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Romans 7:14-25

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.”

Many people today have been taught that this text describes the state of a Christian. And in the case of the author, Paul, even a mature Christian. The expectancy then, is that a Christian can never hope to overcome sin while in his body of flesh. He is a prisoner while in his body to the law of sin. Verse 19 says, “For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.”

The statements contained in today’s passage are often coupled with Romans 8:1, which proclaims, “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Without considering the context which surrounds this section of Scripture, many are lead to believe that Jesus will save a person even though he continues in sin. Hence the popular phrase: “I’m just a sinner saved by grace.”

But a study of the context surrounding the second half of Romans chapter 7 dispel such misunderstandings. For example, chapter 6 of Romans starts off with the following questions to Christians: “What are we to say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may increase?”

The resounding answer in verse 2 thunders, “May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” Yet the wretched man of Romans 7 is certainly living in sin. How can these things be compatible?

Notice in the first half of Romans 7, which leads into the description of the Romans 7 man, starts by saying in verse 5, “For while we were in the flesh . . .” Then in verses 7 through 11 Paul testifies how sin came into his life as a young person and separated him from God. Romans 7:14 then begins describing his lost condition: “I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.” The wretched man described in verses 14 through 25 regards a person’s condition before he becomes a Christian, not after. Otherwise the gospel is not good news at all!

So, if you claim to be a Romans 7 Christian, I urge you to study Romans chapters 6 and 8 very carefully. And come out of the darkness into the marvelous light of true New Testament Christianity.