MORE RHETORIC AT THE BOUNDARIES: ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE FOR A CHAIN-LINK TRANSITION AT ROMANS 7:25

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Abstract: The ordering of Paul's statements in Romans 7:25 has long puzzled commentators. In a 2005 monograph, Rhetoric at the Boundaries: The Art and Theology of New Testament Chain-Link Transitions, *Bruce W. Longenecker proposes that in Romans 7:25 Paul employs an ancient rhetorical device to transition from one section (A) to another section (B). This chain-link transition described by Longenecker follows an A-b-a-B pattern, in which a summary of the first section (a = 7:25b) follows a brief introduction to the second section (b = 7:25a). In addition to 7:25, Longenecker presents three other passages from Romans that purportedly display the same chain-link interlock: 10:16–17, 12:14–16, and 13:13–14. This article supplements Longenecker's argument by providing two additional examples: 1:24–25 and 3:21–23. The article concludes that Paul clearly employs this rhetorical device in Romans, and that the use of this device is the best explanation for the ordering of his statements in 7:25. This conclusion undermines the common claim that the placement of 7:25b after 7:25a indicates that 7:14–24 describes the Christian experience.*

Key words: Paul, Romans, rhetoric, transition, chain-link interlock

One of the most prominent debates in the interpretation of Romans concerns Paul's exclamation in 7:25a. Here Paul clearly anticipates deliverance from the condition described in 7:14–24. However, is this deliverance available in the mortal life, or is it realized only in the final transformation of the body (see 1 Cor 15:49–57; Phil 3:20–21)?[1] One important argument supporting the latter interpretation concerns the location of Paul's statement in 7:25b. This statement, which provides a concise summary of the condition described in 7:14–24, comes *after* Paul's exclamation of praise in 7:25a. If 7:25a led directly into the triumphant declarations of 8:1–4, one might conclude that Paul envisions a present escape from the condition described in 7:14–24. However, the fact that Paul does not continue immediately to 8:1 but instead recapitulates the condition described in 7:14–24 has led many to

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[1] For a concise summary of the principal arguments in this complex debate, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 379–90; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 469–70.

conclude that the frustration and failure described in these verses remains the ongoing experience of the Christian.[2]

Those who insist that 7:14–24 cannot describe the normative Christian experience have struggled to explain the location of Paul's statement in 7:25b. Some commentators have even suggested that these words are a post-Pauline interpolation. While Ernst Käsemann acknowledges that this is a "precarious" proposal supported by "no historical evidence," he insists that affirming the authenticity of 7:25b risks shattering "the whole theology of the apostle."[3] In 2005, however, Bruce W. Longenecker proposed a solution that does not require amending the text. He argues that in Romans 7:25 Paul employs an ancient rhetorical device to transition from one unit (*A*) to another unit (*B*).[4] This "chain-link transition" or "chain-link interlock" follows an *A-b-a-B* pattern, in which *a* is a retrospective section pointing back to *A*, while *b* is an anticipatory section pointing forward to *B*. As shown in Figure 1 below, 7:25a is the *b* in this *A-b-a-B* structure, while 7:25b is the *a*.[5] If Longenecker's proposal is correct, then the exclamation of praise in 7:25a introduces the triumphant declarations of 8:1–4, declarations that undoubtedly describe the present experience of the Christian.[6]

Figure 1. Chain-Link Transition in Romans 7:25[7]

A	*b*	*a*	*B*
7:7–24	7:25a	7:25b	8:1–39

Of course, Longenecker's proposal concerning Romans 7:25 would be greatly strengthened if one could produce additional examples of chain-link transition in the Pauline epistles. In his monograph, Longenecker proposes four such examples: 1 Corinthians 8:7–8, Romans 10:16–17, Romans 12:14–16, and Romans 13:13–14. However, as discussed below, these examples are not equally compelling. In this article, I bolster Longenecker's proposal by providing two additional examples of chain-link transition in Romans: 1:24–25 and 3:21–23.

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[2] E.g., John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 270.

[3] Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 211–12.

[4] Bruce W. Longenecker, *Rhetoric at the Boundaries: The Art and Theology of New Testament Chain-Link Transition*s (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005).

[5] Longenecker, *Rhetoric at the Boundaries*, 88–93.

[6] In his brief assessment of the significance of Longenecker's proposal, Will Timmins does not give proper attention to this point. Will N. Timmins, "Romans 7 and the Resurrection of Lament in Christ: The Wretched 'I' and His Biblical Doppelgänger," *NovT* 61.4 (2019): 404.

[7] The nomenclature I use to display chain link transitions differs slightly from the nomenclature employed by Longenecker. See discussion in Section II below.

I. METHOD

Longenecker's term "chain-link" is derived from the language Lucian employs to describe how a good writer will transition from one section to another: "When he has finished the first topic he will introduce the second, fastened to it and linked with it like a chain; … always the first and second topics must not merely be neighbours but have common matter and overlap."[8] Longenecker defines a chain-link transition as follows: "Instead of text-unit *A* simply coming to an abrupt end and being immediately followed by text-unit *B*, text-unit *A* gives way to a brief signalling of material *B*, followed by a resumption of material *A*, and finally a full commencement of text-unit *B*."[9] Thus a "chain-link construction is marked out exclusively by the overlapping of material (via content repetition or a gesture of some kind) at the boundary of two text units."[10] In its "purest forms," the chain-link construction "follows an *A-b-a-B* pattern in which a clear overlap of material is evident at the point of transition."[11]

In this study, I seek to identify transitions in Paul that exemplify the *A-b-a-B* structure Longenecker proposes in Romans 7:25 (Figure 1). I am aware that this attempt is not unlike the hazardous attempt to identify chiasm (*A-B-C-C′-B′-A′*). As David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina observe, "Many scholars see chiasm almost everywhere and identify it even where the alleged coordinate members are not clearly parallel."[12] In order to minimize the risk of producing dubious examples of chain-link transition, I will utilize in my analysis two restrictive criteria derived from Romans 7:25 that are not articulated by Longenecker.

First, note that Paul's statement in Romans 7:25b functions as a concise summary.[13] The statement does not introduce any themes not found already in 7:14–24. The sharp dichotomy expressed in 7:25b simply echoes the dichotomy previously expounded. The positive statement, "With my mind I am a slave to the law of God," recalls in particular both 7:22 ("I delight in the law of God in my inmost self") and 7:23 ("the law of my mind").[14] Likewise, the negative statement, "With my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin," recalls in particular both 7:14 ("sold into slavery under sin") and 7:23 ("making me captive to the law of sin that dwells

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[8] Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 12, citing Lucian, *Hist.* 55 (Kilburn, LCL). Longenecker also finds a reference to chain-link transitions in Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.4.129.

[9] Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 18. I have placed A and B in italics to match the formatting used throughout this article.

[10] Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 19.

[11] Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 21.

[12] David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina, *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 120. See also James Kugel, "On the Bible and Literary Criticism," *Prooftexts* 1.3 (1981): 224.

[13] This point is often noted by commentators. See, for example, Frank Thielman, *Romans*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 364.

[14] All Scripture quotations are from the NRSV.

in my members"). Finally, the "doubly emphatic" αὐτὸς ἐγώ recalls the distinctive emphasis on the first-person found throughout 7:7–24.[15]

Second, note that while Paul's statement in Romans 7:25b functions as a concluding summary of 7:14–24, his statement in 7:25a can easily function as a brief introduction to 8:1–39. The emphasis on Jesus, who is notably absent from 7:7–24, is characteristic of chapter 8, where Paul opens (8:1–4) and closes (8:31–39) by proclaiming the salvation that God has accomplished through his Son. Furthermore, the anticipation of deliverance from the "body of death" (7:24) serves as a fitting prelude to the theme of resurrection life developed throughout chapter 8.

Therefore, in seeking parallels to Romans 7:25, I am not content to find *A-b-a-B* structures in which *a* is connected to *A* by "content repetition or a gesture of some kind." Rather, I am seeking specifically structures in which *a* functions as a concluding summary of *A*. Likewise, I am seeking structures in which *b* functions as an introduction to *B*. These two criteria will help ensure that the *A-b-a-B* structures identified exemplify the specific rhetorical structure proposed in Romans 7:25.

Consider, for example, the chain-link transition proposed by Justin King. King claims that Romans 7:1–3 and 7:5 refer to the past condition, while 7:4 and 7:6 refer to the present condition. Drawing on Longenecker's monograph, King thus proposes a chain-link transition at Rom 7:4–5 (Figure 2).[16] Notice, however, that in this *A-b-a-B* structure, *a* (7:5) cannot be described as a summary of *A* (7:1–3). In 7:5, Paul makes no mention of wife, husband, marriage, or adultery. This verse instead develops concepts and images that are entirely absent from 7:1–3, including flesh, sinful passions, members of the body, and fruit. The verse also employs the first-person plural, which is absent from 7:1–3. King's proposed chain-link transition thus fails to meet my first criterion and is excluded.

Figure 2. Chain-Link Transition in Romans 7:4–5

A	*b*	*a*	*B*
7:1–3	7:4	7:5	7:6

Admittedly, this more conservative approach runs the risk of excluding genuine examples of chain-link transition. Nevertheless, my purpose in this study is not to catalogue all transitions in Paul that might to some degree exhibit the type of overlap discussed by Lucian. Rather, I am seeking clear and precise parallels to the specific rhetorical construction that Longenecker has proposed in Romans 7:25.

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[15] The description of αὐτὸς ἐγώ is from John D. Harvey, *Romans*, EGGNT (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 186. There are twenty-four occurrences of the first-person singular pronoun in 7:7–24 and twenty-six occurrences of first-person singular verbs. (If the first ἐγώ in 7:20 is deemed inauthentic, then the count is twenty-three.)

[16] Justin King, "Rhetorical Chain-Link Construction and the Relationship between Romans 7.1–6 and 7.7–8.39: Additional Evidence for Assessing the Argument of Romans 7–8 and the Identity of the Infamous 'I,'" *JSNT* 39.3 (2017): 265–69.

II. NOMENCLATURE

Before proceeding to analysis, I must note a minor difference between the nomenclature I use to describe chain-link transitions and the nomenclature employed by Longenecker. Longenecker places every verse within one of the main text units (*A* or *B*). Thus he represents the chain-link interlock at Romans 7:25 as follows: *A* (7:7–25), *b* (7:25a), *a* (7:25b), *B* (8:1–39).[17] Here the transitional sections *b* and *a* are included within the main unit *A*. The problem with this nomenclature is that the very nature of the chain-link interlock often makes the boundary between *A* and *B* ambiguous. Consider, for example, the chain-link transition at Romans 10:16–17, discussed in Section III below. Longenecker represents this chain-link interlock as follows: *A* (10:14–17), *b* (10:16), *a* (10:17), *B* (10:18–21). Here *b* and *a* are included in *A*. However, as Longenecker appears to acknowledge in his discussion of the passage, *a* and *b* could just as well be included in *B*, as follows: *A* (10:14–15), *b* (10:16), *a* (10:17), *B* (10:16–21).[18] To avoid drawing an arbitrary boundary between *A* and *B*, I have excluded both *a* and *b* from the main text units. Note that King uses the same nomenclature as I use (see Figure 2 above).[19]

III. CHAIN-LINK TRANSITIONS IDENTIFIED BY LONGENECKER

As noted in the introduction, Longenecker finds in Paul's epistles four *A-b-a-B* chain-link transitions outside Romans 7:25: 1 Corinthians 8:7–8, Romans 10:16–17, Romans 12:14–16, and Romans 13:13–14. Before proposing two additional examples, I will briefly evaluate Longenecker's examples based on the criteria developed above in Section I: (1) *a* functions as a concluding summary of *A*, and (2) *b* functions as an introduction to *B*.

Figure 3. Chain-Link Transition in 1 Corinthians 8:7–8

A	*b*	*a*	*B*
8:4–6	8:7	8:8	8:9–13

Consider first the chain-link transition Longenecker identifies in 1 Corinthians 8:7–8 (Figure 3).[20] This structure satisfies our second criterion. As Longenecker observes, 8:7 (*b*) introduces the pastoral concern developed in 8:9–13 (*B*). It is less obvious, however, that the structure meets our first criterion. While 8:8 (*a*) and 8:4–6 (*A*) both use the first-person plural, 8:8 makes no mention of monotheism, a prominent theme in 8:4–6. Longenecker suggests that 8:8 expresses "the conclu-

[17] Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 91.
[18] Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 93–95.
[19] King incorrectly attributes the difference between his nomenclature and the nomenclature employed by Longenecker to a typographical error in Longenecker's monograph ("Rhetorical Chain-Link Construction," 264n12).
[20] Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 87–88.

sion … to which 8:4–6 has been leading."[21] However, according to C. K. Barrett, 8:8a quotes a slogan from the Corinthians, while 8:8b begins "Paul's correction of the Corinthian position." The Corinthians would have asserted that they were no worse off *if they ate*, and no better off *if they did not eat*. Paul, however, "is concerned to point out that the converse is equally true."[22] On this analysis, Paul's statement in 8:8 arguably "takes its cues" from 8:7/9–13, where Paul suggests that Christians should voluntarily abstain.[23] In other words, Paul's statement in 8:8, "we are no worse off if we do not eat," prepares for his conclusion in 8:13, "I will never eat meat." 1 Corinthians 8:8 is thus plausibly an integral part of the argument Paul develops in 8:7–13, not a concluding summary of 8:4–6. One should note that Longenecker himself expresses some hesitation about this passage, concluding that it only "perhaps" contains a chain-link transition.[24]

Figure 4. Chain-Link Transition in Romans 10:16–17

A	*b*	*a*	*B*
10:14–15	10:16	10:17	10:18–21

Second, consider the chain-link transition Longenecker identifies in Romans 10:16–17 (Figure 4).[25] Romans 10:17 (*a*) functions as a concise summary of the chain of "cause and effect relationships" delineated in 10:14–15 (*A*), while 10:16 (*b*) introduces the break in that chain that is developed in 10:18–21 (*B*).[26] This structure thus satisfies our two criteria.

Figure 5. Chain-Link Transition in Romans 12:14–16

	A	*b*	*a*	*B*
Longenecker	12:9–13	12:14	12:15–16	12:17–21
Vasser	12:3–13	12:14	12:15–16	12:17–21

Third, consider the chain-link transition Longenecker identifies in Romans 12:14–16 (Figure 5).[27] As Longenecker observes, the exhortations in 12:9–13 and 12:15–16 primarily concern relationships with others in the Christian community, while the exhortations in 12:14 and 12:17–21 primarily concern relationships with

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[21] Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 87.

[22] C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, BNTC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 195. See also Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 647–48. Others conclude that both 8:8a and 8:8b express the Corinthian position; see, for example, Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 199.

[23] Longenecker describes an *A-b-a-B* chain-link transition as a structure in which *a* "takes its cues" from *A*, while *b* "takes its cues" from *B* (*Rhetoric*, 100).

[24] Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 101.

[25] Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 93–95.

[26] Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 93.

[27] Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 95–99.

those outside the Christian community. Romans 12:14 (*b*) describes the proper response to persecution and thus introduces the themes developed in 12:17–21 (*B*). At first glance, however, 12:15–16 (*a*) does not seem obvious as a concluding summary of 12:9–13 (*A*). Nevertheless, if we extend *A* to include 12:3–8, a section that also concerns relations within the Christian community, we see at once that 12:16 returns to precisely the same theme that opened this section: humility in thinking. Note that φρονέω and cognates occur four times in 12:3, three times in 12:16, and nowhere else in between. Thus 12:16 forms an *inclusio* with 12:3 and so functions as an appropriate conclusion to the section.

Figure 6. Chain-Link Transition in Romans 13:13–14

	A	*b*	*a*	*B*
Longenecker	13:11–12	13:13	13:14	14:1–15:6
Vasser	13:11–13c	13:13d	13:14	14:1–15:6

Finally, consider the chain-link transition Longenecker proposes in Romans 13:13–14 (Figure 6).[28] Romans 13:14 (*a*) functions as a concluding summary and thus satisfies our first criteria. However, 13:13 (*b*) does not easily function as an introduction to 14:1–15:6 (*B*). Most of the vices listed in 13:13 have no clear connection to the discussion in 14:1–15:6. Nevertheless, as Longenecker observes, the final two vices ("quarreling and jealousy") contrast with the "peace" (14:17, 19) and "harmony" (15:5) encouraged by Paul. Furthermore, unlike the first four vices, these last two are not characteristically "sins of the night" and thus do not readily fit the context as "works of darkness" (13:12).[29] Note also that Paul uses these two vices in 1 Corinthians 3:3 to characterize divisions in the Corinthian community (cf. 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:20). Therefore, as Moo observes, it is likely that Paul selected these last two vices "with a view ahead to his rebuke of the Roman Christians for their divisiveness and mutual criticism."[30] Thus, if we restrict *b* to the final words of 13:13 (μὴ ἔριδι καὶ ζήλῳ), designated 13:13d in Figure 6, then the *A-b-a-B* structure satisfies our second criterion.

In conclusion, with minor modifications, the three examples from Romans provided by Longenecker satisfy our criteria and thus exemplify the rhetorical structure proposed in Romans 7:25. In what follows, I offer two additional examples from the same epistle: 1:24–25 and 3:21–23.

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[28] Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 99–101.

[29] Moo, *Romans*, 841.

[30] Moo, *Romans*, 841.

IV. CHAIN-LINK TRANSITION AT ROMANS 1:24–25

Most commentators divide Romans 1:18–32 into two pericopes: 1:18–23 and 1:24–32.[31] On this analysis, 1:18–23 describes the cause (people suppressed the knowledge of God and turned to idols), while 1:24–32 describes the effect (God handed people over to their own depravity). The content of 1:25, however, clearly belongs with the first pericope, thus complicating this simple division. Furthermore, since 1:21–23 already provides the ground for 1:24, 1:25 seems redundant as a relative clause. Some scholars have therefore proposed that οἵτινες in 1:25 begins a new sentence.[32] Placing the break after 1:24 instead of 1:23 has allowed scholars to propose three divisions (see Figure 7) based on the triple use of the verb παραδίδωμι (1:24, 26, 28).[33]

Figure 7. Structure of Romans 1:21–31

A	B		A	B		A	B
1:21–23	1:24		1:25	1:26–27		1:28a	1:28b–31

However, while this tripartite structure is attractive, it is rather artificial. Note first that 1:28a differs from 1:21–23 and 1:25 in that it lacks any reference to idolatry. Moreover, while it is possible that οἵτινες begins a new sentence, this is not the most natural reading of the relative pronoun.[34]

Figure 8. Chain-Link Transition in Romans 1:24–25

A	b	a	B
1:18–23	1:24	1:25	1:26–32

Longenecker's proposal concerning chain-link transitions provides us with a better solution to the problem posed by 1:25: this verse is the *a* in an *A-b-a-B* interlock (Figure 8). As Frank Thielman observes, 1:25 (*a*) is an "emphatic summary" of 1:18–23 (*A*).[35] Likewise, 1:24 (*b*) clearly introduces the themes that are developed in 1:26–32 (*B*). Notice also the verbatim repetition in this passage. Verse 25 repeats the basic structure of verse 23 ([μετ]ήλλαξαν τὴν … τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν …) while also incorporating concepts from earlier in the discourse: ἀλήθεια (cf. 1:18) and κτίσις

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[31] UBS⁵; Schreiner, *Romans*, 83; Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 148; Frank J. Matera, *Romans*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 45–47; Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 199; Harvey, *Romans*, 34, 42; Thielman, *Romans*, 100. Some further specify that 1:18 is the introduction and 1:32 is the conclusion.

[32] C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 1:123; Moo, *Romans*, 123.

[33] Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, SP 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 63–64; Wiard Popkes, "Zum Aufbau und Charakter von Römer 1.18–32," *NTS* 28.4 (1982): 499.

[34] According to Robert Jewett, "The grammar demands a relative clause" (*Romans*, 169). See also BDAG 729–30.

[35] Thielman, *Romans*, 108. See also Schreiner, *Romans*, 91.

(cf. 1:20). The interruption caused by the placement of this summary *after* verse 24 evidently prompts Paul in verse 26 to repeat verse 24. The opening words of verse 26 (διὰ τοῦτο παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς …) differ from verse 24 only in the replacement of διό with διὰ τοῦτο and ἐν with εἰς. The verbatim repetition between verses 23 and 25 on the one hand and between verses 24 and 26 on the other make the passage a striking example of the chain-link interlock described by Longenecker.

V. CHAIN-LINK TRANSITION AT ROMANS 3:21–23

Paul's statement in 3:21 obviously marks the beginning of a new section in his argument. However, in what James D. G. Dunn describes as a "brief parenthesis," Paul immediately reverts in 3:22b–23 to themes that he has already expounded.[36] Furthermore, as C. E. B. Cranfield and others observe, this parenthesis "sums up the conclusion to the argument of 1:18–3:20."[37] The statement, "there is no distinction, since all have sinned," echoes 3:9 ("all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin") and provides a succinct summary of what Paul has been arguing since 1:18 (see esp. 2:1 and 3:19–20). The claim that all "fall short of the glory of God" also echoes Paul's language in both 1:23 and 2:7/10.[38]

Figure 9. Chain-Link Transition in Romans 3:21–23

A	b	a	B
1:18–3:20	3:21–22a	3:22b–3:23	3:24–4:25

The placement of 3:22b–23 *after* 3:21–22a thus fits precisely the chain-link pattern described by Longenecker (Figure 9). This structure was in fact described decades before Longenecker published his monograph. In 1977, Nils Alstrup Dahl noticed the "delayed conclusion" in 3:22b–23 and connected it with similar delayed conclusions in 7:25b and 10:17.[39] Citing Dahl, Jouette M. Bassler also found a "postponed conclusion" in Romans 3:22b–23:

> Paul occasionally employs the stylistic device of the postponed conclusion in which the summarizing conclusion of one argument is delayed until after the next argumentative unit has begun. This device seems to be operating in Romans 3. Verse 21 clearly introduces the new theme of the manifestation of

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[36] James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 2 vols., WBC 38 (Dallas: Word, 1988), 1:178–79. So also Moo, *Romans*, 246.

[37] Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:204. So also Longenecker, *Romans*, 415; Moo, *Romans*, 246.

[38] Note esp. the movement from 2:10 ("glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good") to 3:12 ("there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one").

[39] Nils Alstrup Dahl, *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 84–85. Dahl also finds a "delayed conclusion" in 2 Corinthians 5:21, but a chain-link transition in this passage is not evident to me.

God's righteousness apart from the law, but in vv. 22b–23 Paul summarizes themes of the preceding argument.[40]

Likewise, citing Bassler, Charles D. Myers characterized the transition in Romans 3:21–23 as precisely the type of chain-link "interlock" that Longenecker would later describe:

> Paul delays a summarizing conclusion of one argumentative unit until after the next argumentative unit has begun. Thus the remark in 3:22b–23 … serves as a delayed conclusion for Paul's discussion of the universality of sin in 3:9–20, although it occurs after the next unit on God's solution to the problem of sin (3:21–26) has begun.… Paul interlocks the paragraphs in his argument.[41]

VI. CONCLUSION

In Romans 7:25, the placement of the concluding summary (7:25b) *after* the exclamation of praise (7:25a) has long puzzled scholars. However, building on Longenecker's analysis, we can now see that the order of statements in 7:25 aligns with a clear pattern in Paul's rhetoric. As shown in Figure 10, Paul summarizes one section *after* introducing the next section in at least five other examples in the same epistle.

Figure 10. Chain-Link Transitions in Romans

A	b	a	B
1:18–23	1:24	1:25	1:26–32
1:18–3:20	3:21–22a	3:22b–3:23	3:24–4:25
7:7–24	7:25a	7:25b	8:1–39
10:14–15	10:16	10:17	10:18–21
12:3–13	12:14	12:15–16	12:17–21
13:11–13c	13:13d	13:14	14:1–15:6

While further research may uncover chain-link transitions in Paul's other letters, the only clear examples that I have been able to identify are in Romans. This is consistent with the distinctive character of that epistle. While the letter is undoubtedly intended to address particular historical exigencies, most of Romans is a "general and sustained argument" that is developed according to its own "inner logic," not a collection of ad hoc responses to questions or crises in Rome.[42] If Paul ever had occasion to use a rhetorical device to transition between blocks of material, it would be while constructing this remarkably long and complex argument.

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[40] Jouette M. Bassler, "Divine Impartiality in Paul's Letter to the Romans," *NovT* 26.1 (1984): 54.

[41] Charles D. Myers Jr., "Chiastic Inversion in the Argument of Romans 3–8," *NovT* 35.1 (1993): 35. Myers finds another "delayed conclusion" in 3:28, but a chain-link transition in this passage is not evident to me.

[42] Moo, *Romans*, 12.

While modern readers may find Paul's chain-link transitions confusing, "the technique seems to have been far more accessible and understandable within predominantly oral/aural cultures."[43] Paul's *A-b-a-B* transitions frustrate those seeking to divide the text into discrete pericopes or create linear outlines. However, as Longenecker argues, the "cross-boundary gestures" of the chain-link transition were useful "in facilitating the assimilation of texts in ancient oral/aural contexts."[44] Such transitions in Paul's greatest epistle were likely appreciated by his original audience as both "structurally transparent and stylistically commendable."[45]

In conclusion, Paul clearly employs chain-link transition in Romans, and the use of this device is the best explanation for the ordering of his statements in 7:25. While this conclusion does not by itself settle the complex debate over the correct interpretation of Romans 7, it undermines one important argument in the debate. Given our knowledge of chain-link transitions in Romans, the position of Paul's concluding summary in 7:25b *after* his exclamation of praise in 7:25a can no longer be seen as evidence that Paul is describing the ongoing Christian experience. Rather, the position of 7:25b after 7:25a is fully consistent with the view that the deliverance anticipated in 7:25a is realized in the opening verses of Romans 8.

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[43] Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 51.
[44] Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 51.
[45] Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 255.