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Wilder's "Perspectives on Our Struggle with Sin: Three Views of Romans 7" (Book Review)

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The title clearly indicates this book’s subject: the consideration of interpretations of Romans 7. This well-documented scholarly work is a conversation between the different perspectives with responses given by the other contributing authors (p. 2). The final chapter addresses how to apply Romans 7 in ministry (p. 5).

Wilder graciously introduces the four authors and the topic. He poses the questions that Stephen Chester, Grant Osborne, Mark Seifrid, and Chad Brand address: To whom does Paul’s first-person “I” refer? And, “Is Paul describing the spiritual experience of a regenerate or unregenerate person, or both?” (p. 3). Osborne proposes that Paul writes about his personal experience with the understanding that it applies to everyone. He promotes the interpretation that Paul describes life before conversion in the early verses of Romans 7, but refers to life after conversion in the last verses (pp.47-48). Chester then promotes his understanding that throughout Romans 7, Paul is speaking of his life before Christ from his regenerate perspective. Seifrid asserts that Paul “does not speak of the Christian struggle with sin” (p. 164). Instead, Paul enthusiastically directs thanksgiving to God. He describes the Christian walk as a journey where we must avoid both the trap of thinking that Christ’s sacrifice is insufficient to cover our sin and the trap of taking pride in our acceptance of salvation (p. 164).

Brand reviews the common elements and conflicts between the perspectives and their implications. He advocates preaching about sin to direct everyone to the Lord. Brand ends by advising pastors to be sensitive to the Lord’s timing – to allow people to wrestle with conviction as He works in them (p. 201). It is useful to see how groups of cited theologians align with the different perspectives throughout the text. Substantial Name, Subject, and Scripture indexes are provided. Recommended especially for seminary/university libraries, professors, students, and pastors.