

Inevitably you'll find yourself in the **Roman's 7** insanity cycle.
See if you can see yourself.

- ¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand.
For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do . . .
- ¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells;
for to will is present with me,
but how to perform what is good I do not find.
- ¹⁹ For the good that I will to do, I do not do;
but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.
- ²⁰ Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it,
but sin that dwells in me.
- ²¹ I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.
- ²² For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.
- ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind,
and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.
- ²⁴ O wretched man that I am!
Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Have you been there?!

That's in the language of the Apostle Paul, 50AD

Here's a version I love in the language of Justin Colon, 2019. (Disclaimer)

VIDEO: My Flesh Is Weak

My flesh is weak!

It's so hard to give up that ONE THING.

Our question this morning is WHY?

So, here's you go? The first is the Distortion Factor



When Jesus puts his finger on the ONE THING that has to go,
that ONE THING suddenly takes on gargantuan proportions.

Now it's not that this ONE THING is just something you *like*,
it's something you can't imagine living without!

I can remember when I knew that I was using food as my drug of choice
and that this was hindering my relationship with God and my health.

Suddenly, my favorite foods took on heavenly proportions.

I can actually remember thinking that heaven must be the freedom to eat
Lemon Meringue Pie all day long without ever getting sick or fat.

Oh, my flesh is weak!

And then another distortion kicks in.

I grew up in California.
I'd grown so accustomed to smog alerts.
I barely paid any attention.

 This was just the way things were.

 This was my normal.

When you're close up, you can't see the air you're breathing.

And then after my Freshman year at college I went down to Mexico
 to work with Campus Crusade for Christ for the summer.

 Beautiful Cuernavaca! It was quite literally Paradise!

Then came the time came to fly home.

As we approached LAX I looked out the window of my plane.

I was horrified!

The city was covered with a dirty pink carpet that made you want to puke.
SMOG!

And you watch as the plane descends right into that pink puke.

If you can get some distance

 you'll realize just how harmful your "normal" really is.

That's called the Minimization Distortion.

Ah, come on. It's not *that* bad.

That's what happened to the Children of Israel in Egypt.

Moses comes to deliver them.

At first, they're excited, Yeah!

 until they realize this is going to make Pharaoh very angry,

 and he's going to take it out on them,

 and make their life *worse!*

They get angry at Moses for disrupting the life of slavery:

 “You [Moses] have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants,
 to put a sword in their hand to kill us.” **Exodus 5:21b**

Don't rock the boat!

Just leave well enough alone!

They were good NINES – Just keep the status quo!

It is possible for you to become so accustomed to sub-normal, your bondage
that you'll resist every effort to free you.

The Hebrews had been slaves in Egypt for two hundred years.
Slavery meant that they were not free to go where they wanted.

But this life was familiar.

At least they had food every day with leeks and garlic to flavor it up!

As destructive as our sinful habits and lifestyle might be,
As limiting as a particular relationship might be,
it suddenly seems easier to live with the familiar,
than be free and experience . . . the unknown.

My flesh is weak!

But yet another distortion factor kicks in big time with this next seemingly godly declaration!

- I can do this! I WILL do this!
Emphasis on WILL, as in will-power.

It's a popular mantra in today's world.
You have everything you need right inside of you
to do whatever you decide to do!
Just do it!

Here's the truth;
When it comes to a fight between your cravings and unhealthy behavior
and your will,
it's not a fair fight.

Your bad patterns in life and your cravings are so powerful and so insidious,
your will power is simply no match for them.

When I've spoken to some of you who are trying to get over some bad behavior,
and I hear you say, "I will not do that again,"
I probably tell you, "That doesn't give me any comfort."

That's why Jesus taught us to pray: Lead us not into temptation!
Cause we're so prone to cave into it!

My flesh is weak

But not only are we up against the distortion factor,
we have some more misdirected thinking . . .

Here you go . . .

I can have my ONE THING and you follow Jesus too!



I'll just file things in separate compartments,
that what happens in one compartment can stay in that compartment
and not affect the other compartments of our life.

Like, "What's done in Vegas, stays in Vegas!"

That's wishful thinking, not reality.

Think about it.

You can hear a song on the radio that can bring you to tears
Basically, sound waves are coming into your ear
and it's making water is come out of your eyes.

You are an incredibly integrated being.
Everything you do affects everything you are.

Once Jesus puts his finger on the ONE THING that has to go to
to follow him wholeheartedly, you have to choose.
The two compartments become mutually exclusive.

But we don't only fight these distortion factors and the compartments non-solution,
We have yet one more enemy of the good . . .

God's favorite word is today.
The devil's favorite word is tomorrow.

One of the best lines in all of Scripture is said by Pharaoh.
Moses has come to deliver the Israelites from slavery.
The Egyptians have escaped the first plague, the river turning to blood.
But still Pharaoh won't let the Israelites go, so a second plague comes – the frogs!
How disgusting!
So Pharaoh calls Moses and says, "Get rid of these frogs and I'll let the people go!"

Exodus 8:9 And Moses said to Pharaoh,
"Accept the honor of saying *when* I shall intercede for you . . .
10 So Pharaoh said, "Tomorrow."

Just do it --- Tomorrow!

Give me one more night with my frogs!
How we love to procrastinate!

My flesh is weak

And so we say with Paul, and Justin . . .

²⁴ O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

HELP!!

What's the remedy?

I LOVE the Apostle's final word at the end of his litany of frustrations with the flesh.

25 Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

And he plunges **into Romans 8**

^{1a}There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

9 But how does that help us? Here's how . . .

If there is no condemnation,
you can get our eyes off your own obsession with our failures.
Shame won't change you,
nor can you shame other people in changing.
If there is no condemnation, no one is keeping score,
So you can get our eyes off your own goodness
And off your will power's
These things are not strong enough to save you or change you.

What will?

^{1b}Those who are in Christ Jesus walk not according to the flesh,
but walk according to the Spirit.

Whatever goodness you obtain will be a bi-product of walking with the Spirit.
You can't make goodness your goal – like the Rich Young Ruler did.
Just tell me what good thing I can add that will tip the scales.
There are no heavenly scales.
But if you make walking in the Spirit the goal,
whatever doesn't serve that end will eventually fall away.



So the key is getting our eyes off of ourselves and onto the Spirit.

David says, I lift up my eyes to the hills.

Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord **Psalm 121:1**

We need a higher vision, a higher desire!

You fight a lower desire, not with shaming yourself or with your will power. You fight a lower desire with a higher desire.

Let me illustrate how you know this is true.

Let's say you hate to do your Algebra homework.

But then there's this really cute girl in Algebra class who's really good at Algebra, and suggests you get together to study.

Algebra just became your favorite class!

What changed? A higher desire trumped a lower desire.

We need a higher desire!

Who gives us spiritual desires and visions for our future?

The Spirit of God.

So ask Jesus to intensify that higher desire.

To make you want that higher desire so badly you can taste it!

Remember Jesus isn't into deprivation.

He made that quite clear to the disciples in the story of the Rich Young Ruler.

Peter was boasting, "We have left everything to follow you!"

"We've accepted all this deprivation to follow you!"

How noble and self-sacrificial of us!

How proud Jesus you must be of us!

Gag!

Jesus is quick to point out:

²⁹ "Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life."

All you may see when Jesus fingers your ONE THING is your deprivation.

But Jesus sees the blessings 100 times over.

No room for self-pity.

**Oh, my flesh is weak!
But the Spirit is strong.**

And then Paul goes on in **Romans 8** to say,

¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,
He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies
through His Spirit who dwells in you.

¹³if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

You need to conduct your own funeral

You're simply not the good person you thought you were.
You don't just need a little self-improvement.
You need a death and resurrection.

That's why when you come to me and say, "I can do this, I know I can,"
I'm worried.

But if I hear you say, "I give up; unless God does a new work in me, I'm done for."
That's when I say, "You're going to be okay."

You need a death and resurrection.

It is the primal story that's broadcast through creation.

First comes winter, then spring

Night is followed by day.

Unless a seed dies and is buried, it cannot produce new life.

The story of life emerging from death is the story woven throughout creation,
throughout the scriptures,
and manifest most fully in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

This is the picture in emersion baptism:

We die with Christ and are raised to newness of life.

Now, here's what needs to happen at your funeral:

Proverbs 28:13 says

People who conceal their sins will not prosper,

but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy.

You need to confess your sin by name.

If you can't name it, you can't get rid of it.

And you must name it . . . to God and to another human being.

That's been the value of our 12-step group.
We've been calling out our *own* sin.
It's easy to call out the sins of the other.
It's hard to call out our own.
But no change comes until we call out our OWN sins to one another.

James 5:16 is one of the most powerful verses in Scripture:
*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another,
that you may be healed.
The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

Whether it's my 12-step group, or my small group, or my pastors meeting,
or my husband, or my therapist,
I make sure that I have absolutely no secrets that haven't been shared
with at least one other responsible human being.
No filing cabinets under lock and key.

But *who* do I have to tell?
The local bartender?
(Sure, I'd risk no unpleasant consequences)
God will tell you exactly who you must tell.
It's going to require courage and humility.
It's going to require a relinquishment of outcomes.
Half measures won't work.

**My flesh is weak
But His Spirit is strong.**

The entire sermon can be encapsulated like this:

*Walk by the Spirit and you
will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.*
Galatians 5:16



BENEDICTION

May you lift up your eyes
And see a vision so compelling that
walking by the spirit and following close after Jesus
is your greatest joy