

ROMANS 7:14-20

The Lordship of the Law!



**The Law and “I”
(Present) (Section I)**

ROMANS

7:14-25



INTRO & REVIEW

An excellent book for a detailed study of Romans 7 is Michael Middendorf's, *The "I" in the Storm: A Study of Romans 7* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 1997).

Dr. Middendorf draws the following poignant conclusion about the argument of Romans 7: In Romans 7, Paul decisively proves that his and our righteous standing before God cannot be either earned or maintained by obedience to the Law's command.

ROMANS

7:7-13



IN

REVIEW

In Romans 7:7-13, two key points emerge:

- 1) Paul expresses the “*destructive effect*” of the Law in exposing, convicting, and arousing sin. This is due to the fact that the “I”’s encounter with the divine commandment is no longer direct. Sin always stands in between and has fundamentally perverted “I”’s relationship to God’s Holy Commandment(s). This perversion is deceptive and deathly.**

However, the blame for this rests squarely upon sin and not upon the Law!

ROMANS

7:7-13



IN

REVIEW

In Romans 7:7-13, two key points emerge:

- 2) A recognition of death worked by sin is what God intended to accomplish by revealing the Law's commands. God's ultimate purpose in the Law is to show sin for what it truly is and to demonstrate, unequivocally, the need for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which accomplishes what the Law is never able to do (cf. 8:2-4; which we will study next week as "*Paul's Greatest Hinge!*").**

ROMANS

8:14-20



VERSE

14

“For we understand that the Law is Spiritual, but I am fleshly, having been sold and still under sin.” As with 7:1, Paul draws his hearers (even you, today) along with him by assuming their (your) agreement. In so doing, Paul provides further evidence that his rebuke of the question posed in v.13 was valid. Having stated the unavoidable fact that sin, through the Law’s commandment, results in death (v.13); Paul proceeds to elaborate further on the blamelessness of the Law in causing death. At the same time, Paul underscores why the Law is unable to overcome sin and death.

ROMANS

8:14-20



VERSE

14

“For we understand that the Law is Spiritual, but I am fleshly, having been sold and still under sin.”

With “the Law is Spiritual”, Paul refers, as he has already done (v.6), to the Spirit of God (i.e., The Holy Spirit). He unmistakably associates the Holy Spirit with the Law. This link, along with v.12, makes it clear that Paul will not permit the Law to be held accountable! The Law, in and of itself, is not a negative or evil force, neither is its influence limited merely to the old age of sin and death (3:31).

ROMANS

8:14-20



VERSE

14

“For we understand that the Law is Spiritual, but I am fleshly, having been sold and still under sin.”

On the contrary, the Law is a Spirit-filled entity that is intended for life (v.10). However, due to the fallen nature of the flesh, sin has ability to utilize the Law for its own fatal ends; your death! (vv. 8a, 11). You will then be confronted, next week, with Paul’s emphasis that the Law is not capable of overcoming sin and its condemning role!

ROMANS

8:14-20



VERSE

14

“For we understand that the Law is Spiritual, but I am fleshly, having been sold and still under sin.”

The Law’s inability stems from the fact that, in stark contrast to this Spirit-filled Law, *“I am fleshly...!”* “I” am composed of flesh, which is to say, “I” *“having been sold and still under sin”* expresses more than a flesh and blood person via creation. It refers to the fallen, sinful nature which “I” have inherited from Adam (cf. 5:12, 18). Thus, the “I” and you, have been sold into the slavery of sin and sin is again depicted as a personal force that takes hold of a man’s life and controls it.

ROMANS

8:14-20

“For we understand that the Law is Spiritual, but I am fleshly, having been sold and still under sin.”

**As the Formula of Concord
states:**

EPITOME

of the
Formula
of Concord

by
Jakob Andreae

“However, in the elect children of God this spontaneity is not perfect but is encumbered with great weakness, as St. Paul complains about himself in Rom. 7[:14-25] and Gal. 5[:17].”

**(FC Ep IV 13; Kolb and Wingert,
The Book of Concord, p. 497).**

VERSE

14

ROMANS

8:14-20



VERSE

15

“Indeed, I do not know what I am accomplishing. For what I will, this I am not practicing, but what I hate, this I do.”

This verse begins the description of v.14 as it introduces a situation which is repeated with various nuances in the verses to follow. It is important to notice that in each instance, the starting point is a saying on the contradiction of willing and doing.

ROMANS

8:14-20



VERSE

15

“Indeed, I do not know what I am accomplishing. For what I will, this I am not practicing, but what I hate, this I do.”

The crucial factor for understanding this verse is the sense of the Greek verb: *γινώσκω*. Does Paul mean that the “I” does not know what he does, or that he fails to understand *why* he does it? Both seem impossible; however, the “I” goes on to describe the very things he is and is not doing, and also indicates his own understanding of the reason why this is so (cf. vv.14, 17, 20). Neither does *γινώσκω* refer to mere “knowledge” gained by experience (as in v.7).

ROMANS

8:14-20



VERSE

15

“Indeed, I do not know what I am accomplishing. For what I will, this I am not practicing, but what I hate, this I do.”

In line with the motif of v.14, the “I” does not know the reason or the purpose of those actions which are determined by his enslaved flesh.

Additionally, to “acknowledge” or “approve” can be drawn from the Hebrew: *ed1y2*.

ROMANS

8:14-20



VERSE

15

“Indeed, I do not know what I am accomplishing. For what I will, this I am not practicing, but what I hate, this I do.”

The point at issue in this verse is performance in relation to the Law. The situation introduced virtually defies explanation. The “I” reveals that something gets in between ***“my willing and my doing.”*** Yet, the “I” is never depicted as two “I”’s in vv.15-25; nor do we have a dual or split personality. Rather, it is the same “I” each time -- the “I” ***“sold under sin”*** in its fleshliness, and the “I” as ***“the inner man.”*** Paul does not divide or separate the “I” from ***“the flesh.”***

ROMANS

8:14-20



VERSE

16

¹⁶ “But if what I do not will, this I do, I agree with the Law that [it is] excellent.”

The presence of the Law indicates that Paul continues to discuss the effects of the Law’s commandments upon the “I.” However, Paul’s chief interest in this verse is not to conclude his defense of the Law, but to show the agreement which exists between the will of the “I” and the Law.

ROMANS

8:14-20



VERSE

16

¹⁶ “But if what I do not will, this I do, I agree with the Law that [it is] excellent.”

In spite of this agreement, the sentence structure implies that what is described is actually happening. The same “I” whose will opposes the evil and agrees with the Law, at the very same time accomplishes that which is against both his will and the Law. Yet the “I” is aware that the Law is not to blame for his own inability to live according to its commands and to refrain from what it forbids.

ROMANS

8:14-20



VERSE

16

¹⁶ “But if what I do not will, this I do, I agree with the Law that [it is] excellent.”

The “I” affirms to the Law the highest quality of goodness! Paul’s chief interest, therefore, is not to conclude his defense of the Law, but to show the agreement which exists between the will of the “I” and the Law. In spite of this agreement, the sentence structure implies that what is described is actually happening!

ROMANS

8:14-20



VERSE

17

“And now I myself am not accomplishing it, but the sin which is dwelling in me.”

The “I” unmistakably identifies the source which leads him to do that which his will abhors and which is counter to the excellent (good) Law. It is described as *“the sin which is dwelling in me.”* This phrase indicates that the fault lies once again with sin, but it does not mean the “I” is innocent!

ROMANS

8:14-20



VERSE

18

“For I understand that good is not dwelling in me, this is, my flesh. Indeed, to will [what is excellent] lies close at hand for me, but the accomplishing of what is excellent, no.” In the first half of this verse, does not imply that there is a complete separation between the “I” and the flesh. Paul does not conceive of “flesh” as man’s “lower self” or as an aspect of men which has been merely weakened. Neither can Paul’s uses of flesh be restricted solely to the unbelieving state. In this context, the flesh (Old Adam) can appropriately be defined as the workshop of sin. *The flesh* denotes the whole fallen human nature, together with its unavoidable affections and ties to this fallen world.

ROMANS

8:14-20



“For I understand that good is not dwelling in me, this is, my flesh. Indeed, to will [what is excellent] lies close at hand for me, but the accomplishing of what is excellent, no.”

The flesh supports an identification of the “I” as a Christian; since, no such qualification would be necessary if Paul is speaking of an unbeliever!

VERSE
18

ROMANS

8:14-20



VERSE

18

“For I understand that good is not dwelling in me, this is, my flesh. Indeed, to will [what is excellent] lies close at hand for me, but the accomplishing of what is excellent, no.”

This last half of v.18 begins a new section in which Paul seeks to clarify the disparity which exists in the “I.” However, the Law does not drop from view. The conflict Paul has set up is between the “I”’s ability to will the good commanded by the Law and his inability to perform it. Thus both the excellent commands of the Law *and* the discrepancy in the “I” are present here and those verses that follow.

ROMANS

8:14-20



VERSES

19 & 20

Verses 19-20 further illustrate what has been said: ***“For I am not doing [the] good which I will, but [the] evil which I do not will, this I practice. ²⁰But if what I am not willing, this I do, I am not accomplishing it, but the sin which is dwelling in me.”***

There is perhaps too great a temptation to view these verses merely as repetition. It's important for you to see that the main difference between vv.14-17 and vv.18-20 is that the Law is not specifically mentioned in the latter. It's true that for Paul sin exercises its influence whether the Law is in view or not. However, in light of the unquestionable use of ***“the good”*** to refer to the Law in v.13, ***“the good”*** in v.19 certainly keeps the Law in view.

ROMANS

8:14-20



VERSES

19 & 20

“For I am not doing [the] good which I will, but [the] evil which I do not will, this I practice. ²⁰But if what I am not willing, this I do, I am not accomplishing it, but the sin which is dwelling in me.”

What stands out in these two verses is that the thing willed by the “I” is now identified explicitly as *“the good.”* Likewise, that which the “I” accomplishes against his determined will is identified as *“evil”* [and maybe a better translation would be *“wickedness”*] and attributed to *“sin which is dwelling in me”* (v.20).

ROMANS

7:21-25

Double Effects of the Law



**The Law and “I”
(Present) (Section II)**



ANY
QUESTIONS