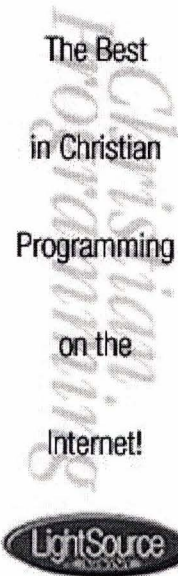


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Tuesday, January 6, 1998

Subject: What tense is Paul using in Romans 7:15-25?

Dear Dr. Ryrie: Is Paul speaking in the present tense in Romans 7:15-25? If so, his statement seems to conflict with those in chapter 6, verses 6-7, 16-17, and 20-22. I know there is some debate about this in different circles. My pastor says that the second half of Romans 7 describes the Christian walk--being forgiven, not perfect. Others say that Paul is talking in the past tense or from his pre-Christ perspective. I hope you can shed some light on this. --Eric L.

Dear Eric: Yes, Paul uses present tenses in Romans 7:15-25 indicating, to me at least, that he is relating his experience as a believer, not as an unbeliever. Any seeming inconsistency between this passage and Romans 6 might be clarified by remembering that "death" in the Scriptures never mean cessation but always separation. Therefore, in Romans 6, Paul is stating the great truth that we are separated from the reigning power of sin but not from its presence in our lives. His testimony in Romans 7 makes it clear that sin still plagued him. Only when we get to heaven will we be free from the presence of sin.



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