**In Romans 7.13-25, is Paul speaking as a Jew under the law or a Christian? – By Thailer Jimerson**

As promised, since we didn’t get to cover the last question in our Wednesday bible class on Romans held in the auditorium, here is a brief summation on the issues discussed in chapter 7.

The question goes as follows:   
**In verses 7-25, Paul is writing of the universal experience of failure to live up to a moral standard. Is Paul, then, writing from the perspective of a Jew under the law, or a Christian under moral precepts? What proof do you give in support of your answer?**

There are Christians who hold both sides and can reason well for their position. I think it’s important to discuss because what one believes about this text I think determines one’s understanding of sanctification, i.e. whether we really progressively grow more holy or not. If this is a Jewish experience, we can grow more holy; if a Christian, do we really grow less and less enslaved to sin? Paul’s language in vv.14, 15, 18 don’t seem to reflect that.   
 The following is an great excerpt from the New Bible Commentary, 21st Century Edition summarizing and answering the issue:

“Paul’s teaching about the law comes within a lengthy ‘personal confession’. Whose experience is Paul describing here? Many, noting that Paul now writes in the present tense (in contrast to the past tense in vs 7–11) and claims to delight in God’s law, argue that he must be describing his present situation as a mature believer. The passage would then make clear that the law cannot provide victory over the power of sin within the Christian, who, though regenerate and free from sin’s condemning power, cannot escape sin’s clutches (cf. 14, 23, 25). While this interpretation of the passage can muster very strong support (e.g. Augustine, Luther, Calvin) and deserves great respect, there is an alternative approach. Most of us can identify, as Christians, with the struggle depicted in vs 15–20, but Paul’s objective treatment of the situation he is talking about makes it difficult to think that a Christian is being described. Paul claims that he is sold as a slave to sin (14b; cf. v 25) and is a prisoner of the law of sin (23). The former description seems to be diametrically opposed to the description of the Christian in ch. 6—‘set free from sin’ (v 22)—and the latter conflicts with Paul’s assertion in 8:2 that the Christian has been set free ‘from the law of sin and death’. It seems then, that Paul in these verses is describing his experience as an unregenerate Jew, finding his love for God’s law and desire to obey it constantly frustrated by his failure to obey it. To be sure, we cannot be certain about the extent to which Paul was actually conscious of this struggle in his pre-Christian days. (His claim in Phil. 3:6 that he was ‘faultless’ with respect to ‘legalistic righteousness’ refers to his legal standing according to Pharisaic standards and not to his actual situation.) Certainly it would only have been in the light of his knowledge of Christ that Paul would have recognized the depths of the sinfulness he depicts here. In vs 7–11, then, Paul describes the effect of the giving of the law on himself and all other Jews, while in vs 13–25 he describes the continuing existence of a Jew, such as he once was, under the law. The present tense, which he begins to use in v 14, is much better suited to this depiction of a regular state of affairs.” (p.1138)