

Still Struggling? Victory Now! - Romans 7:7-8:39

"I am a great sinner, but Christ is a great Savior"
 - John Newton, former slave trader and author of Amazing Grace.



Have you ever felt like the Christian life is a journey characterized by three steps forward, two steps back? In Romans 1-3, Paul showed us the lost person; in chapters 4-5, the justified person; in chapter 6, the victorious person. Suddenly, when we come to chapter 7, Paul turns inward and paints a self-portrait so stark and real it catches us off guard. "...What a wretched man that I am!" (7:24) he cries out in frustration over his struggles with sin - struggles we call all understand and identify with.

Paul's Plea: Remove the Thorn (2 Cor. 12:7-9)

I received such wonderful revelations from God, (however) to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.

You wonder why God doesn't remove temptation from your life? You wonder why God doesn't alter your personality? You say things you later regret or do things you later question? Why doesn't God make you more like Jesus? HE IS. HE'S JUST NOT FINISHED YET. Until he is, his grace is sufficient to overcome your flaws.

What to do?

Step 1: TURN YOURSELF IN

Jesus said to them, "Do you hide a lamp under a bowl or under a bed? No! You put the lamp on a lampstand. Everything that is hidden will be made clear and every secret thing will be made known - Mark 4:21-22 (NCV).

If they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers—their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies—then ... I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. (Lev. 26:40-42)

Grace means you don't have to run anymore! Grace means it's finally safe to turn ourselves in.

Step 2: Remember Four Things - Romans 8:31-39

- 1) **God is FOR YOU** "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31)

God **IS** for you. Not "may be for you," not "has been for you," not "was for you," not "would be for you," but "God is for you!" He **IS** for you. Today. Right now! As you hear these words. No need to wait in line or come back tomorrow. He **IS** with you. He could not be closer than he is at this second. His love won't increase if you are better nor be any less if you are worse. He **IS** for you.

- 2) **God PROVIDES for us.** "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32).

Would God teach us to walk just to watch us fall? Would he be nailed to the cross for our sins and then shun us when we ask for help? Come on. Is Scripture teasing us when it reads, "He has put his angels in charge of you to watch over you wherever you go"? (Ps. 91:11)

- 3) **There's grace for the GUILTY.** "Who can accuse the people God has chosen? No one, because God is the One who makes them right. Who can say God's people are guilty? No one, because Christ Jesus died, but he was also raised from the dead, and now he is on God's right side, and is also interceding for us" (Rom. 8:33-34).

David Timms, "We gain nothing by beating ourselves up over failure. We gain everything by forging fresh resolve. The past moment does not have the same value as the present moment. What we have done or not done does not carry the same weight as what we choose to do right now. God lives in the perpetual present. He keeps less score than we do and is unfazed by our inconsistencies." "The Lord's lovingkindness and compassions never fail...They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness" - Lam. 3:22-23.

- 4) **No SEPARATION.** "Can anything separate us from the love Christ has for us?" (Rom. 8:35).

Final Thought

What a gift God has given us. We've won the greatest lottery in the history of humanity, and we didn't even pay for the ticket! Our soul is secure, our salvation guaranteed. Our name is written in the only book that matters. We're only a few sand grains in the hourglass from a tearless, graveless, painless existence.

This is the message of God, the promise of victory now! The declaration Paul preached with unwearied enthusiasm: "What we cannot do, God has done. He justifies us by his grace." Grace is entirely God's. God loving. God stooping. God offering. God caring and God carrying.

This is God's version of grace: "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).