

IN RESPONSE - "CHRIST SETS YOU FREE"

by Dennis Prutow

Volume VI, Number 6, June, 1997

Most of my Reformed colleagues follow Professor John Murray in interpreting Romans 7. Here, I interact with Professor Murray's primary reasons for holding the person in Romans 7:14-26 is regenerate. I quote at length.

The main question in the interpretation of verses 1-25 is one on which there has been deep-seated difference of judgment in the history of interpretation. Does Paul continue to delineate for us his pregenerate experience as in verses 7-13? Or does the present tense of verse 14 indicate that he has made a transition to the description of his present experience in the state of grace? There are features which would seem to be quite incompatible with the latter alternative and these have appeared to many interpreters to settle the question beyond reasonable dispute in favour of the view that there is no transition from one phase of experience to another but that verses 7-25 constitute in this respect a unit. The chief support for this view and the main obstacle to the other view is the strength of the expressions Paul uses to describe himself. "I am carnal." Does this not mean that he is the opposite of "Spiritual" and therefore still "in the flesh" (vs. 5) and under the dominion of sin? "Sold under sin"—is this not to the same effect as being the bondsman of sin and therefore under its dominion, the opposite of being under grace (cf. 6: 14)? Or, when he says, "To will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not" (vs. 18), are we to suppose that the man in whom the powers of grace are operative is destitute of the good works which are the fruit of the Spirit? Again, surely the complaint of verse 24, "Wretched man that I am!" is far from being the state of mind of one who has entered into the joy and liberty of the gospel (cf. 7:6). Besides, the relation to the law of God, assumed in this passage (cf. vss. 21-23), would hardly appear to be different from that in verses 7-13. It should not surprise us therefore that for these considerations as well as

others notable expositors should insist that the Paul of Romans 7: 14-25 is the same as that of 7: 7-13 and a different Paul from the exultant and triumphant Paul of Romans 8.¹

Professor Murray neglects the most potent general argument opposed to his position. If it is the case, to use Professor Murray's own words, why do notable expositors insist the Paul of Romans 7: 14-25 the same as that of 7: 7-13 and a different Paul from the exultant and triumphant Paul of Romans 8?

They see in the text Paul make the most radical break in his flow of thought, not at Romans 7:14 but at Romans 8:1. They then ask the question: Which is more radical, the differentiation between a Christian position and another Christian position, or the difference between the unconverted and the converted person?

If conversion is the radical break with sin Murray eloquently insists upon elsewhere, and if the most fundamental change occurs in the text at Romans 8:1, we have a powerful argument Romans 7:14-25 describes the unregenerate. The most marked change in life is not between a Christian position and another Christian position. But this would be the case if Romans 7:14-25 represents the regenerate person.

How [then should we] explain the contrast between the delineation of chap. vii. and that of chap. viii., a contrast infinitely *sharper* than we find between the section vv. 7-13 (description of Saul as a Pharisee) and vv. 14-25 a passage which they would refer to Paul the Christian? Is there, then, a greater difference between Christian and Christian, than between Pharisee and Christian? Philippi alleges that the apostle describes successively in the two passages, vv. 14-25 and viii. 1 et seq., the two opposite aspects of the Christian life, the believer *without* and the believer *with* the breath of the Spirit. But once again the great crisis would require to

be put in this case, not in vv. 24 and 25, between the *two aspects* of the *same state*, but between vv. 13 and 14, where the new state is contrasted with the old, *newness of spirit* with *oldness of the letter*, to use Paul's own words.—The direction of the apostle's thought is clearly marked out by the section as a whole; it may serve as a guiding thread in all that follows. After showing that there is in faith a new principle of sanctification (vi. 1-14), which is a sufficiently firm standard for moral life (vv. 15-23), and which renders emancipation from the law possible and desirable (vii. 1-6), he explains what the intervention of the law produced in his own life (vv. 7-13), and the state in which, despite his sincere and persevering efforts, it left him (vv. 14-23), to issue in that desperate cry of distress in which this state of continual defeats finally expresses itself: *Who shall deliver me?* Of this liberator he does not know the name at the time when he utters the cry (a fact which proves that he is not yet in the faith); but he anticipates, he hopes for, he appeals to him without knowing him. And heaven gives him the answer. Chap. viii. contains this answer: *The Spirit of Christ hath set me free*, ver. 2.... This series of ideas is unimpeachable; it only remains to see whether in this way we shall account for all the details of the following passage, and succeed in overcoming the objections mentioned above, which have been raised in opposition to this view.²

We look at the specific points next.

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² F. Godet, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1956), pp. 281-282. See also, Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 324-325; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 453.

¹ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973) p. 256.

IN RESPONSE - "I DELIGHT IN THE LAW," PART ONE

by Dennis Prutow

We turn now to the more particular arguments of John Murray in favor of the man of Romans 7:14-25 being regenerate. Professor Murray makes five points.

(1) Paul says, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (7: 22). It is not our concern now to determine what he means by "the inward man". Whatever its precise import, it must refer to that which is most determinative in his personality. In his inmost being, in what is central in will and affection, he delights in the law of God. This cannot be said of the unregenerate man still under law and in the flesh. It would be totally contrary to Paul's own teaching. "The mind of the flesh", he says, "is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be" (8: 7). The mind of the flesh is the mind of those who are "in the flesh" (8:8). Nothing could be stronger than to say that the mind is "enmity" against God and, by implication, against the law of God; enmity is the opposite of delight in the law. Hence the Paul of 7:22 is not "in the flesh" and his mind is not "the mind of the flesh"; his mind must be that of the Spirit (8:6).¹

First, it is important to understand what Paul means by the inward man or the inner person.

"Inner person" occurs only twice elsewhere in Paul, and both times the reference is undoubtedly to a Christian (2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 3:16). But this does not mean the phrase is a "technical" designation for a Christian. In other words, a phrase, or word, may be used to describe a Christian without that phrase or word necessarily denoting what is distinctive to Christians. This seems to be the case with "inner person." This phrase was used in secular Greek to denote "man...according to his Godward immortal side."² In this sense, "inner person" must be distinguished from "new person" (cf. 6:6)—which does have a clearly soteriological meaning.³

There are two additional points of rebuttal. First, "the inward man" cannot be "that which is most determinative in Paul's personality" or "what is central in will and affection." If the *inward man* in this text is that which is *most* determinative in the personality, the man of Romans 7 would do that which he desired in the law. He could not practice behavior *contrary* to that which is *most* determinative to his conduct. However, a man may readily act contrary to "conscience or reason."⁴ This is the case here. "The approbation, complacency (so to speak), which reason and conscience yield to the divine law as holy and good, is the truth intended to be expressed."⁵

In addition the *inward man* of verse 22 is parallel to *the law of my mind*. "The rational and moral nature of man, determined by conscience (ii. 15), is, as the inward man, distinguished from the outward man that appears in the body and its members."⁶ As Murray tells us, "It would appear reasonable to assume that 'the inward man' is contrasted with 'the outward man'...."⁷ The contrast is between thought and action.

We recall the mind and conscience are part of that image of God in the broad sense, the natural image, which is marred and defaced but not effaced. As already stated, it is common for unbelievers to act contrary to the searching inner proddings reason and conscience.

If the reader has any question, whether this last statement is in accordance with the apostles views of unsanctified human nature, he needs but to turn back and read Romans ii. 14, 15, in order to dissipate his doubts.⁸

The second main point of rebuttal centers on Paul's *delight*⁹ in the law of God. Murray maintains such delight cannot be reflective of anything but the regenerate heart. Paul uses a compound verb here. We note at the outset, "The

compound nature of the verb is neither to be overlooked...nor to be taken as a strengthening of it...."¹⁰ Interestingly, Paul uses this compound verb in no other place. We therefore look at how the New Testament uses the root and we examine the concept of delight or joyful concurrence in the law in the Old Testament.

The nominative¹¹ root of the verb translated *delight* in Romans 7:22 is used five times in the New Testament. In each case, there is a pejorative connotation to the word. Luke 8:14 is the first reference.

The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures [delights] of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.¹²

It is the pleasures or delights of the world which attract and turn men and women away from Christ. The delight here is an unseemly and self centered delight. Titus 3:3 is Paul's only use of the word.

For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures [delights], spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.¹³

Again, the delights or pleasures are self-serving; self-gratification is the goal. James 4:1. "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures [delights] that wage war in your members?"¹⁴

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¹⁰ Meyer, p. 282.

¹¹ Gk. ἡ ἡδονή.

¹² Gk. τὸ δὲ εἰς τὰς ἀκάνθας πεσόν, οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ ἀκούσαντες, καὶ ὑπὸ μεριμνῶν καὶ πλοῦτου καὶ ἡδονῶν τοῦ βίου πορευόμενοι συμπνίγονται καὶ οὐ τελεσφοροῦσιν.

¹³ Gk. Ἥμεν γὰρ ποτε καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀνόητοι, ἀπειθεῖς, πλανώμενοι, δουλεύοντες ἐπιθυμίαις καὶ ἡδοναῖς ποικίλαις, ἐν κακίᾳ καὶ φθόνῳ διαγοιζόμενοι, συζηγοῖται, μισοῦντες ἀλλήλους.

¹⁴ Gk. Πόθεν πόλεμοι καὶ πόθεν μάχαι ἐν ὑμῖν; οὐκ ἐντεῦθεν, ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατευομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν;

¹ Murray, *Romans*, p. 256.

² J. Jeremias, *TDNT I*, p. 365.

³ Moo, *Romans*, p. 462.

⁴ Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 183.

⁵ Stuart, *Romans*, p. 337.

⁶ Meyer, *Romans*, p. 282.

⁷ Murray, p. 265.

⁸ Stuart, p. 328.

⁹ Gk. συνῆδομαι.

IN RESPONSE - "I DELIGHT IN THE LAW," PART TWO

by Dennis Prutow

James 4:3 is once again a similar use of the term *delight*. "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures [delights]."¹

Finally, the fifth reference is 2 Peter 2:13. "They count it a pleasure [delight] to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you"²

When Paul uses the same word with a prefix to describe his delight in the law of God he appears to have a self-centered kind of delight in mind. He appears to have in mind a self-centered agreement with the law rather than a delight manifesting a love toward God. This indicates pride. As a Jewish man and Pharisee, Paul took great delight in the law of God. At the same time he took great pride in himself for his outward observance of the law. Such delight is real but it is not the delight of David for God's law.

When we examine the Old Testament, we find the noun form of the Greek word under discussion in only two places in the canonical books, Numbers 11:8 and Proverbs 17:11. Delight and pleasure from food is the theme in both cases.

Taken together, the words *delight*, *delights*, *delighted* and *delighting* appear one hundred and two times in the Old Testament of the New American Standard Bible. We never find the word Paul pens in Romans 7:22 used in the Greek Old Testament, with reference to the law of God. There are many texts, particularly in the Psalms, with which Paul was quite familiar, but which do not use the word Paul gives us in Romans 7:22.

The word Paul uses in Romans 7:22 does not stand behind the word *delight* in any of the following. Psalm 1:2, "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night."³

Psalm 40:8, "I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart."⁴ Psalm 112:1, "Praise the Lord! How blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in His commandments."⁵ Psalm 119:16, "I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word."⁶ Psalm 119:24, "Your testimonies also are my delight; they are my counselors."⁷ Psalm 119:47, "I shall delight in Your commandments, which I love."⁸ Psalm 119:70, "Their heart is covered with fat, but I delight in Your law."⁹ Psalm 119:77, "May Your compassion come to me that I may live, for Your law is my delight."¹⁰ Psalm 119:92, "If Your law had not been my delight, then I would have perished in my affliction."¹¹ Psalm 119:143, "Trouble and anguish have come upon me, yet Your commandments are my delight."¹² And Psalm 119:174, "I long for Your salvation, O Lord, and Your law is my delight."¹³

As mentioned, Paul was very familiar with the Septuagint and quoted from it extensively. He surely knew the Greek words used in this version to express delight in the law of God coming from a regenerate heart. Yet Paul used a verb he

never uses elsewhere and the Septuagint *never* uses to speak of delight in the law of God. At the same time, Paul uses a verb having a root used elsewhere in the New Testament to describe less than laudatory behavior. Why would Paul do this? The delight Paul has in mind is not the delight born of a regenerate heart. It is an approbation of and esteem for the law possible for prideful unregenerate hearts seeking self aggrandizement rather than the glory of God.

I repeat, it is possible for the unregenerate to have the kind of delight in and for the law of God to which Paul refers. Under the common operations of the Holy Spirit, unregenerate persons may have a degree of light from the Spirit (Hebrews 6:4-6). Under the common operations of the Spirit, unregenerate persons may receive the Word of God, including the law of God, with joy and delight. Jesus Himself tells us this is the case (Matthew 13:20-21). Finally, under common operations of the Spirit, unregenerate persons may make outward confessions of Christ as Lord and appear outwardly to be converted (Matthew 7:21-22).

Professor Murray insists the joyful concurrence Romans 7:22 expresses is *impossible* for the unregenerate. However my points are: (1) If this is the kind of delight in the law David expresses in the Psalms, we ought to heartily agree with Professor Murray. But the delight of Romans 7:22 is self-centered, prideful and lustful rather than lovingly God-centered. (2) Paul therefore seems to take pains not to identify the delight of Romans 7:22 with the delight for the law expressed by David. (3) It is possible for the unregenerate to delight in God's law as Paul mentions in Romans 7:22 when under the influence of certain common operations of the Holy Spirit as discussed in previous articles. For these reason, I do not agree with Professor Murray.

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¹ αἰτεῖτε καὶ οὐ λαμβάνετε, διότι κακῶς αἰτεῖσθε, ἵνα ἐν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς ὑμῶν δαπανήσητε.

² ἡδονὴν ἠγούμενοι τὴν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τρυφὴν, σπῖλοι καὶ μῶμοι ἐντρυφῶντες ἐν ταῖς ἀπάταις αὐτῶν συνευχούμενοι ὑμῖν.

³ ἄλλ' ἢ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ κυρίου τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ αὐτοῦ μελετήσῃ ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός

⁴ τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημά σου ὁ θεός μου ἐβουλήθην καὶ τὸν νόμον σου ἐν μέσῳ τῆς κοιλίας μου (LXX, 39:9).

⁵ ἀλληλοῦα μακάριος ἀνὴρ ὁ φοβούμενος τὸν κύριον ἐν ταῖς ἐντολαῖς αὐτοῦ θηλήσει σφόδρα (LXX, 111:1).

⁶ ἐν τοῖς δικαιομασίῃ σου μελετήσω οὐκ ἐπιλήσομαι τῶν λόγων σου (LXX, 118:16).

⁷ καὶ γὰρ τὰ μαρτύριά σου μελέτη μου ἔστιν καὶ αἱ συμβουλῆαι μου τὰ δικαιοματά σου (LXX, 118:24).

⁸ καὶ ἐμελέτων ἐν ταῖς ἐντολαῖς σου αἷς ἠγάπησα σφόδρα (LLX, 118:47).

⁹ ἐτρυθήν ὡς γάλα ἡ καρδία αὐτῶν ἐγὼ δε τὸν νόμον σου ἐμελέτησα (LLX, 118:70).

¹⁰ ἐλθέτωσάν μοι οἱ οἰκτιρμοί σου καὶ ζήσομαι ὅτι ὁ νόμος σου μελέτη μου ἔστιν (LLX, 118:77).

¹¹ εἰ μὴ ὅτι ὁ νόμος σου μελέτη μου ἔστιν τότε ἂν ἀπωλόμην ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει μου (LLX, 118:92).

¹² θλίψις καὶ ἀνάγκη εὔροσάν με αἷ ἐντολαῖ σου μελέτη μου (LLX, 118:143).

¹³ ἐπεπόθησα τὸ σωτήριόν σου κύριε καὶ ὁ νόμος σου μελέτη μου ἔστιν (LLX, 118:174).

IN RESPONSE - "I MYSELF WITH MY MIND AM SERVING THE LAW"

by Dennis Prutow

We turn to Murray's second point. (2) The foregoing (vs. 22) is similar to the import of verse 25: "Consequently then I myself with the mind serve the law of God". This is service which means subjection of heart and will, something impossible for the unregenerate man. He is not subject to the law of God and he cannot be because he is "in the flesh", he is "after the flesh," and he has "the mind of the flesh" (8: 5-8).¹

As professor Murray makes the same point here as he does with reference to Romans 7:22, I again maintain the service of which Paul speaks *cannot mean*, as Murray alleges, subjection of heart and will. This is the case for a simple reason. There is a different law at work. It is the law of sin, the principle of sin. It wages war against the law of the mind. This is not the struggle of the believer. How so?

On one hand, Paul confesses the superiority of the law of sin. It makes him a prisoner. He is bound. "The *nomos* [law] of sin wins this battle; 'I' am a prisoner of that *nomos*."² On the other hand, Paul has already told us this is "a state from which every believer is released (6:2, 6, 11, 18-22)."³ Paul is therefore describing a person "who [is] caught in the conflict between mental assent to God's word and practical failure to do it."⁴ And what Paul depicts is quite possible for the unregenerate.

Professor Murray continues the same line of reasoning in his third point.

(3) The person portrayed in 7: 14-25 is one whose will is toward that which is good (vss. 15, 18, 19, 21) and the evil that he does is in violation of that which he wills and loves (vss. 16, 19, 20). This means, without doubt, that his most characteristic will, the prevailing bent and propension of his will, is the good. And this again is totally unlike the unregenerate man of 8: 5-8. The man of 7: 14-25 does bad things but he hates them and they violate the prevailing bent of his will

to the good. The unregenerate man hates the good; the man of 7: 14-25 hates the evil.⁵

Murray again maintains, without doubt, that the man of Romans 7:14-25 has a characteristic will, a prevailing bent and propension of will, which is toward the good. If the prevailing bent of the will is good, then sin is not the controlling element of life. Sin remains but does not reign; it does not have dominion.⁶ However, in the case before us, sin not only remains, it reigns. Despite the will to do good, Paul confesses an inability to follow through (7:14, 18, 23).

Further, Paul says, "I practice the very evil I do not wish" (Verse 19). What does the *practice* of evil indicate? Look at Paul's listing of the deeds of the flesh and his comment regarding their practice.

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that *those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God* (Galatians 5:19-21, italics added).

The person who *practices* evil is not regenerate. Paul says he *practices* the evil he hates (Romans 7:19). The *prevailing* bent of the will of the man in Romans 7:14-25 is therefore not good. Where the prevailing, *controlling*, bent of will is good, there cannot be a *continual practice* of known evil.

On the other hand, as we have seen, it is possible for unregenerate persons to have a knowledge of, even a delight in, that which is good while, at the same time, the disposition remains bent toward evil. Murray's argument is wanting. Professor Murray gives us his fourth point.

(4) The tension which appears in 7: 14-25 between that which Paul delights in, loves, approves, and wills and that which he is and does in contravention is inevitable in a regenerate

man as long as sin remains in him. These two complexes in him—righteousness, on the one hand, sin, on the other—are contradictory and the more sensitive he is to the demands of holiness, the more sensitive to that pattern after which his most characteristic self is formed, the more will the contradiction which still exists in him be focused in his consciousness. And the more sanctified he becomes the more painful to him must be the presence in himself of that which contradicts the perfect standard of holiness. The complaint, "Wretched man that I am!", is the honest expression of this painful experience of internal conflict and contradiction. The complaint of verse 24 is the mark of candour and the proof of sensitivity. Once we admit that sin persists in the believer, the tension of 7: 14-25 is inevitable and it is not the way of truth to ignore it.⁷

Is Professor Murray correct? "The tension which appears in 7: 14-25 between that which Paul delights in, loves, approves, and wills and *that which he is and does in contravention* is inevitable in a regenerate man as long as sin remains in him" (italics added). First, we have seen it is possible for unregenerate persons under common operations of the Holy Spirit to have a certain delight, love, approval and desire to follow God's moral law.⁸

Second, we can say beyond doubt, the persons who progress in sanctification will sense more and more their own profound sinfulness. They will battle with sin more ferociously. "I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified"⁹ (1 Corinthians 9:27). Self discipline comes hard after much practice. However, there is a deeper problem in Romans 7.

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¹ Murray, *Romans*, p. 258.

² Moo, *Romans*, p. 451.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 445.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 467.

⁵ Murray, *Romans*, p. 258.

⁶ Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, p. 145-146.

⁷ Murray, *Romans*, p. 258.

⁸ Hodge, *Systematics*, vol. 2, pp. 670-675.

⁹ ἀλλὰ ὑποπιέζω μου τὸ σῶμα καὶ δουλαγωγῶ, μὴ πως ἄλλοις κηρύξας αὐτὸς ἀδόκιμος γένομαι.

IN RESPONSE - "I SEE A DIFFERENT LAW MAKING ME A PRISONER"

by Dennis Prutow

What is the root problem Paul expresses in Romans 7? Paul *cannot* discipline his body and make it his slave. The opposite is true. "I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members"¹ (Romans 7:23). Sin controls. Paul cannot, he does not have the ability, to discipline his bodily members and use them to the glory of God. It is not within him to do so. "The willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not" (Romans 7:18). Again, Paul describes *that which he is and does in contravention* to God's law.² "I practice the very evil that I do not want" (Romans 7:19). This is not a scenario of victory. Paul is drawing a picture of sin leading to death and anguish. The law cannot and does not save us. It shows us our sin; it slays us and condemns us (Romans 3:19-20).

Paul uses military imagery in Romans 7:23 to paint the picture he wants us to see. The *law of the mind* is God's law.³ It is that in which Paul delights in his mind (Romans 7:22). The law *in my members* is the law or principle of sin. These two are in conflict. That is, the latter wages battle against the former. What is the outcome of this warfare? "Paul claims that the result of the battle between 'the law of sin' and 'the law of my mind' is an unqualified victory for the former: 'I have become a 'captive to the law of sin.'"⁴ Murray concurs. "The apostle represents himself as led captive to the law of sin."⁵ Paul would have been familiar with the military procedures.

Captives taken in war were put to death, or kept or sold as slaves, at the pleasure of the victor. The meaning therefore is, that the law of sin had entire rule or control, notwithstanding the *inner man* decided against it.

And can such be the *habitual* state of any real Christian?⁶ "Surely it is a tragic picture drawn by Paul with this outcome, 'sold under sin' (14)."⁷

Paul's cry in Romans 7:24 is therefore much more than "the mark of candour and the proof of sensitivity" of a Christian struggling with sin as Murray thinks. "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?"⁸ This is a cry of desperation. Paul thought, formerly, he was righteous, on the proper road, headed for heaven. Now he realizes his utterly lost condition, his wretchedness (Romans 7:9). Romans 7:24 is the cry of a man who now knows he is under condemnation, "[a] heart rending cry, from the depths of despair."⁹

Paul has reproduced this [the foregoing argument] vividly from his own experience, but
ταλαίπωρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος
[wretched man that I am] is not the cry of the Christian Paul, but of the man whom sin and the law have brought to despair."¹⁰

No wonder that the sinner, whose conscience has been awakened by the law of God, and who has been brought by bitter experience to see that all which reason and conscience do for him proves ineffectual as to the actual control of his lusts and passions—no wonder that he should be thus constrained, in view of the dreadful condemnation which seems to await him, to exclaim, "Wretched man that I am!" Well may he express a wish, too, for deliverance from the predominating power of his bodily carnal lusts and inclinations; which in spite of all the remonstrances his awakened conscience makes, continue to expose him to the curse of the divine law, yea to its aggravated penalty.¹¹

The point is that persons under common operations of the Holy Spirit, having a sense of their condemnation and a degree of light regarding the gospel, can experience the struggle and conviction outlined by Paul. At the same time they remain unregenerate. Professor Murray's assertions do not stand.

Finally, we turn to Professor Murray's fifth argument.

(5) We are not to suppose that 7:14-25 is destitute of the triumphant note which is so conspicuous in chapter 8. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (vs. 25). This is Paul's answer to the complaint of verse 24. It is not the answer of defeat; it is the answer of assured confidence and hope. It breathes the same triumphant note of I Corinthians 15:57: "But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". The thanksgiving of verse 25 is not the language of the unregenerate man under the bondage of sin. And the conclusion of verse 25 stands in the closest logical connection with the exultant faith and assurance of the introductory thanksgiving.¹²

Romans 7:25 reads, Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.¹³

Professor Murray wants us to think the interjection at the beginning of verse 25 gives the whole of Romans 7:14-25 a victorious note. But: "On any reading of the passage, v. 25 is anticipatory of a victory yet to come...."¹⁴

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¹ βλέπω δὲ ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου ἀντιστρατεύόμενον τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντά με ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου.

² Murray, *Romans*, p. 258.

³ Byrne, *Romans*, pp. 232-233; Denney, *EGT, Romans*, p. 643; Hendriksen, *Romans*, p. 235.

⁴ Moo, *Romans*, p. 465.

⁵ Murray, *Romans*, p. 267.

⁶ Stuart, *Romans*, p. 338.

⁷ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, vol. iv, p. 370.

⁸ ταλαίπωρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος· τίς με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου;

⁹ Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 183.

¹⁰ Denney, *Romans*, p. 643.

¹¹ Stuart, *Romans*, pp. 338-339.

¹² Murray, *Romans*, pp. 258-259.

¹³ χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν. ἄρα οὖν αὐτὸς ἐγὼ τῷ μὲν νοῦ δουλεύω νόμῳ θεοῦ, τῇ δὲ σαρκὶ νόμῳ ἁμαρτίας.

¹⁴ Moo, *Romans*, p. 446.

IN RESPONSE - "THANKS BE TO GOD"

by Dennis Prutow

Does Romans 7:25 lend a note of victory to verses 14-24?

On any reading of the passage, v. 25 is anticipatory of a victory yet to come: on the regenerate view, anticipatory of the final deliverance from the "mortal body" depicted in 8:10, 23; on the unregenerate view, anticipatory of the deliverance from sin and death depicted in 8:2-4. On the unregenerate view it must be assumed that Paul, the Christian, has at this point interjected his own thanksgiving. And perhaps it could be argued that the use of the plural ("our") rather than the "I" style of the surrounding context signals the presence of such an interjection.¹

The interjection of praise does not recollect; it anticipates. There is little if anything for Paul to be thankful about or for in the preceding verses. He finds himself under condemnation, unable to deliver himself. He cries, "O wretched man that I am." He asks the only possible question of a person lost in sin, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death." This interjection does indeed look ahead to Romans 8. It anticipates the deliverance from condemnation declared in Romans 8:1-2.

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."²

Once Paul makes his sudden exclamation of praise in Romans 7:25, he returns to sum up his argument. "So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin."

Professor Murray asserts, "The thanksgiving of verse 25 is not the language of the unregenerate man under the bondage of sin."³ Of course this is the case. But this fact does not argue Romans 7:14-25 delineate the Christian per-

spective. The Christian Paul, looking back and rehearsing the pre-Christian battle and defeat by sin, exalts momentarily in the victory of Christ. "The regenerate man's ideal contemplation of his pre-Christian state rises with sudden joy into a declaration of his actual emancipation as a Christian."⁴ Perhaps it is also true that these words of praise

should be read as in a *parenthesis*; for to parenthesis it clearly belongs, inasmuch as it breaks in altogether upon the thread of discourse, and is simply an anticipation of what is about to follow in chap. viii."⁵

Murray therefore fails to make his point.

After this interruption in the description of his state of misery previously to faith, Paul returns to his subject in the second part of ver. 25, which is a sort of summary of the whole passage, vv. 14-23.⁶

For the first time in this context, Paul contrasts his two responses, or situations, in terms of 'serving,' but the other terms reflect the language Paul has already used: serving 'the law of God' (v. 22) 'with the mind' (cf. v. 23) versus serving 'the law of sin' (v. 23) 'with the flesh' (v. 14b, 18).⁷

The thrust of the passage is that of defeat and despair. Paul sums up,

While my *mind*, *i. e.*, reason and conscience, takes part with the law of God and approves its sanctions, my carnal part obtains the actual predominance, and brings me into a state of condemnation and ruin.⁸

Romans 8:1-2 confirms this by defining the primary problem of the person in Romans 7:14-25 as condemnation.

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.⁹

Regarding Romans 8:1, professor Murray says, "The 'therefore' means that this

complete absence of condemnation is an inference drawn from what precedes."¹⁰

This must be the case. Murray adds,

[I]f there is included in freedom from condemnation not only deliverance from the guilt of sin but also from its power, then the "therefore" could be related quite properly to what immediately precedes (6:1-7:25) as well as the more remote context. It is this latter alternative which the evidence would appear to demand... Hence what is thrust into the foreground... is not only freedom from the guilt but also freedom from the enslaving power of sin.¹¹

This is *precisely* the case and *precisely* the answer to the problem set forth in Romans 7:14-25. Sin is in control. "The willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not" (verse 18). "I practice the very evil that I do not want" (verse 19). Paul sees he is a prisoner. "I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members" (verse 23). He is under condemnation. "Wretched man that I am."

"[C]ondemnation" designates the state of "lostness," of estrangement from God that, apart from Christ, every person will experience for eternity. Those "in Christ Jesus" are removed from this state—and removed forever from it, as the emphatic "no" indicates.¹²

Why? "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (Romans 8:2). Once a prisoner of the law of sin, Paul is now set free from the law of sin. What could be more clear? Paul is set free from the guilt and the ruling power of sin. If this is the case, as Murray himself admits, the scenario Paul sets forth in Romans 7:14-25 must be that of an unregenerate person, awakened and under conviction.

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¹ Moo, *Romans*, pp. 466-467.

² Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ· ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσέν σε ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου.

³ Murray, *Romans*, p. 259.

⁴ Denney, *EGT, Romans*, p. 643.

⁵ Stuart, *Romans*, p. 339.

⁶ Godet, *Romans*, p. 291.

⁷ Moo, *Romans*, p. 467.

⁸ Stuart, *Ibid.*

⁹ See note 2.

¹⁰ Murray, p. 274.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 274-275.

¹² Moo, p. 473.