

THE UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS MESSENGER

September 20, 2009

Romans 7--2

Over the next few bulletin articles we will continue the examination of Romans 7 started last week. Picking up in verse 14, we will examine each verse through the remainder of this chapter individually. Our purpose is to see if it is Paul the Jew or Paul the Christian whose religious consciousness is being portrayed. Please keep in mind that verse 14 through the end of the chapter portrays an inner struggle which the spirit is unable to control due to the power of sin. If Paul writes of himself as a Christian, then everything true of him in these verses is equally true of us today. For that reason, I do not believe Paul refers to himself as a Christian but as he was before putting on Christ. Let's examine the verses together.

Romans 7:14 **“For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.”**

In verse 7 Paul asked something that would have entered the mind of his readers based upon his reasoning concerning sin and the Law. He asked if the Law itself was sinful. While he answered that question in verses 7-13, he continues to emphasize the point here. The Law was spiritual, not carnal. What precisely does Paul mean by “spiritual” in this place? Some have concluded that it was spiritual because of the Holy Spirit's inspiration when it was originally given. Others suggest that it is another way of Paul saying what he had previously said in verse 12; namely that the law was holy, righteous, and good. Still others point to the context which follows and claim “spiritual” in this place refers to the fact that the Law appealed to the spirit of man. I tend to lean toward this last position though there is truth in all three. Regardless, the first part of verse 14 shows that Paul did not believe that the Law of Moses was the *cause* of his death. How could it be when it was spiritual?

Paul goes on to say, **“But I am of the flesh, sold under sin.”** Here is where the difficulty begins to rear its head. By far the majority of Christians that I have spoken to assume that Paul is speaking of himself in this verse as he currently stood as a Christian. Considering what the New Testament says of the Christian, and what Paul says of himself in other places, let me suggest that he cannot be speaking of his current life as a Christian. Let's consider some things together.

Was Paul *as a Christian* sold under sin? Let's go back to verse 9 to find out when this took place. **“I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.”** Here was the time when sin entered his life and he died. The only time in Paul's life when he lived unaffected by the Law was when he was a child. As he grew and matured he began to understand his responsibility to God. When he chose to disobey that Law, sin came to life and he died. He was sold under sin. Someone asks “If Paul is describing a past event in his life, why then does he speak in the first person?” Simply because he is using himself as a type for all people who are under the bondage of sin because he *was* there himself at one point in his life. Paul is speaking of the unregenerate person who has awakened, through the instrumentality of the Law, to the

misery and hopelessness of his condition. It is not unusual for the apostle to personate others in his writings (see Romans 13:11-13) and that is what he is doing here.

There is a question that we must consider before we leave this verse to move to the others. Would the apostle say of himself, or any person enjoying a saved relationship in Jesus Christ, that they are “of the flesh, sold under sin”? Would the apostle say of himself as a regenerated person, “**O wretched man that I am**”? Would this man, cleansed from his sins and standing in the light of Jesus Christ, plaintively cry, “**Who shall deliver me from this body of death**”? Those last two exclamations are to be found in verse 24 of this chapter. Please jump ahead and note Paul’s answer in verse 25. “**Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!**” Paul said that he was a wretched man and that he needed someone to save him from his body of death. Who was that someone to be? That someone was God, operating through the work of Jesus Christ. As a Christian, Paul had no need to make such a plaintive and pitiful cry for it had already been answered, as it has for each of us who are Christians. On the other hand, when he had been an unregenerate sinner, he desperately needed an answer to that question.

To view these verses as Paul speaking as if he were an unregenerate sinner, as he had been at one time but was not any more, presents far fewer difficulties than to view these verses as if Paul were describing his condition as a Christian. As we move on we will note the unregenerate sinners conflict.

In Need of Prayers	Congregational News
<p>Sharon Tirey continues her cancer treatments.</p> <p>Keep Kristen Osterling and her baby boy in mind as he continues to go through some difficulties.</p> <p>Remember David Blakeman.</p> <p>Lilly Fitzwater (Bill Morelan’s mother) is recovering in a care facility in Ohio. The contact information is posted on the bulletin board in the hall.</p> <p>Chuck McDavitt is suffering with diabetes and an infection in his foot.</p> <p>Ron Catchen had open heart surgery earlier in the year but recently had to have stints put in.</p>	<p>Remember to thank God for John and Brianna, two souls who have recently submitted themselves to Christ. Let’s make sure that we are there for them to provide instruction, support, and encouragement as they have embarked on their life lasting journey with Jesus Christ.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">University Height Church of Christ 445 Columbia Avenue Lexington, Ky 40508 859-255-6257 www.uheightschurch.com</p>