

The Book of Romans

The Gospel of God

Romans 7:7-25

Q: How did the law, which is holy and good, come to be such a negative force in the history of salvation?

A: The power of Sin!

⁷ What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET."⁸ But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin *is* dead.⁹ I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died;¹⁰ and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me;¹¹ for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.¹² So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.¹³ Therefore did that which is good become death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

¹⁴ For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate.¹⁶ But if I do the very thing I do not want *to do*, I agree with the Law, *confessing* that the Law is good.¹⁷ So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not.¹⁹ For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.²⁰ But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

²¹ I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.

²² For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,²³ 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.²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

(Romans 7:7-25)

Who is the Wretched Man?

Romans 7:14-25

Who is the Wretched Man?

➤ Three Views:

1. Paul as a mature Christian
 - use of the present tense in v14-25
 - only a believer delights in God's law and seeks to obey; his "mind" is positive not corrupt
 - only a Christian possess an "inner man"
 - consistent with a believer's struggle (cf. Gal 5:16ff)
 - section ends with a summary of the divided state after the mention of deliverance

Who is the Wretched Man?

➤ Three Views:

2. Paul before his conversion
 - strong connection with "the flesh"
 - complete absence of the Holy Spirit in this struggle
 - "sold under sin" is not the state of a Christian (6:18)
 - believers are not "prisoners to the law of sin" (8:2)
 - this does not describe a struggle with sin but a complete defeat by sin
 - struggle to obey the "law" is not that of the Christian

Who is the Wretched Man?

➤ Three Views:

3. Paul as a "carnal" Christian
 - Paul does not describe the normal Christian life, but those who try to live as believers in the power of the flesh under the law
 - either "carnal" Christians or Jewish believers under the law and not under the Spirit

Who is the Wretched Man?

➤ Implications:

- Paul's essential teaching about the function and inability of the law remains the same
- the outcome of these various views is not as divergent as it might appear
- your view of Romans 7 does have some impact on how you view the Christian life

Who is the Wretched Man?

➤ My tentative approach:

- Paul represents the fallen human being confronted with the law
- Paul sets before us the image of our (fallen) selves that is reflected by the law – all humanity