

Uncharted Territory: Taking Life Where You've Never Been

Week One: *The Cycle We Cannot Seem to Break*

We live in a perpetual up-and-down, back-and-forth, wishy-washy life of sin and holiness; good and bad; victorious and defeated. But the Gospel promises something entirely different. **Romans 7:25** demonstrates that we can be determined in our mind to follow God, but in our flesh be a slave to sin; **Romans 8:1** tells us we are freed from the "punitive sentence" (*condemnation*) of this slavery as we walk in Christ and choose to not walk after the flesh.

This week, make a commitment to *invest four blocks of time* to meditate on God's Word slowly and carefully, to reflect on the internal leanings of your own heart, and surrender to God for His help.

Day One: How Bad is the Problem?

Read slowly and carefully meditate upon: **Romans 7:15-25**

Reflect: Paul admitted an ongoing struggle to act how he truly desired—in alignment with the Law of God. He called himself a “wretched man” because of his up and down behavior and used the horrible imagery of a dead body strapped to him to from which he needed to be rescued.

- *In what ways do I relate to Paul? In what ways am I different?*
- *What are the sins I tend towards?*
- *How do I feel about myself when I sin? Is it healthy or unhealthy to feel that way?*

Pray: *God, I confess to you that I fall short in so many ways. I desire to do good; you know that. I thank you for your mercy and love for me. I receive your forgiveness over my sins. I ask you to reveal your understanding of me, and to help me see myself through your eyes of love, forgiveness, mercy, and grace. In Jesus' name!* (**ALSO:** Consider praying **Psalm 51** as your own prayer to God!)

Day Two: What is the Problem?

Read slowly and carefully meditate upon: **Romans 7:17 & 20;**
James 1:13-15

Reflect: **Romans 7** describes sin as a unique entity that is operating somewhat independently of the desires and choices of my mind. **James 1** suggests that as I yield to evil desires, sin is conceived—as if it were someone or something external (or additional to us).

- *In what ways do I see sin pressing in upon me from outside my own desires?*
- *In my sin, what is my part (what have I created or chosen) vs. what is external to me?*
- *How does it affect my attempts to battle sin if some part of the battle lies outside of myself?*

Pray: *God, please help me to recognize the external forces of sin that are at work against me. Search my heart, O God, and reveal to me the places in my heart where I harbor evil desire that are my own internal issue. Help me be honest with myself and you as to why those desires have a place within me. And I ask you to rescue me as you promise in Romans 7:24-25. In Jesus' name!* (**ALSO:** Consider praying **Psalm 139:23-24** as your own prayer to God!)

Day Three: What is the Solution?

Read slowly and carefully meditate upon: **Romans 7:25-8:11**

Reflect: Paul is offering a two-part solution that is entirely rooted in Jesus. Jesus is the one who rescues us, but we must recognize the battle between our mind (volition) and our flesh (sinful nature). We also must choose to not “walk about” with the flesh (see your Bible's footnote about the second part of **Romans 8:1**).

- *Where do I see myself “walking about” with my flesh? Where is the flesh my friend?*
- *Do I believe that the Holy Spirit has truly released me from the deadness that comes from sin? Why or why not?*

- *How could I trust that the Holy Spirit is a better friend to me in my times of emotional need?*

Pray: *God, help me recognize the difference between my flesh and your Spirit. Help me to see where I am turning to and depending on natural, sinful reactions to be my comfort instead of leaning upon you. Reveal to me the leading of your Holy Spirit in all my stress points, discomforts, and temptations. In Jesus' name!* **(ALSO:** Consider praying **Psalm 34:1-10, 17-18** as your own prayer to God!)

Day Four: Am I Ready to Pivot?

Read slowly and carefully meditate upon: **James 1:12-25**

Reflect: **James 1** demonstrates that we have certain responsibilities for our own victory over sin. Perseverance (**1:12**); owning the root of our own desires (**1:14**); speed to listen and slowness to anger (**1:19-20**); humbly accepting the Word planted in us (**1:21**); and doing what the Word says (**1:22**) are all roles we must play to prevent the conceiving of sin (**1:15**).

- *Of the responsibilities listed above, which ones am I most attentive to, and which am I least attentive to? Why?*
- *What could I commit to in my daily life that would begin to increase my attentiveness to these qualities and actions?*
- *Are there adjustments to my daily habits and schedules I need to make?*
- *Am I committed in faith to the authority and necessity of God's Word to influence my every thought and action? Why or why not?*

Pray: *God, help me be attentive to your Word and the place it has inside my heart and mind. Reveal to me where I doubt the importance of your Word. Reveal to me where I could (and should) shift my priorities to be more attentive to your Word. Shift my character; O God, to slow down, to listen, to press in, to persevere. I need your help!! In Jesus' name!* **(ALSO:** Consider praying **Psalm 119:9-24** as your own prayer to God!)

NOTES:

- *What is God showing me in His Word this week?*