

Romans 7:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Analysis

Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.—Paul repeats v. 17's crucial distinction, bracketing vv. 18-19's elaboration. The repetition underscores the fundamental point: regenerate identity ("I") versus remaining corruption ("sin dwelling in me"). Ouketi egō (οὐκέτι ἐγώ, "no longer I") doesn't eliminate responsibility but distinguishes the Christian's true self (united to Christ) from remaining sin's alien presence.

This framework is essential for persevering in sanctification: believers must fight sin ruthlessly (Colossians 3:5) while maintaining assurance that sin doesn't define them (Romans 8:1). The proper response to failure isn't either minimizing sin ("that's not really me") or despair ("I must not be saved"). Rather: "This contradicts my regenerate identity; by God's Spirit I'll mortify it, confident that Christ's righteousness defines me." This balance enables warfare without works-righteousness.

Historical Context

Paul's pastoral wisdom shines through—he provides theological framework for fighting sin without losing gospel-assurance. Believers need both urgency in mortifying sin and confidence that failure doesn't nullify justification. This dual emphasis characterizes Reformed soteriology: justified once-for-all, sanctified progressively, both grounded in union with Christ.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does maintaining the distinction between 'I' (in Christ) and 'sin dwelling in me' enable you to fight sin without losing assurance?
2. What would change in your battle against specific sins if you firmly grasped that they contradict rather than define your identity?
3. How might this framework help you pursue holiness from security rather than insecurity?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	δὲ	ὃ	οὐ	θέλω	ἐγὼ	τοῦτο	ποιῶ	οὐκέτι	ἐγὼ
if	Now	G3739	not	would	I	that	I do	G3765	I
G1487	G1161		G3756	G2309	G1473	G5124	G4160		G1473
κατεργάζομαι	αὐτὸ	ἀλλ'	ἡ	οἰκοῦσα	ἐν	ἐμοὶ	ἁμαρτία		
that do	it	but	G3588	that dwelleth	in	me	sin		
G2716	G846	G235		G3611	G1722	G1698	G266		

Additional Cross-References

Romans 7:17 (Sin): Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.