

Romans Summary
Week 13, Wednesday December 7, 2016
Romans 7:13-25

Paul, in the last section, summarizes his position on the law; though it didn't bring the life it promised, that doesn't mean the law is bad. In fact, the law is holy, righteous and good. So, our questioner raises the next logical question: did that which is good (Law) become death for me? Again, NO! Instead, the law has a double purpose statement: 1) it allows sin to be seen as sin (demonstrated through my death) and 2) so sin become utterly sinful (accomplished through the commandment).

Having now thoroughly exonerated the Law, but having shifted the problem onto the 'I', Paul now proceeds to also exonerate the 'I'. REMEMBER who the 'I' is: Israel, under Torah, apart from Christ and the Spirit! Not Paul, not you and me. Remember where we now are on the map — in Christ, not in Adam. This is not Paul's treatise on the still present sin in the life of the believer. Paul is **continuing** to contrast the new covenant and its people with the old covenant and its people.

Of course, this is crucial to understand because when we say that there is a double purpose, it is not the Law's purpose, but God's purpose. Just like in 5:20, where the Law leads to the trespass increasing, God purposes to bring sin to its fullest and show it to be utterly sinful in order to fully and finally deal with it. So where does the Law come and fulfil its purpose? In Israel, which stands in Adamic solidarity with the rest of humanity. That is the same place that Messiah comes — Israel — to finally deal with the problem of sin, in the flesh; that is Adamic flesh.

Paul points out that the Law is spiritual, but the 'I' is fleshly (in Adam). This means that the 'I' continues in bondage — on the left side of our diagram — in the Egypt of Sin. Because the Law is in the sphere of the spiritual (God side) but the 'I' is in the Adam sphere no amount of trying to be obedient to the Law will free it. The problem is not Torah, but the type of person the 'I' is; i.e. Adamic.

What does it mean to be fleshly? I commit sins of ignorance: I do not do what I want, but what I hate. The 'I' is an unwilling participant in this drama. Again, this is the description of Israel under Torah: she sees the right thing to do, she delights in it and wants to do it, but finds that what she actually does is the thing she in fact hates. Israel in Torah has the picture of what the truly human life should look like, but fails to attain it. The conclusion is that because I do what I don't want, I agree that the Law is good. It is not evil, it is not the cause of my death, there is no charge left against Torah.

Because the 'I' is frustrated it too is exonerated. This shows, in fact, that the problem is not the 'I' itself but, Sin which lives in the 'I'. Just as Sin was responsible for death, so Sin is also responsible for the fleshly state of the 'I'. Sin, not the good thing (Law/Torah) lives in the 'I'. That is a problem because what lives in me is what empowers me to live. Without the good (Law/Torah) living in the 'I' it can will the good, but cannot do it. So, just like there becomes a double Torah (letter/Spirit), now there is a double 'I'; the 'I' that wills and the 'I' where sin dwells instead of the good.

Paul, on behalf of his kinsmen according to the flesh, cries out under the tension of this divided 'I'. Who will deliver me from this body of death? Israel delights in Torah, desires to do it, but cannot because she is enslaved under Sin which leads to the death she doesn't want versus the life she does want. She cannot escape her Adamic solidarity — she needs deliverance.

This leads to Paul pointing to the coming fuller answer in chapter 8. Here is Paul's highest Christology. The good news is that God has dealt with Sin through Jesus, who is God's Messiah, who is our Lord. This is who will rescue the 'I' who desires to serve God, but is in bondage to sin.

“The Condemned Man” reflection and discussion questions:

1. Do you live with this sort of memory of not being good enough?
2. How did Jesus set us free from the Law of Sin and Death?
3. Why should we expect Jesus to work in us to change?