

Week 2-

Remember that last week we covered three views from Chapter 7 vs 14-25. We covered the Unregenerate view, the Regenerate view and the Split view. This morning we will cover the Carnal view and the Transitional view.

At this point I want to make it clear that there are more views of this passage than the ones I have outlined. And there are countless variations from the ones that I have outlined. So I am not trying to create the impression that I have captured every possible view that is out there.

Let's start with the fourth view- The Carnal View. I am not going to spend much time on this view because Mike has mentioned the error of this view frequently. But it is worthy of mention because many people use this view as a foundation for their idea of a type of Christian that does not obey and does not have to obey.

This view holds that the person being spoken of in our text is essentially a sub-standard Christian. They have received Christ as Savior but not as Lord. They are saved from hell but not from sin. They will get into the final party but will have a really bad seat.

This view would say that the "I am Carnal" statement is referring to the class of this kind of believer. This is a believer that chooses to not walk according to the Spirit. They say "I believe" but their behavior displays little or no true spiritual concern.

One of the main supporters of this view says this:

"If you have received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Redeemer, then the Holy Spirit, as we have already seen, has come to take up residence within your human spirit, and you have been born again and God has set His seal upon you as His child. But if that old, Adamic nature, the flesh, still dominates your soul and monopolizes your personality by coloring your thinking, sparking your ambitions, capturing your affections and subtly persuading

your will into submission to its claims upon you, then you are a Carnal Christian."

Here is Bill Bright's list of the attributes or characteristics of a Carnal Christian. I use his name just to show how popular this view is.

"The Carnal Christian is a fruitless witness for Christ, has a poor prayer life, has no desire for Bible study, is disobedient to God, has a legalistic life, impure thoughts, jealousy, worry, is controlled by self, self seeking, doubt, critical spirit, defeat, wrong doctrine, frustration, aimlessness and envy."

Another author says

"The only difference between the person described in that quotation and a lost man is that the "Carnal Christian" has made a mental decision to believe that Jesus is a real person who died on the cross. That is what it means to "accept Jesus as his Savior" and be "eternally secure in Christ in the Carnal View.""

I don't think I need to go through all the verses in our text to clarify this view. The view falls apart as soon as you look at the texts in front of and behind it in the book of Romans. Chapters 5 and 6 tell us that a believer is set free from sin's power and condemnation. Chapter 8 makes the state of a person who walks in the spirit mutually exclusive of a person who walks in the flesh. And it says ***to be carnally minded is death***. It does not say that to be carnally minded is unfortunate or less rewarded. It says it is death, the same as the state of an unbeliever.

Last week we looked at a bunch of verses that tell us that a believer obeys. To come up with a view from Romans 7 of a believer defined by disobedience is simply impossible if the Bible is true from cover to cover. So if you hear this view, realize that it can only be defended by rewriting the rest of scripture.

Now we have gone through the most popular views. What I intend to do now is go verse by verse through a view that is

slightly different from the first view. I will spend more time talking about the verses and the meanings. The view that Mike has presented to me makes a great deal of sense and may be the simplest interpretation of the text. I would not have seen this myself, but once seeing it, I see a lot of merit in it.

This passage is quite likely describing the temporary condition of a man who is being worked upon by the law. The beginning of this process is that of the law of God came to Paul in verse 9. The body of the process is that of the law working upon him. And the end is the man calling out to Christ to save him.

Now, the first obstacle is the present tense verbs. This may not be as difficult as it would first seem. The verb tense used to say "I am carnal" is present indicative. I am going to quote some information Carla got from a reference book from the Blue Letter Bible.

"The present tense represents a simple statement of fact or reality viewed as occurring in actual time. In most cases this corresponds directly with the English present tense. Some phrases which might be rendered as past tense in English will often occur in the present tense in Greek. These are termed "historical presents", and such occurrences dramatize the event described as if the reader were watching the event occur. Some English translations render such historical presents in the English past tense, while others permit the tense to remain in the present."

So we see Paul could be speaking of a historical state. Paul would not need to be referring to himself in his current spiritual state.

Paul in verse 7 says "*I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.*" Paul is describing the process of his salvation. Paul knew the law a long

time. But one day the law knew him, it came to him. The Holy Spirit brought the truth of the law to Paul's true condition. From this point in the text Paul does nothing to show us that he is changing the topic. He then starts a series of "for's" and "if's". So we get the idea that Paul is expounding upon what he has already said. If that is the case we begin this text when the law came to Paul. He is under the conviction of the law. Which means that the Holy Spirit is working on him. We may want to define it as regenerate or unregenerate but from where we sit it is hard to know what God would call it. Paul is as good as saved, but he doesn't know it yet.

*<sup>14</sup>For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.*

We know- eido- be aware of. This is the kind of knowing that happens when you observe something closely. You perceive it, see it. And by seeing you know it.

The law is spiritual- from the word pneuma for breath or spirit. So Paul has seen and perceived that the law is spiritual. It is more than matter. It is a supernatural thing.

I am carnal- pertaining to flesh, carnal, fleshly unregenerate.

Flesh is usually understood to either be a synonym for the word body or for the sinful unrenewed flesh. The general rule to determine which it is is simple. If it is used to contrast with the Spirit, it is talking about unrenewed flesh. If it is not, it is usually talking about the body.

In our text it is very clear that the flesh is being used in contrast to the law which is spiritual. So we can safely assume this text is talking about the unrenewed flesh.

Sold under sin- the wording here likely implies being sold as a slave to sin. One of the definitions for sold is "entirely under the control of the love of sinning". This person is exactly as Paul described the person is who is under the law in ADAM. Sin has set up a base camp in the law and the more the unregenerate man tries to obey the law, the more he sins because it is so much

part of who he is. This will be important as we go forward. Keep in mind the concept of slavery.

So, the law is working on Paul, the previous self righteous Pharisee of Pharisees. He sees that he has a problem. The law that he spent so much time trying to obey is now convicting him to the soul. He is awakened and can see for the first time that he is carnal. All the obeying he has been doing doesn't count for anything. Because it is really not obeying at all. He has not been doing the right things for the right reasons. He hasn't loved God at all. He has only loved himself. He has been acting out what he truly is. He is a slave that has been sold to sin. What a piercing blow. This realization couldn't happen apart from the Holy Spirit. Every unregenerate person is carnal and sold under sin, but only those who God is awakening can have a saving realization of that truth. That is the big difference between this view and the unregenerate view. God is doing a supernatural work in a natural man. This explains the spiritual insight that Paul is exhibiting. It is God's work in Paul. He does not have faith to be delivered yet, but he has awareness and insight that only comes from the Holy Spirit.

*<sup>15</sup>For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.*

This is the real truth of Paul's life up to this point. When he sees the law and sees how things ought to be done, that isn't what he does. When he sees that he should not covet, he may determine not to covet. He can preach about coveting. He can give you a million reasons not to covet. But at the end of the day, when he looks at his heart what he sees is that he has done things or thought things from a coveting motive. So in the final analysis Paul wants to stop coveting but he keeps coveting.

The word for practice here and verse 19 means to exercise, practice, to be busy with, carry on. So the things that Paul says in his mind he ought to be doing, he doesn't get busy about those

things, he doesn't carry those things on. It is the things he hates that he does.

*<sup>16</sup>If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.*

The fact that he wills not to do it, the fact that he sees it as being wrong and despises that wrong thing is an endorsement by Paul that the law is good. The law describes bad things as being bad. Paul sees them as being bad. Paul determines not to do bad things. Paul agrees with the law.

*<sup>17</sup>But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*

Paul had believed in an "I" that had great potential. He believed in an "I" that could please God. An "I" that could obey the law. An "I" that could be righteous. An "I" that could be holy. But when the law opened his eyes, he didn't find such an "I". All he found was a sinner, a slave to sin. And that is what defined him. The false ideas he had about himself collapsed in the face of the facts. The good intentions he had were not good to the core. Only the sinner "I" could explain what he had been doing. And this sin that he had worked so hard to pretend did not exist was dwelling in him the whole time.

The word for dwell means to co-habit. All of the wording Paul uses describes a duality, two wills inhabiting the same body.

Where it says, "no longer" it means a complete and total change. I think this means that Paul is saying he no longer has any illusions that some good "I" was driving the bus. No longer does he think there is any goodness in his heart. Sin is the only thing that explains his behavior.

*<sup>18</sup>For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.*

I know- ginosko- to know experientially.

Paul gets the point. He has experienced the truth of his own heart. When Paul was living in fleshly obedience to the law he

had a problem. There was nothing good dwelling in him. He had the external law and it was good. But there was nothing good internally for it to appeal to. Sure he had a human will. He could determine to do something just like any other human being. But if the thing he willed to do was spiritual, he was completely helpless to carry it out. He experientially knew the bad, but he could not find anywhere within him the wherewithal to perform the good. He could not **do** good because he was **not** good.

*<sup>19</sup>For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.*

Coveting had taught him who he truly is. I know it is wrong to covet. I will not to covet. That is a good thing to will. Do I stop coveting? Nope. I covet more. The more I think that I should not covet, the more coveting I do. And it isn't incidental. It is something that I do over and over. The word practice is really just the word to do, but the verb tense means to do it over and over and over again. Paul is getting the point. The thing that I know is repugnant is the thing I do over and over and over again, even while I vote against doing it.

*<sup>20</sup>Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.* Paul realizes- I have a problem. It is not an "I" that just needs to try harder. No. It is my complete and utter state of sinfulness. I don't have an "I" that can do what I imagine I should do. The law is good. The law is right. The law says stop. I think myself to be good. I think that agreeing with the law will give me some kind of credit with God. But none of that stops me from doing every kind of evil thing. There is only one way of accurately describing this. Sin defines me. The sin that dwells in me runs me. I am only acting like the slave to the greater power that I am. I am sins slave, not some independent "I".

*<sup>21</sup>I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.*

The word "law" referred to here is an overriding principle. Paul is saying, this is how it works without exception. This is the rule of behavior. When I really look at it, all my theories fall apart and this is what I find. Evil exists in me. It is true that I can will, I can think, I can imagine. There is a person inside my head. But it is not the person I imagine. This person is powerless. The evil that is ever present, that evil is not powerless. That evil dictates my thoughts and actions.

*<sup>22</sup>For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.*

Paul has to admit. There is something that keeps causing him to see the law as good, as positive, as something to obey. He sees it as spiritual and holy and godly. He delights in that law. Delight means "to rejoice in with one's self". Inside he thinks it is a great thing. There is something that causes Paul to see it that way. And maybe that is the Holy Spirit that has been working on Paul's heart through the law. This may well be a different delight than the delight we talked about in the unregenerate view. This may be a true delight that God had worked in Paul's heart in the process of convicting him of his sin.

*<sup>23</sup>But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

So while there is some spark of knowing and intending good, this is the other truth, another principle that cannot be avoided. This other force wars against the impotent thoughts and intentions that go through my mind. And it takes Paul and puts him in his place. It puts Paul into the slavery that is his birthright. He is placed into the captivity, the slavery to the law of sin.

The word for captivity means to lead away captive  
2) metaphorically to capture ones mind, captivate

So there sits Paul, the supposed great law obeyer, as a slave to sin, wrapped up in sins chains. It is the principle of sin that lives in his members. That is the overriding principle, no matter what He thinks. No matter what he intends. No matter what he **pretends**. He is in captivity.



*<sup>24</sup>O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

The word wretched means-enduring toils and troubles, afflicted, wretched. So the word carries with it the idea of being tormented with the state that Paul is in. He cannot bear the state of sin that he is in.

Notice here that there is no mention of any consequence of the sin that bothers Paul. It isn't like he was caught in a sin and was going to be kicked out of the synagogue. He wasn't on the verge of being exposed for being a coveter. Paul is anguishing over the fact that he is a sinner... period.

We have all grown up in a time that evangelists have thought we need to appeal to the felt needs of people. Jesus should be presented as a friend for the friendless, a home for the homeless, a psychiatrist for the frazzled, a cool authority for someone who needs order to their lives. But that is not the kind of evangelism God was doing. God brought the word of God to Paul's opening eyes and he was horror stricken with what he saw. He was tormented by one thing- his wickedness.

Do we carry this awareness? Do we show the results of the Spirit's work within us. Are we abhorred, not only with the sin we see in our world, but more pointedly, the sin we see in our lives. What really torments us? Is it our failure to love Christ as we should and our failure to separate ourselves from sin full thought and behavior? Or are we fed up with the people God expects us to love? Is the thing that upsets us most the way that we are treated by others? Are we tormented that we are overlooked and spoken badly of. Does it bother us most the way those around us refuse to fulfill our selfish desires?

When we become upset with what God is upset with, we show evidence that He is at work in our lives. God was at work in Paul's life to bring him to repentance and faith. Is He at work in our lives to bring us to Godly living? What are you tormented by?

This is the end that the Holy Spirit through the law brings Paul to. This is what all of Paul's legalistic righteousness brought him to. This is what all of his spiritual efforts brought him to.

I am wretched. I thought I was good. I thought I was holy. I thought I was righteous. But the law showed me otherwise. I am wretched. I need a savior. Who will do it? Who will rescue me from my sinful fleshly thinking and behavior? Who will give me power to overcome it?

There was an ancient tribe close to Paul's hometown that had a bizarre penalty for someone who committed a particularly gruesome murder. The murderer would have the victim strapped onto his back. And that corpse would remain there until the murderer died. And it usually didn't take very long because the murderer would soon become infected with disease caused by the rotting corpse. Some people think this is what Paul is making reference to in this statement. Who will get this rotting corpse off my back. Who will set me free from it. That was how powerfully Paul wanted the deliverance. And when God causes a person to want it that bad, you can rest assured He will be glad to provide it.

One of the authors said something like this: Man does not need a law. Man needs deliverance. That is the essence of this text. Then verse 25

*<sup>25</sup>I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

*So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*

Paul got the point. He knew he was a sinner. He didn't know that for years, but somehow God used the commandment about coveting and Paul finally got the point. So he calls out from utter despair for salvation. And what did he find? That it is Jesus Christ our Lord that saves. And Paul does what every person who truly calls on Christ does. He thanks God for the work of Jesus Christ. He gets to God, not through his own works of self righteousness. He thanks God through the work of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Again, if that is the state you are in, this may be the most blessed day of your life. If you feel that desperation, I can assure

you, you didn't put it there. It is the Holy Spirit at work causing you to feel your need of Him. Call out to Jesus Christ our Lord. It is he and he alone that can and will deliver you.

Now Paul recaps what he learned about the law when a person tries to be justified or sanctified by it. While my mind can imagine that I am serving God, while my mind can intend to serve God by obeying its law. While I, in Adam and under the law, can deceive myself into thinking that I am good and that I am doing good, the truth still stands. When I am in the flesh I serve the law of sin. And that is all. That is all.

# 5 Views of Romans 7:14-25

References	Unregenerate View	Regenerate View	Split View	Carnal View	Transition View
Addressing person in what state?	Normal Continual state of Unregenerate person	Normal Continual state of Regenerate person	Normal Continual state of Unregenerate & Regenerate person	Normal Continual State of Regenerate? Rebel	Temporary State of Paul coming to Christ
Person described in Romans 7:5,6	Romans 7:5	Romans 7:6	Romans 7:5-6	Romans 7:6	Between Rom 7:5 & 6
I am carnal sold under sin	The unregenerate man is exactly as described	This is only referring to the fleshly remnants of the believer, not the whole believer	The unregenerate man is exactly as described	This refers to "the carnal christian". This person is, by this theory, a fleshly disobedient person. But he has acknowledged that he believes in Christ so there is nothing Christ can do about it.	The unregenerate man is exactly as described
What I hate, I practiced	The unregenerate man practices known premeditated sin because he is in a state of sin	This is only referring to sins that are committed unknowingly. This does not apply to premeditated sin. It is sin that is present even while a believer commits faithful actions.	The unregenerate man practices known premeditated sin because he is in a state of sin	This refers to premeditated sin practiced by a so called believer. This believer is actively and continually committing known sinful behavior.	The unregenerate man practices known premeditated sin because he is in a state of sin
Vs 17 But Now			This is the place that transitions from unregenerate to regenerate.		

No longer I but sin that dwells in me	The "I" is referring to Paul's self that thought was in control and calling all the shots. The "no longer I" is not stated to avoid responsibility for his actions but to stress that sin is "driving the car", and the I is completely impotent to do anything that matters.	The "I" is the believer's true self in Christ. The no longer I is referring to the fleshly remnant that still influences some behavior and drives other behavior.	The "I" is the believer's true self in Christ. The no longer I is referring to the fleshly remnant that still influences some behavior and drives other behavior.	The "I" is the believer's true self in Christ. The no longer I is referring to the fleshly remnant that still drives all the believer's behavior.	The "I" is referring to Paul's self that thought was in control and calling all the shots. The "no longer I" is not stated to avoid responsibility for his actions but to stress that sin is "driving the car", and the I is completely impotent to do anything that matters.
For in me, that is in my flesh, nothing good dwells	Paul realizes that since his life is defined by sin, there is no good "I" like he had previously imagined. There is nothing good there.	The statement only applies to the fleshly remnant of the believer. Not to the whole of the believer. Since Christ is a part of every believer's life, this statement could not be true of the whole.	The statement only applies to the fleshly remnant of the believer. Not to the whole of the believer. Since Christ is a part of every believer's life, this statement could not be true of the whole.	The statement only applies to the fleshly remnant of the believer. Not to the whole of the believer. Since Christ is a part of every believer's life, this statement could not be true of the whole.	Paul realizes that since his life is defined by sin, there is no good "I" like he had previously imagined. There is nothing good there.
Vs 21 The one who wills to do good	An unbeliever can will to do things that are good. The mind has that capacity. But even those things are not from a faith in Christ and are as filthy rags in God's sight.	The regenerate man can will to do good based on the new life that Christ has given him. This willing to do good is a faithful action.	The regenerate man can will to do good based on the new life that Christ has given him. This willing to do good is a faithful action.	The regenerate man can will to do good based on the new life that Christ has given him. This willing to do good is a faithful action.	It is possible this is a true desire to do good. God may have placed it in Paul's heart but he cannot yet carry it out because he does not have faith.
vs 22 I delight in the law of God	This would need to be the Pharisaical delight- a delight that may worship the words while hating the author.	The regenerate man can truly delight in the law of God since God has put the law in his heart.	The regenerate man can truly delight in the law of God since God has put the law in his heart.	The regenerate man can truly delight in the law of God but they would define how God puts his law in their heart much differently than the more acceptable views.	It is difficult to fully know the spiritual state of Paul but this could be a true delight in the law of God. The Holy Spirit has started working on Paul. It may be God has put this true desire in Paul's heart but Paul cannot carry out that desire because he does not yet have faith.
vs 23 Bringing me into the captivity of the law of sin	The unregenerate man is positionally under the captivity of the law. This just describes the operational side of the process. This is the law of sin making the position and the operation congruent.	The regenerate man cannot be positionally under the captivity of the law of sin so this must be describing an operational activity that is totally incongruent to the believer's position in Christ. It is an operationally temporary apparent captivity.	The regenerate man cannot be positionally under the captivity of the law of sin so this must be describing an operational activity that is totally incongruent to the believer's position in Christ. It is an operationally temporary apparent captivity.	This view holds that a believer can live under the captivity of known sinful behavior day after day without real consideration of the problem of incongruence.	The unregenerate man is positionally under the captivity of the law. This just describes the operational side of the process. This is the law of sin making the position and the operation congruent.
vs 24 Who will deliver me from this body of sin?	This is an appeal for salvation	This is an appeal for glorification	This is an appeal for glorification	This is an appeal for glorification	This is an appeal for salvation
vs 25 So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God but with the flesh the law of sin.	This is a restatement of what Paul has been talking about all along. It is a parting shot summary to put anyone in their place who tries to convince these believers to go back to the law for justification or sanctification. It doesn't work!	This is a summary of how the normal christian life is lived. It is perfectly congruent with what will be revealed in Chapter 8.	This is a summary of how the normal christian life is lived. It is perfectly congruent with what will be revealed in Chapter 8.	I am not sure how this view explains this verse. It looks as if they would need to view it as a regrettable but acceptable state until the believer decides to do otherwise.	This is a restatement of what Paul has been talking about all along. It is a parting shot summary to put anyone in their place who tries to convince these believers to go back to the law for justification or sanctification. It doesn't work!