

Overview

What does it mean to be good? What does it mean to be a good Christian? Is your goodness defined by what you do and don't do? These are just some questions to think about as we study the book of Romans. In Romans 7 Paul is very open and honest about the internal struggle going on inside of him. He does not question his position in Christ, but he does go to great lengths to express the wrestling with sin going on within. He keeps finding himself doing the very things he doesn't want to do and not doing the things he wants to do. If the Apostle Paul is having this struggle then it shouldn't come as a surprise this internal war wages in every Christian. It is too easy to define Christianity as a list of does and don'ts. This definition will only lead to a life burdened down by shame and guilt. Anyone who finds themselves on the losing side of sin will eventually just give up because they don't feel good enough to belong to Christ or go to church. In Romans 8:1 Paul defines everyone's position in Christ when he said: "therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." An eternal victory doesn't mean there won't be an internal struggle. Paul explains in Romans 5 this sinful struggle is because of the sinful nature that drives everyone to please their own desires. If Christ nailed all of our sins on the cross then why do Christians still struggle? Christ didn't come to just make good people. He didn't die on the cross so everyone can follow a list of does and don'ts. Ephesians 2:4-5 reads: ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved." Christ came to make people who were once spiritually dead now alive in Him. This new life comes with an intense desire to serve God and not just yourself. It doesn't just eliminate the sinful nature and that is where the struggle occurs. Christians have been given a position of victory, but still have the choice to choose sin. This is why the words of Paul in Romans 7 resonate with believers as much today as they did 2,000 years ago. As long as we are on this side of glory everyone will have an internal struggle. This is summarized in Romans 7:18 which reads: ¹⁸"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."

Bible Study: Romans 7:15-20

1. Define a sinful nature. What does it mean to have a sinful nature?
2. How would you describe a mature Christian? When do you know if you have become a mature Christian?
3. Read Galatians 5:17. Discuss as a group the struggle between living a spiritual life and the constant temptation of sinful desires. How do you grow to the point that the desires of the Spirit are stronger than the desires of the flesh?
4. Is Paul writing this passage from the position of a mature Christian or is he explaining a pre-Christian struggle with sin?
5. How would you describe to a new believer that coming to Christ doesn't necessarily mean their old temptations will just instantly be gone? Take some time to define in a way a new believer would understand the difference between justification, sanctification, and glorification.
6. How do you deal with someone who keeps falling into sin and uses the excuse that it is okay because the Apostle Paul had the same problem: Romans 7?

7. Read James 1:13-15. Besides prayer and Bible reading, how can a believer remain strong against temptation?