

Sunday, July 12, 2026

When in Romans part 20: Romans 7:13-25

The War Within: Moving from Pride to Freedom Sermon Summary

This convicting message confronts one of the most frustrating realities of the Christian walk: the internal war between our desire for righteousness and our pull toward sin—what Pastor Chris affectionately called "**the do-dos**" based on Paul's circular wrestling match with his own choices. Drawing from **Romans 7:13-25**, we are invited into Paul's deeply raw confession that even when we delight in God's law, evil wages a war within us. As Pastor Chris plainly put it: *"I want to do good, but evil is always there. That is the harsh reality of the world we live in and the harsh reality of our battle against sin and against Satan and even against our own flesh."*

Pastor Chris illustrated the core roadblock to our freedom through a stubborn, relatable story: trying to strain, snap ropes, and almost rip the bumper off his tiny car trying to drag a massive fallen tree out of his driveway, all while ignoring a nearby neighbor who had a big truck and a chainsaw. This is the essence of pride. Pride convinces us that we must do it ourselves. When we look in the mirror and see our past failures, we often see wretchedness and attempt to hide. But as **James 4:6** reminds us, God opposes the proud, but pours out grace on the humble.

The sermon shattered the myth that spiritual maturity means perfection. *"Mature Christians are sometimes out of control,"* Pastor Chris shared. *"They're out of control in their mind, they're out of control in their attitude, or they're out of control in a significant sin kind of setting where they're stuck in a cycle of sin."* The defining mark of maturity is not that they never fall, but that they refuse to live for months and months out of control. They recognize that *"asking for help is a sign of strength. Not asking for help is a sign of weakness."*

Paul actually ends Romans 7 on a **downbeat**, noting that with his flesh he serves the law of sin. But Pastor Chris reminded us that this isn't the end of the story—it's just a transition into the upcoming triumph of Romans 8. We must recognize our baseline limitations: *"You can't do what God does, and God won't do what you need to. In this case, this is a 'I can't do it, God help me,' so that's a God thing."*

To wage this war long-term, Pastor Chris detailed a practical blueprint for ongoing holiness:

1. **Learn Yourself:** Study what brings you joy and do more of it, but also identify your "triggers"—like how his own ADHD makes boredom a dangerous trigger.
2. **Learn Your Enemy:** Stay alert to the schemes of the ruler of the kingdom of the air (**Ephesians 2:1-2**), refusing to play games with the sins the world glorifies.
3. **Practice Real Repentance:** Rejecting the cheap, cultural "say you're sorry" mask, real repentance requires a full U-turn: admitting you're wrong, expressing godly remorse, committing to change, and asking forgiveness.

4. **Find Your People:** Build real, trusted community to practice **James 5:16** by confessing and praying for one another weekly, just as Pastor Chris does with his own online video group of pastors.
5. **Get the Right Help:** Be specific about your struggle—if you're stuck in a cycle of lying, you don't go to a proctologist. Get the specialized care you actually need.
6. **Be Helpful:** Step into mutual restoration (**Galatians 6:1-2**), remembering that when you help others, you help yourself—though you must watch your own step so you aren't tempted.

Ultimately, God designed humans for community. True humility means dropping the "I'm fine" facade, telling the truth when asked "*How are you doing?*", and leaning on the body of Christ to walk out of isolation into supernatural freedom.

Scripture Focus

- Romans 7:13-25
- Ephesians 2:1-2
- James 5:16
- Galatians 6:1-2

Sermon Focus

Pastor Chris's sermon focuses on the persistent reality of the internal spiritual battle, the deceptive nature of pride, and the essential need for deep, transparent community to experience true freedom.

The key points from the message include:

1. The Reality of "The Do-Dos" (The Internal War)

Drawing from **Romans 7:13-25**, Pastor Chris highlighted the frustrating, cyclical struggle between our desire for righteousness and the pull of the flesh—a dynamic he playfully called the "do-dos" based on Paul's phrasing ("*the good I want to do, I do not do...*"). He emphasized that evil is a harsh, daily reality that battles against our flesh, and even spiritually mature Christians will find themselves out of control at times. The mark of maturity isn't never falling, but refusing to stay stuck in a sinful loop for months.

2. Pride is the Main Roadblock

Using the illustration of stubbornly trying to pull a massive fallen tree out of his driveway with a tiny car—damaging his vehicle while ignoring a neighbor with a truck and a chainsaw—he

showed that pride convinces us we must fix everything ourselves. According to **James 4:6**, God actively opposes the proud but pours out grace on the humble. True humility means recognizing our baseline limitations: “*You can't do what God does, and God won't do what you need to.*”

3. A Blueprint for Ongoing Holiness

To wage this war successfully over the long term, Chris outlined a practical strategy:

- **Learn Yourself & Your Enemy:** Identify your specific spiritual "triggers." For example, he shared that his own ADHD makes boredom a highly dangerous trigger. We must also stay alert to the enemy's schemes (**Ephesians 2:1-2**).
- **Practice Real Repentance:** He rejected the cheap, cultural "say you're sorry" mask. True biblical repentance requires a full behavioral U-turn: admitting you are wrong without making excuses, expressing godly remorse, actively committing to change, and humbly asking for forgiveness.
- **Get the Right Help:** We must match the struggle to the correct tool. As he joked, if you are stuck in a cycle of lying, you don't go visit a proctologist. Seek specialized, appropriate care when a habit is too heavy to lift alone.

4. True Healing Demands Community

God did not design humans for isolated Christianity. While forgiveness comes from God, **James 5:16** notes that *healing* happens when we confess our sins to one another and pray for one another. Pastor Chris challenged the congregation to drop the automatic "I'm fine" facade and build a tight crew of trusted people with whom they can be brutally honest—modeling this by sharing his own weekly practice of structured confession with a video group of fellow pastors.

Discussion Questions

1. Pastor Chris talked about how his ADHD makes sitting still for more than 11 seconds incredibly boring, which acts as a personal trigger. What is a funny or quirky personal trait or habit of yours that your friends or family have to learn to navigate?

Digging Deeper

2. **Read Romans 7:21-25 and Ephesians 2:1-2.** Pastor Chris stated, “*I want to do good, but evil is always there. That is the harsh reality... of our battle against sin and against Satan and even against our own flesh.*” Why is it critical for us to study and understand how the enemy specifically uses our individual wiring and triggers against us?
3. The sermon heavily criticized the cultural habit of using a quick public apology to smooth things over. **Read Proverbs 28:13.** How do Pastor Chris’s four steps of a biblical

U-turn (Admit wrong, express remorse, commit to change, ask forgiveness) contrast with how our society typically handles mistakes?

4. **Read James 5:16 and Galatians 6:1-2.** Pastor Chris shared his weekly routine of practicing structured confession and prayer with a video group of pastors. What keeps us from creating those exact kinds of transparent spaces in our everyday lives? What makes the qualification “*you who are spiritual/mature, restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness... paying close attention to yourself*” so necessary when helping others?

Practical Application

5. Pastor Chris joked that if you have a problem with lying, you don't go see a proctologist —you have to get the *right* kind of help. What does it look like to practically evaluate the cycles we are stuck in and seek out the specific, appropriate spiritual or professional tools required to break them?
6. **Time for Homework:** Pastor Chris explicitly challenged us to find our people this week and break the fake "I'm fine" routine. Let's practice right now in a safe way: Go around the circle, skip the standard "fine," and genuinely answer the question: *How are you actually doing this week, and how can this group pray for you?*

Personal Reflection Guide: Guarding the Heart

Part 1: Mapping the Internal Battle

“So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is present with me.” — Romans 7:21

1. **Where is the friction?** When you look at your life over the past few weeks, where are you experiencing the most intense internal tug-of-war (e.g., your temper, your thought life, your speech, your relationship with technology, your anxiety)?
2. **Are you playing games?** Are there "little sins" or subtle habits in your life right now that you are actively tolerating because, deep down, you secretly enjoy them or rely on them for comfort?
3. **The Downbeat Check:** Do you currently feel stuck on a "downbeat" like Paul at the end of Romans 7—feeling defeated by your own flesh? What would it look like to consciously hand that specific failure over to Jesus right now, remembering that Romans 8 (freedom) is coming?

Part 2: Auditing Your Triggers

“Learn yourself... What kinds of things lead you to sin? You might call them triggers.”

4. **What is your "boredom"?** Pastor Chris shared that his ADHD makes boredom a high-risk trigger. When you are completely alone, uninspired, or have empty time on your hands, what does your brain default to for quick, temporary happiness?
5. **The Emotional Radar:** Look at the HALT acronym (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired). Which of these emotional states leaves you most spiritually vulnerable? How can you proactively build an "emergency care plan" for the next time you hit that state?
6. **Joy vs. Numbing:** What are 2 or 3 clean, life-giving joys that genuinely refresh your soul without an emotional or spiritual hangover? How can you intentionally schedule more of those into your calendar this week to crowd out temptation?

Part 3: Confronting Pride and Isolation

"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." — James 4:6

7. **Are you still holding the ropes?** Think about the illustration of trying to pull the massive tree out of the driveway on your own strength. What is the spiritual weight or problem in your life right now that you are stubbornly trying to fix, muscle through, or hide out of pride?
8. **The "I'm Fine" Audit:** How many people in your life actually know the real, unedited version of your current weekly struggles? When you say "I'm fine" to your friends, family, or small group, what are you usually trying to hide or protect?
9. **Who has a chainsaw?** If your spiritual engine broke down today, or a temptation hit you like a freight train, who are the 2 specific people you could text or call at 9:00 PM without feeling judged? If nobody comes to mind, what practical step can you take this week to start building that trust with someone?



A Simple Journaling Prompt to Finish:

Write out a raw, 3-sentence prayer based on **Psalm 70:1** ("*God, help me right now*"). Explicitly name the "tree" blocking your path, confess that you cannot move it on your own, and ask Him for the humility to invite others into the clearing process.

Small Group Discussion Guide: Breaking the Cycle

Icebreaker (10 mins)

1. Pastor Chris shared a hilarious story about stubbornly trying to pull a massive tree out of his driveway with a tiny car, nearly ripping his bumper off because he wouldn't ask his

neighbor for help. What is the most ridiculous thing you have ever tried to fix, move, or build completely on your own because you were too stubborn to ask for help?

Looking at the Word (15 mins)

2. **Read Romans 7:15-24 out loud.** Paul is incredibly vulnerable here about his own internal tug-of-war (what Pastor Chris called "the doo-doo"). How does it feel to hear an Apostle—one of the greatest Christian leaders in history—admit that he struggles with doing things he hates? Why do you think we often feel like we aren't allowed to be that honest in church culture?
3. **Read James 4:6 and James 5:16.** Notice that James mentions two different things: *grace* and *healing*. According to these verses, what is the connection between humility, confessing to one another, and experiencing true healing?

Living it Out (20 mins)

4. Pastor Chris noted that "**mature Christians are sometimes out of control,**" but the difference is they don't stay stuck there for months. How do you distinguish between a believer who is actively fighting a spiritual battle and someone who has simply given up and surrendered to a sinful cycle?
5. **Let's talk about triggers.** Pastor Chris candidly shared that his ADHD makes boredom a major trigger where his mind looks for an "easy path" to quick happiness. What are the high-risk environments or emotional states (e.g., exhaustion, stress, loneliness, isolation) that tend to trigger your flesh or open the door to old habits?
6. The sermon challenged us to ban the automatic "I'm fine" reflex. Who are "your people"? Do you currently have a tight circle or a trusted friend where you can look them in the eye and say, "*This is where I blew it this week, please pray for me*"? If not, what holds you back from building that kind of crew?

Closing Prayer & Action Step (10 mins)

7. **The 4-Step U-Turn Challenge:** Before we pray, look at the 4 steps to true biblical repentance we learned on Sunday:
 1. *Admit you're wrong (no excuses).*
 2. *Express genuine remorse.*
 3. *Commit to change.*
 4. *Ask for forgiveness.*

8. Is there a relationship in your life right now where you need to make a true U-turn instead of just offering a cheap, surface-level "sorry"?

Prayer Focus: Pair up (men with men, women with women) or pray as a whole group. Pray specifically for the courage to drop the masks this week, to invite God into our specific triggers, and to actively carry one another's burdens so that nobody in your group is fighting their battles in isolation.

5-Day Devotional: *The Struggle & The Toolbox*

Day 1: The Bumper-Ripping Pride

- **Scripture:** *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."* — James 4:6
- **Devotional:** Pastor Chris shared a story about straining to drag a fallen tree out of his driveway with a tiny car, snapping ropes and nearly ripping off his bumper, simply because he didn't want to ask his neighbor for help. He realized later that the underlying malady was simple: pride. We do the exact same thing with our sins, anxieties, and hidden habits. We strain under weights we were never meant to lift because we don't want to admit we are in need. But the reality is that *every single one of us* is in need. Humility isn't hanging your head; it's having the strength to say, *"I can't do it all myself."*
- **Reflection:** What is the "fallen tree" in your life right now that you are stubbornly trying to drag on your own?

Day 2: The Reality of "The Do-Dos"

- **Scripture:** *"For I do not do the good I want, but I do the very evil I do not want."* — Romans 7:19
- **Devotional:** Pastor Chris affectionately called this passage the "do-dos" — the agonizing, frustrating cycle of wanting to walk in righteousness but finding ourselves pulled toward the flesh. He noted, *"I want to do good, but evil is always there. That is the harsh reality of the world we live in and the harsh reality of our battle against sin and against Satan and even against our own flesh."* If you feel this internal war waging inside your mind, take heart: it means you are in the fight. Even mature Christians find themselves momentarily out of control. The key is not to panic, but to run back to a posture of desperate reliance on Jesus.
- **Reflection:** How does recognizing that the spiritual battle operates on three fronts (the world, Satan, and your own flesh) change how you prepare for temptation?

Day 3: Learning Your Triggers

- **Scripture:** “...according to this world's present path, according to the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the ruler of the spirit that is now energizing the sons of disobedience.” — Ephesians 2:1-2
- **Devotional:** A vital part of ongoing holiness is self-awareness. Pastor Chris challenged us to "learn yourself" and "learn your enemy." The enemy operates on schemes, and our flesh has specific weak points. Pastor Chris candidly shared that because of his ADHD, boredom is a massive trigger that makes him want to seek out stimulation or self-medication. We have to stop playing games with the sins the world glorifies. When you know what triggers your specific flesh, you can plan ahead, step off the world's path, and choose actions that foster true spiritual joy instead of temporary happiness.
- **Reflection:** What are your primary spiritual triggers (e.g., boredom, exhaustion, loneliness, stress)? What is a healthy, life-giving joy you can replace them with this week?

Day 4: Making the U-Turn

- **Scripture:** “...if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” — Romans 8:13
- **Devotional:** Pastor Chris shared how much he dislikes the cultural mandate to just "say you're sorry." A simple, empty apology leaves the underlying sin untouched and the cycle intact. In Scripture, freedom demands true repentance—which is the spiritual equivalent of a U-turn. True repentance requires four active steps: 1) Admit you are wrong without making excuses, 2) Express godly remorse for the pain caused, 3) Commit to a change in behavior, and 4) Humbly ask for forgiveness. We take responsibility for the vehicle, and we count on the Holy Spirit to give us the supernatural power to move in the opposite direction.
- **Reflection:** Is there an area in your life where you have been offering cheap "sorries" to God or others instead of executing a true, behavioral U-turn?

Day 5: Doing Your Homework

- **Scripture:** “Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed.” — James 5:16
- **Devotional:** Pastor Chris closed the sermon by giving the congregation actual homework: *Find your people*. He shared his own weekly practice of meeting via video conference with a group of pastors where they systematically go around in a circle, confessing exactly where they blew it that week and praying over one another. Forgiveness comes from God, but James 5:16 tells us that *healing* happens in the context of community. When we hide our habits, we stay sick. When we build deep trust with real people and dare to answer the question “*How are you doing?*” with absolute honesty, the enemy's power breaks.

- **Reflection:** Do you currently have "your people" whom you can look in the eye and tell the absolute truth to? If not, what practical step can you take this week to begin building that circle of trust?

7 Days to "Finding Your People"

Day 1: Audit Your Joy and Your Triggers

"Learn yourself... What kinds of things bring you joy? When you know about it, do more of it... The opposite is also true. What kinds of things lead you to sin? You might call them triggers."

- **Today's Action:** Take 10 minutes with a blank piece of paper or a notes app and divide it into two columns: **Life-Giving Joy** and **The Triggers**.
- **How to do it:**
 - In the first column, write down 3 specific things that bring you deep, clean, refreshing joy (hobbies, walks, calling an old friend). Commit to doing one of them today.
 - In the second column, be brutally honest about your weak spots. Like Pastor Chris noted with his ADHD and boredom, what opens the door for you to self-medicate or take the quick, temporary path to "happiness"? Is it exhaustion at 9:00 PM? Is it isolation on Sunday afternoons?
- **The Goal:** You cannot invite others into your struggle until you clearly know what the struggle actually is.

Day 2: Drop the "I'm Fine" Reflex

"Sometimes we need to ask this question and wait for the actual answer. 'How are you doing?' And then wait. Because the person will probably say, 'Fine.' And they're probably lying."

- **Today's Action:** Pay close attention to how you answer people today, and make a conscious decision to ban the automatic "I'm fine" from your vocabulary.
- **How to do it:** If someone at work, church, or home asks how you are doing, practice giving a 1-to-2 sentence honest update. It doesn't mean you dump your deepest traumas on the grocery store cashier, but if it's been a tough week, say so: *"Honestly, it's been a bit of a heavy week, but I'm hanging in there."*
- **The Goal:** Break the habit of hiding. True community is impossible as long as you are pretending everything is perfect.

Day 3: Identify Your Potential "Crew"

"Find your people. Who can you be this honest with? Build relationships. Build trust. It is hard... Do it anyway."

- **Today's Action:** Look around your existing circles and write down the names of 2 or 3 people who are spiritually mature, trustworthy, and safe.
- **How to do it:** Look at your small group, your serving team, or mature Christian friends you respect. Ask yourself: *Who is someone I know I won't feel judged by? Who is someone who loves Jesus enough to tell me the truth, but is gentle enough to carry a heavy burden?*
- **The Goal:** You aren't reaching out to them just yet. Today is simply about identifying who your potential "neighbor with the big truck and the chainsaw" might be.

Day 4: Draft the Text (The Pastor Chris Model)

"I practice this every week. I meet with a group of pastors... Each week we start with, 'This is where I blew it this week... Please pray for me about this.'"

- **Today's Action:** Select *one* person from your Day 3 list and draft a simple, no-pressure invitation to connect.
- **How to do it:** Send a text or an email. You don't need to confess your deepest secrets in the text; just pitch the concept of mutual accountability.
- *Script Copy/Paste:* "Hey [Name], I was listening to the sermon this past Sunday about how much we need real community to fight our battles and pray for each other. I'm trying to take the homework seriously. Would you be open to grabbing coffee or jumping on a quick call sometime next week? I'd love to share a bit of what I'm working through and be a sounding board/prayer partner for you, too."
- **The Goal:** Move from thinking about community to actively initiating it.

Day 5: Identify the *Right* Help

"Ask for help. You have to ask for the kind of help you need, right? ... If I am stuck in a cycle of lying... I don't need to go to a proctologist... Get the kind of help you actually need."

- **Today's Action:** Look at the specific triggers and cycles you wrote down on Day 1. Assess if your struggle requires standard peer accountability, or if it requires specialized, professional help.
- **How to do it:** Be realistic about the depth of the tree blocking your driveway. If you are struggling with everyday marital communication, a small group partner is great. If you

are buried in an active addiction, severe clinical depression, or deep-seated trauma, identify the counselor, recovery ministry (like a 12-step program), or pastoral staff member you need to contact.

- **The Goal:** Ensure you are matching the weight of the struggle to the correct tool in the toolbox.

Day 6: Prepare Your First "U-Turn" Confession

"When you fall, here's what you need to do... Admit you're wrong... Express remorse... Commit to change... Then we ask forgiveness."

- **Today's Action:** If you have an active conflict or a hidden sin that has damaged a relationship in your life, prepare to own it using Pastor Chris's 4-step framework.
- **How to do it:** Write out or mentally rehearse exactly what you need to say to God and to the person you hurt. Do not say, *"I'm sorry, but you made me mad."* (That's the cheap children's version). Instead, use the template:
 1. *"I did [X], and it was wrong."* (Admit)
 2. *"I know it caused you pain, and it grieves my heart."* (Remorse)
 3. *"I am actively changing my behavior so this doesn't happen again."* (Commit)
 4. *"Will you forgive me?"* (Ask)
- **The Goal:** Clear out the relational debris so you can walk into your new community with a clean slate.

Day 7: Show Up and Be Helpful

"When you're helping others, you're helping yourself also... Carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

- **Today's Action:** Go to your small group, church service, or coffee meeting with the primary goal of listening intently to lift someone else up.
- **How to do it:** When you ask someone how they are doing today, don't just let them off the hook with a quick brush-off. Lean in. Listen to their eyes and their tone. If they open up, don't try to fix them or lecture them. Just say, *"That sounds incredibly heavy. Can I pray for you right now regarding that?"*
- **The Goal:** Complete the cycle. By stepping outside of your own head to carry someone else's burden, you will find that the Holy Spirit naturally breaks the power of isolation over your own soul.