

**Subject: *Our Struggle with Sin***

**Scripture: *Romans 7:14-25***

### **1. Who is the struggler?**

Does this refer to an unbeliever or a believer? Is it a lost person or a saved person?

We notice in the text that Paul is referring to himself (“I”) many times. In verse 24, he speaks of his frustration, “O wretched man that I am!” Does he refer to himself as a lost man or as a saved man? If he refers to himself as a believer, is he an immature believer or a mature believer?

- The struggler is a Christian

In verses 1-13 Paul speaks of his life in the past tense, but in verses 14-25, he is speaking of himself in the present tense. This is a key. In verses 1-13, Paul describes his experience as a lost man, but in our text (vs. 14-25) he describes his experience as a saved man. Only a believer can say what he said in verse 22, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man.”

- The struggler is a mature Christian

The more mature a Christian is, the more he is aware of sin and his struggle with sin. An immature Christian is quick to see the sins of other people, but a mature Christian is quick to see his own sin. We have some examples of godly people who struggled with sin:

**Job 42:6** *Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

**Psalms 51:3** *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.*

**Isaiah 6:5** *Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*

**Daniel 9:5** *We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments.*

And let’s not forget about Paul...

**1 Corinthians 15:9** *I am the least of the apostles...*

**Ephesians 3:8** *To me, the very least of all the saints...*

**1 Timothy 1:15** *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.*

My good friend Pastor Scott Price signs his letters, “Scott, a fellow struggler.”

There was a time when Paul was exclusively a sinner.

There will be a time when Paul will be exclusively a saint.

But right now, as he is writing this, he is a sinner-saint.

### **2. What is the struggle?**

We can see the struggle in this passage. He has a desire to do good, yet the reality of doing wrong. There is a desire (delight) in God's law, but there is another law at work (vs. 22-23).

Does this refer to our struggle with sin and temptation in the world or with something else?

In one sense we battle with sin around us. We live in a sinful world, just like we live in a world of sickness and germs. The Bible has 1,189 chapters and only two chapters describe a world without sin (Genesis 1-2 and Revelation 21-22). So it is expected that we will always struggle with sin in the world. We face all kinds of sins: sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit, sins of commission and sins of omission, intentional sins and sins of ignorance.

But Romans 7 is not talking about sin around us. It is talking about sin within us. This is our struggle with indwelling sin.

- Vs. 17, *sin that dwells in me*
- Vs. 18, *in me dwells no good thing*
- Vs. 20, *sin that dwells in me*
- Vs. 21, *evil is present with me*
- Vs. 23, *the law of sin in my members*

Every Christian has three enemies: the world (external), the flesh (internal), and the devil (infernial). Before we are saved sin dominates, but after we are saved it has no dominion over us (Rom. 6:14). Though sin no longer has dominion over us, it still dwells in us, thus Paul calls it "indwelling sin."

***Galatians 5:17*** *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

Sin outside of us is one thing, but sin living in us is another. We can preach against sin and condemn sin, but can we see the sin inside us? It is possible to become nose blind to odors, and we become nose blind to our own sin. Years ago, there was a house I used to visit a lot and the welcome mat had a drawing of an old farmer and his wife standing at his side and these words written underneath: "One nice person and one old grouch live here.

Paul is not saying that sin dominates his life, but sin is ever present and it keeps him from doing what he really wants to do. It is a law or principle, a disposition or tendency to sin that lives with him. He delights in God's law, but a different law or principle works against him.

William Hendriksen comments: "When Paul reviews his Christian life, he is disgusted with himself. God has done so much for him, but he has done so little in return. Not only that, but the little he has accomplished is tainted with sin. His aim is so much higher than his reach."

### **3. Who can help in this struggle?**

- Vs. 24, a plea for deliverance

Look at Paul's desperate plea for deliverance: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The word "wretched" means miserable. He could not escape. This is a cry of distress, but not of despair.

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me...* We are wretched when God saves us, and we are still wretched after He saves us.

Paul may be speaking here of a punishment that was sometimes given to violent criminal who was bound to the dead body of his victim while it rotted. Paul says, "I'm exhausted in my struggle with sin."

During the Civil War a Union soldier was shot in the arm. His commanding officer saw him and said, "Give me your gun, private, and get to the rear." The private handed over his rifle and moved toward the rear of the battle to seek safety, but after going a short distance he found himself in another skirmish. He went in another direction and found himself in another part of the battle. Finally he went back to the front lines shouting, "Give me back my rifle. There ain't no rear to this battle anywhere."

- Vs. 25, a promise of deliverance

This is our great hope. We have been saved from the penalty of sin (justified). We are being saved from the power of sin (sanctified). We will be saved from the presence of sin (glorified). We live between the already of justification and the not yet of glorification.

### **How Do We Face This Struggle?**

- 1) Know this struggle is common to all believers

If you don't have a struggle with sin, you're probably not a Christian.

- 2) Know this struggle is never easy

Every believer will feel what Paul felt: "O wretched man that I am."

- 3) Know this struggle will soon be over

When death comes or when Christ comes again our struggle with sin will be over. Whenever a Christian is suffers pain for a long time and then death finally comes, we rejoice because their battle is over. It is every bit as sweet when we are finally delivered from our battle with sin. To live is Christ, and to die is gain. Thanks be to God though Jesus Christ our Lord.