

Exegetical Notes - Romans 7:15-25

“Thanks Be to God”

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Pastor, Cornerstone Fellowship

101 Kyllies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320

610-384-1375

charleshjensen@aol.com

Romans 7:15-25

Verses 15-20

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell 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 I do not do the good I want to do, but 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.

- In Romans 7:14, Paul has made a great confession. Through the understanding of the law, he has learned that though the law is spiritual, he is unspiritual. As a result, he, in and of himself, is unable to “do what he wants but does what he does not want to do.” He wants what is right and good in the eyes of God, but he continually discovers that he sins by doing what he knows displeases God.
- The phrase “It is no longer I myself who do it” is not an attempt on Paul’s part to escape responsibility for his sin. It is his way of saying what he has acknowledged before, that in himself he cannot defeat sin. It still has power over him even though he is trusting Jesus to save him. Though it is the desire of his heart to do good and please God, he cannot do so in his own strength.
- Though he is “in Christ Jesus,” he is unable to do what he wants to do, please God, and continually falls back into behaviors which do not please God.

Verses 21-25

²¹ So I find this law at work: Although 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 me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

- This is the reality Paul sees in himself. He wants to do good and so to please God. But he sees another power, his sinful nature, fighting against his desire to do good. Often the other power wins and he does what he knows displeases God. This eternal fight makes him “wretched” because it prevents him from living to please God. He prays for the time when he will be set free from his physical body so that he can be perfectly sanctified in the presence of God .
- He thanks God because he knows that he IS delivered through Jesus Christ and that he is forgiven. He seeks to serve God, but he knows that, in this life his attempt to please God will always be imperfect. But he is being sanctified. When he is at last with God, he will live so as to please God set free, by Jesus through death, to any obligation to the law or his sinful nature.

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