

Paul's Letter to the Romans:



THE PINNACLE OF
CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

What the Law Doesn't Do Well, It Doesn't Do At All...¹ Romans 7:14-25

^{NIV} **Romans 7:14...**We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-- this I keep on doing. ²⁰Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. ²¹So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²²For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. ²⁴What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵Thanks be to God-- through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

St. Augustine changed his mind.² He started out believing that the man described in Romans 7:14-25 was Paul prior to his conversion, However, by the time he had become an old man, he had changed his mind and taken the position that Romans 7:14-25 was instead, a description of a Christian Apostle Paul. In his famous book, *The Retractions*, a book written near the end of his life explaining where and why he had changed his mind theologically over the course of his life, Augustine wrote this.

In the beginning, I certainly did not want this *passage* applied personally to the Apostle who was already spiritual, but rather to *someone* living under the Law and not yet under grace...so I argued that the passage describes a man still under the Law, not yet living under grace who wishes to do good, but, overcome by the lust of the flesh, does evil.³

But that was Augustine in the beginning and is not where he wound up. After doing battle with Pelagius for a number of years and putting the Pelagians to flight, Augustine wrote this.

In those books which we have published against *the Pelagians*, we have also shown that these words are better understood of the spiritual man already living under grace, even though the body of the flesh is not yet spiritual, but will be at the resurrection of the dead.⁴

That was Augustine's way of saying, **"I used to think Romans 7 was a description of Paul before he was saved. Now I think it describes as a saved man living in conflict."**

Now, I have to tell you it was a big deal for Augustine to change his mind. Luther thought Augustine's change of heart regarding the identity of the man in Romans 7:14-25 was big enough that he dedicated a couple of paragraphs to it in his own commentary on Romans. Listen to this quote he includes from one of Augustine's more obscure writings:

"Note that it is not, as you think, some Jew who is speaking, but...the apostle Paul is speaking of himself when he says, **'I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, etc.'**"⁵

Now, unless you think that I am making more of Augustine changing his mind than I ought let me add that even Calvin also mentions the fact in his commentary on Romans. He wrote this:

But Paul, as I have said already, does not here set before us simply the natural man, but in his own person describes what is the weakness of the faithful, and how great it is. *Augustine* was for a time involved in the common error; but after having more clearly examined the passage, he not only retracted what he had falsely taught, but...proves, by many strong reasons, that what is said cannot be applied to any but to the regenerate.⁶

Now that leads me to ask the question, **“What was it that caused Augustine to change his mind?”** The answer to that question is simple enough I think. In fact, Augustine pretty well spells the answer out when he mentions his conflict with Pelagius. You see Pelagius held that there was no way that Paul could possibly be describing himself. The reason I know that it what he held is because I have read his commentary. Yes, believe it or not Pelagius wrote a commentary on Romans and to this point in our study I have not referred to it even once but I am going to now. I am doing that with an implicit understanding that you will not tell anybody else outside of the crowd that is here that you actually heard me or anybody else here at APC quote from Pelagius’ commentary on Romans. Anyway, here’s what he says:

Grace (and by grace he means enlightenment through the Bible and not God’s kindness) sets free the one whom the law could not have set free. Was Paul then not yet set free by the grace of God? This shows that the apostle is speaking in the person of someone else, not in his own person.⁷

So what you see here, and I think this fairly obvious, is that on the one side there are Augustine, Luther and Calvin saying that the man in Romans 7:14-25 is Paul and not just Paul but Paul the Apostle, not pre-conversion Paul or Paul as a representative Jew but Paul, really and truly, and not just Paul but Paul in his full spiritual maturity. What you have on the other side is Pelagius the heretic says, **“There is no way Paul would have ever described himself as a man sold under**

sin. Therefore Paul is using the word "I" as if he is speaking for someone else or in an unconverted state."

Now, obviously, that demonstrates that the argument has been settled and that there is really nothing else to talk about. A person must chose between the **"Reformed perspective"** of Augustine, Luther and Calvin or the **"heretical perspective"** of Pelagius. As a matter of fact, the elders are going to pass around two clipboards and allow each of you to sign in and show your support for either one of these two positions.

Well, of course, we are not going to really do that and of course, the fact that Augustine, Luther and Calvin agree on a position does not necessarily mean that it is right. Oh, it probably means it is right but it doesn't necessarily have to be right. Of course, and I do not want to be quoted on this at all, the fact that Pelagius held a particular view does not necessarily mean that it is wrong. Oh, it probably means it wrong but that doesn't mean that it has to be wrong. The issue is, **"Does the view that you hold fairly reflect what the text says and does it fit into the overall argument and structure of the book without contradicting the Bible or some other clearly stated theological proposition?"**

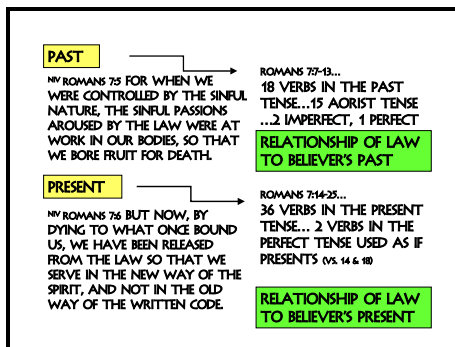
Now my view, the view I should add of Augustine, Ambrose, Luther, Calvin, Edwards, Warfield, Hodge, Shedd, Machen, Bruce, Cranfield, Dunn, Barnhouse, Boice, Sproul, Danner and others, does that. But, and listen to me carefully here, and I tempted to stop the tape back at the back, the view of Pelagius here and a whole host of other commentators who hold the opposite view here may also do that. So this is one of those places, and there may be many such places, where we can show a bit of charity in our interpretation.

Now, the last time we were together I spent an inordinate amount of time explaining how I thought Romans 7:5-6 offered a preview of what follows in Romans 7:7-13 and in Romans 7:14-25. What I said then was this. Romans 7:5 is about the past and is expanded in Romans 7:7-13 as Paul talks about the inability of the law to justify. Romans 7:6, on the other hand, is about the present and is expanded in 7:14-25 as Paul talks about the inability of the law to sanctify. Now this past/present distinction is not anything that I am making up or forcing on the text.

In Romans 7:7-13, there are 18 verbs and all of them are past tense verbs. And almost every commentator makes note of that fact, regardless of which position they hold. Now the reason they make note of that fact is because almost every single commentator holds that the description there is of Paul's or someone else's past spiritual condition. In that regard there is not really even any debate that Paul is talking about either his experience before conversion or he is talking about Israel's experience before conversion or he is talking about their common experience.

Now, that is not the case when we come to Romans 7:14-25. You would think that it would be especially in light of the fact that there is such a dramatic change in the tense of the verbs that are being used. **In Romans 7:14-25, Paul doesn't use any past tense verbs** (actually there is one perfect tense participle but it is used in the context of a present reality, that is I am unspiritual *having been sold* under sin) **instead, he uses only present tense verbs. It is fairly noticeable in light of the fact that there are 38 verbs in just 12 verses and all of them are in the present tense** (actually, two of them are perfect tense verbs used as presents⁸, that is they are perfect in form but presents in meaning).⁹ Now I want you to think about

that. If someone were telling you something and using only past tense verbs and then suddenly switched to only present tense verbs what would naturally think had happening? Well, you would think that they had been talking about the past but then they switched over and started talking about the present.



And that is, of course, the primary reason that so many commentators believe that the person that Paul is describing here is Romans 7:14-25 is himself and a mature, Christian Apostle Paul at that. In other words, they argue that Paul described himself prior to his conversion in 7:7-13 and that now in 7:14-25 describes himself after his conversion and this then is his conclusion, **“The law couldn’t justify me or declare me to be righteous before I was a believer and now that I am a believer, it still doesn’t have the power to sanctify me or grow me in my actual righteousness.”**

Now that is the view that I hold in this passage and in case I forget to say it plainly the rest of the way let me just spit out here. Those that disagree with the view that Paul is describing himself here as a mature Christian struggling with sin have to wind up saying that although Paul uses a whole bunch of present tense verbs here, he is really describing a past experience. Now to be fair to that position, I do have to admit that does sometimes happen in the Greek New Testament. In fact, it’s a pretty common occurrence in the gospels. Grammarians

even have a technical term to describe it. They call it the **“historical present”** use of the present tense and what they mean by that is that the writer describes a past event using a present tense verb to make it especially vivid to his readers.¹⁰

Now if you will allow me to digress for just a minute I want to show you just such an example of the use of an historical present in the Gospel of John. Look at John 4:7.

NIV John 4:7...When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"

BNT John 4:7...ἔρχεται (is coming) γυνή ἐκ τῆς Σαμαρείας ἀντλήσαι ὕδωρ. λέγει (is saying) αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· δός μοι πεῖν·

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Now you cannot see this in English but you can trust me on this, the two verbs **“come”** and **“say”** are both in the present tense in Greek. Literally, the translation goes something like this, **“A woman of the Samaritans is coming to draw water. Jesus is saying to her, ‘Give me to drink.’”** Do you see how that makes the scene more dramatic? Of course, the English translators don’t translate it using present tense verbs even though they are present tense verbs in Greek. They don’t do that because they are trying to tell it the way we tell stories in English. But John is using the present tense here to involve his readers in the story. To help them **“see”** the events almost like he is playing a video for them.

Commentators that argue that Paul is describing his or someone else's pre-conversion experience here say that that is what he is doing in Romans 7:14-25.¹¹ But to keep on going with so many present tense verbs even when using them as "**historical presents**" would be very, very unusual. Listen to what Charles Cranfield says about that:

Against these views the use of present tenses throughout vv. 14—25 weighs heavily; for the use of the present is here sustained too consistently and for too long and contrasts too strongly with the past tenses characteristic of vv. 7—13 to be at all plausibly explained as an example of the present used for the sake of vividness in describing past events which are vividly remembered.¹²

And listen to J.I. Packer:

Paul's shift from the past tense to the present in verse 14 has no natural explanation save that he now moves on from talking about his experience with God's law in his pre-Christian days to talking about his experience as it was at the time of writing.¹³

In other words, the switch from the past tense verbs in 7:7-13 to the present tense verbs in 7:14-25 is so overstated that it is even more dramatic than using present tense verbs to describe something in the past.

Now, of course, there are other arguments for both positions. That is, there are other arguments that do support the idea that Paul is describing the time before his conversion here and there are other arguments that support the idea that he is describing his spiritual condition after his conversion.

Now what I would like to do is go through the verses themselves in the remaining time we have together and look at each verse and see how it tends to support one position over another and so on. But even before I do that I want to

take a minute and answer the question, **“Now why it that it matters in the first place?”**

You see it is one thing to argue that Paul is describing his pre-conversion life in Romans 7:14-25 but it is another issue to say that the modern Christian doesn't have a proper view of his conversion and is, in fact, living in defeat when he sees himself in Romans 7 and ought to see himself rightly as in Romans 6 and buck up and act like the child of God that he is.

It is one thing to say Romans 7:14-25 describes Paul's post-conversion experience but it is another thing altogether if we use it to discourage people in their spiritual growth and pursuit of holiness by painting a picture of the Christian life that is altogether too dark or too dismal or too discouraging.

You see it matters whether Romans 7:14-25 is a description of Paul before or after becoming a Christian because which view you hold can determine whether or not you think conflict he talks about there is reflective of a normal, healthy Christian life or reflective of an abnormal, fearful, sub-Christian life.

You see if Paul is describing his life and struggle as a mature Christian then perhaps we ought to expect a much bigger and longer battle than what we normally tend to expect. Perhaps we ought to view the Christian life as an endless, ongoing conflict and perhaps we ought to instruct our gentlest and most demure women that they too are to take up arms against the sin that indwells them and to bite and scratch against sin all the days of their lives. Perhaps, we ought to instruct “new Christians” that holy living is hard and that it means we have to apply ourselves to battle knowing that we must rely in the end on the

Spirit of God to do what we cannot. Listen to what J.C. Ryle says especially regarding this view of Romans 7 and the battle for our ongoing sanctification.

...let us not expect too much from our own hearts here below. At our best we shall find in ourselves daily cause for humiliation, and discover that we are needy debtors to mercy and grace every hour. The more light we have, the more we shall see our own imperfection. Sinners we were when we began, sinners we shall find ourselves as we go on: renewed, pardoned, justified— yet sinners to the very last. Our absolute perfection is yet to come, and the expectation of it is one reason why we should long for heaven.¹⁴

On the other hand, if Paul is describing his struggle prior to being a Christian perhaps we ought to take a much brighter view of our sanctification. Perhaps, we ought to lay down some of our **“worm-theology status”** as one famous preacher put it and relax and enjoy our status a bit and realize who we are and having recognized who we are simply live in light of our new identity and let God work out our sanctification without so much fear and trembling.¹⁵

Anyway that is why it matters one way or another. If Paul struggled we probably ought to expect to struggle too. If Paul’s salvation was so complete and so radically transforming that he experienced very little a struggle, then perhaps we ought to renew our understanding and expectation of what our regeneration actually involves and what it ought to look like.¹⁶ Of course, it may be that those two options, either **“worm-theology”**¹⁷ or **“the continual victorious Christian life”** are not the only two options. Perhaps, it is never all one way or the other. Perhaps when we are feeling self-assured and pompous a little **“worm-theology”** is a good thing. Perhaps, when we are down and out and down in the mouth about our spiritual progress, perhaps it is a good thing to be reminded that we are new creatures in Christ and that that is how we are to view ourselves.

Anyway, that is why it matters. That having been said, let's get at last to the text.

^{NIV} **Romans 7:14**...We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

This verse in particular is the verse that is most compelling to those that say Paul has to be speaking of his pre-conversion experience. The reason for that is pretty obvious. In chapter 6, Paul made the point that the Christian is no longer a slave to sin. In fact, and I hammered this as repetitively as I knew how when we were there, Paul went to great lengths to show that we have been transferred out from under the slavery of sin and placed over under the reign of grace and have been made "**slaves to obedience**" or better "**slaves to God**" and the end result of all that was that we are to think of ourselves as "**dead to sin.**"

^{NIV} **Romans 6:17**...But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. ¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

In fact, those two verses alone led Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who to my mind is without question the great preacher of the twentieth century, to say this:

It is really astonishing that anyone who has worked carefully through chapter 6 could conceivably say that in chapter 7, verses 13–25 describe the regenerate man at the height of his experience.¹⁸

And you know, he has a point. Clearly the major point of Romans 6 was to get the Romans to think about themselves rightly. But if Paul wanted them only to think high and lofty thoughts alone he sort of dampened that possibility a bit when he added verse 19. You see it adds a bit of somber realization to this wonderful positional reality that we have only begun to experience.

^{NIV} **Romans 6:19**...I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves.

Do you see what I mean? You see if the reality of having been transferred from being slaves to sin to being slaves to righteousness is completely over and done it would not have been necessary to add that he thought they were weak in their natural selves. Now I think he added that phrase because he had to ratchet down his argument to their spiritual level, which means they weren't completely delivered from the presence of sin and error, which means they were still caught in the battle between what will be and what currently is.

Besides, later in this very paragraph where we are Paul does come right out and say that he was experiencing two slaveries at the same time. Look down to verse 25 where Paul answers the question, **“Who shall deliver me from the body of death?”**

^{NIV} **Romans 7:25**...Thanks be to God-- through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Now it seems really unlikely to me that Paul is saying that being a **“slave to God's law”** and being a **“slave to the law of sin”** are the same thing and to me, unless he means them to be the same thing, that fact alone is pretty decisive. Now it is not especially decisive because it proves that this speaking of his post-conversion state but rather because it poses the possibility that a man can be a slave, in at least some sense, to two realms at the same time. Regardless of what a person sees being taught in the previous passages, this passage teaches that Paul thought of himself, at least at this one point, as being a slave in two pretty distinct camps. Now, there are some commentators who even try to get rid of this problem by moving the second part of verse 25 up in front of verse 24. They want to so that so they can then say, **“Well, starting in verse 24, Paul is**

describing the believer but until then unbelievers” which is something they cannot do with the second part of verse 25 where it is.

NIV ROMANS 7:23...BUT I SEE ANOTHER LAW AT WORK IN THE MEMBERS OF MY BODY, WAGING WAR AGAINST THE LAW OF MY MIND AND MAKING ME A PRISONER OF THE LAW OF SIN AT WORK WITHIN MY MEMBERS. ²⁴WHAT A WRETCHED MAN I AM! WHO WILL RESCUE ME FROM THIS BODY OF DEATH? ²⁵ THANKS BE TO GOD-- THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD! SO THEN, I MYSELF IN MY MIND AM A SLAVE TO GOD'S LAW, BUT IN THE SINFUL NATURE A SLAVE TO THE LAW OF SIN.

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Now most commentators are not intellectually dishonest that way. Douglas Moo keeps verse 25 where it is and still argues that Paul is describing an unregenerate man here.¹⁹ Now, I don't see how he can do that but I know he would say the same thing about my seeing verse 14 as applying to a believer.

Anyway the rest of the verses don't cause much problem for either view, with a few notable exceptions. Now one thing I do want you to notice is that there is an obvious repetition going on between verses 14-17 and verse 18-20. Look first at verse 14.

NIV Romans 7:14...We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.

I take it that when Paul says the law is spiritual, he is saying that it is altogether right, just and good. In other words, it is from God. On the other hand, he is saying that he is not altogether right, just and good. Now that does not mean that he is altogether sinful but rather that he is still influenced by sin. The word “**slave**” is not actually there in the Greek but it is certainly implied and does not make the NIV translation here particularly wrong or poor. I mention that because neither the KJV, the ESV or the NASB include the word slave.

Now the main thing I want you to notice is that Paul’s conclusion in all of this is that the law is good but is not able to evoke a change in him adequate to help him actually obey the law. That point seems clear regardless of whether you view Paul here as saved or unsaved.²⁰ The law is not sinful but it is powerless to change the sinner, even the redeemed sinner.

Now look at verse 18.

^{NIV} **Romans 7:18**...I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-- this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

Now verses 18-20 repeat almost exactly the same idea as verses 14-17 with one exception. The focus is not on the fact that the law is good but that indwelling sin is bad and that whatever desire there is in this person to do good is unable to overcome the strength of that indwelling sin.

Now I should add one other thing. Paul seems to be making a clear distinction here between the fact that part of him has “**nothing good dwelling in it**” and part of him not only knows the good but also has a real desire to do what is

good. Now I think the position that sees Paul describing himself as a Christian in Romans 7:14-25 makes a really good point here when it argues that Paul did not seem to view himself in his pre-conversion state in other verses as suffering from this same kind of struggle. In fact, if you read Philippians 3, Paul seemed to have all the spiritual confidence in the world.

^{NIV} **Philippians 3:3**...For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh-- ⁴ though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

But that confidence, that apparent self-assuredness concerning his own righteousness seems to be missing here in Romans 7. Of course, those holding the other view could say that the uncertainty was just as present in Philippians 3 but that it was under wraps, which is something I do not see at all. You see I think Augustine's point here is very important. Listen to what he says:

It's one thing, after all, not to lust; another not to go after one's lusts. Not to lust is the mark of the altogether perfect person; not to go after one's lusts marks the person who is fighting.²¹

And it seems to me that is Paul's point. He is struggling here not just with sin and not just with righteousness but with both. Now I have to tell you that I find it very hard to see an unconverted man delighting in his **"inner being"** in God's law but that is what Paul is getting ready to say. In fact, I find it hard to believe that a sinful man could do anything other than despise the law of God. Oh, I recognize the fact that the nation of Israel viewed the law as it's great treasure but I am not talking about superficial allegiance. There is plenty of that in our

own country over this flap in Alabama with the Ten Commandments. I am talking about in the heart. In fact, in the very next chapter Paul is going to say this:

^{NIV} **Romans 8:6...**The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; ⁷ the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

But that is not what Paul says is happening in him. No, he finds something else altogether happening. He finds that he loves the law of God only he cannot perform the law of God. Look at it with me starting in verse 21.

^{NIV} **Romans 7:21...**So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God-- through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Now I need to conclude here and let some of you make your objections but as I do I want to make four applications based on the fact that I understand Paul to be saying that the law does not have the power to lead us on in our sanctification and that that is evidenced even a life as wonderfully used of God as his own. I have borrowed these applications from James Boice.²²

- 1) God has called us as Christian people to a lifetime struggle against sin.**
- 2) That although we are called to this enduring struggle we will never make much headway apart from the Holy Spirit or apart from the community of faith.**

- 3) **When we do make headway in our sanctification, we are not doing better than we ought but only what we ought and are therefore still unprofitable servants.**
- 4) **We are to go on fighting and struggling against sin, and we are to do so using the tools made available to us, chiefly prayer, Bible study, Christian fellowship and encouragement, service to others and the sacraments.**
- 5) **Finally, it is important to remember that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the Day of Christ Jesus.**

Lets pray.

¹ Most of the logic of this lesson came from my beloved brother, Larry Danner. He, really more than any one commentator helped me to notice the pattern of vs. 5-6 and how the thoughts contained there are expanded in the following two sections.

² Augustine, *The Retractions i.xxii.i.* from the Fathers of the church series volume 60. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1968), 96-98. Augustine writes, "While I was still a priest, we who were in Carthage at the same time happened to read the Epistle of the Apostle to the Romans and, after I, to the best of my ability, replied to certain questions asked me by some of my brethren, they wanted my reply put into writing rather than merely spoken. When I yielded to them, another book was added to my previous works.

In this book I said: "However, what he says, 'We know that the Law is spiritual; but I am carnal, adequately shows that the Law can be fulfilled only by spiritual men, the kind that the grace of God transforms." I certainly did not want this applied personally to the Apostle who was already spiritual, but to the man living under the Law but not yet under grace." For prior to this time, in this way I understood these words which, at a later date, after I had read certain commentators on the Sacred Scriptures whose authority moved me, I reflected upon this more deeply and I saw that his own words can also be understood about the Apostle himself: "We know that the Law is spiritual; but I am carnal." To the best of my ability, I have carefully showed this in those books which I recently wrote about the Pelagians. In that book, then, and in the words, "but I am carnal," and then in what follows up to the place where he said: "Unhappy man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord," I said that this describes the man still under the Law, not yet living under grace who wishes to do good, but, overcome by the lust of the flesh, does evil. Only the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord" by the gift of the Holy Spirit frees from the domination of this lust, and the charity...poured forth in our hearts" through Him conquers the lusts of the flesh lest we yield to them to do evil but rather that we may do good. Hence, then, the Pelagian heresy is now overthrown, which maintains that the charity whereby we live righteously and devoutly is not [poured forth] from God in us, but from ourselves. But in those books which we have published against them, we have also showed that these words are more correctly understood also of the spiritual man already living under grace, because of the body of the flesh which is not yet spiritual, but will be at the resurrection of the dead; and because of the very lust of the flesh with

which saintly persons are in conflict in such a way that, though they do not yield to it and do evil, yet in this life, they are not free from those movements which they resist by fighting against them. They will not have them, however, in that life where “death” will be swallowed up “in victory.” Therefore, because of this lust and its movements which we resist in such a way that, nevertheless, they are in us, every saintly person already living “under grace” can say all those things which I have said are the words of the man not yet living “under grace,” but “under the Law.” It would take too long to explain this here and I have mentioned where I have explained it.”

³ Ibid, 96.

⁴ Ibid, 97.

⁵ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans* in *Luther's Works, Vol. 25*, translated and edited by J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972; reprinted 1999), from the Scholia 7:7. Taken from Augustine's *Against Julianum*.

⁶ John Calvin, *Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 264.

⁷ Pelagius, *Pelagius's Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, translated by Theodore De Bruyn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 105.

⁸ Daniel B. Wallace, *Basics of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1993), 382.

⁹ C.K. Barrett, *Romans: The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1957), 146.

¹⁰ Ernest DeWitt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1976; reprinted 1978), 9.

¹¹ It is interesting that whole Douglas Moo (a fabulous commentator and the best proponent of 7:14-25 as Paul's pre-conversion experience) notes that the use of the present tense is one of the primary reasons for holding that Paul is speaking of himself here as post-conversion doesn't not really deal with the issue of tenses. His argument is more contextual that grammatical.

¹² C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans: Volume 1, Introduction and Commentary on Romans 1-8* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975; reprint, 1992), 344-5.

¹³ J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1984), 143-4.

¹⁴ J.C. Ryle, *Holiness: It's Nature, Hindrances Difficulties and Roots*, (Moscow, Idaho: Charles Nolan Publishers, 1877; reprinted and enlarged in 1879; reprinted by Charles Nolan in 2001), 39-40.

¹⁵ David Needham, *Birthright: Christian Do you Know Who You Are?* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1979; reprinted 1983), 47. He writes: “But there is one serious error — a tragic

flaw. An error that pervades dozens of popular books on the Christian life. I wish I could shout these next lines around the world! A Christian is not simply a person who gets forgiveness, who gets to go to heaven, who gets the Holy Spirit, who gets a new nature. Mark this — a Christian is a person who has become someone he was not before. A Christian, in terms of his deepest identity, is a SAINT, a born child of God, a divine masterpiece, a child of light, a citizen of heaven. Not only positionally (true in the mind of God but not true in actuality here on earth), not only judicially (a matter of God's moral bookkeeping), but ACTUALLY. Becoming a Christian is not just getting something, no matter how wonderful that something may be. It is becoming someone."

¹⁶ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* in the New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 448. He writes: "Each of these expressions depicts an objective status, and it is difficult to see how they can all be applied to the same person in the same spiritual condition without doing violence to Paul's language. In chapters 6 and 8, respectively, Paul makes it clear that "being free from under sin" and being free from the law of sin and death" are conditions that are true for every Christian. If one is a Christian, then these things are true; if one is not, then they are not true. This means that the situation depicted in vv. 14-25 cannot be that of the "normal" Christian, nor of an immature Christian. Nor can it describe the condition of any person living by the law because the Christian who is mistakenly living according to the law is yet a Christian and is therefore not "under sin" or a "prisoner of the law of sin." Other points are significant also — the lack of mention of the Spirit, the links with 7:5 and 6:14, and the connections between vv. 7-12 and 13-25 but I think these arguments are the most important."

¹⁷ Charles Swindoll, *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*, (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1983), 247.

¹⁸ D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Romans: Exposition of Chapter 7* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1973; reprinted 1974), 241.

¹⁹ Moo, 466, note 86.

²⁰ Moo, 456, 467. Even Moo who holds that Paul is speaking of an unregenerate man holds this to be true.

²¹ Augustine, Sermons III/5 (148-183) on the New Testament translated by Edmund Hill (New Rochelle, New York: New City Press, 1992), 71. See also in the same sermon on page 73. "You see, it's not a case of it's being me in the mind, someone else in the flesh. But what is the case? *I myself therefore*; because it's I myself in the mind, I myself in the flesh. It's not a case, you see, of two opposed natures, but of one human being made from each nature; because it is one God by whom humanity was made. *I myself therefore*, I myself, *with the mind serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin* (Rom 7:25). With the mind I do not consent to the law of sin; but for all that, I would much rather there wasn't any law of sin in my members. So because I would much rather not, and yet all the same there is: *it is not what I want to that I do*; because I lust, and don't want to, *it is not what I want to that I do; but what I hate, that is what I carry out*. What do I hate? Lusting. I hate lusting, and yet I do it, with the flesh, not the mind. *What I hate, that is what I carry out*."

²² James Montgomery Boice, *Romans Volume 2: Reign of Grace, Romans 5-8* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 766-769.