

ROMANS, RIGHTLY DIVIDED & VERSE-BY-VERSE
SESSION 18 | ROMANS 7:9-25

ROMANS 5:12-8:39 | GIVING TESTIMONY TO THE VALIDITY OF THE
MYSTERY

Supplemental Resource, Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 28

ROMANS 6:1-7:25 | A MESSAGE TO BELIEVING JEWS IN OVERLAP TIMES

Supplemental Resource, Romans Graphically Presented, pgs. 32-35

ROMANS 7:1-25 | DEAD UNTO THE LAW

Supplemental Resource, Romans Graphically Presented, pgs. 35

Verses 1-8 – see session 17.

VERSE 9 – BLACK

In what way could Paul have been **alive without the law**? At its simplest sense, Paul seems to be talking about a time in his life in which he lived outside the law. However, in light of Philippians 3:5-6 this is a very hard position to support.

Most commentaries, then, assume that Paul *means* that he *thought* he was **alive without the law**. That is, that he was delusional in piety, and then he woke up to the realities of the Law and recognized his wretched nature. However, this interpretation seems far too convenient as a support of the Calvinist/evangelical system and far too removed from *what Paul actually says*, both here and in Philippians 3:5-6.

My best proposal is that Paul here is using the pronoun **I** in a *theoretical* sense, as in, “suppose I was alive without the law...” His purpose being to show that *the law increased guilt*. Thus, this proposal is viewing **I** as a placeholder for *anyone*.

While this is not a perfect solution, it may help deal with further use of the first-person singular pronoun throughout the chapter.

To support the proposal, it is worthy to note that Paul uses the first-person plural pronoun (ἐγώ) 18 times in Romans, and this is the very first time. Furthermore, one-third of the uses of this pronoun are in chapter 7. (Note: in English the pronoun “I” is found beginning in chapter 1, but these are embedded within the verb and the pronoun ἐγώ is not therefore printed and emphasized. In each of the usages of ἐγώ in chapter 7, the verb itself *could have* expressed the first-person plural *without the pronoun*, yet Paul chose to use the pronoun).

Finally, this proposal, while not perfect, seems better than the alternative (which goes against Paul’s own testimony in Philippians 3:5-6). The only other alternative is to ignore what Paul says. I choose to take an “imperfect” solution to a difficult verse.

VERSE 10 – BLACK

Recall that Paul is stating *benefits* and not curses of the Law. A major benefit of the Law is that it **was ordained to life**. (Paul speaks of **the commandment** as indicative of *the Law*).

If the Law **was ordained to life** then Calvinism and Evangelicalism must come forth and reject one of their basic tenets, *that the Law only brings death*. For example, *Got Questions* says, “because we cannot keep God’s Law on our own, the result is only sin and death for those under the Law.”¹ But if the Law **was ordained to life**, then how can its result be “only sin and death,” as *Got Questions* (and so many others) attests?

¹ *What Is The Law of Sin and Death?* Got Questions. <https://www.gotquestions.org/law-of-sin-and-death.html>. Accessed April 6, 2023.

I think we must admit that if the Law **was ordained to life**, then it must have had the ability to perform and come to its full purpose. Even if Paul's "everyman" (represented in the pronoun) struggled to find anything but **death**, this does not change the Law's ability.

VERSE 11 – BLACK

Paul very clearly puts the blame where the blame is due: **sin**, which used **the commandment** and **deceived me** and using the Law as a weapon, **it slew me**.

VERSE 12 – BLACK

It seems that if indeed **the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good** (and how could we argue otherwise), and it was **ordained to life** (v. 9), then our perspective on the law must be *positive* and not negative. The Law *brought life*, just as it was designed to do. But now, in the dispensation of grace, God is offering that which is infinitely better, *a gift of life* rather than *a reward of life*.

VERSE 13 – BLACK

Paul, once again, drives home his belief that the Law **is good** and should not be considered an instrument of **death**. The Law does not kill. However, **sin** used the law to **appear sin** and **become exceeding sinful**.

VERSE 14 – BLACK

Verse 14 sets the groundwork for verses 15-25. Paul's core belief is that **the law is spiritual**, which is a *shorthand* manner of all the good things he has just said about the Law. His second core belief is that **I am carnal, sold under sin**. It may be that Adam did the "selling," but **under sin** is where "I" reside in the flesh. Sin is the ultimate problem, and not the Law.

VERSES 15-24 | BLACK

This section (vv. 15-24) is a "back and forth" testimony between that which "I" would versus that which "I" would not. And, in these verses, the "would not" wins, every time. The **inward man** (v. 22) delights in God's law, but the **law in my members** (v. 23) (i.e., the "outward man") is **warring against the law of my mind** (v. 23). Thus there is a spiritual-vs-physical tug-of-war taking place within. And who would not attest to this struggle!

Note that it is difficult to argue for so-called "Total Depravity" while also holding to these verses, which speak of a "partial" depravity (if depravity is even the word that should be used).

In the end, Paul's "I" cries out for deliverance **from the body of this death** (v. 24).

VERSE 25 – BLACK

Verse 25 answers the question of deliverance in verse 24. It is **through Jesus Christ our Lord** that there is deliverance from **the body of this death** (v. 24).

Paul makes his summary, stating, in brief, the problem of life under the law, and it is similar to the words Jesus used to warn Peter, **the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak** (Matt. 26:41).