

# An Exegesis of Romans 7

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1 Ἦ ἀγνοεῖτε, ἀδελφοί, γινώσκουσιν γὰρ νόμον λαλῶ, ὅτι ὁ νόμος κυριεύει τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐφ’ ὅσον χρόνον ζῆ;

**Translation** - *Or do you not know, brothers—for I speak to those who are acquainted by experience with law—that law has lordship over a person for whatever time that person lives?*

For the first time since 1:13 Paul addresses his readers as ἀδελφοί. There was no question at that place as to whom the recipients of this letter are: Christians from Judaism, from among synagog proselytes, from the pagan populace. There is no reason here to limit those who are acquainted by experience with law to the Jewish component of the church at Rome. There is no need either, to narrow νόμος to the Mosaic Code or to include only Roman law with it.

Paul’s readers are not ignorant of the fact that any system of law (ὁ is generic) under which any person lives (τοῦ is generic) governs that person for life. Implicit in that thought is the corollary, that law’s lordship over a person does not extend beyond the time that person lives.

Only AAT, GWN and NASB among nine English translations render the opening word of this chapter, Ἦ. Luther ignores it, too. Every verbally inspired word has its function, however. What is the reason Paul begins his thoughts here with “Or”? He is harking back to 6:14, where he said: “For sin shall not have lordship over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” In 6:15-23 he raised and answered the question. “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?” Having disposed of that libertine notion he returns to the radical assertion of 6:14. Οὐ γὰρ ἐστε ὑπὸ νόμον.

How can this be that we are not under law? Answer: “(It’s plain): or (Ἦ) don’t you know...?” Verse 1 does not explicitly answer the question how this can be (as verse 4 will), but the answer is already implicit: With a person’s death law’s commands and demands and restrictions are at an end for that person.

2 ἢ γὰρ ὑπανδρος γυνή τῷ ζῶντι ἀνδρὶ δέδετα νόμῳ· ἐὰν δὲ ἀποθάνῃ ὁ ἀνὴρ, κατήρηται ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τοῦ ἀνδρός.

**Translation** - *Yes indeed, a married woman is bound by law to the man while he lives. But if the man dies she is released from the law relating to that man.*

Γάρ introduces an illustration, not a proof. Also this is an example and not an allegory. Paul does not say it, but the woman would also be released from the law if *she* died. He is not ready yet to talk about that; he is simply illustrating the binding nature of law. Verse 3 continues the illustration:

3 ἄρα οὖν ζῶντος τοῦ ἀνδρός μοιχαλὶς χρηματίσει ἐὰν γένηται ἀνδρὶ ἐτέρῳ· ἐὰν δὲ ἀποθάνῃ ὁ ἀνὴρ, ἐλευθέρα ἐστὶν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου, τοῦ μὴ εἶναι αὐτὴν μοιχαλίδα γενομένην ἀνδρὶ ἐτέρῳ.

**Translation** - *So then, while the man lives she will be called an adulteress if should belong to another man. But if her husband should die she is free from the law; she is not an adulteress if she belongs to another man.*

If the husband dies what changes in her situation? The law has not been repealed. No, there can be a new relationship because a death has occurred. In the next verse, not in a way that the illustration might have

led us to expect, Paul will tell us that a death has occurred and that a new relationship has begun. The illustration of vv. 2 and 3 is done with and Paul moves on to the reality:

**4** ὥστε, ἀδελφοί μου, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐθανατώθητε τῷ νόμῳ διὰ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι ὑμᾶς ἑτέρῳ, τῷ ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγερθέντι, ἵνα καρποφορήσωμεν τῷ θεῷ.

**Translation** - *Likewise my brothers you too were put to death, as far as the law is concerned, through the body of Christ; with the result that you belong to another, to the one who was raised from the dead, so that we bear fruit for God.*

Ὡστε may be treated literally as “also thus”—“likewise,” and not to introduce a consequence— “and so it follows.” The truth of v 4 does not derive from any of the first three verses (which simply stressed the binding nature of the law). Rather it derives from the saving work of Jesus Christ our Lord, brought home to us by the means of grace and apprehended by faith.

The main verb, ἐθανατώθητε, helps signal that we are done with the illustration. Paul does not say, “You died,” but, “You were put to death.” The passive is also a wholesome reminder that this was not an achievement on our part. That “we died to sin” (6:2) was not our achievement, either, but the passive here reminds us that God was the agent.

The instrument for his action will be identified in a moment, but first he says τῷ νόμῳ. Not dative of instrument, “by the law,” but dative of respect, even disadvantage. “You were put to death as far as the law is concerned.” In light of v 1, “The law has lordship for as long as a person lives,” our being put to death can only mean that the law can no longer lord it over us by its commands, threats condemnations, or punishments. Not only Moses but all religious rules, codes and systems have lost their lordship. Why? On the one hand, “the law has lordship for as long as a person lives:” on the other hand, “you have been put to death.”

The instrument (διά with the genitive) of God’s slaying action is “the body of Christ.” The reference, of course, is not to his body in the Supper or to his body the Church. It is to his crucified body. Paul portrays the same reality from the perspective of what happened to the law in Colossians 2:14, “ ... Having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.” What was done to the law at Golgotha through Christ’s body was to our advantage and to the law’s disadvantage.

Now, how did the sacrificial death of Christ become *my* death? “Do not you know that whoever of us were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into his death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father’s glory, so also we by God’s intention walk in newness of life” (6:3-5). Just before saying this Paul had said (6:2), “We died, to sin’s disadvantage.” In the rest of chapter 6 he talks about the significance of having died to sin, to demonstrate that we should not “remain in sin so that grace may abound” (6:1). A summary sentence in the discussion appears at 6:14, “For sin shall not lord it over you, for you are not under law but under grace” (6:14). As we have noted at 7:1, our chapter elaborates and expounds that verse, especially the second clause.

Back to the verse before us. God’s intended result (εἰς) and therefore the result is that we belong to another. He was dead; the law killed him. He was raised from the dead. That Christ, through whose body we were put to death as far as the law is concerned, lives; we belong to him (τὸ γενέσθαι ὑμᾶς [Χριστοῦ]).

The result, according to God’s, intention for this new relationship, is that we bear fruit for God (τῷ θεῷ dative of advantage). Some fanciful interpreters, wanting to continue the illustration of verses 2 and 3 beyond its intended use, want the fruit-bearing to depict the “children” of the Christian’s marriage to Christ. This is allegorizing, reading more into the verb than is in it. We are told by the experts that it was never used with reference to children, only to crops.

Why does Paul shift to 1<sup>st</sup> person plural with this verb? A simple and sufficient answer is that he is affirming his oneness with his readers in the Christian experience he has sketched in this verse.

5 ὅτε γὰρ ἦμεν ἐν τῇ σαρκί, τὰ παθήματα τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν τὰ διὰ τοῦ νόμου ἐνηργεῖτο ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν, εἰς τὸ καρποφορῆσαι τῷ θανάτῳ·

**Translation** - *For when we were in the flesh the sinful passions—those which come through the law—kept working in our members so that we bore fruit for death.*

Γάρ introduces vv. 5 and 6 as the explanation of v 4. ὅτε ἦμεν speaks of a past time, when we used to be (ἦμεν is imperfect) “in the flesh.” ἐν with the dative signifies sphere, the place within which we used to be. τῇ σαρκί is where we used to exist before we belonged “to another, to the one raised from the dead” (v 4). “The flesh”—needless to say—is not the body (although our bodies were involved and implicated). Existence in the flesh was having our abode in the sinful nature, when we were enslaved to sin, ruled by death, under law, at enmity with God. “When we were” implies that this is no longer the case, that “that is not our address anymore.”

“Passion is a neutral word, but when it is qualified by τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν it loses its neutrality and is unmistakably negative. Some have understood “of sins” as possessive, and that makes sense. Others have taken the genitive as source, but the plural makes that unlikely. Quality or character seems to make the best sense: passions characterized by sins,” and so “sinful passions.” The plural “sins” suggests that Paul has action in mind, not our natural sinful state or the sin-power (ἡ ἁμαρτία).

Paul further identifies these sinful passions in a startling way. They are urges, desires, impulses, lusts—“those that (τὰ)” are or come through law! Διὰ τοῦ νόμου says that law is the instrument through which sinful passions arise. Paul will assign an even more active role to law in vv. 8 and 11.

Ἐνηργεῖτο is another imperfect, “kept working,” a middle, an intransitive. The sinful passions, those that come through law, do not originate in our members. They work in our members, however, exploiting them. They exploit them for the purpose and with the result that (εἰς) they bear fruit for death. Paul asked in 6:21, “What fruit did you have then [when you were slaves of sin and free with regard to righteousness” (6.20)] on the basis of those things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.” He will remind us in 8:6, “the fleshly mindset is death.”

6 νυνὶ δὲ καταργήθημεν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου ἀποθανόντες ἐν ᾧ κατειχόμεθα, ὥστε δουλεῦειν ἡμᾶς ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος καὶ οὐ παλαιότητι γράμματος.

**Translation** - *But now we have been removed from the law’s sphere of activity, since we have died to that in which we were imprisoned, with the result that we are slaves in newness of spirit and not oldness of letter.*

“But now” marks the contrast to the ὅτε of verse 5, “when we were in the flesh.” The first person, the meaning of καταργέω, the passive form, and the adverbial use of the prepositional phrase ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου all taken together suggest the translation, “we have been removed from the law’s sphere of activity.”

Ἀποθανόντες is used causally, “since we have died.” There is an ellipsis, in no way ungrammatical or unusual, before ἐν ᾧ. Supply τούτῳ. Κατέχω is “to hold down, suppress.” To be held down *in* something is to be imprisoned. What is that to which we have died, In which we were imprisoned? Paul has already told us in v 4: We have been put to death to the *law’s* disadvantage.

Before we go to the ὥστε clause let us hear Luther on this first clause: “But how are we ‘discharged from the law’? Doubtless because through faith in Christ we satisfy the demands of the Law and through grace are freed and voluntarily perform the works of the Law.... Even though we sin often and are not perfectly voluntary, yet we have made a beginning and are progressing, and we are righteous and free. Indeed, we must constantly beware that we may not be under the Law. Therefore we must always remain in faith and pray for love” (LW 25).

I am still a sinner and sin much, but that is not the overriding reality in my life. I still have a sinful nature, but that's not my dwelling place. I am still mortal, but death has lost its sting and its victory. God's law still says, "Love me; love your neighbor," but it no longer exercises lordship over me or imprisons me. All this is the work of God alone, by his grace in Christ alone, mediated to me by the gospel in word and sacrament, received by faith alone. He has redeemed me and set me apart for service to him. Justification and sanctification are to be distinguished in theology but they are never divided in life; neither exists without the other.

In saying that the ACI introduced by ὥστε expresses intended result we bear in mind that the intention is God's and the result is from him. We are removed from the law's sphere of activity, we are dead to the law so that we can slave (δουλεύειν). Slave for what, under what? Sin is excluded; we are dead to that. The law is excluded, as these first verses of chapter 7 have made clear.

To what, to whom, are we then slaves? To righteousness (6:18), to God (6:22). Slavery seems a strange state for redeemed people to be in and Paul acknowledges that in 6:19, "I use a human expression because of the weakness of your flesh." But consider the alternatives: I can serve in complete submission to him who redeemed me for glorious freedom or I can be in subjection to what held me in miserable bondage. "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul" may be good humanistic poetry, but it is mistaken and blasphemous.

What is the environment in which we now do our (sphere) in which we now do our slaving? We do it ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος. The genitive is qualitative, "newness characterized by spirit." This must include the thought that this newness has its source in the Holy Spirit.

The use of οὐ instead of μή emphasizes the contrast between newness characterized by spirit and oldness characterized by letter. The distinction is not between what is written (γράμμα) and what is "inward" (πνεῦμα), between the Scriptures and something that comes apart from the Scriptures. It is really the distinction between law and gospel. Recall what Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "(God) has also enabled us to be servants of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit makes alive" (2 Co 3:6). Paul does not say these things as an enthusiast or an antinomian, but as a gospel-preaching anti-legalist. The law (oldness of letter) cannot enable us to receive God's favorable verdict (justification). Neither can it renew our lives (sanctification). The gospel (newness of spirit) enables us to serve God just as it declares us righteous, just in declaring us righteous, just by creating the faith that is imputed to us as righteousness. "Through Jesus Christ the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death" (Ro 8:2).

7 Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; ὁ νόμος ἁμαρτία; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔγνων εἰ μὴ διὰ νόμου· τὴν τε γὰρ ἐπιθυμίαν οὐκ ἤδειν εἰ μὴ ὁ νόμος ἔλεγεν, Οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις.

**Translation** - *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Absolutely not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin by experience if not through the law. Yes, in fact, I would not have perceived coveting if the law had not kept saying, "You shall not covet."*

For the third time in this section on sanctification chapters 6-8, Paul introduces an excursus that heads off misunderstanding. Asking a question, he suggests a false conclusion that might be drawn from what he has said and emphatically rejects it. Then he goes on to show why the conclusion is mistaken and sets forth the correct understanding. (Cp 6:1-11; 15-23).

In 6:2 and 6:11 Paul has said we are dead to sin; in 7:4 that we are dead to the law. In 6:21 he has said that we are freed from sin; in 7:6 that we are freed from the law. Are law and sin therefore identical? Emphatically not! Again, "The law came in that the trespass might increase" (5:20) and, "The sinful passions ... arise through the law" (7:5). Is the law therefore identical with the sin-principle? Emphatically not!

Something else entirely (ἀλλὰ) is the case. Law and sin remain opposites, but they have a startlingly close connection, as Paul will show in what follows. As other Greek authors could do Paul omits the ἄν in his condition of past unreality. I would not have known sin experientially (ἔγνω), but I did know it through the

law. *There* is one connection between those two opposites, sin and law. Sin was there all the while, whether I knew it or not, but law gave me experiential knowledge of it.

Τε signals that the second condition of past unreality is closely linked to, is a counterpart of, the first. For that reason I regard as confirmatory and translate τε γὰρ as “Yes, in fact.” To confirm or to instance his first statement he speaks of his experience with a specific expression of the law. Paul says that he would not have perceived, been aware of, coveting had the law not kept telling him (ἔλεγεν = iterative imperfect), “You shall not.”

Ἐπιθυμήσεις is the volitive future of a verb which can be translated as “desire, lust, yearn for, covet.” Robertson (943) calls it “the imperative future of legal language.” The Author of the directive says that it is his will that I do not desire what is not mine. In this way God identifies what seems natural and in itself harmless as sin. He also reveals the inwardness of sin, that it is a matter of the heart. If God says, “You shall not covet (as he does),” then the heart in which covetousness lurks is a sinful heart. This knowledge has been lost to fallen man and he does not realize what his real situation vis-a-vis God’s holy will is. He can be “religious” and “law-abiding,” a model of civic righteousness, realizing that he is not perfect but not realizing that his heart is far from God and that his covetous is idolatrous rebellion against God.

How he experienced the reality of sin through the law Paul makes clear in what follows:

**8** ἀφορμὴν δὲ λαβοῦσα ἡ ἁμαρτία διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς κατειργάσατο ἐν ἐμοὶ πᾶσαν ἐπιθυμίαν· χωρὶς γὰρ νόμου ἁμαρτία νεκρά.

**Translation** - *But sin, taking the opportunity, worked every kind of coveting in me through the commandment. For apart from law sin is dead.*

God in his law said, “You shall not covet.” But what did sin make of that commandment? The sin-power in me, the sin principle, opportunistically exploited that commandment to effect exactly what God prohibits. What the commandment forbade the commandment was instrumental in producing. The law is not sin, but sin uses the law as a stimulus, an incitement to stir up the embers, poke the sleeping lion, pour water on the inert lime and make it exceedingly hot. Here the law is more than a mirror, curb, or guide. It is a catalyst, an incitement!

Διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς, because of its position, probably modifies κατειργάσατο rather than λαβοῦσα, but those translators and commentators who do not agree do not really change the meaning. Either way, sin employs the commandment to effect an opposite reaction. This was true for Israel, who received the commandment at Sinai, for Paul the Israelite, for anyone who hears the commandment. The commandment demands but it does not enable. Not only justification but also holy living must be sought elsewhere than in the law, because of what the sin in us does with the law. Other commandments may have the same effect. Paul cites the one that does not appear in most of the moral codes of the heathen, the one most blurred in natural man’s heart.

“For apart from law sin is dead.” Paul is not talking about sins or about whether or not people are sinners. He established in 5:12 that through one man all sinned. In 5:13 he made a statement similar to and bearing on what he says here: “For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law.” The sin-power was there before the law was given, but there was no consciousness of it as what it is, no connecting it with mortality and with everything else that has gone wrong in God’s good creation. So here “sin is dead” means that it lies dormant, plays possum, does not assert itself. Until a person hears, “You shall; you shall not.” Then sin is aroused, bestirs itself, and once again shows itself for what it is.

**9** ἐγὼ δὲ ἔζων χωρὶς νόμου ποτέ, ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς ἐντολῆς ἡ ἁμαρτία ἀνέζησεν, **10a** ἐγὼ δὲ ἀπέθανον

**Translation** - *Now, once I used to live apart from law. But when the commandment came sin revived, and I died.*

To whatever time period in Paul's life this might refer it must coincide with the time when τὴν ἀμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔγνων (v7), when τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν οὐκ ᾔδειν (v.7), when for him ἀμαρτία νεκρά (v.8). Stoeckhardt and Franzmann refer to his Jewish youth, when he was “not yet driven by sex, ambition, avarice, and the fear of death” (FR). Others say that for the son of a Pharisee there could have been no time from earliest childhood when he could have lived apart from law. Others refer it to the days of his maximum achievement as a Pharisee, as he describes them in Galatians 1:13f and Philippians 3:4ff. Then, if ever, he lived in a state of security, without conscious conflicts of conscience, ignorant of how alienated from God he was and how damnable his self-righteousness was.

“I was living,” in any case, cannot describe true spiritual life. It must refer to times when Paul's natural man flourished because he was not recognizing or perceiving what the law really says, “All these have I kept since I was a boy” (Lk 18:21).

Notice the word “times” in that last sentence. The intention is to indicate that the condition or state of mind characterized as “living apart from law” was not necessarily constant or marked off by definite limits. Likewise the aorist participle ἐλθούσης does not have to refer to a once-for-all event (punctiliar). Remember that the aorist is “timeless,” not circumscribed by the boundaries of past, present, future; it can simply emphasize the vocable meaning of the verb. It seems best to think of the χωρὶς νόμου ποτέ and the ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς ἐντολῆς as *recurring* events in his pre-Christian life. ποτέ and the imperfect ἔζων certify that Paul is speaking of a past that is past. It was when he was in the flesh (v 5). In any case, whenever the law intruded into his secure life, sin revived. Literally, it “lived again.” Sin aroused from its dormancy. It reasserted its enmity against God and its hatred of his holy will. It made Paul conscious of sin.

I take the next clause (v 10a) to be a natural conclusion to v 9: “And I died.” Sin revived and I died. It was the end of false security (“living”) and the beginning of despair. He was physically alive but he was under God's sentence of death, separated from the source of life.

Verse 9 marks the first appearance of ἐγώ and v 10 the second. It will appear six times more in this chapter. Ἐγώ is in emphatic position here in verses 9, 10a. This is autobiography, although Paul is reporting it for instruction and because it is typical or representative of Christians generally.

**10b** καὶ εὐρέθη μοι ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ εἰς ζωὴν, αὕτη εἰς θάνατον·

**Translation** - *And the commandment which was intended for life, that same commandment was found for me to result in death.*

There is an element of surprise and mystery in εὐρέθη. How can this be that the Lord said, “Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD” (Lev 18:5), and that then his decrees and laws turn out to be εἰς θάνατον? That is simply how it is and v 11 will explain why it is. Paul did not discover this phenomenon at the end of a logical process. It was found for him, disclosed to him. What he had relied on, prided himself in, been zealous for—that ended by killing him. “But whenever the Law alone, without the Gospel being added, exercises this its office, there is death and hell, and men must despair, like Saul and Judas ...” (*Smalcald Articles*, Part III, Art. III, TR 481).

**11** ἡ γὰρ ἀμαρτία ἀφορμὴν λαβοῦσα διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς ἐξηπάτησέν με καὶ δι' αὐτῆς ἀπέκτεινεν.

**Translation** - *For sin, taking the opportunity, utterly deceived me through the commandment and through it killed me.*

Γάρ is explanatory, introducing an explication of v 10. How could the same commandment that was intended for life result in death? Sin was the culprit, the spoiler, the villain. Twice Paul uses a διὰ phrase: Sin used the commandment to utterly deceive him and the same (δι' αὐτῆς) to kill him.

Using the same participial clause (ἀφορμὴν λαβοῦσα), as in v 8 and naming the same villain (ἡ ἁμαρτία) he elaborates on the consequences of sin working every kind of coveting in a person. First, it utterly deceives that person and then it kills him. As Luther comments here (*LW* 25) sin depicts the law as “harsh and hard” and itself as “good and sweet.”

It is common and not inappropriate to see allusions to the temptation and fall of Eve here, but the parallels must not be forced. The Tempter used God’s commandment regarding the tree to utterly deceive Eve and thus do her to death; he still uses the same tactics (for he is behind all sin). Question the commandment, deny the consequences of disobedience, ascribe meanness to God, promise what cannot be delivered. Thank God he did not succeed with Jesus!

**12** ὥστε ὁ μὲν νόμος ἅγιος καὶ ἡ ἐντολὴ ἁγία καὶ δικαία καὶ ἀγαθή.

**Translation** - *And so the law is holy; and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*

Recall the question with which Paul began this section: “Is the law sin, then?” With ἅγιος Paul affirms in a positive way what he has implied in vv. 7-11: There is nothing evil about the law. He has showed that while there is a relationship between the two, sin is the villain and the law is not. The law and the commandment are what their Giver is.

ὁ μὲν alerts us that a δὲ is coming. It is somewhat remote and often overlooked, but it is there. First, however, Paul clears up another possible misunderstanding by use of his familiar rhetorical device: question, μὴ γένοιτο, and explanation.

**13** Τὸ οὖν ἀγαθὸν ἐμοὶ ἐγένετο θάνατος; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ ἡ ἁμαρτία, ἵνα φανῇ ἁμαρτία, διὰ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ μοι κατεργαζομένη θάνατον, ἵνα γένηται καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν ἁμαρτωλὸς ἡ ἁμαρτία διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς.

**Translation** - *Did, therefore, the beneficial thing become death for me? Absolutely not! Rather, sin (became death) so that it might be made manifest as sin by working death in me through that beneficial thing, so that through the commandment sin might become surpassingly sinful.*

Οὖν introduces a conclusion. In discussing the relationship between sin and law (opposite but related), Paul said with regard to the commandment (specific law): “When the commandment came sin revived and I died” (vv 9b, 10a); “The same commandment intended for life resulted in death v 10b); “Through the commandment sin utterly deceived me and killed me” (v 11). Granted that the law (τὸ ἀγαθὸν, good in the sense of beneficial) is not sin (v 7.), hasn’t it resulted in death for me?

Absolutely not! A conclusion to be rejected out of hand (μὴ γένοιτο). Something else (ἀλλὰ) is the case. Again sin is seen to be the culprit or villain. Ἡ ἁμαρτία needs a verb. It is possible to see an ellipsis and supply ἐγένετο θάνατος, as in the translation above. Other translations let κατεργαζομένη (participle) function as a finite verb (which Paul sometimes does.) and read: “Sin ... works death.” I prefer to understand this present middle deponent participle as instrumental “by working,” an adverbial modifier of φανῇ.

Ἴνα as frequently in this chapter, introduces intended result: “That ἡ ἁμαρτία might be made manifest as ἁμαρτία.” Φανῇ is aorist passive subjunctive. The passive needs an agent and the agent is God who gave the law. The thought corresponds to what has been said in vv. 7,8.

The sin-power (the inherent sin of our origin) is manifested by its working death through the beneficial thing (the law, the commandment). In God’s purpose this use of the law by sin *is* beneficial *just because* it works death. Θάνατος, and the thought of sin working death through the law corresponds to the thoughts of vv.

9-11: ἐγὼ δὲ ἀπέθανον. “I was “alive” once, self-confident, self-righteous, self-satisfied. The law that promises, “Do this and you will live” became sin’s instrument when sin used a commandment of the law to effect sin, in attitude only, or in action as well.

We are again struck by the obvious but easily forgotten truth that the law does not give spiritual life to sanctify any more than it does to justify. Paul simply describes the law’s function as magnifying mirror and emphasizes its inability to sanctify.

“Through the law we have nothing except an evil conscience, a restless heart, a troubled breast because of our sins, which the law points out but does not take away” (*LW* 31, p 231, in “Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses”).

The second ἵνα clause elaborates the first and shows how sin is made manifest. It is God’s intention and it does result that the sin-power becomes surpassingly sinful through the commandment. “The law was added that sin might increase” (5:20). The combination of the sin-power and law as the sin-power’s instrument has this effect on the unregenerate, who do not know the gospel. It has the same effect on the regenerate when they lose their gospel focus, when the *opinio legis* asserts itself.

The rest of the chapter illustrates how the sin-power manifests itself as sin, how it becomes surpassingly sinful, how it uses what is beneficial to work death. He does not speak autobiographically to present himself as an example to follow (or to pity). He has been speaking and will speak autobiographically to illustrate that the Christian life does not spring from law and why it simply cannot. At last, in verse 25, he will confess and preach the agency of Christ as the source of sanctification as he has confessed and preached the agency of Christ as the source of the justification.

But *are* these verses autobiographical in the sense that they are the words of a *regenerate* Paul? We could at this point list the chief arguments pro and con. I prefer to address the question, sometimes in an indirect way, at a number of appropriate points in the verse-by-verse treatment of vv. 14-25.

**14** οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ὁ νόμος πνευματικός ἐστίν, ἐγὼ δὲ σάρκινός εἰμι πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν.

**Translation** -*Yes indeed, we know that the law is spiritual. But I am fleshly, sold under the sin-power.*

Our translations tend to disregard the γὰρ treating it as a mere connective (which is not γὰρ’s function). NSAB renders it as “for,” explanatory. I regard it as confirmatory (γὰρ = γε ἄρα = “Yes indeed,” and believe that Paul is recalling the thought of verse 12: The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and beneficial.

So, it is a given (οἶδαμεν) that the law is spiritual. Let us affirm its divine source and the fact that it shares in the divine attributes!

Now the μὲν of verse 12 finally gets its δὲ. “But I am fleshly.” It is σάρκινος rather than the more usual σάρκιος. They have essentially the same meaning, say BAG; translating “fleshy” instead of “fleshly” is not really helpful. Paul uses the word as the opposite of πνευματικός in 1 Corinthians 3:1 – οὐκ ἠδυνήθην λαλῆσαι ὑμῖν ὡς πνευματικοῖς ἀλλ’ ὡς σαρκίνοις, ὡς νηπίοις ἐν Χριστῷ. “I was not able to speak to you as spiritual persons but as fleshly persons, i.e. as immature children in Christ.” In what follows (1 Co 3:3,4) he calls them σαρκικοί, *kappa* rather than *nu*, citing their jealousy and strife as evidence. These, remember, were people whom he had addressed as “the church of God, sanctified in Christ Jesus, called as saints” (1 Co 1:2).

Like many a saint before and after him, Paul in this verse (Ro 7:14) does the opposite of boasting of his Christian maturity: “I am fleshly.” The flesh is still part of me. *It* has not been and never will be regenerated. It might be reformed by law, outwardly improved by law, curbed by law. It is still sinful, and because it is an inherent part of me I am “sold under sin,” to the extent it asserts itself (as it does every day). The participial clause states the consequence of being σάρκινος. That the participle is *perfect* passive of is significant: the state continues (cp. γέγραπται, τετέλεσται). The imagery of πιπράσκω as applied to a human being is the imagery of the slave market.

Notice εἶμι, present. The verbs of vv. 7-9a employed past tenses when Paul spoke of how it was ποτέ, before the commandment came. The same was true of the section that speaks of how it was after the commandment came (vv. 9b-13). In vv. 14-25 Paul uses the present tense, speaking of himself as he is, a man reborn.

Oh, but here there is a contradiction! We have died to sin (6:1); our old man has been crucified so that we no longer serve sin (6:6); the one who dies is declared free from sin (6:7); reckon yourselves to be dead to sin (6:11). Yes, it seems to be a logical contradiction to say, “I am sold under sin.” But immediately, after stating the facts and describing the realities (6:1-11), he had followed with imperatives that Christians still need to hear: “Do not let sin rule in your mortal body to obey your body’s passions; neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness for sin’s advantage; but yield yourselves to God ... ” (6:12,13). The indicatives and the imperatives are addressing the same people, regenerate Christians.

The Christian life is full of contradictions! It is a paradox. Especially, it is not something static, in which the Christian’s life moves without variation on a consistent high plain of triumph. That’s what the rest of this chapter is about. The new life is a present reality, but the old nature still asserts itself. That is not the fault of the law, which is spiritual, but of fleshly me. The law, which is spiritual, makes that plain to me. It does more than show me my sin (Paul does not mention specific and concrete sins in this chapter). It shows me that “fleshly I” am still sold under the sin-power. That’s the contradiction that makes a great Christian agonize at last, “Oh, miserable I!” (7:25).

“There is the one man Paul, who recognizes himself to be in two different relationships. Under grace, he is spiritual, but *under the law, carnal* (emphasis added). It is one and the same Paul who is under both” (LW 32, p 246, in “Against Latomus”). Also, “The godless man is not wholly cleansed when the godlessness of the heart is overcome, but the battle of spirit and flesh remains, as Paul teaches in Romans 7:14ff and Galatians 5:17ff” (LW 9, p 88f, at Deuteronomy 7:22).

**15** ὁ γὰρ κατεργάζομαι οὐ γινώσκω· οὐ γὰρ ὃ θέλω τοῦτο πράσσω, ἀλλ’ ὃ μισῶ τοῦτο ποιῶ.

**Translation** - *For, what I produce I do not understand. For what I will, this I do not do; but what I hate that I do.*

NEB and a few commentaries take γινώσκω to mean “acknowledge” or “recognize” here. That is a possibility, but since Paul is describing a contradictory state of affairs, “I do not understand” seems very much in place.

NIV again evades the γὰρ by not translating it. I believe it is explanatory: “Why did I say what I just said (v 14)?” Answer: “Because what I produce I do not understand.” The produce is not the fruit that should result from one who is joined to him who was raised from the dead (7:4). Only the regenerate man can be engaged in such conflict, put up the struggle which is described in the verses which follow, and analyze it as Paul does. “He who is not spiritual does not hate his lustfulness” (LW 25).

What the Spirit in Paul wills is clear from v 16: “I agree with the law that it is good,” and v 22: “For I rejoice in the law of God according to the inner man.” The Spirit in Paul can only love the law, which is spiritual. But Paul does not do what the Spirit wills. “He wants to act in a completely pure, free and joyful manner, without being troubled by his rebellious flesh, and this he cannot accomplish.... He who proposes to watch, to pray, and to help his neighbor will always find that his flesh is rebellious and that it devises and desires other things” (LW 25).

What is it that the Spirit in Paul hates, which he does? At the very least, it is the evil desiring which the command forbids: οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις.

He describes the struggle of flesh and spirit to the ὀδελφοί in Galatia, using 2nd person plural: “For the flesh ἐπιθυμεῖ against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. For these are opposed to one another, so that the things *you will*—those very things *you do not do*” (Ga 5:17). The language is not identical, but the thought is the same:

15 οὐ γὰρ ὃ θέλω τοῦτο πράσσω (Ro 7:15).

17 μὴ ἂν ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε (Ga 5:17).

What Paul describes here is not the whole story of the Christian's life, but it is a daily fact of life. When the Christian *does* do what he wills to do the achievement, the victory, is not his (because the sinful nature inheres in him) and not the law's (because that's not what the law does). The victory belongs to Christ, who lives in him (Ga 2:20). The achievement must be credited to the Spirit, who produces good fruit (Ga 5:16). "A Christian man is a just, saintly, righteous, and blessed person and a child of God, namely, according to the spirit. According to the flesh, however, he still has his sin" (LW 30, "The Catholic Epistles," p 233, at 1 Jn 1:10).

The usual distinction between ποιέω and πράσσω may apply here, although commentators seem reluctant to urge it. Πράσσω (practice) has in it the idea of continuing, regular, or habitual activity. Ποιέω (do) has in it the idea of a single concrete act. Following this thought we might paraphrase: "For what I will I do not consistently practice, but what I hate I go ahead and do." We are probably not damaging or weakening Paul's thought or the Spirit's intention, however, if we simply regard Paul's use of κατεργάζομαι, πράσσω, and ποιῶ in this verse as an example of the variety that delights.

16 εἰ δὲ ὃ οὐ θέλω τοῦτο ποιῶ, σύμφημι τῷ νόμῳ ὅτι καλός.

**Translation** - *Now, since I do the very thing I do not will, I am agreeing with the law that it is good.*

It is at this verse, probably still thinking of v 15, that Luther uttered his familiar *simul justus et peccator*: "I am *at the same time a sinner and a righteous man*, for I do evil and I hate the evil which I do" (LW 25, emphasis added).

The condition is a simple present, describing a real situation. "Since this is the case, the other is the case." Recall the question of v 1. "Is the law sin?" Recall the answers in vv. 12, 14: "The law is holy; ... the law is spiritual." Here he says the law is καλός, good in the sense of useful or in the sense of morally beautiful.

The grammar is simple, but what about the thought? Do I not repudiate the law when I do the very thing I do not will? Should I not refrain from doing what I do not will if I agree that the law is good? Yes, I would refrain if I were not σαρκινός, (v 14). Yes, I do agree and should refrain according to the inner man (v 22). Yes, I agree with my mind (v 25). Christ who lives in me, the Spirit who dwells in me, thus also I, agree with the law. But I am not "whole." There is an ambiguity, an ambivalence in me. There is an intruder in me, identified by Paul in the next verse:

17 νυνὶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγὼ κατεργάζομαι αὐτὸ ἀλλὰ ἡ οἰκοῦσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἁμαρτία.

**Translation** - *But now I no longer do that thing, but the sin-power which makes its abode in me (does it).*

We have showed in the comments at v 14 that the difference in tenses (past in vv. 7-13, present in vv. 14-25) indicate two different periods in Paul's life. In verses 7 to 13 the regenerate Paul recalls the period before his conversion and explains the law's activity. In vv. 14-25 he relates the ongoing struggle, the terrible frustration of the regenerate person, as only a regenerate person ever could. It is all autobiographical, not as an example for us to follow ("Be imitators of me") but as an explanation and illustration of what the Christian's struggle for holy living is. And, in all of it he makes clear that the law is not sin but that neither is it the means of sanctification.

"As it is" is NIV's rendering of νυνὶ δὲ. I have no idea why, unless it is another way to say, "But now." Phillips and NEB translate it adversatively. AAT ignores it. Six others, including Luther, translate it

conjunctively or consecutively, simply joining it with the foregoing or treating it as something that follows from the foregoing. I agree with Phillips and NEB here. The connection is this: “What I will, this I do not do; but what I hate, this I do. Now, since I do the very thing I do not will, I am agreeing with the law that it is good” (vv. 15b,16). Verse 17: νυνὶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγὼ: “But now no longer I...”

If not I, then who or what? Not a different “I,” an alter ego, a Mr. Hyde, an “unconverted half.” On the contrary, something else entirely (ἀλλὰ). The sin-power dwelling in me does it.

Πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν (v. 14b), sold like a slave under the sin-power, and ἡ οἰκοῦσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἁμαρτία (v 17) are two pictures of the same reality. The sin-power is a present and active force in the life of the believer, playing the slave-master (v 14b) or the intruder in the house (v 17). If I don’t recognize this in myself, don’t understand it from the Scriptures, then my fellow Christians—beginning with my spouse—can inform me. They will assure me that I am still a sinner and I do still sin.

There is an uninvited, unwelcome, disorderly guest in the house that is “I.” He doesn’t belong there, has no right there, but makes himself very much at home (οἰκοῦσα, present participle). It is not the law! It is the sin-power. This is not an excuse but an acknowledgment of the sin-power’s pervasiveness. This is not refusing responsibility for my sin but identifying the sin-power as the villain.

**19** οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι οὐκ οἰκεῖ ἐν ἐμοί, τοῦτ’ ἔστιν ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου, ἀγαθόν· τὸ γὰρ θέλειν παράκειται μοι, τὸ δὲ κατεργάζεσθαι τὸ καλὸν οὐ·

**Translation** - *Indeed, I know that there does not dwell in me—that is, in my flesh—any good thing. For to will lies right next to me, but to perform the good thing not.*

The first γὰρ is confirmatory, reaffirming what Paul just said and giving it’s corollary: The sin-power dwells in me; the good thing not. The sin-power dwells in me, wreaking havoc in my life. Nothing good lives in me—that is, in my flesh. There are two important things to note here in this familiar verse. First, the Christian’s flesh is no better than that of the unregenerate. Second, the qualifier, “that is, in my flesh” is required when the Christian speaks of what is in him. Christ and the Spirit dwell in him, and they are ἀγαθόν. The flesh dwells in him and there is nothing ἀγαθόν in it.

The, second γὰρ is explanatory, providing the evidence for this lack of anything good in the flesh. Τὸ, where it is positioned, functions as an anaphoric demonstrative: “The aforementioned willing,” the θέλειν mentioned in vv. 15 and 16. This willing παράκειται μοι (lies right next to me), that is, it is ready at hand.

The τὸ with κατεργάζεσθαι is likewise anaphoric, *but* it has no performance of the good to bring forward! By this time we are not surprised, but we easily forget that our best willing is frustrated and our best doing is spoiled by our fleshliness.

**19** οὐ γὰρ ὃ θέλω ποιῶ ἀγαθόν, ἀλλὰ ὃ οὐ θέλω κακὸν τοῦτο πράσσω. **20** εἰ δὲ ὃ οὐ θέλω [ἐγὼ] τοῦτο ποιῶ, οὐκέτι ἐγὼ κατεργάζομαι αὐτὸ ἀλλὰ ἡ οἰκοῦσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἁμαρτία.

**Translation** - *Indeed, I do not perform the beneficial thing which I want to, but the useless thing which I do not want to do, that I practice. Now, if I do that very thing which I do not want to, I no longer am doing it but the sin-power dwelling in me is doing it.*

Verse 19 repeats the substance of v 15b. Verse 20 repeats the substance of vv. 16a, 17. Why? Because it is important, because it is a summation of what has preceded (vv. 14-18), and because he is about to address the problem of incomplete sanctification from another angle.

In v 19 the distinction between ἀγαθόν (good) and κακὸν (bad) is a distinction between what is beneficial—the positive things which the law demands—and what is useless. The classical distinction between

ποιέω and πράσσω seems to work here, too. I do not perform the positive; I do practice the useless. So much for will power (ὁ θέλω), even in the regenerate man.

The first ἐγὼ in verse 20 is bracketed, indicating that it is a variant reading. It would not affect the sense to omit it. It does remind us that all the appearances of ἐγὼ indicate that Paul has really been speaking of himself, not using the first person in a generalizing way.

In these verses Paul has spoken of his failures and defeats, which does not imply that Christ and the Spirit never triumphed in and through him. Paul does not say it explicitly in this verse, but we can learn from Luther to regard the tension and conflict between willing and doing as signs of spiritual life. Where Christ and the Spirit do not dwell there is no such conflict.

**21** Εὐρίσκω ἄρα τὸν νόμον, τῷ θέλοντι ἐμοὶ ποιεῖν τὸ καλόν, ὅτι ἐμοὶ τὸ κακὸν παράκειται·

**Translation** - *I find then the rule applies to me that when I want to do good the evil lies at hand for me.*

Lenski understands τὸν νόμον as God's law and takes it to be the object of θέλοντι. Among ten translations compared, only Phillips's paraphrase understands τὸν νόμον as God's law—and he does not regard it as the object of θέλοντι. The same or even less favorable proportions apply among commentators. Lenski credits the German commentator Meyer with this view. Understanding it thus would not materially affect the sense, even for Lenski, but it is not to be so understood. It *is* possible to read τὸν νόμον as accusative of respect, "I find then with respect to the law that...."

More convincing as to line of thought and as to Greek syntax, is to understand νόμον as "rule," "principle." Everything else Paul says in this verse he has already said twice, if not with the exact wording. What he says new is that this happens with the certainty and regularity of a law, like a law of nature. It is, in fact a law of that sinful nature which inheres in the spiritual man. He will return to this law in verse 23 and elaborate on it there as a "different law." But first he makes explicit mention of the law of God in verse 22.

**22** συνήδομαι γὰρ τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον,

**Translation** - *For I am in joyful accord with the law of God according to the inner man ...*

The qualifier τοῦ θεοῦ is another indication that τὸν νόμον of v 21 is not the law of God. Paul has said in v. 16, "I agree with the law that it is good." Now he says συνήδομαι, "I rejoice together with it." He is that blessed man of Psalm 1: "His delight is in the law of the LORD" (Ps 1:2).

This is "according to the inner man." Now, it is said that ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπον was used in Greek philosophy to denote the higher, nobler, more inward part of man's nature (*Kittel* I, p 365). This is reported by those who believe Paul is speaking in vv. 14-25 of his experience as an unregenerate man. In 2 Corinthians 4:16, however, Paul says that the *Christian's* inner man is renewed day by day. Ephesians 3:16 is even more convincing: "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit εἰς τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον." We know that the Holy Spirit, through Paul and the other New Testament writers, breathed new and evangelical content into old and well-worn pagan words. This section and this verse do not deal with an anthropological dualism in natural man but with a theological ambivalence in regenerate man. One thing the unregenerate man of vv. 7-13 does not do is delight in the law of God.

**23** βλέπω δὲ ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου ἀντιστρατευόμενον τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντά με ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου.

**Translation** - *... but I see a different rule in my members, warring against the rule of my mind and taking me captive in the rule of sin, which is that rule in my members.*

Just by the way, how could anyone ever be justified or sanctified ἐν τῷ νόμῳ when the meaning of that word is constantly shifting throughout the first eight chapters of Romans? Does Paul do that deliberately, to make that very point?

Here we have a νόμος different (ἕτερος = differing in kind) from the νόμος τοῦ θεοῦ (v 22). A law differing from the law of God must be opposed to the law of God. This law, located in my members, exists in me because I am fleshly (v 14). Luther says the members of our body are “the tinder of sin and concupiscence” (LW 25).

This law in my members is consistently (present participle) warring against the law of my mind. My mind agrees with the law of God (v 16), rejoices in the law of God (v 22). I want to love God with all my being and my neighbor as myself. The ruling principle in my members, although it does not always succeed in its war against the ruling principle of my mind, demonstrates by its very existence that “I am fleshly, sold under sin” (v. 14).

Like ἀντιστρατευόμενον, αἰχμαλωτίζοντα is a present participle, denoting continuing action. It has a conative sense. That is, the sin-power is constantly striving to take me captive but not necessarily succeeding. Again, the sin-power’s very existence and activity demonstrate that my sanctification is not complete, whether I fall into concrete sinful action or not.

This “other law” is constantly trying to lock me “under the authority of the sin-power (ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἀμαρτίας). That authority of the sin-power is the aforementioned (τῷ) one that is (ὄντι) in my members. This is Christian warfare and it is civil war: The ruling principle in my members versus the ruling principle in my mind. This struggle does not go on in the unregenerate person.

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

**Translation** - *O, miserable person I! Who will deliver me from this body which is characterized by death?*

Why is this body characterized by death (θανάτου = genitive of attribution)? It is because there is a law of sin in my members (v 23) and because “the wages of sin is death” (6:23). Paul is not only frustrated by his imperfections. He dreads what will happen if his body becomes truly subservient to sin. Even in triumphant chapter 8 he warns, “If you live according to the flesh you are going to die” (8:13). In 8:23 he says that “although we have the firstfruits, which is the Spirit, still we ourselves also groan within ourselves while we await the full status of sons which is the redemption of our *bodies*.”

Ἄνθρωπος is nominative absolute, used here as interjection. Paul, child of God, heir of heaven, apostle to the Gentiles, author of half the New Testament, teacher of Martin Luther is a miserable, wretched, distressed person. He has the forgiveness of sins, has been freed from the rule and lordship of sin, and is still a sinner. Release from the misery does not lie in any use of or relationship to the law. Then where? “Who will deliver me?”

**25** χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν. ἄρα οὖν αὐτὸς ἐγὼ τῷ μὲν νοῦ δουλεύω νόμῳ θεοῦ τῇ δὲ σαρκὶ νόμῳ ἀμαρτίας.

**Translation** - *Thanks to God, (he will deliver me) through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I do slave for the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*

God will deliver me as he has delivered me. Do not despair! He will do this through Jesus Christ our Lord, as he has done it through Jesus Christ our Lord. The διὰ phrase does not modify χάρις, making Jesus the medium of our thanks to God. According to sense it modifies ῥύσεται in verse 24. He will be, as he has been, the agent of God’s delivering act.

Paul's familiar threefold naming of the Deliverer is never just "preacher talk." It is always a sermon in itself. "Jesus" is the person who is salvation from sin. "Christ" is his office. God's man anointed to do God's saving work in God's good time. "Lord" is the God of free and faithful grace, become man to redeem us so that we might live under him and serve him.

Paul is not just now discovering all this; he is remembering it. He is not teaching it to readers who have not heard it before; he is reminding us of what we know. In the struggle and frustration and failures of his faith-life the Christian returns to the foundation of faith. Justification is not by works and sanctification is not by law.

The αὐτὸς in the second clause is represented by the word "do" in my translation. Αὐτὸς here is not reflexive ("myself"), or used for contrast ("I as contrasted with others"), but intensive, adding emphasis to δουλεύω. Ἐγὼ would normally do that, but Paul has been using ἐγὼ for another purpose throughout this section.

"With my mind I do slave for the law of God." Paul and we, who are not under law but under grace (6;14), who have been put to death to the law's disadvantage (7:4), who have been removed from the law's sphere of activity (7:6)—we do with our regenerate minds slave for the law of God. Take law as God's will that we love him and the neighbor or take law as God's controlling authority. In either interpretation the regenerate person submits with his mind to God.

The Formula of Concord, Epitome, Art. VI, "Of the Lord's Supper," (*TR*, p 807) includes reference to this verse when it says, "Fruits of the Spirit, however, are the works which the Spirit of God who dwells in believers works through the regenerate, and which are done by believers so far as they are regenerate, as though they knew of no command, threat, or reward; for in this manner the children of God live in the Law and walk according to the Law of God, which St. Paul in his epistles calls the Law of Christ and the law of the mind..."

"But with the flesh the law of sin." Recall v 7: "Is the law sin? Absolutely not!" Rather, sin exploits the law (vv. 7-13)—though in God's gracious purpose that turns out for our good—and in that sense it is the law of sin. Alternatively, take law of sin as sin's controlling authority. In either interpretation we still have a sinful nature according to which we do sin and are sinners.

Notice that neither νοῦς nor σὰρξ is the subject in verse 25b. It is ἐγὼ in both clauses. In the ἐγὼ of the regenerate person, until he is taken to be with the Lord, there is that ambivalence. To say this is not complacent acceptance of the *status quo* but a realistic assessment of the Christian life.

There is also hope. Hope is expressed in "Thanks to God. He will deliver." There is hope implicit in "With the mind I do slave for the law of God." There is supreme confidence in 8:1, "In no way then is there now condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." and all the rest of that wonderful chapter.

"To will what is good is the main trait of a Christian. Frequently he does not progress beyond the good will to do something. Before he is aware of it, he has gone astray; the sin within him has come forth, and he is ashamed of himself. But for that reason he has not by any means fallen from grace" (Walther, *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel*. p 309).