

"This is a Discussion on Romans 7: 14-25"

The reason I am doing this discussion is because I was asked to by a Christian brother. He said he had asked several others to do this for him, but they had all refused.

I had already spent lots of hours studying these verses, because I had heard many preachers and teachers referring to different verses in this chapter, to point out different problems that Paul was experiencing, in trying to live the Christian life. But while I was listening to them, the words of Paul in other letters that he had written would run through my mind that did not harmonize with what these preachers and teachers were saying about Paul in Rom. 7:14-25. First we need to give the view that most preachers and teachers give on these twelve verses: they believe that Paul was describing how difficult it was and how wretched it was to live the Christian life. I believe that Paul is talking about a time when he was a nonchristian, struggling to keep the demands of the law. I believe the key thing in determining the truth in these verses is found in harmonizing scriptures. If what we believe, regardless of what subject we are studying, doesn't harmonize with other scriptures on the same subject, we do not have the truth.

There are so many Christians who are finding comfort in their sins, thinking that the great Apostle Paul was struggling with the same sins that they are. I do not believe that is what Paul wants us to learn from these twelve verses. Let's start by going to Rom. 3:8. Paul says "and not rather (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say) let us do evil, that good may come."

Paul's opponents were saying that if your gospel is true, we ought to continue practicing sin, so that God's grace has an opportunity to multiply to God's glory. In Rom. 6:1-2 we read, "what shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that God's grace may abound? God forbid how shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?"

Paul tells of these slanderers in Rom. 6:6 that the body of sin had been destroyed. The body of sin is the house that our old man lived in, but in baptism the old man has been crucified with Christ. Paul is saying here "when I was outside of Christ my body was the tool and the servant of sin. When I became a Christian my body became Christ's, and therefore sin no longer owned it". When we unite ourselves with Christ we take on the obligation to live a holy life and not to continue to live a life of sin. So in chapter six Paul teaches that holiness is the logical outcome in the life of a Christian. In chapter seven Paul teaches that holiness is acceptable to God; and holiness can only come when one is free from a life of sin.

In Rom. 7:4 we read, "wherefore my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ, that you should be married to another, even unto Him who is raised from the dead". This verse makes it clear that there is a law arrangement to which man must die to before we can be married to Christ. When Jesus became Lord, He also became our high priest; and then the mosaic covenant was moved out and it was replaced by the new covenant.

Question: What then did the Jews die to in order to come under the law of Christ? They died to the moral law. The moral law was a law of sin and death. How do we know that? Because it was a law of works. A law of works demands flawless obedience. The moral law made no provisions for the forgiveness of sins. The only way that salvation could be obtained under the moral law was never to sin. The moral law continued to exist after the Law of Moses was fulfilled (Rom. 2:14-15).

The letter of the law stresses obedience, right down to the mere jot or tittle. In 2 Cor. 3:6 we read, "who hath also made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit, for the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life." This verse is plain enough for us to know, that the law killeth. Do we have any verses in the Old Testament that says the law killeth? In Deut. 27:26 we read, "cursed be he that confirmet not to all the words of this law, to do them." Eze. 18:4, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die. Gal. 3:10, "for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of law, to do them". James 2:10, "for whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all".

In II Cor. 3:7 the Law of Moses is called the ministration of condemnation. *Question:* why did God give man such a law that demanded flawless obedience? To show man that he could not save himself, thus he must have a savior. Under the law, it must be service according to the letter of the law. Under the law of faith, there can be

acceptable service without flawless obedience, and this is accomplished by the blood of Jesus. Christians are in Christ, and in that relationship we are acceptable with God as long as we are walking in the spirit of God.

Paul is saying here in Rom. 7:7-25 that the law is not evil, the people who are under it are evil. Paul insists that it is through man's contact with law that he came to the personal knowledge of sin. The law demanded obedience from him, and when he did not obey it, he died. *Question:* did he die physically or spiritually? Answer: spiritually. Isaiah 59:2 says that sin separates one from God. Under the law that is called spiritual death, and the law did not provide any way for complete forgiveness after man had sinned.

I would like to challenge everyone who believes that Paul was writing about his life, after he became a Christian, to begin reading at verse nine, where Paul tells us very plainly that he was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came sin revived and he died. Verse ten: "and the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death". Verse eleven says, "for sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me". In all three of these verses, Paul says when he sinned it killed him spiritually. Now here is the challenge - begin reading in verse twelve and read very slowly through verse twenty-four, and then point out to me in which verse does it say that Paul was made alive in Christ Jesus. Notice what he says in verse fourteen: "for we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin". *Question:* does this sound like Paul is now a Christian? It does not sound like it to me, because when we become a Christian we are delivered from all of our sins. Something else we must notice in this verse is when Paul says that he was carnal in this state that he was in. We read in Rom. 8:6-7 where this same Paul says, "for to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace, because the carnal mind is enmity against God".

In verse eighteen Paul says, "For I know that in me dwelleth no good thing". Now let's turn to John 14:23 and see what Jesus has to say to the obedient believer. He says, "if a man loves Me, he will keep My word and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him". So we can easily see that Paul was not a Christian here, because he says there was no good thing dwelling in him. Now let's read verse twenty-one. Paul says, "I find then a law that, when I would do good, evil is present with me". Let's turn to 2 Tim. 4:7 and read what Paul has to say about his Christian life. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith". Surely we can see a completely different attitude in Paul after he became a Christian. Now let's read verse twenty-four. Paul says, "oh wretched man I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Now let's turn to Gal. 5:22 and see how his attitude has changed since he has become a Christian. We read, "but the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Note: no wretchedness here.

How could Paul make it any plainer in this verse that he is not a Christian, when he says, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death". In this verse he declares himself a spiritually dead person. Notice also in this verse, he is still looking for someone to deliver him from the wretched condition that he is in. Now, back to our challenge. Was anyone able to find just one verse where Paul says that he became spiritually alive? I did not. We find our answer in verse twenty-five, where he says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord". He is now speaking from the heart of a Christian. We read in Rom. 8:1, He is now so excited about his new life in Christ Jesus that he cries out "there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit".

For all of those who believe that Paul was writing about how miserable he was in trying to live the Christian life, you should try to harmonize that with what Jesus is saying in Matt. 11:28-30. He said "come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light". I believe that I can take these words of Jesus and convince others that they need what Jesus has to offer, but I know that I would have a very difficult time trying to convince someone that they needed what Paul was experiencing in his life, if that was what Christianity was all about.

I have been a Christian for sixty-two years, and I have heard many preachers and teachers referring to the twelve verses as the warfare that goes on in the Christian life. After Paul became a Christian, he wrote many of the letters that are in the New Testament. I do not recall a single time that Paul said he was miserable or wretched, but to the contrary, Paul uses the words rejoice, rejoiceth, rejoicing, or rejoiced over thirty times in the letters that he wrote to Christians about Christian living. Paul says in Rom. 8:2 that he had been set free from the law of sin and death. In Rom. 6:12 he said, "Do not let sin reign in your mortal body. In Phil. 2:13 Paul said, "for it is God that worketh in me both to will and to do His good pleasure". In 1 Cor. 15:22 we read where all the spiritually dead can be made alive in Christ Jesus. In Phil. 4:13 we read where Paul says, "I can do all things in Christ Jesus".

I hope we have noticed that everything that Paul has said about the condition of himself in these twelve verses does not in any way describe the condition of the Christian life. It is the complete opposite. It seems to me that in these twelve verses Paul is describing a man who very much wants to satisfy the demands of the law, but he finds out with all his strugglings that the mountain of guilt just keeps on piling up, and he finds himself under the power and domain of Satan. Now let's remember from verses eight through thirteen, we have been introduced to a man who was killed by the law of sin and death because he had sinned. These verses also say that this man was spiritually alive before his sin spiritually killed him. So we have an unsaved man introduced into our lesson. After having said this, it seems that Paul may be thinking that the people might get the impression that the law is in some way evil, because he said it had killed him. So he does not want anyone to think that the law is evil, so he says the law is holy, it is just and it is good. In fact it is too holy for him to keep, because it keeps him enslaved to sin. So, under law he is a wretched man.

Paul is trying to convince the Jews that the law they are trying to hang onto is a soul killer, regardless of how much they try to meet its demands. This law made no provisions to save people after they had sinned. *Question:* Why was it given then? It was given to cause man to cry out to God for deliverance, and that is exactly what Paul did in verse twenty-four. *Question:* In Rom. 7:14 what law is Paul talking about? It is the law that killed him. Verses nine through eleven. *Question:* What was the law that killed him? It was the law of sin and death. The Law of Moses was a law of sin and death. The moral law that we read about in Rom. 2:14-15 is a law of sin and death. A law of sin and death is a law of works, which is given by God and demands perfect obedience. If a man breaks just one law, at that moment, he is separated from God, which means spiritual death.

The first law of sin and death came into existence in Gen. 2:17. It was given to Adam and Eve. It was a very simple law - if you sin you will die spiritually. They ate of the tree of the forbidden fruit and the day that they ate God drove them out of His presence, which was in the Garden of Eden. *Question:* what does Paul say about this law? He said that it was spiritual, because it was from God.

Question: what does Paul mean here, when he says he is carnal? He means he is only flesh and blood, with nothing to fight sin with but his own human nature, and fleshly strength. *Question:* under the law of faith, is that all a Christian has to fight sin with, is the carnal flesh? The answer is no. In 2 Pet. 1:4 we read that when a person becomes an obedient believer, he immediately becomes a partaker of the divine nature of God. I John 4:4 says "greater is He who dwells in the Christian than he that is in the world." In Acts 5:32 we read where God gives the Holy Spirit to everyone who obeys Him.

Now let's read what Paul says to the Christian concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in their life. Eph. 3:20 - "now unto Him that is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the Power that works in us. Paul says to the church in Gal. 3:3 "you foolish Galatians, having begun your Christian walk with the Holy Spirit helping you, are you now made perfect through the flesh?" It is hard for man to give up his religious pride. Many times man wants to obtain his salvation by his own efforts, so he can hold up his prideful head and say to others "look what I have done." It seems that most find it very difficult to fall down before God and say "I am a failure, I owe a debt to you that I cannot pay; will you please pay it for me?"

Let's read verse 14 again. *Question:* what does Paul mean when he says "I am sold under sin." In the Greek, the word sold means disposed of as merchandise or into slavery. When someone is sold, as we all know, that which is sold now belongs to someone else. *Question:* Is a Christian sold under sin? Absolutely not! Gal. 3:13 this same Paul says that the Christian has been redeemed from the curse of the law.

Question: what is the curse of the law? In Gal. 3:10 we read "cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them". Please notice what this verse does to view #1, which believes that Paul was a Christian when he wrote the twelve verses we are discussing. If this verse 14 were the only verse there was in discussion, it would prove beyond any shadow of a doubt that Paul was not a struggling Christian, trying to keep the law of Christ, or would say that he was sold under sin and then turn right around and say I have been redeemed from my sins. This really is so plain that we would have to have help to misunderstand it.

Now let's read again verses fifteen through seventeen. In these verses we can see the complete frustration of Paul, but we must understand why he was so frustrated. I do not believe Paul is saying here that he found it impossible to do even one good deed, or that he was incapable of resisting even one temptation, because we know from the verses that follow that Paul was a really good man according to moral standards, so what then, is the problem that Paul has? His problem is that he cannot resist all the temptations of life. He cannot fully satisfy the righteous demands of the law, though his heart longs to do so. Please notice...it would not be of any real help

to him if he could bring his sinning down to just one sin a year. Because, under the law, that would be one sin too many. The good that Paul seeks for is the full satisfaction of doing all of God's will. But this he finds impossible, regardless of how hard he tries, and this is what enslaves him and drives him to frustration.

Paul, while under the law of works, striving as hard as he could, found himself sold under sin even though in his heart he had chosen to serve God. But the one who worked through his flesh had more power than Paul did. So Paul ends up doing what sin wants him to do. Paul says, "in my mind I don't want to break any of God's laws, but Satan lives in my flesh, and he is so powerful that I end up doing the things that I hate." So the law, which Paul believed was ordained to give life, brought death to him. So why hang on to a law that was bowing him down into sin's domain. No wonder Paul would say in verse twenty-five "thank God, I have been delivered through Jesus Christ from this terrible condition that I found myself in."

Paul says in verse sixteen that he agrees with the law, that it is good. His mind testifies to that, but his flesh will not let him keep it perfectly. So it is not his mind that is sinning, because it wills to do good, but it is sin's power that dwells in his flesh, and this is what keeps him frustrated. Let's read Rom. 7:18-20. In these verses Paul is continuing to say the same things that he has previously said, that is, that he knew what the law said and he also wanted to do what the law said, but the sin power that dwelled in his flesh would overrule his will some times, and he would find himself doing that which was wrong.

I believe what Paul is trying to get across here to every one of us, and especially to the Jews, is that under the law, the only power that man had to fight sin was by his own human power, and that Satan has more power than man, so the final verdict was that man could not keep the law because Rom. 8:3 says "for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Peter completely agrees with Paul. In Acts 15:10 he says "now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." I believe Paul is saying he feels himself being pulled in two directions. I am a walking civil war. He was haunted daily by this feeling of frustration, knowing what was good and then not having the ability to do it. Paul is telling us that while he was living under the law of sin and death, he could hate sin, but then would find out the sin power in his flesh could overrule his mind if it so desired. When man is outside of Christ, the flesh will go along with the will of man as long as the flesh does not mind. But if it does mind, the flesh will win out. I believe that is what Paul is saying here. It is not his will (or mind) that is doing these bad things, but it is sin's power which is dwelling in his flesh that is greater than the will of his mind.

Now let's see what Paul has to say about this warfare between the flesh and the mind after we become a Christian. Turn your bible to 2 Cor.10: 3-5. "though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh". Now listen very closely to verse four: "for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God for the pulling down of strongholds." Verse five, "casting down imagination and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Now here Paul has just described unto us the warfare that goes on in the Christian life. Paul also says in Phil. 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me." Notice now what we have learned from Paul about fighting this warfare after he became a Christian. First, this warfare is not fought by carnal man, but through the mighty power of the Holy Spirit of God, which is given to every obedient believer (Acts 2:38). How can anyone who has studied these three verses still believe that Paul was a Christian when he wrote the twelve verses that we are discussing here in this lesson? All Christians are soldiers, enlisted under the banner of Christ, to oppose and resist all forms of evil, not through flesh power but by the Holy Spirit of God. Amen? Paul was unable to do that when he was under the law of sin and death.

If Christians believe that all they need to fight the desires of the flesh is their own wisdom, skills and knowledge, then our pride has already defeated us. Satan is not going to move out of his home unless he is bound and thrown out by Jesus Christ. Jesus said in Matt. 12:29 "how can one enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man". That is exactly what Jesus did. He bound Satan, where he no longer has dominion over the flesh as long as we are living for Christ. *Question:* before Jesus bound Satan what did man have to fight Satan with? Answer: all he had was his will (or his mind).

The Christian can now do what the mind wills. How can he now do that? He can do that through the power of the Holy Spirit, which lives in our bodies. In 1Cor. 3:16, we read, "know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Holy Spirit of God dwelleth in you." Again, I would like to ask those who believe that Paul was a Christian when he wrote these twelve verses: why was he so wretched and so frustrated when God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit were dwelling in him? Doesn't make much sense, does it?

Paul is saying that to resolve to do something is no sign that it will be done. There is in humans a weakness of the human will. When the human will comes up against facts, problems, difficulties and oppositions the human will can fail. For example, the Apostle Peter's mind caused him to say to Jesus "I will die for you." He also said "I will not deny thee." We all know that Peter's flesh overruled his will. When the human will is not strengthened through the Holy Spirit it will give way under pressure. But on the other hand, when our will is strengthened by the Holy Spirit we can do all things that our will, wills to do (Phil. 4:13). Example: we read from history books that in the first century, when persecution was so severe, when Christians were fed to the lions and burned at the stake, they were heard singing praises to God. So what Paul desperately needed, when he was under law, he did not have because what he needed could only be had in Christ Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

We must not misunderstand Paul, and believe that he is saying, that he is not responsible for his sins. Because he acknowledges that he is responsible for his sins throughout these twelve verses. He says I practice what I don't agree with. What I hate, that is what I do. There is not two persons here, there is only one, but his will and his flesh are contrary to one another. There is a warfare going on here - the flesh wanting to do one thing and the will wants to do something else. Sin here is spoken of as if it is a person, and as if it had a mind and a rule all of its own. Satan rules the flesh when the body is absent of Divine Power.

Law must get into the mind of man before he can sin. Because in Rom. 4:15 we read, "where there is no law, there is no transgression. In other words, sin has no power in the human flesh until there is a law of God in the mind of man. *Question:* how did the law of God get into the mind of every person in the world? Let's read it in Rom. 2:14-15, "For when the gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the means while accusing or else excusing one another." *Question:* now after reading this verse, how does the law of God get into the mind of man? Paul says, "it is written in their hearts." *Question:* Who wrote this law in the mind of man? It would have to be God, because no one else has the power to do that. Now here is a very important question: when did God write this law in the hearts of man? Let us read 1Cor. 15:22, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Then in Rom. 5:12, "wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men; for all men have sinned." *Question:* Do these two verses shed any light on our subject? I don't know about you, but they sure do for me.

I learned from 1Cor. 15:22, that Adam had something to do with the law of sin and death being passed on to all men. There is another verse that plays a very important part in answering our question and that is Gen. 2:17, where we read about the entrance of the law of sin and death into this world. Let's read it: "God said to Adam, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." We know here in this verse when God said to Adam the day you eat you shall die, that He was talking about Spiritual death. How do we know that? Because we read in Gen. 5:5, that Adam lived to be 930 years of age. Now let's notice what happened to Adam and Eve when they had eaten of the tree of right and wrong. In Gen. 3:7 we read, "and the eyes of them both were opened and they then knew what was right and what was wrong." Please listen very carefully to this statement - these verses that we have just read do not say that through Adam's sin caused every man thereafter to inherit Adam's sin. This is what most religious people in the world today teach. But this is not what these verses teach. These verses say very clearly that Adam's sin caused death to pass upon all men. Now it is very important to listen to the rest of the verse in Rom. 5:12 where it says, "For all have sinned." What should this verse mean to us? It should mean that it is man's own sin that separates him from God and not Adam's own personal sin. I hope everyone who reads this lesson can easily see that man did not inherit Adam's sin. Now the question is: what did we inherit from Adam that has caused all men to sin? Now let's just use our common sense. When Adam ate of the fruit from the tree of right and wrong, then the moral law became Adam's heritage from God. So his heritage from then on became the heritage of every baby who was born thereafter. We read in Gen. 3:20 where it says that Eve is the mother of all living. Now notice what great meaning this gives to Rom. 2:14-15 - that we have already read, when it says the law is written in the hearts of all people. This law, I believe from the scriptures that we have read is the moral law, which is a law of works, which is a law of sin and death. The requirement of such a law is flawless obedience, and the reason it brought forth death was that no one could keep this law perfectly. Please do some serious meditation and harmonizing scriptures on this subject, and I believe that you will come up with the same conclusion that I have come up with.

I want to spend a little more time on the thought of all babies being born with the moral law written in their hearts from birth. It is impossible for a child to sin against God until God's law convicts the mind, that they are breaking not only their parents' law, but they are also breaking the law of God. We need to read what Paul says about this concerning his own life. Please notice what he has to say in Rom.7:8. In the last part of this verse he says, "For without the law sin was dead. *Question:* what does that mean? To me, it means there was a time in Paul's life when he could do things that he said were sin, but at the time in his life that he was doing these things they were

not imputed to him. Now notice verse nine and he will shine some light on the statement that he has just made. Let's read it, "For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came sin revived and I died." Verse ten, "And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." *Question:* what does Paul mean when he says I was alive without the law once? To me, he would be saying I had eternal life abiding in me before I reached the age of accountability. But the first time that I broke a law of God, God then convicted me in my heart for what I had done. And at that moment the eternal life that God had given me at my birth was taken from me and I found myself separated from God's presence. This is exactly what Isaiah 59:2 says, that our iniquities will separate us from God. So, Paul calls that spiritual death. Let's notice the wisdom of God in this matter that we are discussing, God has instituted a plan so that every child born into this world (who has no mental disorders) all have the same law written in their hearts, which means that all men are created equal when it comes to the matter of salvation.

Another question might arise about now in the hearts of parents and that is - at what age do children reach the age of accountability? In the Bible there is no definite number of years or days given, but God knows the mind and heart of every child and I believe that God will let each child know in their own heart when the time comes, that he or she is now accountable for their own sins against God's moral law, which is written in their hearts at birth. Now that the law is present in their minds then human flesh becomes the dwelling place of Satan. In 1Cor. 15:56 Paul says' "the strength of sin is the law." That is why Paul says in Rom. 4:15, "Where there is no law there is no sin." So a child cannot be separated from God until God reveals His law to the mind of that young person, and at the moment when he or she sins they will lose the eternal life that they were born with. They will receive it back when they become an obedient believer. We should learn from these verses that under the law of God, and without Christ in our life, sin's power in the flesh is greater than the will of the mind because Satan has more power than man has. So what the mind of man wills, concerning the laws of God, he cannot fulfill. But in Christ all of our wills can be fulfilled, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now let's see if this view doesn't shed some light on 1John 3:8-9 where it says' "He that committeth sin is of the devil." What does that mean in the light of the verses we have already studied? It would mean that this man has let the devil take up his abode in his flesh and sin's power is reigning in his body. Now, let's continue reading - "For the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil, for whosoever is born of God cannot sin, because his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God."

Now, we need to ask the question again - what does that mean? To me it means when we are born of God all of our past sins have been forgiven. Satan has been defeated. He no longer has the power in our flesh to overrule the will of our minds. He has been thrown out and the Holy Spirit has taken His place and has the power to keep him out. Now let's notice in this condition that it is impossible for the devil to come back into our flesh and overpower our will and cause us to sin like he did when we were without Christ. *Question:* how then can a person who has been born of God sin? When we were born of God, God did not take away our freedom of choice. Man can, at any time in his life, choose not to follow all the laws of Christ. At the moment that we choose to do that, we unseat the Holy Spirit from His full power over our flesh. And when we do that we are inviting the devil right back into our fleshly house, from which the Holy Spirit has thrown him out. Please notice - the devil does not have the power to move the Holy Spirit over so he can have a place in our life. We are the ones who make the choice to move the Holy Spirit over so the devil can have a place to sit.

James explains this very well in James 1:13-15. We read that the Christian is drawn away from God by his own fleshly lusts and that brings about death because that is willful sin. Willful sin, if it is not confessed to God and repented of, it leads to spiritual death, which means forever separated from God.

Doesn't this help us to see why Paul could not perform the good that his mind willed to do? Because he was not a Christian; if he had been he would have had the power through the Holy Spirit of God to accomplish anything that his will chose to do. Praise God, for all of his many blessings.

Now let's read Rom. 7:22-23. Paul approves of this law that he is discussing, that it was a good law. He also says he is pleased with the design of the law, because he said in verse ten that the law was ordained to give life. Because he know what Lev. 18:5 said; God says, "you shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, which, if a man does, he shall live. *Question:* what does that mean? I believe that means if a person keeps the laws of God perfectly, from Adam until the coming of Christ, that it would give him eternal life with God. But no man ever did keep that law perfectly until Jesus came. Rom. 3:23 says, "All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God." *Question:* In verse 22, why would Paul say that he delights in the law of God, when it caused him so much

misery and frustration? I believe it was because it offered salvation to the inner man, through faith in the promises of God concerning the coming Savior.

Let's read it in Heb. 11:13, "These all died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them a far off and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." In Rom. 4:3-5 we read that their faith was counted for righteousness. No wonder Paul would say, "I delight in the law of God because if a man could not keep all of the demands of the law, yet his spirit could still be saved by believing in the promises of God concerning the coming of Jesus.

Heb. 9:15 says, "and for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal life.

In verse twenty-three Paul says, "I see a different law in my members." What is this different law? We learned from verse Twenty-two that the law of Paul's mind was the law of God, so the law of God was not the different law. We also know that it is not the Law of Moses because it was also a law of God. There is one thing we know for sure is that this different law is found in his members, because Paul said it was. In the last part of this verse he names this law - he says it was the law of sin, which is in his members.

If we will view the law of God and the law of sin as warring over the soul of Paul, then I believe we have the true picture that Paul is trying to get across to us. The law of sin wars against the law of the mind, or we could say the law of God, and that brings Paul into the law of sin's captivity, which is the domain of Satan. When man is in Christ, this is not true. In Romans 6:12, after Paul became a Christian, he says "let not the law of sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof. This should really help us to see that Paul was not a Christian when he wrote these twelve verses that we have under discussion, because he said in that lifestyle he was unable to keep sin from reigning in his body.

In Rom. 6:14 Paul writes to the church in Rome and says' "for sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under Grace." So again I would like to say I do not believe that Paul was a Christian when he said, "I have been brought into the captivity of sin's power" this means that sin had dominion over him.

Now let's read Rom. 7:24, "Oh wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death" Paul is talking about spiritual death here. Question: How do we know that? Because he is still physically alive, and he says, "I am wretched." You cannot be wretched and be spiritually alive. Another Question: after Paul became a Christian, do we have any record of where Paul said that he was a miserable man? No, but to the contrary, we read in 2 Cor. 7:4 where Paul writes, "great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you (now listen very carefully to what Paul is saying) I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all of my tribulations." In Phil. 4:11 we read, "For I have learned in whatever state I am in there will be content." Wretched and content are complete opposites. The same Paul writes in Phil. 4:4, "rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." It seems to me that the preachers and teachers who believe that Paul was a Christian when he wrote Rom. 7:14-25 must have closed their bibles and never read what Paul had to say about how wonderful it is, and how joyful it is and how contentful it is, and how peaceful it is to be a Christian.

I was sharing my views on this subject a few years ago, when I was teaching an adult class in Clayton, Oklahoma. After class, a Christian man who also was one of our class teachers came up to me and said, "Do you know what you have done? You have just taken away my comfort zone. I have always thought that if Paul had always had a problem with sin dominating his life, then it is no big deal when I sin."

It seems there are many Christians today who do not know the importance of harmonizing scriptures. We must know that if what we preach and teach on any given subject does not harmonize with all other verses on that subject, we do not have the truth.

No wonder James says in James 3:1, "My brethren be not many teachers, knowing we shall receive the greater condemnation." To me this means that we who are teachers should never teach on any subject until we have taken a concordance and looked up every verse on that subject, and then harmonized them. Then we will know what is the truth on that subject. Please hear what I am going to say - if every teacher and preacher would do this there would be no division in the church. But as long as we have those in the church who refuse to study the word of God with an open mind, we are going to have all kinds of problems.

Paul, in the last part of verse twenty-four, says that he had become so miserable and wretched in his condition that he cried out for deliverance. Now let's notice the condition that he is in. In verse nine he says, "I was alive once." In the same verse he says that when the commandment came, he died. Verse fourteen, "I am sold under sin." In verses 17 and 20 sin had taken up its dwelling in him. Verse eighteen, how to perform that which is good he cannot find. Verse 23: "I am in captivity to the law of sin" and the law of sin is in his members. In verse 24: In this condition he is a wretched person, and "I am a body of death." Also in verse 24, Paul cries out for deliverance. *Question:* If Paul is already a Christian, then he has already been delivered from everything that God has promised to man through Jesus Christ. Who is left for Paul to appeal to? I do not know of anyone.

I would like to bring up something for us to seriously think about. How would you like to have the task of preaching the gospel to the world and then share with them what they could expect from God when they obeyed the gospel, and then use what Paul says in Rom. 7:14-25 to sell them on your message of what it would be like when you became a Christian? It would be an impossible mission.

I have already used this verse once in this lesson, but it is so much needed right now in the discussion. The verses are Matt. 11:28-30, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Now this is what Paul is crying out for. This is a message that people will gladly respond to, and what a beautiful message to preach to the world.

Paul, in just a few verses here in Romans, the seventh chapter, has given us some very important information concerning his life, from the time he was born until he became a Christian. Now here are some facts that he shares with us. He says that he was alive without the law once. There is a terrible false doctrine in the world today that the Apostle Paul completely uproots by this verse, and that is the doctrine that all babies inherit Adam's sin from birth. Most religious churches in the world today teach that doctrine. They teach loud and clear that all babies are born spiritually dead. But I am thankful to God that Paul clears up that false teaching here in this verse. Please don't miss what he is saying. He said he was alive once, without the law. *Question:* what does Paul mean when he says that? There are only two kinds of life that can be had on this earth. They are spiritual and physical. So let's look at their meanings. Physical life means a life that is lived on this earth only in the flesh. Spiritual life means a life lived on this earth with eternal qualities living in the fleshly body. And if we do not let the devil move back into our body at death our spirit will go back to God, who gave it, and the eternal spirit that dwells in the spirit of man will take the spirit of man to his eternal home in heaven.

Question: what happens to the eternal spirit that every baby is born with when they get older and sin? Isaiah 59:2 says that they are then separated from God, which means they have become spiritually dead. What happens then to the eternal spirit of God? I believe it remains with the spirit of man, ready to resume His work, whenever man chooses him to. In Eph. 4:30 we read, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." In I-Thess.5:19 the writer says, "quench not the Holy Spirit." It seems to me that these verses are saying that the spirit of man dictates what the eternal spirit of God can do. Man can limit the Holy Spirit's work or the Christian man can let the Holy Spirit reign completely over his life. God has given man free will choice. So, if man is lost on Judgment Day he can blame no one but himself.

Now let's read than last part of verse twenty-four and the first part of verse twenty-five. We read, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now let's notice that Paul understood and knew the answer to his question, as well as anyone, and he was so excited about it that he just goes ahead and answers his question himself. We must put these writing of Paul in the context in which they were written. Paul has lived under the law, and he has lived under Christ. So he has a perfect understanding of both laws. In Rom. 7:5 we read, "For when we were in the flesh the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. Maybe this would be a good place to explain something. Paul is a Christian when he writes this seventh chapter, but we must notice here in verse five what Paul does. He takes us back to the time when he was under the law. He even shows us he became spiritually dead, and then he shows us what a miserable and wretched time he has spent trying to keep the law. During that time in Paul's life Jesus appeared unto him face to face, and told him how he could be delivered from this body of death. So Paul did exactly what Jesus told him and then he became a new creature in Christ Jesus. I believe that this should give us a clearer understanding of the context in which the last twelve verses were written. We see Paul's mind going through all the unhappiness of living under this law of sin and death and he becomes so emotional that he cries out, "Thank God, I have been delivered from that law through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Paul continues on with this subject in chapter eight. Let's read Rom. 8:1, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." There is

another question that some may have on their minds about the word deliverance. As I have said, most all religious teachers in the world today believe that the last twelve verses in the seventh chapter of Romans believe that Paul wrote them about the struggles that he was having while he was living the Christian life. We have just read where Paul cries out for deliverance and then tells us where the deliverance will come from. And it will come through Jesus and that he has already received Him. Now I will tell you how they answer this question on deliverance. They say that it will come when Jesus comes again. Paul has already told us, in just plain as the English language can speak, that Jesus has already come. Please tell me if you can, how can anyone misunderstand these writing of Paul?

There is another question that I may need to answer here. How do I know that most religious people believe the teaching that I have brought up? I have read some of the most popular commentaries in the world today on this subject and that is exactly what they say. We also have a tape of a very popular Church of Christ preacher who believes the same thing that these commentary writers believe. In fact everyone in the church that I have heard teach on this subject teaches it the same way. Surely there are some who see these verses just like we have discussed in this lesson.

I would like to use one more verse of scripture to show when deliverance comes. It is Col. 1:13 (please note that this verse is used in the past tense). Paul says, "We have been delivered from the power of darkness and have been translated into the Kingdom of God's dear son." Now, in the light of these verses that we have read on deliverance, when does deliverance come? When we become an obedient believer or is it when Jesus comes back again? Well, it could not be any plainer. It is when we obey the gospel. I do not know how Paul could make himself any clearer in this seventh chapter than he has. This discussion on Romans 7:14-25 was written for my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and on and on it could go. This was my daughter-in-law's idea (Linda Marie Trout).

Thanks Linda for the thought,

Herb Trout