

# ROMANS 7:21-23

# The Lordship of the Law!



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

ROMANS

7:21-23



VERSES

21-23

# THE DOUBLE EFFECTS OF THE LAW

*<sup>21</sup> “Consequently, I find the Law for me, the one who wills to do that which is excellent, that for me the evil lies close at hand. <sup>22</sup>Indeed, I delight with the Law of God according to the inner person. <sup>23</sup>But I see another Law in my bodily members waging war against the Law of my mind and taking me captive in the Law of the sin which is in my bodily members.”*



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## VERSE

21

***<sup>21</sup> “Consequently, I find the Law for me, the one who wills to do that which is excellent, that for me the evil lies close at hand.”***

**Paul draws his conclusion regarding this division between will and action in verse 21. The language of this verse reflects the following points**

**1) The repetition of “*for me*” clearly reveals that there is only one “I” who is enduring both of these opposite experiences;**

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VERSE

21

<sup>21</sup> *“Consequently, I find the Law for me, the one who wills to do that which is excellent, that for me the evil lies close at hand.”*

**2) The Greek verb that's translated as “...lies close at hand” is associated with the doing of evil. Its presence indicates that the inability to do good (v.18), as well as the failure to refrain from “evil”, are not the continuous, uninterrupted state of the “I”, and;**



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## VERSE

## 21

<sup>21</sup> *“Consequently, I find the Law for me, the one who wills to do that which is excellent, that for me the evil lies close at hand.”*

**3) While this verse has been interpreted as referring back to verses 7-13 or even as summarizing the entire chapter, this can't be the case! The “I” expresses that the determination of his will agrees with the excellent commands of the Law.**

**When prohibited from putting his will into action by “...*sin which is dwelling within me...*”, the “I” is distressed. The “I”'s fervent desire is to fulfill the excellent Law, but he constantly fails!**

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VERSE

21

***<sup>21</sup> “Consequently, I find the Law for me, the one who wills to do that which is excellent, that for me the evil lies close at hand.”***

**Thus, the continued battle is ongoing between the will of the “I” to refrain from evil and that which makes “I” unable to bring that will to fruition. “I” recognizes that the reason for this inability is his sinful flesh! No such struggle or conflict between will and action is present in vv.7-13; since, only sin, death, and deception came through the Law’s command. Here the “I” consistently expresses his willing conformity with the Law: ***“I find the Law for me...excellent...!”*****



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VERSE

22

<sup>22</sup> *“Indeed, I delight with the Law of God according to the inner person.*

**This verse provides for us the strongest evidence that Paul is addressing himself... the “I”, after his conversion!**

**The verb that Paul uses for “*delight with*” conveys that the “I” not only agrees with, but also joyfully accepts and rejoices in the God-given Law! “I” is striving to live according to God’s will...this only a believer can do!**

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VERSE

22

<sup>22</sup> *“Indeed, I delight with the Law of God according to the inner person.*

**Once again, from our Confessions, the Formula of Concord, the Solid Declaration:**

*“But after a man is converted, and thereby enlightened, and his will is renewed, then he wills that which is good, in so far as he is reborn or a new man, and he delights in the law of God according to his inmost self (Rom. 7[22].”*

**(FC SD II 63)**



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VERSE

22

<sup>22</sup> *“Indeed, I delight with the Law of God according to the inner person.*

**So, then, please read the following statement and can you tell me who wrote this?**

*“If you choose, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice.”<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>(Sirach 15:15; an intertestamental Jewish text, written by Joshua ben Sira, circa. 180 BC; showing the deep depravity of Pharisaicalism as written in the NRSV)

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VERSE

22

<sup>22</sup> *“Indeed, I delight with the Law of God according to the inner person.”*

**The phrase: “according to the inner person” is very crucial in identifying the “I” who joyfully agrees with the Law of God and it also provides evidence that Paul often employs terms which have significant backgrounds in Hellenistic (Greek) philosophy. Yet, please be aware, that this does NOT mean that Paul’s meaning is equivalent to the Greek definitions!**



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VERSE

22

<sup>22</sup> *“Indeed, I delight with the Law of God according to the inner person.”*

**What does Paul mean by the phrase: “...according to the inner person?”**

**In context, Paul is referring to the determined will of the “I” that denotes the “essential self” of the “I” which consistently agrees with and strives to accomplish the Law of God (v.21).**

**This “*inner person*” is only seen by faith (cf. 2 Cor. 5:7).**

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VERSE

22

<sup>22</sup> *“Indeed, I delight with the Law of God according to the inner person.”*

**What must we conclude about v.22?**

**Paul’s two uses of this phrase, “*the inner person*” elsewhere, (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16 and Col. 3:10), are undeniably restricted to Christians!**

**These passages strongly suggest that in v.22, Paul has in mind the “*inner person*” of man which has been transformed by God’s grace and so attempts to do God’s will!**



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VERSE

23

<sup>23</sup> *“But I see another Law in my bodily members waging war against the Law of my mind and taking me captive in the Law of the sin which is in my bodily members.”*

**Paul now adds a contrast! This verse is a valuable key to understanding Paul’s use of “*Law*.” The “I” reveals that, along with the Law of God in which the “*inner man delights*,” there is also “*another Law*” that is present...where?**

*“...in my bodily members...”*

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VERSE

23

***<sup>23</sup> “But I see another Law in my bodily members waging war against the Law of my mind and taking me captive in the Law of the sin which is in my bodily members.”***

**Yet, the Law is not merely present; it ACTIVELY engages you in doing what?**



***“...waging war... and  
“taking me captive...!”***



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VERSE

23

<sup>23</sup> ***“But I see another Law in my bodily members waging war against the Law of my mind and taking me captive in the Law of the sin which is in my bodily members.”***

**What does Paul, however, mean by “...another Law...?”**

**There are two very diverse senses:**

**1. At times, the Law refers to the commands of God which the “I” strives to do; then at other times,**

**2. Law also denotes a different “*standard*” or “*rule*” or “*power*.”**

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VERSE

23

***<sup>23</sup> “But I see another Law in my bodily members waging war against the Law of my mind and taking me captive in the Law of the sin which is in my bodily members.”***

**So Paul utilizes the “Law” in a metaphorical sense to describe the “power” exercised over the “I” by sin, which has invaded his members and usurped the proper place of God’s holy Law.**

**Thus, Paul establishes that God’s righteous requirements are present in the work of the Law that God has written on the heart and conscience of all people (1:18-32; 2:12-15; esp. v.15).**



# ROMANS

7:24-25



RESCUE  
&  
REASSESS-  
MENT

*<sup>24</sup> “O wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup>But thanks [be] to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Consequently then, on the one hand, I myself am a slave to the Law of God with my mind. But, on the other hand, with my flesh [I am a slave] to the Law of sin.”*

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7:24-25



RESCUE

&

REASSESS-

MENT

VERSE 24

<sup>24</sup> *“O wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”*

**In exasperation, the “I” finally laments that there must be One who can rescue...but Who?**

**Is it not clear that the “I” is Paul?**

**Yet, what is the definition of “*wretched?*”**

**Properly, *wretched* (beaten-down) from continued strain, leaving a person literally full of deep misery!**



# ROMANS

7:24-25



RESCUE  
&  
REASSESS-  
MENT

VERSE 24

<sup>24</sup> *“O wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”*

**Of what does this longed for deliverance consist?**

**The “I” cries out for rescue from “...*this body of death.*” The demonstrative pronoun “this” is best read with the entire phrase, which indicates that this phrase is referring to vv. 10, 11, and 13.**

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## 7:24-25



RESCUE  
&  
REASSESS-  
MENT

VERSE 24

***24 “O wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”***

**But this cry does not refer to a longing for physical death. Paul does not look for an escape from the body, but, rather, a redemption of it (cf. 8:11,23; 1 Cor. 15). This is known by his use of the Greek word: σώματος (*body*: in contrast to σάρξ: the *fleshly body*...in other words...a body free from sin)! So the “I” calls out for rescue from the *‘fleshly, sold under sin’* condition which leads to endless contradiction, endless warfare, and endless struggle between his will and sin.**



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RESCUE  
&  
REASSESS-  
MENT

VERSE 24

*<sup>24</sup> “O wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”*

**Therefore, Paul is speaking of an eschatological or theological tension, not an anthropological one (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16 – 5:4). The presence of the eschatologically nuanced “*rescue*” (or “*deliver*”) as well as its future tense, indicate that this “*rescue*,” or at least its final fulfillment, is still in the future.**

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## 7:24-25



RESCUE  
&  
REASSESS-  
MENT

VERSE 25A

***<sup>25</sup>But thanks [be] to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Consequently then, on the one hand, I myself am a slave to the Law of God with my mind. But, on the other hand, with my flesh [I am a slave] to the Law of sin.”***

**The first sentence of this verse responds immediately to this apparently unsolvable dilemma with the concise statement: “*But thanks [be] to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*”**



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## 7:24-25



RESCUE  
&  
REASSESS-  
MENT

VERSE 25A

***<sup>25</sup>But thanks [be] to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Consequently then, on the one hand, I myself am a slave to the Law of God with my mind. But, on the other hand, with my flesh [I am a slave] to the Law of sin.”***

**The very close parallel of 1 Cor. 15:57 indicates that the “I” longs for the final fulfillment of his being united with  
“Jesus Christ our Lord”  
in his bodily resurrection.**

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RESCUE  
&  
REASSESS-  
MENT

VERSE 25B

***<sup>25b</sup>Consequently then, on the one hand, I myself am a slave to the Law of God with my mind. But, on the other hand, with my flesh [I am a slave] to the Law of sin.”***

**The latter portion of v.25, the “I” turns from his brief, but intense, anticipation of his future deliverance... to the realities of “I”’s present, continuing situation. This same pattern also occurs in 1 Cor. 15:57-58.**



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RESCUE  
&  
REASSESS-  
MENT

VERSE 25B

***<sup>25b</sup>Consequently then, on the one hand, I myself am a slave to the Law of God with my mind. But, on the other hand, with my flesh [I am a slave] to the Law of sin.”***

**One must take note that, as it stands, v.25b is an embarrassment to those who see in v.24 the cry of an unconverted man who, in verse 25a, has received deliverance from the situation depicted in verses 13-24. As a result, numerous attempts have been made to alter this text.**

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RESCUE

&

REASSESS-

MENT

VERSE 25B

***<sup>25b</sup>Consequently then, on the one hand, I myself am a slave to the Law of God with my mind. But, on the other hand, with my flesh [I am a slave] to the Law of sin.”***

**25b clearly reveals that in this battle, the Law hits the “I” in two ways: First, as reflected in the “I”’s desire to serve the Law, is that which determines and directs his “will,” “mind,” and “inner man.” Secondly, sin continues to work in the “sold under sin” flesh (v. 14). There sin, “through that which is good” (v. 13), is able to effect what it exclusively accomplished in verses 7-13.**



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RESCUE  
&  
REASSESS-  
MENT

VERSE 25B

*<sup>25b</sup>Consequently then, on the one hand, I myself am a slave to the Law of God with my mind. But, on the other hand, with my flesh [I am a slave] to the Law of sin."*

**Sin, "through the commandment" (v.13), continues to identify sin "in my members" (v.23), to provoke sin "in my flesh" (v.18) and to bring about death (v.13) in the limited sense of making this a "body of death" (v.24). Verse 25b, then, depicts a warfare which lasts until the defeat of your last enemy:**

**DEATH!**



# ROMANS

## 7:24-25



**CONCLUSION**



(διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν).





ANY  
QUESTIONS

# Paul's Greatest Hinge!

ROMANS 7:14-25

TO

ROMANS 8:1-4

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Week