

IN CHRIST

Have you ever felt like you just aren't good enough? You aren't the person you wanted to be for your family. You failed to show up for a friend like you'd hoped. You wanted your house to be clean at the end of the day, but it looks worse than when you started. You thought your words would encourage, but they ended up offending.

Some of the most comforting words in scripture to me come from Romans 7 when Paul laments over his inability to do what he knows is right.

“For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.”

-Romans 7:15-25

The Apostle Paul, the writer of most of the New Testament, the one whom God so abruptly and radically brought to himself on the way to Damascus, who was imprisoned and beaten and ultimately martyred for his faith in Christ—this same Paul just couldn't “get it together” and he goes on and on about it for 10 verses?!

Unbelievable.

I feel a little guilty for taking comfort at Paul's expense, but what a relief to know that I am not alone in my feelings of inadequacy and frustration! I have the grandest plans, the purest intentions, but I'll probably mess them up... if I try to carry them out in my own strength. I can totally relate to Paul here.

But this passage doesn't simply give me a sense of validation for my weaknesses. Paul isn't just complaining. Notice that verse 18 says, “I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out”. And in verses 24-25, “...Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

This passage tells me the truth that (1) I can't follow God's ways on my own and (2) only Jesus can deliver me from my failings. Paul is acknowledging his weakness & then pointing to the Savior, who equips us and empowers us to do what is right while we are stuck in our fallen, sinful bodies.

And so, we are daily met with our sinful nature even when we have the best of intentions. Do we grit our teeth, plant our feet, and tell ourselves we can handle it on our own? Well, we might do that, but it will ultimately fail us. Instead, we must recognize our weakness and look to the Savior for His strength. & even when we fall short (or, let's be honest, do the *opposite* of what we were hoping to do), He uses those failures to teach and shape and further sanctify us.

And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention those glorious next words of Romans 8. Our bibles separate it into a new chapter, but these thoughts flowed freely from Paul's mind which was saturated in gospel truth: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

As you are confronted with your own weakness & failures, remember that you are in Christ & there is no condemnation for you, dear sister. As one of my favorite authors, Abbey Wedgeworth says, “You can ride that truth all the way to the throne of grace.” Today, may his strength be made perfect in your weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

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