

Study in Romans

Doctrine > Good News > Temporal Blessings > Paul's Sanctification Testimony

Part 1

Romans 7:14-20

We come now to the part of Romans 7 that makes this chapter so well-known throughout church history: Paul's personal testimony of his frustration with his own struggle against sin. Some have thought that the crass honesty Paul displays here cannot possibly be true of one of the greatest Apostles of all time, so they impose on this passage a reading of Paul describing his life before he was converted. However, as we will see, the text of the passage and the context of all that we've studied up to this point simply will not allow for this interpretation.

Let us see the passage for what it is: Paul's honest confession of his struggle with the presence of sin in his unglorified, fleshly body. Rather than having it tarnish our inflated opinion of this great man, let us embrace the comforting thought that Paul was a flawed person just as we are. He would be the first to say—as indeed he does at the end of this chapter—that the praise for anything of eternal benefit in his life belongs to God through Jesus Christ. What is true for Paul then becomes true for us. We can stop being so captivated by disappointment with ourselves and become captivated instead by our awe that God the Father would love such as us and marvel at the power of His gospel to truly save sinners.

1. Why this is Paul's testimony as a Christian
 - a. It is present tense.
 - b. He nowhere indicates this is how he used to be.
 - c. The context in chapter 6 and earlier in chapter 7 has all been about Christians struggling with sinning now that we are under grace.
 - d. Perhaps most compelling is that the context makes it clear that only Christians have a choice to either obey God or obey sin (cf, 6:23). Therefore only a Christian can relate to this struggle with disappointment in ourselves.
2. Whirlwind of frustration part 1 (vv. 14-16)
3. Explanation of how the Christian can still struggle with sin now during God's sanctification process (vv. 17-18)
4. Whirlwind of frustration part 2 (vv. 19-20)