

Romans 7:7-25—Who Is ‘I’?

- 1.) “Dwell”: nothing good (7:18) and sin (7:17, 20, 23) **VS.** Holy Spirit (8:9, 11)
- 2.) In/Of the Flesh (7:5, 14, 18, 25, 8:7-8) **VS.** Not of the Flesh (8:5, 9)¹
- 3.) Captive to the Law of Sin (7:23, 25) **VS.** Set Free from Law of Sin (8:2; 7:6)
- 4.) Slavery (7:14; 6:17, 6:19-20) **VS.** Free (6:6-7, 6:17-19, 6:22)
- 5.) Death (7:5, 10-11, 13, 24; 6:20, 8:6) **VS.** Life (6:4, 10-11, 13, 22-23; 7:6; 8:2, 6, 10-11)
- 6.) Law Disobeyed (7:10-11, 7:15-25; 8:7) **VS.** Law Obeyed (8:4; 2:27-29, 13:8-10)
- 7.) Christ and the Spirit are not mentioned a single time in 7:7-25 (except for final deliverance from the depiction of condemnation), whereas in 8:1-17 the presence of both Christ and the Spirit explode onto the scene as the solution to the weakness of the flesh and the law due to sin
- 8.) **7:5-6** as OUTLINE: 7:5 = 7:7-25 and 7:6 = 8:1-17 (cf. also 6:20-21 and 6:22, again separated by “now”)²
- 9.) Redemptive-Historical “Now” of 8:1 and 7:6 (also 6:22); cf. 3:21, 26 (the “now time”). This “now” is not “now in my life” or “now that I (Paul) am moving on to the next stage of the argument”; rather, it means “now” at this point in salvation history, in the fullness of time, God has sent forth His Son to redeem those who were enslaved and condemned under the law.
- 10.) “Before the Commandment Came I Was Alive” (7:9; when was this true for Paul or any believer [Jew or Gentile], who were born into the reign of death? But the coming of the law was the death blow to Adam & Israel in redemptive history, both of whom represent what it means to be “under law”)
- 11.) The process of our “sinful passions being aroused by the law” of 7:5 (explicitly past tense!) is portrayed in graphic detail in 7:8-13, which therefore must also be in the past.

¹ It is important to see that in Romans 8:5, the word “live” (ESV, NIV, etc.) is not in the Greek with either “according to the flesh” or “according to the Spirit.” This misleads the reader into interpreting 8:5 as if Paul is highlighting our subjective response, rather than our objective “position” or “status” before God, or better yet, the “realm” we belong to. Literally, the Greek reads: “For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those are who according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.” This is not prescriptive, but descriptive. Clearly, to be “according to the flesh” in 8:5 is synonymous with being “in the flesh” in 8:8-9, and to be “according to the Spirit” is parallel with being “in the Spirit” in 8:9. Cf. the New American Standard’s translation of 8:5.

² See Schreiner’s *Romans* commentary for the development of this key insight.

- 12.) Not Conflict But Inability (7:14-18; 6:20, 8:7-8)
- 13.) Condemnation of 8:1 is experience/situation of 7:7-25 (note the “for” that 8:2 begins with and the reason it provides for why there is no condemnation)
- 14.) Christ the *telos* (goal) of the law in Romans 10:4 is illustrated by the cry of 7:24-25 (Israel’s long bondage under the law was designed to lead her to the Messiah, who comes to redeem and free those who were enslaved under the law because of their sin)
- 15.) The purpose of the Law before Christ is depicted in Romans 7 (5:20 and 7:8-11; 3:20 and 7:7)...but believers are no longer ‘under law’ but joined to another (7:4). Romans 7:7-25 is a picture of what it looks like to be “under the law”, but believers are no longer under law but under grace (6:14). Paul nowhere says or infers that the law continues to play these roles in the lives of believers who are in Christ.

OBJECTIONS

- 1.) **Present Tense** (vividness, dramatization of what it looks like to be “under law” / vv. 7-12 are past tense! / Greek verb tenses: not primarily time of action, but kind of action)
- 2.) **Delight in Law** (conscience / this is a portrayal of Jews under the law, not Gentiles apart from law—even though ultimately there are parallels and Romans 2 shows both Jew and Gentile are on same level before God / if this was true Spirit-produced delight in the law, it would lead to (imperfect) obedience. But “I” here does not obey even imperfectly; he disobeys perfectly, and is in total, radical slavery to sin and unable to do what the law requires in any sense. Do we really want to say that true delight in the law of God can exist in a heart that is in bondage to sin and habitually disobeys what it “delights” in? Delight here means something akin to “approve with my mind as to its beauty and goodness and rightness, even though my heart is more attracted to sin”. See 7:16)
- 3.) **What about Conflict in Christian Life?** (Romans 8 and Galatians 5 are full of conflict! / Romans 7 is not conflict, but slavery and radical inability / every NT letter written to churches assumes sin remaining in their lives and is not surprised by it, even though always calling for repentance)

READING: Piper sermons on Romans 7 / J.I. Packer appendix to *Keep In Step With The Spirit* / Appendix to Reymond, *New Systematic Theology* / Commentaries by Douglas Moo, Thomas Schreiner, James Dunn, John Murray, N.T. Wright, Robert Jewett / Calvin's *Institutes*, 4.15.12 (cf. 2.2.27, 3.3.11, 3.11.11; also see his commentary on 7:7-25)

http://www.solidrock.net/library/thompson/thompson_rom7.php

<http://bibleblogger.org/papers/R7.pdf>