

Romans 7:14-25, 8:1-4

(PARAPHRASE - THE MESSAGE)

My **FALSE SELF** is full of itself —after all, I've spent a long time in sin's prison. What I don't understand about myself is that my **TRUE SELF** decides one way, but then **FALSE SELF** acts another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if my **FALSE SELF** can't be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God's command is necessary.

I need something more! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of the **FALSE SELF** within me keeps sabotaging the best intentions of my **TRUE SELF**, I obviously need help! I realize that my **FALSE SELF** doesn't have what it takes. My **FALSE SELF** can will it, but my **FALSE SELF** can't do it. My **TRUE SELF** decides to do good, but my **FALSE SELF** doesn't really do it; My **TRUE SELF** decides not to do bad, but then my **FALSE SELF** does it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and my **FALSE SELF** gets the better of me every time.

It happens so regularly that it's predictable. It's reactive and deeply habitual. The moment my **TRUE SELF** decides to do good, my **FALSE SELF** is there to trip me up. My truest self truly delights in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that the parts of me that are still the **FALSE SELF** do not join in that delight. My **FALSE SELF** covertly rebels, and just when my **TRUE SELF** least expects it, my **FALSE SELF** takes charge.

I've tried everything in my own strength and will, and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question?

The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions, this divided soul, where my truest self wants to serve God with all my heart and mind, but my **TRUE SELF** is pulled by the influence of the **FALSE SELF** to do something totally different.

With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma, is resolved. The soul is integrated and made true. Those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of death through the **FALSE SELF**.

God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn't deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all...