October 5, 2003 Northwest Bible Church

Worship Service Alan Conner

**Rom. 7:14-25**

*Inner Conflict – believer or unbeliever?*

***INTRO***

***I. OUTLINE AND OPENING OBSERVATIONS:***

 A. Outline:

 Lament #1 - sold into bondage to sin (14-17)

 Lament #2 - nothing good in my flesh (18-20)

 Lament #3 - sin makes war against me and imprisons me (21-23)

 Lament #4 - I am wretched, but Christ is my answer in the midst of my conflict (24-25)

 B. Opening observations:

 1) inner conflict: Rom. 7:15, 18, 19

 2) indwelling sin - the source of the conflict: Rom. 7:14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23

***II. THE INNER CONFLICT: BELIEVER OR UNBELIEVER?***

 A. Evidence for the unbeliever view:

 1) Context, esp. v. 13 which does not suggest a clear transition to Christian experience.

 2) Bondage to sin (Rom. 7:14). Contrast with Rom. 6:2, 6-7, 14, 17-18, 22; 8:2?

 3) Absence of good (Rom. 7:18).

 4) Consistent failure to obey (Rom. 7:15, 19, 25).

 5) Pharisaical or pious Jew’s delight in the law of God (Rom. 7:22).

 6) No reference to the Holy Spirit. Chapter 8 refer to the HS 19 times.

 7) Proponents of this view include: Patristic fathers of the first three centuries in general

Sanday-Headlam; Ridderbos; C.H. Dodd, Godet, Meyer, Stifler, Augustine until Pelagius adopted this view and then he restudied it and came to the believer view, Stifler, W. H Griffith Thomas, John Gerstner, etc.

 B. Evidence for the believer view:

 1) The present tense. Contrast past tense in 7:7-13.

 2) If 7:14-25 related to Paul’s pre-Christian experience, we would expect him to conclude with the words in v. 25, but he returns to the struggle with sin. This suggests that the freedom given by Christ does not now at this time eliminate our on-going struggle with sin in the Christian experience.

 3) The depth of defeat experienced here can be understood of the Christian life.

 a) Paul does not say in v. 14 that he is “I am in the flesh,” (7:5; 8:8) or “I am according to the flesh,” (8:4-5), both of which refer to the unregenerate condition. but “I am of flesh” meaning that which possesses flesh, carnal, influenced by the flesh, unspiritual, and as such it can refer to Christians (1 Cor. 3:1).

 b) The “sold into bondage to sin” (lit. “sold under sin”) of v. 14 does not have to mean in this context that sin is his master (6:14), or that he is totally a slave to sin (6:6). It can merely mean that he cannot escape sin, but it does not have to mean that he can do nothing but sin. Read in light of v. 23.

 c) Salvation has an ALREADY-BUT-NOT-YET theme in Paul’s theology. See Rom. 8:10-13, 23.

 4) Evidence of the new birth.

 a) a desire to obey God (Rom. 7:15, 18, 19, 21). Contrast Rom. 8:7.

 b) there is humility before God (Rom. 7:18).

 c) There are references to two natures in this struggle. There is a distinction between-

 (1) the inner man and the outer man (Rom. 7:22-23)

 (2) the “I” which desires to do good, and the flesh which sins (Rom. 7:15-18, 20)

 (3) mind and the indwelling sin in my members/flesh (23, 25)

 5) Proponents: Augustine; Protestant Reformers and Puritans; Charles Hodge and Robert Haldane, Murray, Packer, Cranfield, Morris, etc.

***CONCLUSION***