

What to Make Of Our Struggle Against Sin?

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[0:00] Good morning. Please have a seat. Please turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 7. If you are new or visiting, welcome. My name is B.K. Smith. I have the pleasure of being one of the pastors who has the joy of serving here.

I know it's that time of weekend where most people are expecting a sermon about the American rebellion to the south of us on this holiday weekend, but we're in Romans. So we'll save that for next year.

Thank you. Before I get started, let me just ask for God's blessing on this morning's service. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, just thank you for this blood that flows white, makes us white as snow. Lord, you are precious to us. We love you. We love you for the work that you have done for us. Father, I just pray as we dive into this passage that we can begin to get a glimpse of the greater work that you did, not only on the cross in that it saves us, but how it ushered in this new era, this church age where believers who are saved are indwelt by the power of the Holy Spirit. And the ramifications of that are immense, that there's just not enough words to describe how awesome that it is, how great.

[1:51] And it just extends this great love that you have for us. So Father, I just thank you for who you are and who you are creating us to be as a church.

We ask these things in your gracious and holy name. Amen. If you weren't with us a couple of weeks ago, we are in this passage.

So we've been going through Romans. And Romans 7, if you're unfamiliar with Romans 7, is probably one of the most, I don't want to say it's the most debated passage, but it is a passage where theologians have been debating for years what is exactly that Paul is saying in this piece of Scripture.

So what we've made this decision is to go through it almost verse by verse. Last time you were with us, we just did verse 15. And verse 15 is probably one of Paul's most honest statements.

He writes, For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing that I hate.

[3:06] And this morning we're going to continue as he continues in this passage. He says, Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law that is good.

So now it is no longer I who do it, but in sin that dwells within me. I think this is the story that any believer, any single Christian knows of this struggle.

That there's these, we know what it is to want to obey God, but yet we fail. We know what it is to desire holiness, to desire righteousness, yet we stumble.

And we know what it is to walk away from this moment wondering, Why did I do that? What was going through my head?

I think any believer or every believer has had that experience. And I think many people who do not know Christ, but who are, for lack of a better word, seeking after Christ, have had those thoughts in their head.

[4:18] Why did I just do what I did? So this is what Paul is unpacking before us. You see, Paul here is not describing an occasional mistake.

Paul, in this passage, is exposing this deep conflict which exists in every believer. Last sermon, we looked at three realities of the Christian life.

The first was, we have this contradiction in ourselves. We often struggle to make sense of our own actions. Can anybody relate to that?

Like, we do something, but we struggle to understand, why did I do that? Because I didn't really want to do that, but I ended up doing that. Then within that, we find out we have this divided will.

What we truly desire to do and what we actually do are sometimes so painfully different. And third, we understand that we have this hatred of sin.

[5 : 24] We hate the things that we've done. And the lesson was that that's a mark of God's work, and a mark of God's work is not defined that we do not struggle.

It's that we cannot make peace with our sin. The fact is, we grieve sin, we hate sin, we long to be free from sin.

Amen? But we end up with this important question that Paul's going to answer for us this morning. If Paul loves righteousness, if Paul hates his sin, if Paul longs to obey God, then what does that tell us about God's law?

Is the law the problem? Is God's standard somehow unrealistic? Does Paul's failure prove that the law itself is somewhat defective?

And these are the questions that Paul anticipates. And I want you to notice in verse 16 how quickly he answers these anticipated questions.

[6 : 33] Now, if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law. That is good. So we see here that Paul refuses to blame God's law.

What Paul is actually saying here, we're going to expand upon it this morning, he goes, my very struggle proves that I agree with God.

Every time I hate my sin, I'm literally saying I agree with God. Every time I grieve my failure or my sin, I'm saying I agree with God.

And every time I long to obey, I'm saying I agree with God. And when we say that we agree with God, we're actually confessing that God's standard, the law is good.

That God's standard, the law is right. So the problem obviously isn't the law. The problem must be something else.

[7 : 33] And in verse 17, Paul finally names the real enemy. The real enemy is not our bad habits. The real enemy is not our lack of discipline.

The real enemy is not our insufficient effort. Our enemy is clearly named in verse 17. It is the sin that dwells within me.

The sin that dwells within me. In other words, in dwelling sin. And if you remember, Paul in these passages talks specifically about sin being a power.

It's not just an action, but it is a power that works against us. And here's the thing. If we do not understand this enemy, we will spend the rest of our lives fighting the wrong battle.

That's why you're going to meet people who get so caught up in trying to follow the law that they're going to be legalistic. They want to obey every aspect of the law, thinking that that somehow is going to bring them freedom.

[8 : 45] Or you're going to find some people that want to do what's right. So when they're going to say, I've got bad habits, I've got to get good habits, I've got to get really disciplined, I've got to get really into this.

And what happens is they end up fighting their own issues rather than understanding the true enemy. So this morning I want to look at two remarkable truths from these two verses.

The first truth is that our struggle confirms that God's law is good. That God's law is good. The fact that we struggle to obey, we're going to see as a good thing.

The second truth is that our struggle exposes the presence of indwelling sin. The fact that we're struggling with this life exposes the presence of indwelling sin.

And my point from all this is only when we understand both of these truths are we truly prepared for the glorious hope that Paul brings us in chapter 8.

[9 : 56] So let's just expand on the first truth. Our struggle confirms that God's law is good. This is point 1, Romans 7, 16. It says, now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law.

That is good. For the last several verses, Paul has been talking about his failures, his frustration, his contradiction, and his struggle. And suddenly in verse 16, he turns the spotlight back onto the law. Because like I said, Paul knows what people are thinking. If the law exposes sin, if the law stirs up conflict, if the law leads to frustration, then maybe the law is the problem.

Well, Paul quickly says that is absolutely not true. In fact, the opposite is true. And I want you to see Paul's logic here.

Notice he says, if I do what I do not want. What Paul is saying here is that if I find myself grieving over my disobedience, if I find myself frustrated by my failure, if I find myself hating the very thing I

have done, then something important is happening within me.

[11:09] And that important thing is, I'm actually agreeing with the law. That word agree means I concur. I consent.

I take its side. I affirm its judgment. Paul effectively is saying the law is right. The verdict of the law is correct.

It is good. God's standards are good, and the law's judgment of my behavior are 100% accurate. When we...

Sorry about that. When we make that decision to follow Christ, it begins with repentance. It's a change of mind which leads to a change of action.

It's, I'm going this way, I think this way, I'm confronted with God's truth, and there's a 180 degree turn. When we repent, one author says, have you ever noticed that repentance is really taking God's side in the argument against yourself?

[12:24] Right? It's taking God's side in the argument against yourself. When David finally confessed his sin in Bathsheba, it's interesting.

You'll see that he doesn't argue. He doesn't negotiate. He didn't defend himself. Instead, he simply says, against you, you only have I sinned. See, this is what repentance does.

When we're repentant, we stop arguing with God. When we repent, we stop making excuses. We stop explaining away sin.

Repentance says, God is right, I am wrong. This is the principle we actually use when we're dealing with church discipline issues. When we're working with someone, and you want to see how truly repentant someone is, the first thing is, do they resist it?

Do they make excuses? Do they try to blame? You know, you didn't handle that right. You didn't communicate with me clearly. When that happens, from a church repentance point of view, discipline point of view, as elders, when we're dealing with that type of thing, that's a clear sign that they're not truly repentant.

[13:40] That's something that resonates. This isn't going to go very well, because there's these excuses for this behavior that they know has been ungodly. You see, Paul's grief over sin proves that he agrees with God's assessment of sin.

Doug Moo, a writer of one of the major commentaries on Romans, says, The very fact that Paul has a will that conflicts with the evil actually done shows that there is a part of his person that acknowledges the just demands of God's law.

So that conflict we have, that frustration, that sorrow, is all evidence for the law. And every time Paul hates his disobedience, he's literally affirming that the law is right.

It is just. I think if there's a lesson that we are to understand from Romans 7, is that the law never loses.

Ever. When the law says, You shall have no other gods before me, it is right. When the law says, You shall not covet, it is right.

[15:07] When the law says, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, it is right. So when the law exposes our pride, our lust, our selfishness, our unbelief, guess what?

It is right. It is right. It is never wrong. And here's the thing. The law never lowers God's standard to make us feel any better.

It simply tells us the truth. And this is why sinners naturally resist it. Not only does the law refuse to flatter us, the law refuses to participate in our self-deception.

The law keeps saying, This is God's standard. This is God's holiness. This is God's righteousness. And every time we fail, the law is vindicated once again.

Now, what does this tell us? It tells us that the problem is not the standard.

[16:21] And you guys know this truth more so in this generation than any other. The important, because our culture has adopted a completely different solution, right?

When we don't meet the standard as a culture, what do we do? We lower the standard. We lower the expectations. We redefine the terms. We adjust the rules.

We move the goalposts. Instead, we've seen this in our culture, this pattern in recent years, where there's been major attempts to adjust the physical standards of police officers, firefighters, and those who serve in the military.

We want them in. They're not making the cut. What do we do? We lower the standards. And it was interesting. I was just reading on some of the problems that this has created.

And instead of actually keeping the standards, what they should have done is provide better training or raise the level of preparation. In fact, one major police department facing recruitment shortfalls modified its physical job standard test.

[17 : 38] They were talking about they had to scale a six-foot wall, but now they have to scale a three-foot chain fence just to kind of make it easier. And they also extended the time allowed to complete the entire course by nearly a full minute.

The question is, did the criminals on the street somehow become weaker? Did the dangers of the job decrease?

Absolutely not. What's interesting is that the firefighting departments have been able to resist this to a greater degree than the police because no one ever wants that story of a firefighter being in a building trying to carry someone down that they can't carry down.

That's just plain dangerous. And of course, it's the same thing in the military. So what happens is this pattern in our culture is consistent.

If you can't meet the standard, then you have to lower the standard. Well, praise God, His law does not work that way.

[18 : 51] Amen? Amen. It's always honest with ourself. It reveals who we are. Now, why does this matter? In fact, before I answer that question, it has actually forced our culture to embrace what they know to be wrong.

And that's how the world handles failure. God never says, well, let's just redefine sin, which we know many churches will try to do that.

Instead, God leaves the standard exactly where it has always been. Perfect holiness. Perfect holiness. Perfect righteousness. Perfect obedience.

And every time we fall short, the problem is not the standard. The problem is us. As we've already seen, the law is spiritual, holy, righteous, good.

So the problem has to be somewhere else. Now, why does this matter? And when I use the example of legalism, it's because many people who are legalistic believes if that we have more rules, more accountability, more discipline, more effort, we will finally be able to meet that standard.

[20 : 19] We could finally become what God requires. But here's the thing. The law was never designed to save. The law was never designed to transform.

The law wasn't even designed to empower. The law is simply the mirror and the truth test before us. That's all it is.

This past week, my wife bought me a new shower mirror. And I had this old one. It's been up there. And she's, you know, got rid of it, got me a new one. But she got me a more powerful one.

She got me the kind that when you turn it around, it's like that big magnifying glass, right? And you can only really look at it and see the nose hairs in your nose, right? It's like you look in there and it's like, man, I'm disgusting.

Like, I can never go out in public looking like this, right? But that's kind of what the law does. It's honest with you. You see, one mark of spiritual maturity is that we stop arguing with God's verdict.

[21 : 33] Mature believers know God's word is always right. Mature believers do not need to defend themselves, explain themselves, or justify themselves.

When someone is mature in Christ, they've learned to agree with God, to confess quickly, to repent honestly, to simply acknowledge God is right, His word is right, His law is right, and the standards are right.

And at this point of this passage, this is where Paul stands. His struggle does not diminish the law. His struggle, in fact, magnifies the law, because every failure confirms that God's standard is good. Amen? That's something to be praised, my friends. Except the magnifying mirrors. But this immediately creates another question.

Paul agrees with the law. If Paul loves what is good, if Paul hates what is evil, if God's law is vindicated, then why do I still struggle?

[22 : 51] What is the source of the problem located in? And Paul's answer is startling.

Verse 17, he says, So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. Now Paul literally identifies the real enemy.

It's not the law. It's not God. It's not the standard. But the sin that still resides within me. And this brings us to our second truth.

The struggle, our struggle, exposes the presence of indwelling sin. Now what's interesting is when we first read this verse, it sounds somewhat shocking.

In fact, if we're not careful, it can sound like Paul is making this grand excuse. It wasn't me. It was the sin. Right? It wasn't me. I couldn't help it.

[23 : 58] Sin made me do it. And some people wrongly go to this passage, say, It wasn't me, man. I didn't steal the car. Officer, it was the indwelling sin in me that stole the car.

Right? But that's not what Paul means. Paul is not avoiding responsibility. He's not blaming someone else. He's not saying, Look, the devil made me do it. Paul at no point is excusing his behavior.

In fact, throughout Romans, Paul has repeatedly held people responsible for their actions. So whatever this verse means, it cannot mean that Paul is denying personal accountability.

So the question is, What does Paul mean? That's what we're going to look at. Now, I want you to see Paul's logic. Notice in verse 15, I do the very thing I hate.

Verse 16, I agree with the law that it is good. Now, verse 17 begins with, So now. And if you're understanding with logic, he's building us.

[25 : 01] He's forming a conclusion. He's reasoning. He's connecting the dots. And his argument goes like this. If I genuinely desire what is good, if I genuinely hate what is evil, if I genuinely agree with God's law, then how do I explain the fact that I still do what I hate?

Paul's essentially saying there's got to be something deeper here. There must be another power operating within me. And Paul identifies that enemy as sin that dwells within me.

Now, if you remember from a few sermons ago, one of the biggest debates regarding this section of Scripture is, Who is Paul talking about? When he says, I, is that him?

Is that someone else? Is that pre-conversion Paul? Or is it Paul now? Now, but I don't want you to get too caught up in that argument, but we need to understand that there is a distinction that Paul is making.

He's not making a distinction between two people, not between good Paul and bad Paul. One commentator describes it this way. Paul distinguishes between his authentic self, which is the self that loves God's law, and the indwelling sin that continues to frustrate that desire.

[26 : 24] Think about what Paul has already told us. He's already told us he wants righteousness. He loves God's standard. He hates evil. He agrees with the law.

That is the direction of his heart. That is the orientation of his inner man. But there's still this other reality. Sin remains present.

Now, notice he doesn't say sin is reigning. Does not say sin is ruling. He does not say that sin is enthroned. He's simply saying that sin is present.

And not only is it present, it's actively resisting everything God is doing. John MacArthur uses a great word picture here.

He says that after salvation, sin becomes like a deposed and exiled ruler. Right? The king has been overthrown.

[27 : 24] The evil king has been overthrown. His throne has been taken. His authority has been broken. His kingdom has been conquered. But he's not disappeared. Right?

He still launches attacks. He still causes trouble. He still seeks influence. He still creates chaos. What's interesting, as many of you know, or some of you may know, I had another career before I arrived here.

I worked with CSIS. And one of my areas of speciality was I became an expert in dealing with state-sponsored terrorism. And what that means is it's when a nation supports terrorist activities. And my main focus at that time was Iraq. If you guys remember Saddam Hussein, you know, he was a tyrant. And Saddam used to control death squads, literally sending them out to kill people. They used to be, most of them used to be from prominent families or those who had somewhat political or possible military power. So if you were a general that escaped Iraq and he knew you didn't like him, he was going to try to bump you off.

[28 : 35] So it was interesting. In April of 2003, the U.S. and coalition forces finally went into Baghdad. I actually have a friend who sent me his boots because he was the first marine unit to actually lay foot in Baghdad because he knew of my work.

We finally got in. But what's interesting is Saddam escaped. And he ended up not getting captured until December. But even though the Americans and the coalition forces were ruling, there was still

attacks, there was still bombings, there was still fear from the people.

And he says, people still feared Saddam. Even though we controlled Baghdad, the capital, our army was all in there, they still feared him until he finally got caught.

He ended up getting caught in a city called Decreet, which was his hometown. That's a lot like sin. Right? He's not ruling, but he's still causing problems.

Still bombing things in your heart. He's exposing you to attacks. He's creating these fears. And this is how sin operates in the Christian.

[29 : 51] The fact is, Jesus Christ is on the throne. Amen? But oftentimes, we give in to the attacks of Satan. The old tyrant still fights, hoping to disrupt what he can until his absolute final destruction.

See, Romans 6 has already told us that sin is no longer our master, no longer our rulers, no longer our king, it's no longer our lord. But sin has not surrendered quietly.

Continues to resist, continues to attack, and it continues to wage war. And every believer knows something about that battle, right? So, there's an interesting thing, and Christians are so often surprised.

One of the great surprises of the Christian life is discovering that conversion does not eliminate the conflict. Right? If I truly surrender to Jesus, all temptation will vanish.

Oh, how we wish. If I truly trust Christ, sinful desires will disappear. Oh, how I wish.

[31 : 09] If I truly grow spiritually, the war will end. Oh, how I wish. But that is not what Scripture teaches.

In many ways, conversion intensifies the awareness of the battle, in fact. You see, think of it this way. Before you were saved, before Christ came into your life, sin was largely unopposed.

Who cares, right? Before Christ, the flesh ruled uncontested. Before Christ, we always surrendered. But now that we're in Christ, sin encounters resistance. The Spirit opposes sin, and now there is war.

And war is exactly the language Paul will use later in this chapter. And this answers the question, why the law doesn't save us.

[32 : 20] Notice how Paul brings this back to his bigger argument. Simply, why can't the law solve the problem? Because the problem is never about information.

It's not ignorance. It's not lack of standards. The problem is indwelling sin. And the law exposes it. The law reveals it.

The law diagnoses it. The law condemns it. But honestly, the law cannot remove it. When I look into that ugly magnifying glass mirror, it doesn't pluck all my ugly hairs or fill out all the bad complexion I might have.

It just shows me what is true. And that's why when we're here in Romans 7, we should be left feeling somewhat uncomfortable.

Because Paul wants us to feel the inadequacy of the law. Paul wants us to feel the weakness of self-effort. Paul wants us to feel the depth of the problem.

[33 : 34] Because only then will we appreciate the greatness of God's solution. Remember who Paul is writing this to? A church made up of Jews and Gentiles, but founded by Jewish people who heard the gospel, saw the resurrected Christ in Jerusalem, went back to Rome, shared this gospel, and this issue plagued the church for many of the first years.

And the question was, how Jewish does one have to be to be Christian? How much of the law do I have to make in my life to be Christian? And Paul is simply saying, you don't need the law, you need Jesus.

See, I hope you don't miss the hope that is hidden in this verse. Paul is acknowledging the presence of sin, but he's also revealing something else. There is now an I that hates the sin.

There is now an I that loves God's law. There is now an I that desires righteousness, and there is now an I that agrees with God.

And before Jesus came along, that did not exist. Something has changed. Something new has been created. And that is why we face the battle that we do.

[35 : 02] God has begun a work that sin can no longer dominate. So the question you should be asking yourselves is where does this leave us?

We know that Paul has exposed five realities. Last sermon, we looked at the first three. We get confused over our actions.

That's the truth. We have divided desires. That's the truth. We hate the sin that we commit.

That's the truth. Yet, God's law is good. Amen? And two, there is a presence of indwelling sin. And that leads us to one unavoidable conclusion. The problem is deeper than our behavior, our discipline, and our effort.

[36 : 06] And the law can expose the problem, but only Jesus Christ can deliver us from the problem. So let me bring this back.

Paul is kind of down the end of the Wizard of Oz, right? When they pull back the curtain, you know who is the one that's been operating behind the scenes, this indwelling sin.

We discovered a man who knows what is right, wants what is right, loves what is right, hates what is wrong, agrees with God's law, yet still himself is struggling.

He still sees himself failing. He finds himself battling. And like we said, the problem isn't ignorance, lack of information. Our God's standards are somewhat unclear.

The law hasn't failed us. The problem is so much deeper than all of that. It's indwelling sin. And it's a nature that continues to wage war against everything that God is doing to us.

[37 : 21] But if there's something that Romans 7 teaches, and if you can just grab one point, this is the point. The flesh cannot fix the flesh.

You get me on that? The fat flesh cannot fix the flesh. The flesh cannot heal itself. The flesh cannot transform itself. The flesh cannot sanctify itself.

The flesh cannot produce the righteousness that God requires. And that is why every self-improvement version of Christianity eventually fails, because sooner or later, every one of us discovers the same thing Paul discovered.

I cannot become holy by trying harder. Now, don't misunderstand me here. I'm not saying effort doesn't matter.

I'm not saying obedience doesn't matter. I'm not saying discipline doesn't matter, because the fact is, the Christian life absolutely involves effort.

[38 : 24] We've said from this pulpit many times, you don't drift towards holiness. But effort is not the source of our transformation.

You with me on that? Our effort is not the source. The source is Jesus Christ. The source is the Spirit. The source is the grace of God at work within us.

And that's exactly what Paul is preparing for us to see. Because Romans 7 is intentionally meant to be frustrating. To leave us unsettled, uncomfortable, feeling the weight of the battle.

To ask why. Because God is driving us toward a conclusion. The confession that every believer eventually must make, and it is simply this, I can't do this on my own.

I can't do this on my own. I can't do this on my own. And here's the thing. That's not failure. This is what's called the beginning of spiritual maturity.

[39 : 31] Spiritual maturity begins with saying, I cannot do this on my own. One of the greatest moments in the Christian life is when we stop pretending we are stronger than we are.

When we stop trusting our discipline. When we stop trusting our willpower. When we stop trusting our performance. I remember this young fool.

His name was B.K. Smith. He was in his 20s. I can handle that temptation. I can handle that. No problem, man. I'm strong. I love my Lord.

I love Jesus. I hate all that stuff. Then my life feels like a car wreck because I trusted my discipline, willpower, and performance rather than trusting on the true words of Jesus Christ.

See, maturity begins when we stop believing that one more rule, one more plan, one more promise, one more burst of determination is finally going to fix us.

[40 : 35] Instead, we begin to depend upon Christ. I really think many Christians spend years trying to be their own Holy Spirit.

Trying to manufacture holiness. Trying to produce transformation. Trying to create what only God can create. And how do you know if you're one of those people?

There's usually a telltale sign. You start to examine the people around you, too. You start holding them to the standard you hold. And you start judging them on your standard.

And the result is almost always one of two things. One, pride. Or two, despair.

Pride happens when you think you're succeeding. And despair happens when you realize you're not. But neither one of those things produces life.

[41 : 40] Neither one produces freedom. Neither one produces joy. Simply because neither one is the gospel. The gospel tells us quite clearly that Jesus did for us what we could never do for

ourselves.

And Christ continues to do in us what we could never accomplish on our own. Now, before I close today's sermon, I want to speak to two different groups of people.

First, there's the discouraged group. You hear a passage like this, and you all think about your failure. Sometimes it's the sins you still battle, the temptations you face, and the areas where you still struggle, and you wonder, am I ever going to change, Lord?

Lord, listen carefully. The presence of the battle is not necessarily evidence that God has abandoned you.

Because you're crying in that struggle, where are you, God? You must not be here. But He is. And the evidence of that is because you're having that battle.

[42 : 54] Many cases, that battle itself is evidence that God is at work in you. The fact that you hate your sin, the fact that you grieve over it, the fact that you long for righteousness, the fact that you feel the conflict.

My friends, those are not signs of spiritual death. Those are signs of spiritual life. Don't lose heart. The truth is, God's not finished with you. The reason you're in this trial is because God is growing you to be the person that He wants you to be.

Not who you think you should be, but who He wants you to be. And then there are others who are possibly here this morning who feel entirely comfortable with their sin.

There's no conflict. There's no grief. There's no repentance. There's no hatred of evil. No desire for holiness. No concern for God's standard. And if that's you, this passage should deeply concern you.

[44 : 10] Because the person Paul describes is a fighter. The person Paul describes hates the evil, agrees with God's law, and describes himself or herself as wanting righteousness.

If none of that is true of you, then your greatest need is not a better plan. Your greatest need is a new heart.

You need Christ. In fact, the Bible talks about that we have this heart of stone without God, and that we literally need God to take that heart of stone out and put in a heart of flesh, a heart that loves the things of God, a heart that is renewed, a heart that is forgiven.

You see, Romans 7 is not trying to leave us in defeat. Romans 7 is preparing us for deliverance. It's preparing us for the triumphant declaration that is soon to be coming. Because if after all the frustration, the struggle, the failure, the conflict, Paul is going to lead us into one of the greatest chapters in all of Scripture.

[45 : 30] chapter where the Holy Spirit appears again and again and again and a chapter that begins with these glorious words, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Jesus Christ.

And this is where hope has to be. Not in ourselves, not in our performance, not in our determination or our ability, but simply in Jesus Christ.

Because He's the only one who saves us, keeps us, and continues to work transforming us. And the one who will one day finish the work He began.

Amen? Let's pray. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, Father, we love you. we thank you for this struggle. We thank you for this struggle and the law that reveals to us where we are at. And we don't even need to know the Ten Commandments. Romans 1 actually talks about the law of God is written on every man's heart and that our conscience itself attests against us.

[46 : 45] That naturally, we know what is true. Father, if there's someone here who is struggling with what the Bible calls a seared conscience, and that is a conscience that of someone who gets so into sin and they continually do this sin, they no longer have any feelings toward it.

It's like a nerve ending that's been cauterized and therefore, there's no pain reception going on. And they somewhat fool themselves that, hey, everything's okay, everything's okay.

Father, we give thanks for your law because it never changes. And no matter how much we may cauterize our feelings, that is not the determinant of what is right or wrong.

Your law is. And it's not even about being right or wrong, Lord. It's about being right with you, our creator, our sustainer, to know that we can have harmony with the creator of this universe, the one who created the beautiful mountains and the wonderful ocean that meet together here in Squamish. Squamish. Your love for us is screaming out to people. So, Father, I ask these people here to take heart in the battle, to not grow weary, to give praise that they still struggle against sin.

[48:34] May you continue to strengthen them. And this is this wonderful thing about the church. We're not meant to struggle on our own. We're to be here together.

The reason why we've even had some life experiences is so we can even relate to one another, love one another, to understand where one another is coming from. And that we can share that this is how I trusted God in this part of my life.

That I no longer need to be identified with the sin that I committed and I now identify with the Christ who saved me. Jesus, we love you and as the beginning of Romans says that we are actually called saints.

Those who are known by you. Never are we called sinners. So, Father, we thank you for Paul's honesty in this passage.

an honesty that describes ourselves so well in our battle. And I pray that you continue to strengthen us and grow us at a church as we willing submit these issues and battles that we have.

[50:01] May we not only confess to one another our sins that we commit against one another, but that we do seek wisdom, that we seek maturity and the maturity of those who've walked longer in the word so that we can be encouraged in the battle that we fight.

We ask these things in your most holy and heavenly name. Amen.