

# The Good Outcome of the Law

(Rom 7:14)

- Remember the context in ch 7 is the function of the law in the life of the believer, and not the unbeliever
- I. Rom 7:14-25
  - A) This begins a new subsection, and is probably the most hotly contested section of Paul's epistles
    - 1. We need to recognize before we begin that some of the greatest minds the church has ever known have disagreed upon this section
    - 2. Common views:
      - i. This refers to an unregenerate man
        - a) This was the almost unanimous view among church fathers in 1<sup>st</sup> 3 centuries
      - ii. This refers to a regenerate man as he always remains
        - a) Augustine held the 1<sup>st</sup> view, but later changed to this 2<sup>nd</sup> view
        - b) The Reformers mostly held this view
        - c) The Puritans mostly held it also
        - d) Charles Hodge taught this, as do most Calvinist theologians
          - 1) Arminians generally hold the 1<sup>st</sup> view
      - iii. This refers to a regenerate man before he receives the "2<sup>nd</sup> work of grace"
        - a) This view sprang up with the Holiness Movement
    - B) We need to be open-minded and come at this as a person seeking to be in conformity with the scriptures, and not as one trying to prove our position
      - 1. Every believer follows some form of doctrinal system, especially those who claim they hold to none
      - 2. No system of theology is perfect, neither is any man's understanding
  - II. General outline of sub-section
    - A) Rom 7:14- General statement about the man/subject in this discussion
      - 1. Rom 7:15- Shows this statement true by proof from daily life (behavior)
        - i. Rom 7:16-17- Deductions drawn from this:
          - a) I consent the law is good
          - b) It's not "I" doing it, but sin in me
            - 1) Rom 7:18-20- Explanation of v.17
      - 2. Rom 7:21- General statement of v.14 repeated, but with deeper understanding now
        - i. Rom 7:22-23- Expounding v.21

- B) Rom 7:24- Desperate plea to God from this newly understood position
  - 1. Rom 7:25a- Outburst of relief
  - 2. Rom 7:25b- Summary statement of sub-section, leading into major summary in 8:1-4
- III. Rom 7:14- Directly related to what went before, no new subject entered into
  - A) “For”- Therefore must be a continuation of the same subject
    - 1. This entire section (v.14-25) is and elaboration of the 1<sup>st</sup> section (v.7-12)
  - B) “We know”- Having now proven or arrived at a proper understanding of the law’s function in the life of a believer (not an unbeliever)
    - 1. “The law is spiritual”- The man in this example now sees the law in its proper light (spirit and not letter)
  - C) Paul is still addressing the objections his previous teaching might raise:
    - 1. “The law is useless then” (v.1-6)
    - 2. “The law is sin” (v.7-12)
      - i. Immediate answer then explanation
    - 3. “How can something that kills be good?” (v.13)
      - i. Immediate answer then explanation
  - D) Paul isn’t simply sharing his own experience here, he is describing and proving his teaching on the function of the law in the life of a believer
    - 1. He is showing what the law can do and what it cannot do because of sin
      - i. Or, he is outlining the law’s purpose as well as limits
        - a) Rom 8:2-4- Proves this very thing
          - 1) The law of God had become the “law of sin and death” due to sin’s entry into humanity
          - 2) Rom 7:13-25- Paul explaining what the law can now do in man’s current capacity
- IV. Is this as simple as the change in tenses, and the great minds missed it?
  - A) The history of this text demands a very close look
    - 1. Humility demands it as well
  - B) “Dramatic present”- Stating a thing by its current effect
    - 1. “If what you are saying is true, then I find myself in this position”
      - i. This is a form of deductive reasoning where you take a teaching and test it by current application
      - ii. Most of the theologians of the past have felt that this is what Paul was doing here
- V. The outcome stated:
  - A) “Law is spiritual”- He has already said it is “just, holy and good”
    - 1. The law is “good” only to those to whom it “has come” (v.9)
      - i. 2 Cor 3:6- The “letter killeth” (can’t give life)

- a) “Letter”- an outward understanding of law, believing it regulates actions only
  - b) “Spirit giveth life”- a true understanding of the law leads to life
    - 1) The law is spiritual in meaning, such as “don’t covet”
    - 2) The law is spiritual in intent, to lead to Christ
      - (a) Rom 7:10- “Commandment ordained to life”
- B) “I am carnal”- This is the main teaching of v.14-23
- 1. “Carnal”- fleshly, the natural man, man as he is in sin or is affected by sin
    - i. The opposite of “spiritual” man, correlates to the “letter”
      - a) “Letter”- in the flesh, under the law, under sin, carnal
        - 1) This is the main use of the term in scripture, such as Rom 8:59 (same epistle)
        - 2) But there is a 2<sup>nd</sup> use, such as in 1 Cor 3:1-4:
          - (a) “Carnal”- Immature, still retaining the old way of thinking and acting; a Christian lacking good understanding
- C) How could either use of carnal refer to Paul as he wrote Romans?
- 1. Was Paul lost?
  - 2. Was Paul a babe?