



DOING WHAT I DON'T WANT TO DO

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As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

Romans 7:17-20

I had always thought I was such a good person, doing my best to serve God. Obeying his leading. Writing prayers every day in my journal. Loving others in the way God taught me to

love. All in all, I thought I followed Christ quite well. I did not think of myself as a particularly evil person.

And yet, sometimes I do some pretty bad things that I wish I could take back.

I had always thought that when you sinned, you fully knew what you were doing. But the scary thing is, so often you sin without realizing it. Then, before you know it, the damage is done, and you've hurt someone. You feel bad, filled with shame, left wondering if there's any good left in you at all.

Have you ever said, "I'll never do that again" and then you do it anyway? Or made a promise and then break it? That's what it is to be human. It's all part of the human experience. As followers of Christ, we can understand what Paul said in verse 19: *For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.*

Often, I use my mental health problems as an excuse. "It was nothing I could have helped," I might think. "It's not my fault, only a symptom of my illness." But while illness can contribute to it, everyone wrestles with sin. Even Christians.

Why do we have such a struggle? Paul tells us in verse 17: it is *"no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me."* Sin dwelt inside Paul and it dwells in every one of us. As long as we live, the struggle against sin will go on. We try to live up to what we know God wants us to be, but find we have little control.

The apostle Paul, a most godly man, admits to the struggle he has within his own soul. We who have sinned and need healing can look to Paul's admission and take it as our example for the first step we need to take. The people who are made better by the power of God are those who are not ashamed to admit their weaknesses, failures, and struggles.

Our struggles with sin don't mean we are bad. In fact, as we struggle, we will find ourselves turning to God more than we otherwise would, leaving our self-reliance behind. We will realize what it means to trust in God and God alone.

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