here he shows it cannot be by one's own works, because of indwelling sin. But in the sixth chapter he tells us that those justified by faith are no longer the servants of sin, but are made free from it. In the eighth chapter also, especially in verse 2, he tells of deliverance from the bondage of sinning. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. It was the law of sin that caused Paul to do what he would not do before he was regenerated. When the Spirit of life came into his heart he was freed from the power of sin so he no longer was compelled to sin. That he did not sin after conversion is certain from his own words. " Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe."

{SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY / J. J. Butler & Ransom Dunn}

Rom. 7 is most frequently appealed to by objectors. They regard it as an account of the experience of Paul after his conversion, and of Christian experience generally. But we are unwilling that the passage should be held up as a model Christian experience. Are true believers carnal, sold under sin? (7:14.) Compare 8:2: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The candid inquirer will see, by studying the connection, that the Apostle in the seventh chapter is describing the struggles of the sinner under the law - his ineffectual attempts to be delivered from sin by mere works of law. Although his reason and conscience discern and approve the right, his perverse heart will not bow to their dictates. In this animated description the first person and present tense are naturally employed. In the eighth chapter the way of deliverance through grace in Christ is brought to view, and its superiority shown over the legal method described in the seventh. Thus the two chapters harmonize with each other and with other portions of the Scriptures. Such is the exposition uniformly adopted by the Christians of the first three centuries after Christ; and is the one now given by the ablest Biblical critics of different persuasions, as Tholuck, Knapp, Bloomfield, and Stuart.

{LEGAL EXPERIENCE / Lectures To Professing Christians / Charles G. Finney}

REMARKS

I. Those who find their own experience written in the 7th chapter of Romans, are not converted persons. If that is their habitual character, they are not regenerated; they are under conviction, but not Christians.

II. You see the great importance of using the law in dealing with sinners, to make them prize the gospel, to lead them to justify God and condemn themselves. Sinners are never made truly to repent but as they are convicted by the law.

III. At the same time, you see the entire insufficiency of the law to convert men. The case of the devil illustrates the highest efficacy of the law, in this respect.

IV. You see the danger of mistaking mere desires, for piety. Desire, that does not result in right choice, has nothing good in it. The devil may have such desires. The wickedest men on earth may desire religion, and no doubt often do desire it, when they see that it is necessary to their salvation, or to control their passions.

V. Christ and the gospel present the only motives that can sanctify the mind. The law only convicts and condemns.

VI. Those who are truly converted and brought into the liberty of the gospel, do find deliverance from the bondage of their own corruptions. They do find the power of the body over the mind broken. They may have conflicts and trials, many and severe; but as a habitual thing, they are delivered from the thralldom of passion, and get the victory over sin, and find it easy to serve God. His commandments are not grievous to them. His yoke is easy, and his burden light.

VII. The true convert finds peace with God. He feels that he has it. He enjoys it. He has a sense of pardoned sin, and of victory over corruption.

VIII. You see, from this subject, the true position of a vast many church members. They are all the while struggling under the law. They approve of the law, both in its precept and its penalty, they feel condemned, and desire relief. But still they are unhappy. They have no spirit of prayer, no communion with God, no evidence of adoption. They only refer to the 7th of Romans as their evidence. Such a one will say, "There is my experience exactly." Let me tell you, that if this is your experience, you are yet in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. You feel that you are in the bonds of guilt, and you are overcome by iniquity, and surely you know that it is bitter as gall. Now, don't cheat your soul by supposing that with such an experience as this, you can go and sit down by the side of the apostle Paul. You are yet carnal, sold under sin, and unless you embrace the gospel, you will be damned.

{THE LAST CHECK TO ANTINOMIANISM / John Fletcher}

To see the propriety of the preceding observation, we need only take notice of the contrariety there is between the bondage of the carnal penitent, described Rom. vii, 14, &c, and the liberty of the spiritual man, described in the beginning of that very chapter. The one says, "Who shall deliver me? Sin revives: it works in him all manner of concupiscence, yea, it works death in him: he is carnal, sold under sin," forced by his bad habits to what he is ashamed of, and kept from doing what he sees his duty. "In him, that is, in his flesh, dwells no good thing: sin dwelleth in him. How to perform that which is

good he finds not." Though he has a desire to be better, yet still he "does not do good, he does evil; evil is present with him." His "inward man," his reason and conscience approve, yea, delight in God's law," i.e. in that which is right; but still he does it not; his good resolutions are no sooner made than they are broken: for "another law in his members wars against the law of his mind," that is, his carnal appetites oppose the dictates of his conscience, and "bring him into captivity to the law of sin;" so that, like a poor chained slave, he has just liberty enough to rattle his chains, and to say, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death," from this complete assemblage of corruption, misery, and death! Is it not ridiculous to conclude, that because his groaning slave has now and then a hope of deliverance, and at times "thanks God through Jesus Christ" for that hope; he is actually a partaker of the liberty, which is thus described in the beginning of the chapter? "Ye are become dead to the law [the Mosaic dispensation] that ye should be married to Him, who is raised from the dead, that [instead of omitting to do good, and doing evil] we should rampart against the mistake which our opponents build on the rest of the chapter bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, [in the state of the carnal man sold under sin, a sure proof this that the apostle was no more in that state] the motions of sin which were by the law [abstracted from the Gospel promise] did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the [curse of the moral, as well as from the bondage of the Mosaic] law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve God in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter," Rom. vii, 4, 5, 6. Immediately after this glorious profession of liberty, the apostle, in his own person, by way of contrast, describes to the end of the chapter the poor, lame, sinful obedience of those who serve God in the oldness of the letter: so that nothing can be more unreasonable than to take this description for a description of the obedience of those who "serve God in the newness of the Spirit." We have, therefore, in Rom. vii, 4, 5, 6, a strong.

This mistake will appear still more astonishing, if we read Rom. vi, where the apostle particularly describes the liberty of those who "serve God in newness of the spirit," according to the glorious privileges of the new covenant. Is darkness more contrary to light than the preceding description of the carnal Jew is to the following description of the spiritual Christian? "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we might not serve sin. [Note: the carnal Jew, though against his conscience, still serves the law of sin, Rom. vii, 25.] Now he that is dead is freed from sin. Reckon ye yourselves also to be dead indeed unto sin. Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead. [Note: the carnal Jew says, "Sin revived and I died," Rom. vii, 9, but the spiritual Christian is alive from the dead.] Sin shall not have dominion over you [now you are spiritual: you need not say, I do the evil that I hate, and the evil I would not, that I do:] for you are not under the law [under the weak dispensation of Moses;] but under grace [under the powerful, gracious dispensation of Christ.] God be thanked that [whereas] ye were the servants of sin, when you carnally served God in the oldness of the letter, ye have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine which was delivered you; [that is, ye have heartily embraced the doctrine of Christ, who gives rest to all that come to him travailing and heavy laden.] Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness: for when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

But now being carnal, sold under sin, [ye serve the law of sin? No: just the reverse:] but now being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life," Rom. vi, 2-22. Is it possible to reconcile this description of Christian liberty with the preceding description of Jewish bondage? Can a man at the same time exult in the one, and groan under the other? When our opponents assert it, do they not confound the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations; the workings of the spirit of bondage, and the workings of the Spirit of adoption? And yet, astonishing! they charge us with confounding LAW and GOSPEL!

We shall see their mistake in a still more glaring light if we pass to Rom. viii, and consider the description which St. Paul continues to give us of the glorious liberty of those who have done with "the oldness of the [Jewish] letter, and serve God in newness of the Spirit." The poor Jew carnally sticking in the letter, is condemned for all he does, if his conscience be awake. "But there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, [who are come up to the privileges of the Christian dispensation,] who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus [the power of the quickening Spirit given me, and my fellow believers, under the spiritual and perfect dispensation of Christ Jesus] hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law [the letter of the Mosaic dispensation] could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law," the spiritual obedience, which the moral law of Moses, adopted by Christ, requires, "might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For [so far from professing that [am carnal and sold under sin, I declare that] to be carnally minded is death: [well may then the carnal Jew groan, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death!]] But to be spiritually minded is life and peace! So then, they that are in the flesh, [i.e. carnal, sold under sin,] cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his:" he is, at best, a disciple of Moses, a poor, carnal Jew, and remains still a stranger to the glorious privileges of the Christian dispensation. "But if Christ be in you, the body is dead, [weak, and full of the seeds of death,] because of [original] sin; but the spirit is life, [strong and full of immortality,] because of [implanted and living] righteousness. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, [like the poor, carnal man, who through fear and anguish groans out, O wretched man that I am!]] But ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we [who walk in newness of the Spirit, and please God we, who have the Spirit of Christ,] cry, Abba, Father! the Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God," whom we please, "and joint heirs with Christ," through whom we please God, Rom. viii, 1-17.

And that this abundant victory extends to the destruction of the carnal mind, we prove by these words of the context, "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace; because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh," they that are carnally minded, "cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh," ye are not carnally minded, "if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. For where the Spirit of the Lord is," and dwells as a Spirit of adoption, "there is constant liberty: now if any man have not that

Spirit," or if he hath it only as a Spirit of bondage, to make him groan, O wretched man! he may indeed be a servant of God in the land of his spiritual captivity, but "he is none of Christ's" freemen: he may serve God "in the oldness of the letter," as a Jew; but he does not "serve him in newness of the Spirit," as a Christian. For, I repeat it, "where the Spirit of Christ is," and dwells according to the fulness of the Christian dispensation, "there is a liberty, a glorious liberty," see Rom. viii, 14-21.

{THE RANDALL HOUSE BIBLE COMMENTARY / F. Leroy Forlines}

While Paul has pointed out the impotence of the law for justification and sanctification, that is not the purpose of vv. 7:25. The purpose of these verses is to show what the law could do. In spite of the fact that the law could neither justify nor sanctify, the law was not sinful (7:7). It was not devoid of value. As this passage plainly tells us, in spite of the law's failure to bring salvation, it was good.

What does this passage tell us that the law has done and can do which is good? We must see this or we miss the point of the passage.

(1) In vv. 7-13 we see that the law tells us what the nature of sin is like. Sin is powerful (v. 8). It is deceitful (vv. 10, 11). It is exceeding sinful (v. 13). Sin is such that the law which is good must impose the penalty of death on the sinner (vv. 9-11, and 13).

(2) In vv. 14-23 the law reveals man's relationship to sin. He is enslaved by sin (v 15) in spite of the fact that he recognizes the good of the law and delights in the law (vv. 16-23).

(3) The law can help prepare the way for the gospel. A person so instructed by the law knows how bad sin is. He also knows that in spite of his noble efforts to do otherwise, his slavery to sin shows him to be a miserable violator of the law. The law helps him see the need of a deliverer, although it cannot name the deliverer. The gospel names the deliverer. If he has allowed the Holy Spirit to use the law to properly instruct him, he has been prepared to respond to the gospel by recognizing Christ to be his Savior and Lord. If this is the positive ministry of the law, it is obvious that vv. 14-24 are referring to one who is unregenerate.

In light of 1 Jn. 3:9 and 5:4 (and several other passages that could be cited) the extent of the defeat set forth in this passage cannot apply to the regenerate person.

As we go on into chap. 8, we will see more reasons for understanding this passage to refer to the unregenerate.

{THE CHRISTIAN AND SIN / Steve Grochow}

I want to make it very clear that no person will overcome sin or will be conformed into God's image with a selfish heart or from legal motives. Many people try to obey God's commands using carnal methods. They rely on their own strength, energy and will power in their attempt to fulfill God's requirements. What happens is this, they hear a law and

they know that they should obey this law. Then they vow to keep this law and of course they fail. Then they re-vow that this will not happen again only to find they fail again. This may happen over and over until they get so discouraged that they give up thinking that it is impossible to obey God. The real problem here is that all this is done without receiving Christ's grace or power. No amount of will power, positive thinking, possibility thinking or any other method that comes from a selfish heart or legal motives will ever fulfill God's law. If any person could truly obey God this way then it never would have been necessary for Christ to come to earth and to suffer and die.

This above example is the very condition that Paul referred to in Romans seven. Paul was not in this condition when he wrote this chapter even though he wrote it in the first person. Romans seven is an example of a person living under the law. This person is being motivated by the fear of punishment and the hope of future reward. He is trying to fulfill the law using his own will power, strength and energy. No one will ever overcome sin this way.

Romans eight is an example of a person experiencing the true grace of the gospel through Jesus Christ. This person is truly free from the power and domain of sin. He truly loves God and is motivated by love and keeps all of God's requirements. This was Paul's real condition of time of this writing. These two chapters describe two completely opposing states of being. You are either living under the law or truly experiencing the grace of the gospel. No other choice is possible.

No person can live in both states at the same time because they are 100% opposite of each other. Please take the time to examine these chapters to find out what your current state of being is. Are you now under the law or truly enjoying the freedom of the gospel? If you are living under the law, then you need to repent and take hold of Christ until you truly experience His power over sin in your life.

{THE REQUIREMENTS FOR SIN AND HOLINESS / Steve Grochow}

No one is born with a carnal mind or a sin nature. This enmity against God is not transferred from father to son. It is impossible for a voluntary state of mind to pass from one generation to the next. Sin is the free choice of every person to live entirely for the gratification of his desires, lusts, emotions and feelings.

What about Romans chapter seven, where Paul talks about indwelling sin and sin that he cannot help?

Even though this chapter was written in the first person, it could NOT be Paul's personal experience at the time he wrote it. When you honestly look at both Romans chapter 7 and 8 together you will find that they represent two completely and totally opposite experiences. Chapter 7 is one experience while chapter 8 is the extreme opposite experience. It is impossible for any person to have both opposing experiences at the same time. This would be like trying to drive east and west at the same time. You may live in one of these states for a period of time, but you cannot live in both at the same time.

Romans chapter 7 gives the example of a convicted person (who is yet selfish.) This person knows what he should and should not do. He has a desire to obey but as he is still selfish at heart, he only fails time and again. He is blinded (by his own selfishness) to the spirit of the law, and what it requires. After many attempts of trying establish his own righteousness, apart from truly loving God, he comes to the wrong conclusion that is impossible to obey God.

Here are the reasons why this person fails and then thinks that it is impossible for him to obey:

1. He is still committed to self. He has not relinquished control to God. He has not lovingly embraced Christ as the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul. He is trying to establish his own righteousness, and you can't do the right thing for the wrong reason, and be righteous. It is trying to overcome selfishness with selfishness, a thing which is impossible. The key to this dilemma is not self-resolution. The key is not to make myself 'right'. This is self-righteousness - selfishness trying to overcome selfishness - trying to become 'right' for the sake of self. This will never do. The key is to submit one's self totally to a LOVING God, and to make HIM the supreme object of our affection and worship - to want to do right out of love for HIM, and nothing else - to make fellowship with HIM our supreme desire, and not the honor of self-reputation. Without doing that, one cannot be holy and righteous, no matter how much he tries, resolves, prays, fasts, etc.

2. His heart or true aim and direction is continually rejecting God's true righteous authority over him. It is possible for this person to make some changes in his outward behavior, but in his heart of hearts he remains a total enemy of God. The choice to live totally free of God's authority becomes the law of the sinner's life. The Apostle Paul calls it the law in one's members that wars against the law of the mind. Romans 7:23 "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

Romans 7:19-21 says "For the good that I would I do not, but the evil I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but it is sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me."

Paul knows the true solution to this problem when he cries out saying "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Christ himself is the solution to this problem. Paul goes on to chapter 8 which is his present experience at the time of his writing. This chapter gives the example of a person who is truly living under the grace of the gospel.

{Steve Grochow}

The sinner fails because he is still supremely living for himself. His desires, emotions,

appetites and lusts rule over his will. The fear of penalty and the hope of reward motivate and influence this person. As long as he remains in this state no matter what he vows or decides to do, he will fail. He has never repented and Christ is not his King. The real problem is his selfish heart.

In Romans 8, Paul goes on to give an example of a person experiencing true grace, free from the power and dominion of all sin.

Sin is not found in the body, soul or spirit. It is an act of free choice. If you are living the example given in Romans 7, you need to repent.

{MUST MAN SIN? / A. R. Higgs}

In Romans seven, the contenders for sin have pictured Paul as describing his present experience in bondage to a body of sin from which he could not free himself and in this condition, the good that he would do, he did not do, and the evil that he would not do, that he did. He was guilty of the sin of omission and also of the sin of commission. Those who interpret the apostle, as describing his present experience in this chapter are going to have trouble harmonizing their interpretation with his testimony as recorded in chapter eight. Read this testimony: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). For the apostle Paul to have been in bondage to the law of sin and death in chapter seven and at the same time to have been a free man in chapter eight would be a contradiction. That he was a slave to the law of sin and death before his conversion and that he was made a free man through Christ Jesus is the truth without any contradictions. Some may object to this interpretation by saying that Paul used the present tense of verbs in chapter seven, which would indicate that he described a present experience. In reply to this objection, we call attention to another expression Paul used in the present tense. He said: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am (present tense) chief." The apostle did not describe himself as being the chief of sinners at the time he made the above statement, but rather that he was as a sinner while killing the children of God. The same thing is true in Romans seven. Paul used the present tense of verbs to make his message more forcible, which is sometimes done by good writers. The prophet Isaiah used the present tense of verbs in describing a future event (See Isa. 9:6). If Paul described his present experience in this chapter, then he had no power to do good, nor to refrain from doing evil (See Rom. 7:19). Such a conclusion does not agree with Philippians 4:13 in which he states: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." We therefore conclude that Paul did not describe a present experience in Romans seven, but a past experience while trying to serve God without salvation through Christ.

{REFUTING POPULAR PSEUDO-BIBLICAL EXCUSES FOR SIN / J. Patrick Johnston}

When Saul of Tarsus walked in the flesh as described in Romans 7:14-25 he was not "in Christ Jesus" and was condemned.

The word "therefore" in Romans 8:1 indicates the connection of this thought with the previous chapter. Recall in chapter 7 how when Saul walked in the flesh, the motions of sins used the law to bring forth the fruit of death and condemnation in him (verse 5). "Now", as opposed to then, there is no condemnation for Paul in Christ, because he is in Christ and walks after the Spirit and not after the flesh anymore. Nor will he ever walk in the flesh again if he continues to live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit:

Galatians 5:16: Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Galatians 5:25: If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit...

Now that Paul has been born of the Spirit and bears the fruits of the Spirit, the law does not condemn him (Galatians 5:23). Those who are in Christ live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit, and the spirit of the law, which is love, is fulfilled in them because the Spirit of the law dwells in them (Romans 8:9). However, if any man walks in the flesh like the man described at the end of chapter 7, be not deceived, he does not live in the Spirit and the Spirit of God does not dwell within him.

The Apostle Paul testified in Ephesians 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. (3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature (acquired, not inherited nature) the children of wrath, even as others. (4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, (5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ....

In Romans 7, Paul's walk is after the flesh; according to the course of this world, yet in Ephesians 2 he claims that the days of walking in the flesh are past. He is no longer by nature a recipient of God's wrath. From this we can logically deduce that Paul in the latter half of Romans 7 is testifying of his past miserable state as a convicted sinner walking in the flesh under the law. Paul's days of walking in the flesh came to a close when the great love of God quickened him from his state of death in his sins and he was born again. Thereafter he walked in the spirit, not in the flesh, and was no longer under God's condemnation.

The reason for this removal of condemnation is spelled out in verses 2-4 of Romans 8:2. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (3) For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The righteousness of the law was not fulfilled in Saul of Tarsus because he walked in the flesh; the "law of sin" in his members enslaved him as he claims in chapter 7, verses 21, 23, and 25. "Indwelling sin" had dominion. He was ashamed of it, but he was a lawbreaker whom the law condemned. The law was made for such an one as this (I

Timothy

1:8-11).

But the righteousness of the law was fulfilled in Paul when he died to self and sin and ceased to walk in the flesh and began to walk in the Spirit. In essence, he was made obedient and blameless in respect to the moral law. This is what the law could not do - kill the old man and make man righteous. The law convicted of sin, but could not motivate Saul to fully obey. But what the law could not do, Jesus did! Now sin, personified in chapter 7 as the cruel slavemaster which held Saul captive, had met its match! Christ condemned that tyrant in Saul's flesh and destroyed its power over him. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus freed him from the "law of sin" in his members. Now the law no longer condemns Paul because the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in him as he walks after the Spirit. He is led of the Spirit, so he is not "under the law" (Galatians 5:18). He is married to another, so that he might bring forth fruit unto God (Romans 7:1-4).

This is an immutable characteristic of those "in Christ Jesus", in whom "the righteousness of the law" is fulfilled. They walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh. They bear the fruit of the Spirit, and do not do the "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-24). The righteousness of the law cannot be fulfilled in those who choose to walk according to the flesh.

Ezekiel prophesied these words from the Lord about the new covenant, Ezekiel 36:27: And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them.

Each of the Old Testament prophecies of the new covenant say that the law of God will dwell within the heart of the believer in this covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; 32:27-41; Ezekiel 11:18-21; 36:25-28; Hebrews 8:8-10). Indeed, obedience to God is the characteristic of those within the new covenant. This is what it means that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believers. By faith, they obey the law and do righteousness.

How did Jesus do in us what the law was unable to do? How did he influence us to be obedient so that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us? By the work of His love. In the soul-stirring display of love seen in the sacrifice of the Father's own Son upon the altar of Golgotha's hill, the resolution for man to obey was finally available! Through His selfless sacrifice, He is able to win our hearts completely and free us from this overcoming power of sin by the greater power of His love. Now, we love him because He first loved us (I John 4:19). Because we love Him, we keep His commandments (I John 4:19; John 14:15,21-23). Our response of love to His sacrifice of love is all the motivation we need to destroy our acquired "sinful nature" and bring us fully under His authority. Those who love as He loved fulfill the law (Romans 3:31; 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14; 6:2; James 2:8).

Let us continue in Romans 8:5. For they that are [following] after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. (6) For to be carnally [or fleshly] minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Think about this! What is the difference between the carnal mind which chooses to act according to the desires of the sinful flesh and the spiritual mind which chooses to act according to the instructions of God Almighty? A change of mind! This is the definition of repentance! A change of mind which results in a changed way of life! Paul has clearly shown us that "to be carnally minded is death" in his testimony at the end of chapter 7. But it must be understood that when he experienced godly sorrow and repentance over his sin, his carnal mind was changed, his "old man" or "body of death" was crucified, and the chains of the sin were destroyed.

Would to God that He deliver us from those prowling wolves who teach that there is a vague gray area where a man can be "carnally minded" and "spiritually minded" at the same time; a man can be "righteous" and "walk in the flesh" simultaneously.

(7) Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be.

The miserable man described in the latter half of chapter 7 was definitely not subject to the law of God. He wanted to obey God in his mind, but his actions were determined by his carnal mind which was hostile toward God's law. However, a "spiritual mind" is subject to the law of God, and in the spiritually-minded, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled.

(8) So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Saul of Tarsus did not please God because he walked according to the lusts of the flesh. The desires of the flesh became his slavemaster when he refused to restrain them by the law and the Spirit of God. Righteousness pleases God, but walking according to the lusts of the flesh is displeasing to Him. If one could be righteous and walk in the flesh simultaneously, that person would be pleasing God and displeasing Him at the same time! That is not logical. Christ's sacrifice does not make up for our deficient repentance. His grace, that is, His favor is not bestowed on us if our hearts are evil. Do not be deceived; to have a mind that is carnal or controlled by the desires of the flesh is to severely displease God as one of His enemies! God's enemies will not be able to hide behind a make-believe righteousness on the day of God's fierce judgment. They are under the sentence of death and will not escape the condemnation of His holy law. For that reason, the "carnally minded" must repent and be "spiritually minded" and then "life and peace" will be their reward.

(9) Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

A man who has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him cannot walk in the flesh. The spirit-filled "spiritually minded" person naturally walks in the Spirit. The law of the Spirit has freed him from the law of sin which dwelled in his members and dominated him as a sinner. If you see a man walking in the flesh, be assured of the fact that he is devoid of

God's Holy Spirit and he is not Christ's.

(12) Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. (13) For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Saul of Tarsus was a debtor to the flesh; he was a slave to the tyrant of sin. But neither Paul nor any other saints are debtors to the flesh. The sinful nature is dead and buried without a tombstone, henceforth to be forgotten. Why should we walk in the Spirit and not walk according to the flesh anymore? Because those who walk after the flesh will die spiritually (verse 13). Only if man mortifies the sinful deeds of the flesh will he live and not die. Christians owe the flesh nothing. We owe Christ, our loving Savior and Master, our humble obedience every moment of the rest of our lives!

The Apostle Paul writes to the backslidden Galatians,

Galatians 5:7: Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (8) For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Corruption in this verse means destruction or annihilation. If a man sows to the flesh as did the man described in the latter half of Romans 7 by doing the works of the flesh, he will reap eternal destruction in the lake of fire. Only if a man sows to the Spirit and hence does not fulfill the lusts of the flesh will he reap everlasting life (Galatians 5:16,19-24).

There are multitudes of professing Christians who can identify well with the slave to sin described in the latter half of Romans 7, because they themselves are slaves to sin. They know the goodness of the law of God and his ways, but they continue committing the same old sins. They serve God with their intellect, but they serve sin in their bodies. They desire to do the right thing, but they do not. They are sorry for their sins, but impenitent. "Indwelling sin" has dominion. They are alive to sin, and therefore they are spiritually dead. They are hypocrites. They are headed for the lake of fire! Most are intoxicated with the traditions and doctrines of men, which comfort them in their sins. They have believed the oldest lie in the Book, that same lie that Satan told Eve in the Garden of Eden, "Hath God said that if you eat of the forbidden tree you will not die? You shall not die..." They have embraced the same cursed lie, that a man can sin and not die spiritually.

In Paul's exegesis from verse 14-23, he describes his way of life as Saul of Tarsus - a convicted, awakened sinner, not a converted Christian. If a man professes faith in Christ but identifies with the awakened sinner Paul has described in Romans 7:14-25, he is a false convert and has actually not been brought to true repentance and faith in Christ, or else he has repented of his repentance and forsaken his First Love. This hypocrite might believe in Christ with his intellect, but it is dead faith and unable to save because it lacks the accompanying righteous works (James 2:14-26; Rom.3:31).

In summary, according to the conclusions of both chapters 6 and chapter 8, the man being

described in chapter 7, verse 14-25, has an unregenerate, carnal mind and wicked character. He is a slave to sin, an enemy of God, and under the condemnation of the law. He walks in the flesh and not in the Spirit. This is the pre-conversion state of Saul of Tarsus under conviction but unrepentant.

I conclude then Romans 7 in no way contains valid proof that Christians are bound to sin because of their human flesh. If a professing Christian's carnal mind has not changed, has not been nailed to the cross and buried, then that professing Christian is an impostor and a liar and the truth is not in him (I John 2:3-4). The sinful nature is not an acceptable excuse for persistent sin in the life of the professing Christian. And if a professing Christian finds comfort in Paul's words in the latter part of Romans 7, his mistake is a fatal one.

{MISUNDERSTOOD TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE / Asa Mahan}

The absolute Unanimity of the Primitive Church in respect to this Primitive Exposition.

We have said that, up to the later years of the life of Augustine, the entire Primitive Church--- Augustine included---attached one fixed and exclusive meaning to this passage, namely, that the apostle here, in fact and form, describes a Legal, in opposition to a Faith, Experience described in the subsequent chapter, and in other parts of this epistle. Two questions here arise, viz., Is this statement true? and, What is its real bearing upon the issue before us? We will consider these two questions in the order presented.

This Unity verified as a fact.

If we should recur to the testimony of learned men who have most carefully studied the facts of the case, we should find an entire unanimity of judgment among them in respect to the perfect validity of the above statements. "It will be admitted," says Prof. Stuart, in his world-renowned commentary on this epistle, "by those who are conversant with the dispute about the meaning of the passage before us, and are well read in the history of Christian doctrine, that Augustine was the first who suggested the idea that it must be applied to Christian experience." No individual has studied the history of Christian doctrine more profoundly, if as profoundly, as Neander. In all his most careful researches he found no trace whatever of this Post-primitive exposition prior to the period designated by Prof. Stuart. Everywhere, on the other hand, that great historian (Neander) found, in most distinct development, the presence of this Primitive exposition. Speaking of the passage under consideration, Prof. Tholock says, "The more ancient teachers of the Church had unanimously explained it of the man who has not yet become a Christian, nor is upheld in the struggle by the Spirit of Christ." So Origen, Tertullian, Chrysostom, and Theodoret. At an earlier period Augustine also followed this view. "Augustine," says Meyer, in his most learned commentary, "in his earlier days acknowledged in harmony with the Greek fathers since Irenaeus that the language here is that of the unregenerate man." The statement of such authors as the above remains uncontradicted; nor has any individual been able to find in any of the writings of the Primitive Church prior to the period designated, a sentence, word, or syllable in contradiction to "that we have

designated as the Primitive exposition of this passage.

Let us now turn to these primitive writers themselves. The following is Augustine's primal exposition as given in his Homilies on this epistle. 'Intelligiter,' he says, "hunc ille homo describi, qui nondum sub gratia." That is, "It is understood, that that man is here described who was never under grace." We must bear in mind that Augustine gives the above, not merely as his own view of the passage, but as the accepted exposition of the Church. "It is understood," that is, it is my own and the accepted exposition of the Church. It is a remarkable fact that Jerome, who afterwards accepted the new view of Augustine, had, in his earlier writings, also affirmed the validity of the primitive exposition, so universal was that exposition in the primitive Church.

We must bear in mind that it was in a heated controversy with Pelagius, that Augustine conceived and avowed this new and before unheard-of exposition. The latter rightly affirmed, and the former erroneously denied, the total depravity of the natural man. In his argument, Pelagius referred to the passage under consideration, saying that this was a palpable case, in which, by the universal assent of the Church, the state and character of the unregenerate man is described. He then asked, if approving the right, and hating the wrong, and "delighting in the law of God," did not imply that there was something good even in such a man? Augustine could not deny the fact, the case being so palpable, of the universal agreement of the Church in the deduction that it was the unregenerate man referred to in the passage; nor did he perceive how, admitting the correctness of the universally received exposition, he could meet the argument of his opponent. Under such perplexity Augustine denied the validity of his own and the universal, and adopted the few and before unheard-of, exposition, a most needless resort, and a most calamitous one for the spiritual good of the Church. The fact that the sinner continues "carnal, sold under sin," notwithstanding his conscience approves the right, reprobates the wrong, and even "delights in the law of God," presents the strongest possible proof of the intensity and totality of the natural sinfulness of man. We are fully and undeniably justified, therefore, in claiming for what we have designated as the "Primitive" exposition of the passage, the universal assent of the Church prior to the later years of Augustine.

As we have not now space to cite passages from all the various primitive expositions, one or two must suffice. Speaking of the words, "I am carnal" (verse 14), Theodoret says, "He calls that man carnal who has not yet obtained spiritual aid." Another of these Fathers thus explains the words: "I find then a law that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." "I find," i.e., I have considered and comprehended the force and nature of the law. I have discovered for certain it has no power to help me. How does this appear? "Because when I wish to do good, it helps nothing, but evil is equally present, making my will unexecuted." In precisely similar language do Chrysostom, Theophylact, Ambrose (a Syriac interpreter), and others, explain these words. With similar unanimity do all the primitive Fathers explain the whole passage under consideration, and explain it as referring not to the Christian under grace, but to individuals under law, and acted upon by legal motives only.

Their distinct and opposite moral and spiritual Tendencies.

The obvious and undeniable moral and spiritual tendency of this primitive, and we may truly say apostolic, exposition of these two chapters', at once commends it to our regard as the only true one. What believers at that time needed above all things, was an absolute assurance of the utter hopelessness of all purposes, efforts, and confidences in respect to the attainment of obedience to the law of righteousness, but in one fixed direction, faith in Christ and the power of the Spirit on the one hand, and on the other, an assurance equally absolute that through Christ and the power of the Spirit, "all grace may abound towards us, so that we, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work." These two fundamental assurances in their highest possible forms, this primitive exposition does, in fact and form, present to every believer. Reading, in its light, Rom. vii. 5---25, he perceives at once the utter futility of all legal and formalistic methods of righteousness, and the utter hopelessness of all self-originated purposes of obedience. Thus he finds himself, as he needs to be, absolutely "shut up to the faith." As in the light of the same exposition he contemplates the divine revelations of the following chapter, the highway of holiness opens with perfect distinctness and absolute assurance of hope upon his vision. The believer at once sees, that through faith in Christ, and under the available power of the Spirit, he may "be made free from the law of sin and death," may have "the righteousness of the law fulfilled in himself," may be "free from all condemnation," and in every "conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil," may "be more than conqueror through Him that bath loved us." In short, this exposition presents every conceivable motive to a holy life of which we can form a conception, and that with no opposite tendency whatever.

On the other hand, when this post-apostolic and post-primitive exposition of Romans vii. 5---25 lifts its form before the mind, and that as a divinely-revealed "photograph of the experience of every believer," a deep eclipse passes at once over the revealed privileges and promises of grace, and all hope dies out of the believer's heart and mind of being anything more or better in this life than can be found in the state represented by such words as "carnal, sold under sin" ; "captivity under the law of sin and death"; "doing what we would not, and not doing what we would"; "willing, but not finding how to perform that which is good," and suffering an inglorious defeat in every purpose of obedience, and in every effort to "perform that which is good." We must bear in mind that nothing whatever, in, the direction of victory---that nothing but defeats and captivity under sin---is even hinted in this passage; and these represent the best estate of possible attainment, if this supposition does present God's revealed "photograph of the experience of every believer." We may safely challenge the world to show that we have in any respects

misrepresented the case. Should you reply that we do find outside this passage better things than are here revealed, you then admit that we have not in it by any means "a literal, accurate, and correct photograph of the experience of every believer." But this is not all. In this exposition we find, not only an almost necessary cause of backsliding, but an unanswerable excuse for all such sins. No individual can so far recede from obedience to the will of God, that he will not consciously find in his experience every element of the state represented in this passage, and will not confront you with the fact when you attempt to admonish him.

The Language employed by the apostle in Rom. vii. 5---25, absolutely verifies the Primitive, and falsifies the Post-primitive Exposition.

Let us now consider the language employed by the apostle in this passage, and see if we cannot determine in its light which of these expositions is, and must be, the correct one. That in Verses 5---13 inclusive the apostle refers exclusively to the sinner under law, and acted upon by legal considerations, all admit. From Verse 14 and onward he, it is affirmed, speaks of himself, not in his former state as a legalist, but in his then state as a Christian. The main reason assigned for this conclusion is that he here employs the present instead of the past tense. Every one well read in the Greek language must be aware that nothing is more common in this and other languages than a change from the past to the present tense when the subject of discussion is the same. In this case, however, such a change was demanded by the circumstances. In affirming the law to be spiritual, he was necessitated to say, "The law is," not was, nor will be, "spiritual."

In speaking of himself, in the contrast as carnal, whether he referred to his past, or then existing state, he was required by the known laws of this language, to use the same tense as before. The change from the past to the present tense, therefore, is, in itself, no indication whatever that the apostle refers to his then, or to his past moral state.

The language employed, however, leaves no ground of doubt whatever in regard to his meaning. We refer to such terms as "carnal, sold under sin."; "captivity to the law of sin"; "a law that when we would do good evil is present"; "the good that I would I do not, but the evil that I would not that I do," and "to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." Such language is fully and obviously in place, if the object of the apostle is to represent a legal, in opposition to a Christian experience, and is absolutely out of place, and can be justified by no usage, scriptural or classic, if his object is to portray the latter instead of the former form of experience. All that such language implies is strictly true of the moral state, and experience of the legalist and the man of the world, and is everywhere and exclusively employed in the Scriptures to represent such state and experience, and that as distinguished from the moral and spiritual state and experience of the believer in Jesus. "Doing righteousness," and "sinning not," are the revealed characteristics and peculiarities of the Christian life and experience; not doing the right, but doing the wrong, and never finding "how to perform that which is good," are the equally revealed characteristics and peculiarities of the state portrayed in the passage before us. "We are not in the flesh, but in the spirit," is absolutely affirmed of every believer in Jesus. "Carnal," that is, "not in the spirit," but "in the flesh," is absolutely and unqualifiedly affirmed of all who are in the state portrayed in this passage. "Ye shall be free" ; "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," and "more than conquerors," are the revealed characteristics of the true Christian. "Sold," in abject servitude, "under sin"; "captivity to the law of sin," and hopeless defeat in every conflict with "the law in the members," are set forth as the immutable characteristics of the state here portrayed. Such language as peculiarises this passage is adapted to one exclusive end---to portray a legal and worldly, in opposition to a Christian, life and experience, and it is a perversion of all Scriptural and classic usage to employ such

language to represent the former in distinction from the latter. The words, for example, "I am carnal, sold under sin," do, with perfect correctness, represent the legal and worldly state and experience. To apply such language to the Christian, is to affirm that he, in common with the legalist and worldly man, is totally depraved, and thus to confound all distinction between the latter and the former.

Fundamental Facts wholly inexplicable, but upon the Primitive Exposition.

Permit us, in this connection, to call special attention to three fundamental facts, some of which have been already presented at full length, but which we present together here, that their bearing may be distinctly seen. These facts, which are utterly incompatible with any but the primitive exposition, are the following :---

1. In this whole passage, with the exception of verse 25, in which the way of deliverance from the wretched state previously portrayed is indicated, there is no reference whatever to Christ, to the Holy Spirit, or to faith or its effects. In "a literal, perfect, accurate, correct photograph" of a legal experience, of course no such reference should be had, because none of them have place in such experience, and the fact before us clearly evinces the verity of the primitive exposition. A photograph of Christian experience, however, a photograph in which neither Christ, the Holy Spirit, nor faith nor its effects, its peace and victories especially, are designated or alluded to, would be like an affirmed Life of Christ, in which His name should never appear, nor His character, nor any acts of His life, should be so much as alluded to.

2. The leading terms employed in this passage are the identical ones employed mother parts of the New Testament, to designate a legal and worldly, and never to represent Christian, experience. We refer to such terms as these---"carnal, sold under sin"; "a law that when we would do good evil is present"; "captivity under the law of sin, which is in the members"; "how to perform that which is good I find not"; and "doing what we would not, and not doing what we would," etc. Such terms are never employed in the Scriptures to represent the Christian, but always to designate the legal and worldly, life, character, and experience. Such terms are perfectly adapted to photograph the forms of the legal and worldly life, character, and experience, and their unqualified use in the passage before us absolutely evinces the correctness of the primitive exposition of the passage. The apostle, on the other hand, might as properly

employ the term, "blackness of darkness," to photograph the light of heaven, as to employ such language as the above to photograph the life, character, and experience of believers in Jesus, believers who "walk by faith."

{WHAT MANNER OF MAN IS HE, DESCRIBED IN THE SEVENTH OF ROMANS?
/ Joseph D. McPherson}

We must say in conclusion that although it is popular to take this description of inward conflict and sin's dominion provided us here in the seventh of Romans and press it into the supposed experience of the justified, yet it is both inconsistent with the Scriptures and

dangerous to the souls exposed to such a teaching. It must be readily granted that there are many who are called Christians and who are probably sincere, whose experience fits the description made, but we must consider them to be in the same state with Saul of Tarsus prior to his conversion. That they must continue in this state as some believe, who teach that there is no deliverance from sin in this life, is nowhere taught us in the gospel of Christ.

{F. B. MEYER BIBLE COMMENTARY / F. B. Meyer}

Romans 7:14-25 The Conflict Within. The apostle gives a further statement of his personal experience of the inability of the soul to realize the divine ideal, which has been revealed to it as the norm and type of its attainment. Life does not run smoothly. There are effort, strain, failure, the consciousness of sin. Why is this? It is due to the lack of "power unto salvation."

Self is ever the difficulty. Before we find Christ, or are found of him, we try to justify ourselves, and afterward to sanctify ourselves. Notice how full these verses are of I, and how little is said of the Holy Spirit. But this background of dark experience, ending in vanity, vexation, disappointment, and misery leads to the following chapter, which is saturated with Pentecostal power.

{GOD'S SAVING POWER / Gene Miller}

In 7:14-25, Paul not only employs the first person singular, but also the present tense. This does not indicate that these conditions existed at the time when Paul wrote the words. It does serve to emphasize the reality of the experience and its relevance for all persons. Such use of the present tense is common in the Gospels and throughout the Greek New Testament.

We may be sure that in this "first person" section, Paul begins by speaking of his life before Christ (7:7-25, with the exception of the parenthetical expression "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" in 25a) and then of his life and experience after Christ (8:1-2). If you are not a Christian, see your own predicament mirrored in the inspired word, and accept deliverance from the "law of sin and death!"

{THE HOLINESS ACCEPTABLE TO GOD / John Morgan}

The whole argument of Paul, in the 6th, 7th and 8th chapters of Romans, proceeds on the supposition that the entire subjugation of sin is indispensable to justification. In vain does a man hope that he may yield himself as a servant to sin, and escape condemnation, because he has taken refuge with Christ. Death (6: 16, 21, 23; 7: 5, 9, 11, 13, 24; 8: 2, 6, 8, 13) is the inevitable result of sin, its wages, its fruit. Legal influences do not avail to rescue the sinner from the power of sin,--they rather aggravate his bondage to it, and while sin remains, the sword of vengeance threatens the sinner's life. Now how, according to the apostle, does he escape? By betaking himself to a Savior who will make partial obedience answer? Or by flying to one who gives him the victory of sin itself? Not

a syllable is dropped in these interesting chapters about a partial obedience to the law, about a partial conquest of iniquity. The believer has no condemnation hanging over him or inwardly harassing him, because he walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. The law of the Spirit of life [salvation] in Christ Jesus, has made him free from the law of sin, (and therefore of death,) which has warred in his members and brought him into captivity.

God, by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sin-offering, has destroyed sin by a capital condemnation, that the former transgressor may inwardly fulfil the righteousness of the law. He is married (7: 4) to the risen Son of God, so that he brings forth fruit, not to death, (7: 5,) but to God. His fruit is unto holiness, (6: 22,) and the end is everlasting life. While faith stands, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present and things to come, and every creature in the universe, may assault him with the utmost fury, and in all these things he more than conquers through him that loved him. While his eye is on Jesus, though he walk a tempestuous sea, threatened by all its roaring waves, it shall do no more than touch the soles of his feet.

We are well aware of the interpretation of Rom. 7: 7-25, still current among Calvinistic writers in England and America. It is an interpretation, which, beginning with Augustine, spread through his great influence extensively in the church, and gained still further vogue by the adoption and sanction of the reformers Calvin and Luther. But till Augustine broached it, so far as history informs us, the church knew nothing of it. By the whole early church, learned and unlearned, the passage was referred to the experience of a sinner under the law. Notwithstanding the venerable authority of the Reformers, and the high esteem in which they are held by evangelical men the world over, the whole body of pious German commentators, several of the most distinguished in Scotland and England, and Professors Stuart and Robinson in America, have been compelled, by the apostle's argument, in spite of theological bias, to return to the ancient interpretation.

To ourselves it seems amazing that any man can resist the force of argument with which Prof. Stuart has assailed the modern view, and sustained that, which, before, Augustine, was, for aught history informs us, the universal view of the church. We feel, we confess, an intense interest in the establishment of the true interpretation of this important passage; for we believe that the current false view had done more to hinder the saints and to flatter the hopes of hypocrites than any other single error that has ever prevailed among good men.

{IN DEFENSE OF PAUL AND HIS GOSPEL or Do Christians Sin? / S. Mutch}

The devil has promoted a deadly lie and multitudes have swallowed it with the help of today's false prophets.

The Apostle Paul's Christian experience has been grossly misrepresented by misapplication of his writings in Romans chapter 7.

What Paul wrote here (Rom. 7:14-19, 24) to the congregation in Rome has become the Protestant creed – "Carnal... sold under sin... the evil which I would not, that I do." To this they measure their lives, and without shame or embarrassment, they testify that they are sold under sin. Hence, we have denominations full of "sinning Christians," helped on by their sinning preachers, who propagate "sin-you-must, sin-you-can't-help-it" doctrines.

Is this the gospel Paul preached and lived? Is this all we can hope for in this New Testament dispensation? Was the promise in Matt. 1:21, that Jesus "shall save his people from their sins," unfulfilled? Did the blood of Calvary have the power to purchase our deliverance from sin, once and for all, or must we ever be sinning and repenting, sinning and repenting, and only hope to some day grow out of it and do it less all the time?

Did Paul teach higher than he lived? How could he say "I am carnal," and then say in Rom. 8 that the carnal mind is enmity against God? Did he require of others what he admittedly couldn't do himself? In Romans 2:1, Paul had a strong rebuke for those who judged others, while they were guilty of doing the same thing themselves.

If Paul was saying what Protestants today declare he meant in Rom. 7, then he was in no position to be a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And, if the gospel can offer no more than that to a soul bound in sin, then what is the power of salvation?

Now, if (the Apostle) John accepted Romans 7 as Paul's personal Christian experience – "the evil which I would not, that I do" - as say the sin-you-musts of today, then those two brothers were preaching two different gospels and were not in unity with one another. In fact, John would not have accepted Paul as a saved brother in the Lord, declaring that whoever sins has not known God and is of the devil. John knew that Jesus had said, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (Jn. 8:34, 36), and "Go and SIN NO MORE" (Jn. 8:11b).

Now why did Paul express himself as he did in Romans 7? After all, he did write it. Yes, he did, but who did he write it to? Let us put these scriptures in context. See verse 1 of that chapter. "I speak to them that know the law ..." Paul is writing concerning the Old Testament law and is referring back to his life when he was still living under that levitical law.

Paul expressed himself in the present tense in Rom. 7. That is not uncommon for any of us to do on occasion when we are speaking of ourselves in a past situation – "Well, here I am, running down the street, and who do I see..."

The law showed him his sin, but could not save him from his sin. No wonder he moaned, "O wretched man that I am!" He had been a strictly religious Pharisee, wanting to do right, yet falling short again and again. He cries, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death ..." Who indeed! Did he not meet Him on the road to Damascus? – "I

thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

He expresses that he is under "the law of sin" in Rom. 7:25, then goes on to explain in Rom. 8, that Christ set him free. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath MADE ME FREE FROM THE LAW OF SIN and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Thank God! What the levitical animal sacrifice did not do, the precious and powerful blood of Jesus Christ could do. Paul was able to leave his Old Testament experience of salvation through faith and obedience in Jesus Christ. He became "a new creature." Old things (including his old testimony) passed away and all things became new (2 Cor. 5:17).

That does not mean that it was not possible for him to make a mistake or a misjudgment (that is not sin), but it does mean, according to multiplied scriptures in the Bible, not touched upon in this writing, that he could and did live a life free from committing any sin after he was saved. We ARE EITHER A SAINT, OR ARE A SINNER. When you live a surrendered life of obedience to God, He is "able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Jude 24.

Paul preached a pure gospel, one which can "save to the uttermost." This sinning religion so prevalent today is such as Paul warned of in 2 Cor. 11:4. It is indeed the preaching of "another gospel" and "another Jesus," whom Paul did not preach. Dear ones, if you have been a victim of another gospel, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." That is Paul's warning to you. Flee from error and run to the Deliverer, that One who died to set us free from sin. You too, can obtain a real experience of salvation, and say as Paul did, that you are living holily, justly, and unblameably in this present world.

{ARE MEN BORN SINNERS? / A. T. Overstreet}

Those who are familiar with the Bible will know that in chapter three of Romans, Paul shows that no one can be justified by the law, since all, both Jews and Gentiles, have sinned and are condemned by the law. Then, in chapter seven of Romans, he shows that the law cannot sanctify. It cannot deliver the sinner from the awful bondage of his sins and make him holy. The law is holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12) but it is powerless to make the sinner himself holy, just, and good. The law gives no life; it only brings conviction of the "exceeding sinfulness" of sin (Rom. 7:13) and pronounces judgment upon the sinner for his sins. The Apostle's argument is that the law is absolutely powerless to break the power of sin or inspire holiness. It is only through our union with the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 7:4-6) that we receive life and grace and are set free from the bondage of sin.

If we read this passage without paying any attention to its context, it looks like Paul the Apostle was a total slave to his lusts and passions at the time he wrote this epistle. But if we give attention to its context, we know that the Apostle was not describing his own experience at all in the above passage. He spoke in the first person, and uses the word I,

not to describe his own personal experience, but as a literary device to illustrate the total bondage of the convicted sinner to his fleshly desires and passions. That Paul used himself as an example or illustration of one who was in carnal servitude to the law, and not to describe his own personal experience, is seen, first of all, by the language he uses.

Now Paul was a Christian, and Christians are not "carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14). Instead, they are spiritual and redeemed from sin. Paul was describing the experiences of someone who did not yet know Christ, who was still in bondage to his sins (carnal, sold under sin), and was face to face with a spiritual law. And he speaks in the first person, using himself to illustrate the bondage of this convicted sinner, who was trying to obey a spiritual law without Christ and the liberating power of God's grace.

But Paul's conclusion in verses 24 and 25 shows that what he was illustrating was not a Christian experience because he declared that Christ delivers from it:

To teach from this passage that the Apostle Paul was living in bondage to sin when he wrote this epistle is to completely take his words out of context. For example, look at chapter six. It does not teach that Paul or any other Christian is in bondage to sin. Paul teaches in this chapter that Christ completely delivers from the power of sin.

Paul shows in chapter six of Romans that Christ completely frees the believer from the dominion of sin. He continues in chapter seven to show that the law has no such power.

It was after showing the glorious power of Christ to deliver from the bondage of sin, and the utter inability of the law to do anything more than judge and convict of sin, that the Apostle uses himself as an illustration of one who is in the bondage of a carnal servitude to the law--one who is convicted by the law of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, but still unable by the motives of the law to free himself from his fleshly passions and lusts. But, if Paul were describing in Rom. 7:14-25 his own Christian experience or the experience of any other Christian, it would directly contradict everything he said in both chapters six and eight about the Christian being freed from sin. It is impossible that the Apostle could be inspired by the Holy Spirit to teach the contradiction that the Christian is both gloriously saved by Christ from his sins and at the same time a total slave to them. This is the folly of interpreting a text without giving attention to its context.

It is sad that many who call themselves Christians have misused this text in Romans 7:14-25 to excuse their sins, saying that even the great Apostle Paul could not overcome sin, and that they don't consider themselves to be any greater or more spiritual than he. They say that they are having the same experience that the Apostle Paul had in Romans seven, that sin dwells in them the same as it dwelt in Paul, and that we all have inherited the same old Adamic sin nature. They will say that if the Apostle Paul could not overcome sin, they don't see how they can expect to live without sin. I heard one preacher's comment in the Sunday morning service after having read this passage. His comment was "I'm glad this is in the Bible; it makes me feel a lot better." He assumed that Paul was describing his own Christian experience, and it relieved his conscience to know that the Apostle Paul was in bondage to sin just like other Christians. But the

person who uses this passage to relieve his conscience and to convince himself that he is a Christian while living in bondage to sin is deceiving himself. He is not a Christian. No man is a Christian who is a slave to sin. Christ sets his people free from their sins.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-4). Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness (Rom. 8:7-10).

If Rom. 7:14-25 were a description of Paul's own Christian experience, it would directly contradict the Christian experience he describes above. He says, "There is now no condemnation"; "Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death"; and "The righteousness of the law" is "fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." The experience he described in Romans seven was a woeful experience, filled with condemnation, bondage, sin, and death. Is it conceivable that all the Christians to whom Paul wrote were victorious, sin free, uncondemned Christians, and that Paul alone was a condemned, sin enslaved Christian? That would have to be the fact if Paul were truly describing his own Christian experience in Rom. 7:14-25. Let's compare the experience Paul describes in Rom. 7:14-25 with what he taught to be the Christian's victory over sin through Christ. First, Paul said of the experience of one under the law without Christ.

We can be certain that Paul was not describing his own Christian experience in Rom. 7:14-25, for we find that he said he was carnal, that he was sold under sin, that he had a carnal mind (which, he says later in chapter eight) was enmity against God, not subject to the law of God, and that neither indeed could be. He said that he was definitely in the flesh, and that he still had a sinful body, a body of death, or a sinful body condemned to death, which he cried out to be delivered from.

On the other hand, he told the Christians in chapters six and eight that they were not carnal, but spiritual; that they were no longer walking after the flesh; that they were not sold under sin, but gloriously delivered from the bondage of sin; that they did not have a carnal mind, but a spiritual mind; that they were not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; and that they did not have a sinful body, but that their body was dead. Now, if Paul was describing his own bondage to sin in Rom. 7:14-25, then he was describing his own bondage and slavery to sin at the same time that he declared all the Christians to whom he wrote to be gloriously liberated from the bondage of sin. Such an inconsistent conclusion can only be reached as a result of ignoring context, language, common sense, and reality in interpreting the Scriptures.

No one can come to the Bible with a sincere heart, and read all of chapters six, seven, and eight of Romans, comparing chapter seven with chapters six and eight, and then come away believing that Paul was describing his own Christian experience in Rom. 7:14-25. It is impossible. The contradictions involved in such an interpretation are too obvious.

{THE CHRISTIAN AND ROMANS 7 / Shem Peachey}

In chapter 6 God is mentioned 6 times, and Christ 15 times. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned, but implied. We are "alive unto God" only by the Spirit of Christ in us.

Sin is personified throughout chapter 7 and appears 14 times. Six times it meant death to Paul. "Law" appears 16 times and "commandment" nine times, totaling 25 times, for law is the subject of the chapter. "I" is used 29 times; "me" 11 times; and "my" three times totaling 43 first person singular pronouns in 19 verses. There is no other such passage in the Bible. God is named four times, Christ once, and the Holy Spirit not at all. The content of Romans 7 is law, I, sin, and death.

On the other hand, in chapter 8 God is mentioned 28 times, Christ, 19 times, and the Holy Spirit 19 times. This alone demonstrates the contrast in the contents of these chapters.

The Christian church never believed that Romans 7:13-25 described the experience of a regenerate man until the world-church corruption of the fourth century. At that time such a corrupt doctrine was needed by the (Roman Catholic) church to save its public face because of the whole mass of pagan people of the Empire who were included in the (professing) church. The Reformers needed such a doctrine just as much because of the pagan people in their churches. Why should the whole New Testament doctrine of holiness be debased by a wrong interpretation of Romans 7 in accommodation to a corrupt (professing) church? Why not interpret Romans 7 by the whole New Testament if we want to arrive at the truth?

The Scriptures do not teach sinful imperfection as did medieval Luther and Zwingli. Luther said, "Ich bin zugleich krank und gesund; zugleich ein Sunder und ein gerechter." "I am at the same time sick and well; at the same time a sinner and a righteous one." Zwingli in his communion prayer said, "Father, grant unto us miserable sinners ..." "... that we are indeed miserable sinners ..."

This is as high as the Reformers came in Christian perfection. They left a Christian a sinner (including themselves) hoping in the grace of God to save them as perpetual sinners.

The Reformers were followers of Augustine. He taught that Romans 7 portrays the experience of the regenerate man. Luther and Zwingli taught the same. This error lives on.

Let us shun as from the devil any interpretation of Scripture that makes Paul a defeated sinner (and all of us with him) rather than a victorious saint.

May the Word of God not be distorted nor contaminated as it passes through our minds and hands, nor be diminished as it is uttered by our lips or flows from our pens. Souls may live or die, depending on how we present God's Word to them.

{THE NATURE OF SIN / Winkie Pratney}

In Romans 7:7-24, the Apostle Paul personifies sin to show its power over the enlightened, but unconverted mind. The excited love of conscious freedom, wanting to have its own way, clashes with the judgment of conscience and the moral law; a conflict begins between the "law" (rule of action) of sin, and the law of God. Without the drawing power of Christ, the convicted sinner cannot free himself, until the Gospel comes to deliver him (Romans 7:25; 8:1). But although Paul places the tug of this "law of sin" in his bodily members (from where the excited desires sparked into unnatural strength by the habit of selfish gratification reside), he does not really make a case for any "physical" sin, as if this was his helpless inheritance. If sin WAS physical, in what form would it exist? Would it be solid, liquid or gas? If sin is material, it can be isolated in a test-tube. May we then see the phenomenon of a vial of sin concentrate. This is, of course, absurd. All efforts to trace actual sin to some organic connection with parents have failed of any evidence, medically or physiologically; at the most, ALL inherited traits from parents simply contribute INFLUENCES for later selfish choices.

{CONFLICTING CONCEPTS OF HOLINESS / W. T. Purkiser}

Is this his description of a normal Christian experience, even that of a babe in Christ? To this we say an emphatic "No!" We have heard some pretty sorry confessions of failure made by God's children, but never have we heard a born-again believer get up and testify, "O wretched man that I am!"

Paul is here vividly contrasting his old life as an awakened sinner striving in his own might to keep the law of God, with the deliverance he found in the regenerating and sanctifying grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the old life, he found in his heart a law which countered the ideal of his awakened conscience. He was, as he said, captive to the law of sin dwelling in his members, the body of death which made him wretched.

Then, using the same terminology, he describes the deliverance wrought in him by the Spirit of Christ. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Here, as clearly as language can express it, is the claim of the Apostle Paul to freedom from sin and the body of death with which he had struggled so long in vain. Little wonder he shouts, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:25).

{SOLD OUT AT ROMANS 7 / Vic Reasoner}

The Holy Spirit is referred to some twenty times in the following chapter. Romans 7 makes no mention of the grace of God. It is a classic psychological analysis of the struggle between the conscience and the will. Every sinner knows the conflict between what he ought to do and what he wants to do. Desire usually wins out over duty.

The Greek personal pronoun ego is used eight times in this description. In Greek, as with many other languages, the subject is understood in the verb. Paul supplied an additional word (ego) for emphasis. He does not use it once in chapter 8. Chapter 7 closes with a double pronoun in verse 25, "I myself." Paul describes a man trying to be a Christian by himself.

{LIFE IN THE SON / Robert L. Shank}

The popular concept of "the strife of the two natures of the believer" may seem to be substantiated by Paul's account of the conflict which he experienced within himself, as recorded in Romans 7:7-25. But the passage, which is historical and autobiographical, depicts the conflict between conscience and conduct, between aspirations and inclinations, which Paul experienced while still under the law. (The "therefore" of 8:1 reverts to 7:6, and 7:7-25 is parenthetical.) The dismal conclusion which Paul reached in the conflict within himself under Law is stated (following a parenthetical exclamation in vv. 24, 25a) in verse 25b: "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." But now that he has found deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord and by faith has come to be "in Christ Jesus" (8:1), no longer can he resign himself to such a miserable conclusion. Far from accepting such a conclusion, Paul insists that we who are in Christ Jesus must "walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (v. 4). For the man who is "in Christ Jesus," such a course is mandatory. But it is not inevitable, even though he is "not in the flesh but in the Spirit" through His indwelling presence (v. 9). The Christian must continue to choose whether to be "carnally minded," which tends toward death, or to be "spiritually minded," which tends toward life and peace (v. 6). Paul sharply admonishes his brethren who are in the Spirit to remember that "we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh" (v. 12). We must recognize that two courses are open to us, and we can follow but one. We must weigh carefully the consequences of following either course. If we live after the flesh, we shall die; if we live after the Spirit, we shall live (v. 13). Only men who consent to be led of the Spirit can be sons of God (v. 14), and only such as consent to suffer with Christ will ultimately be glorified together with Him (v. 17).

{WRESTED SCRIPTURE MADE PLAIN / W. E. Shepard}

This is a wonderful rendezvous. People come from the North, from the South, from the East, and from the West and find in this chapter a common solace. It is a very fitting chapter. What wonderful comfort it gives to many to find out that Paul had just such a hard time as they. How often we hear the expression, "Well, my experience is a good deal like Paul's," and then quote the seventh chapter of Romans, or pervert some of his other writings, making them mean what he never intended them to mean. Only the other day a

lady remarked to the writer, when trying to justify herself in not being sanctified, that her experience was a good deal like Paul's. We told her if it was like his she was all right. Another lady once said that her experience was in the seventh of Romans, and she never expected to get above Paul. We wonder what that grand old apostle of full salvation would say now to these professing Christians, who are wresting his teachings "unto their own destruction."

The fact is, that the seventh chapter of Romans is a great parenthesis, thrown in between the sixth and the eighth, no doubt for the benefit of the Jews, as he says at the beginning, "For I speak to them that know the law." He does it to show the weakness of human effort under the law to give a satisfactory experience, either in saving from sin or satisfying the soul. Whether he meant us to understand that it was his actual experience, trying to obey God under the law without grace, or that he uses the first person singular simply as an illustration of one's experience in that condition, is immaterial; the lesson is the same. In the fifth verse of this same chapter he says: "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin (sinful passions, R. V.) which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." In the eighth chapter and eighth verse he tells us, "They that are in the flesh (unregenerate state) cannot please God." Here we have an explanation to the whole chapter. Coupling these statements with the thirteenth verse, where he says that sin worked death in him, shows beyond any question of doubt that he is describing the case of one "in the flesh" under the law. Not that he was in the flesh at the time of that writing, for he says, as just quoted, "For when we were in the flesh," showing here past experience. Being in the flesh, he had the experience of death worked in him, and, of course, could not please God. So in that condition he found evil present with him; the things that he hated he did; he was a wretched man, and cries out for deliverance.

{WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES / F. G. Smith}

A study of the entire chapter shows clearly that the apostle was describing his experience under the law of Moses, before he found Christ. He first speaks of his infantile state, when he was "alive without the law" - did not even know that the law said, "Thou shalt not covet." Afterward "when the commandment came" to him, he says, "sin revived, and I died." (see verses 7-13.) This law under which he was brought up was good in that it defined sin and revealed his condition as an actual sinner, but did not bring to him deliverance and salvation from sin; therefore he cried out, "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Then he obtained a ray of hope and answered the question himself: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (verses 24, 25).

This sin-experience was the experience of Saul, the man who zealously defended the law and persecuted the church of God; but immediately following we have, in his own words, the experience of Paul the Christian: "There is therefore NOW no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law [of Moses] could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending

his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1-4).

Reader, which do you desire, the experience of Saul, or the experience of Paul? After he found deliverance from sin through Christ, he taught that Christians are to live without sin. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:1,2). "For sin shall not have dominion over you: FOR YE ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW, BUT UNDER GRACE" (verse 14). This last text clears up the entire matter. Under the law sin had dominion over the people; under grace, God's people have dominion over sin.

{HALF HOURS WITH SAINT PAUL / Daniel Steele}

In Rom. 7:7-24 there is no term which implies the new birth, or spirituality. In the whole contest the Spirit does not appear on the field as one of the combatants. The "inward man" is not the new man, but the mind, including the aesthetical sensibilities which admire the beauty of holiness while repudiating its obligation.

The best scholarship discredits this chapter as the photograph of a regenerated man. The Greek Fathers, during the first three hundred years of church history, unanimously interpreted this scripture as describing a thoughtful moralist endeavoring without the grace of God to realize his highest ideal of moral purity. Augustine at first followed this interpretation, till in his collision with Pelagius.

{STUART'S COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS / Moses Stuart}

Now to what special end of the Apostle would it be here subservient, if we suppose him to be describing a state of grace in chapter 7. How does the contest in the breast of Christians against sin prove the inefficacy of the law to sanctify them? For to prove such an inefficacy, it must be admitted, is the general object of the present discourse. The fact is, that such statement would prove too much. It would show that grace is wanting in efficacy, as well as the law; for the Christian, being a subject of grace, and still keeping up such a contest, one might, of course, be tempted to say, 'It appears, then, that grace is no more cometenent than law, to subdue sin and sanctify the heart.' And, indeed, why might he not say this, if the ground of those who construe all this of the regenerate man be correct? For what is the real state of the whole matter as represented by the Apostle? It is, that in every contest here between the flesh and the spirit (the moral man) the former comes off victorious. And can this be a regenerate state? Is this the 'victory which is of God, and overcometh the world'? 'He that is born of God sinneth not'; those that love his law 'dono iniquity'; he that loveth Christ, 'keepeth his commandments'; i. e., a habitual and voluntary offender such an one is not; he gives not himself up to any course of sin; it is his habitual study and effort to subdue his passions and obey the commandments of God. But what of all this is there in the case which the Apostle represents in 7:14-25? Read now chapter 8:1-17, and then ask, Is the man described in 7:14-25, who yields in every instance to the assault of his passions and suffers them continually to triumph over

law, conscience, and every other consideration, such a man, or the same man, as is described in 8:1-17? In this latter passage the man is described, 'who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Can this, then, be the same man who does walk after the flesh, and always does this, even when the voice of God and conscience is thundering in his ears, and his own internal moral nature is warning him against the course he pursues? Impossible. Light and darkness are not more diverse than these two cases.

{MUST WE SIN? / Howard W. Sweeten}

I am always reminded, when I see the multitude trying to hide behind what they interpret as Paul's experience, of a certain passage of scripture which intimates that the length of the bed and the width of the cover is insufficient for the occupant's comfort. So when I see the multitude seeking rest, and trying to cover up their sins with this chapter, I say, alas, for the bed is too short and the cover is too narrow. When the chapter is properly interpreted it furnishes neither rest for the sinner, nor a camouflage for his sins. A futile attempt is made by some to prove from this chapter that Paul was a sinner by practice all his life; hence, they argue, inasmuch as he was wretched, and did what he would not, and was carnal, they never expect to be better than Paul.

To say the least, if these statements are a picture of Paul's experience as a Christian, they decidedly contradict his statements made elsewhere. In the sixth chapter he is triumphant, in the seventh wretched; in the eighth victorious, and in the seventh defeated. Such conflicting statements concerning a man's conduct, if referring to the same time in his life, would be repudiated as reliable testimony by any court in the world; these testimonies evidently do not refer to the experience of the apostle at one and the same time. Observe the statements in chapter seven. Verse 14, "I am carnal"; verse 15, "For that which I do I allow not"; verse 19, "For the good that I would I do not"; verse 23, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind"; verse 24, "Oh, wretched man that I am." Do these statements compare with those made in chapter six? "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin"; "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body"; "For sin shall not have dominion over you"; "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin."

Even the casual reader can see that these statements of chapter six are irreconcilable with those of chapter seven. We must therefore seek the proper solution; for rest assured, when Paul is properly understood he will not contradict himself. The only logical conclusion is, of course, that he is referring to his experience and the possibilities of grace at two different times in his life; and is showing, in chapter seven, his experience as Saul, the Hebrew. The seventh chapter of Romans is a kind of parenthetical chapter, thrown into this epistle, evidently for the benefit of the Jews, for "them that know the law," as you will note in the first verse of the chapter. Here the apostle is undoubtedly relating his experience as Saul of Tarsus, and not as Paul, the Christian, as is seen from the following. In all the chapter, neither God, nor Christ nor the Holy Spirit ever appear upon the field of action; they are not factors in the struggle. From the first to the last it is I-I-I, myself, and so on. This is never the way Paul speaks of his experience as a Christian; he invariably recognizes the companionship of Christ after his conversion. Hear him,

"Nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me: and the life I now live," etc. "I am crucified with Christ." "For to me to live is Christ," and so on. With these and many other like statements he shows the necessity of Christ to the Christian. "No man," as we once heard Dr. E. F. Walker say, "can live without a liver." The Christian's liver is, "Christ in you the hope of glory." What is the propelling power of Christianity? It is Christ in you the hope of glory. What is the secret of spiritual power? It is Christ in you. What is the secret of the victorious life? It is Christ in you, whom the apostle never once intimates that he possesses in this chapter.

As is plainly seen by verses four to seven, he is trying to persuade his brethren (the Jews) to accept Christ as the promised Messiah, the efficient Saviour; and proceeds to demonstrate, by his experience as Saul; the Hebrew of the Hebrews--a Pharisee (Phil. 3:25), his inability to measure up to his high ideals, and privileges of grace, as made possible through Christ. As Saul the Hebrew, he was only doing what thousands of ceremonial Christians are doing today, without an indwelling Christ; trying to be Christians without Christ; doing those things they would not, leaving undone the things they should do; carnal, sold under sin. "Oh, wretched man that I am," he continues, and so on.

Thank God, the story does not end in this dark final. Paul has found something better than ceremonial, Old Testament; he has found the better way, the new covenant, the victorious life (see Heb. 10:1-14); and climaxes his dark picture of Romans seven with the question, "Who shall deliver me?" "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," says he; and proceeds further in the eighth chapter to show his Jewish brethren in Rome the benefits of Christ to the lost and ruined race. He shows that wherein the law was weak, God, manifest in the flesh, in the person of His Son, came to condemn and deliver from sin. "There is, therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8 1). Reader, are you living in the experience of wretchedness, or have you found blessed deliverance?

These differences are plainly noticeable to all Bible students, and every reader can surely discern the differences between, and advantages of, Christianity over Judaism, of the new birth over ceremonial righteousness. Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin, was a devout Jew, thoroughly familiar with the customs, ceremonial and religious rites of Judaism; yet the new birth, as taught by and made possible in Christ, seemed to be an entirely new and unknown privilege to him. It would not do to say that they possessed no actual quality of righteousness in any degree, and that there were no righteous men except ceremonially; for undoubtedly there were many noble, honorable, religious characters whose fidelity to God, and faithfulness to their calling, made them to stand out on the pages of sacred history as beacon lights in dark places. To say the least, however, it must be generally conceded that they lived in a period of the world's history before the culmination of the great redemptive plan; and were not blest with such possibilities as are New Testament or new dispensation Christians living in the Pentecostal era.

If the Old Testament plan could have accomplished God's full purpose concerning the redemption of man, then the new plan need not have been inaugurated. Therefore, says

Paul, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." (See further Heb. 7:14-19; Heb. 13:9-12, and others.) These scriptures, and many others, simply show the advantages, the possibilities, and the opportunities, of the New Testament over those of the Old. The conflict of Romans seven is that of a Jew under the law, and is in sharp contrast to the possibilities of grace as shown in chapter eight.

{ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE OF THE ROMANS / W. H. Griffith Thomas}

There does not seem much doubt in the light of the entire passage from verse 7 that the Apostle has in view an unregenerate Jew, alive to the beauty and spirituality of the law of God, and yet only too conscious of his inability to live a life in accordance therewith. It is a picture of an unrenewed heart "under law," and this was the Apostle's own experience in his pre-Christian days. The law aroused his moral consciousness but could not provide him with the moral purpose. "It produced only a deeper sense of discord between duty and desire" (Garvie, Romans, p. 182). So is it always, and when the law of God is brought to bear upon an unregenerate and unrenewed heart it is intended to lead to the cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?"

{FRUIT UNTO HOLINESS / Dale M. Yocum}

I believe that in this chapter Paul was describing his own experience before he met Jesus. It describes his experience after he was convicted of the sin of his heart. There was a time in his own life when he discovered the principle of sin working within him. He became acquainted with the sin principle. But he was not yet acquainted with Jesus Christ. It describes his effort to gain victory over sin without the victory of Christ. From verse six to the end of the chapter, there is no reference to Jesus whatsoever. There is no reference to the Holy Spirit. There is no reference to the grace of God. There is no reference to victory at all. But there is reference to "I" fifty-two times! The law is referred to fifteen times; sin is referred to fifteen times. My dear friends, that does not describe the regenerated life! This is not the story of regenerated people who have Jesus living within them. This is a picture of constant defeat. This man is awakened to the presence of sin and he wants deliverance, but he has not found the way of deliverance.