

OUR POWER

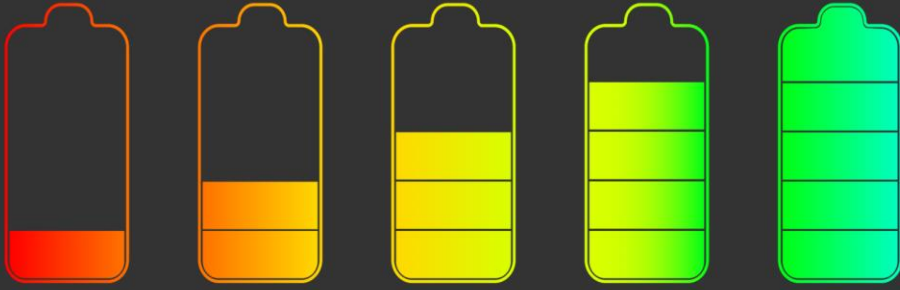
ROMANS 6-8

Good Morning Church Family, I am Pastor Todd Johnson, Executive Pastor here at Brandywine, and this morning we are continuing in our study of the Book of Romans.

PRAY:

Today we will be in Romans chapter 7 where Paul continues to describe the POWER that is available to us through CHRIST.

And here in chapter 7 Paul takes time to highlight the **STRUGGLE** that disrupts OUR POWER IN CHRIST.

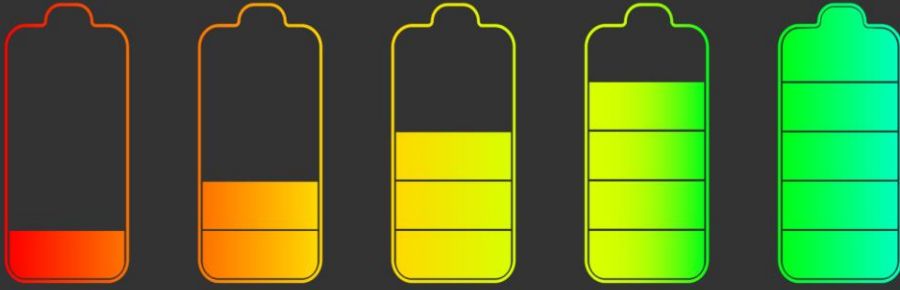


OUR POWER

THE STRUGGLE

And what Paul is going to focus on in this chapter is how we **STRUGGLE** against **THE LAW**...[the rule book, the list of do's and don'ts]...and how we can never live up to the righteous standards and fulfill **THE LAW** on our own because of our **SINFUL NATURE**.....NOW THAT'S THE BAD NEWS

But he's also going to address the fact that because we [believers] live unified with the risen Christ, we are able to accomplish good works FAR BEYOND what the law could ever lead us to.....THEREFORE WE DON'T NEED TO **STRUGGLE**, AND THAT'S THE GOOD NEWS.



OUR POWER

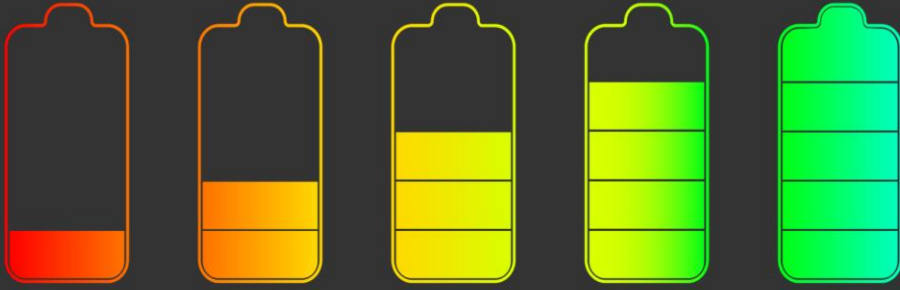
THE STRUGGLE

And friends it is so fitting that we discuss the **STRUGGLES** of the Christian life at a time like this because we **ALL STRUGGLE**.

But especially now during a time of PANDEMIC, SOCIAL UNREST, UNEMPLOYMENT/UNDEREMPLOYMENT, A CONTENTIOUS ELECTION, FEARS OF THE FUTURE...ECT.

2020 has been a year of STRUGGLES.

And at times like this perhaps we feel as though OUR POWER IN CHRIST HAS BEEN DIMINISHED. Because we look at our CIRCUMSTANCES, we look at the effects of SIN in our world and we are troubled.



OUR POWER

THE STRUGGLE

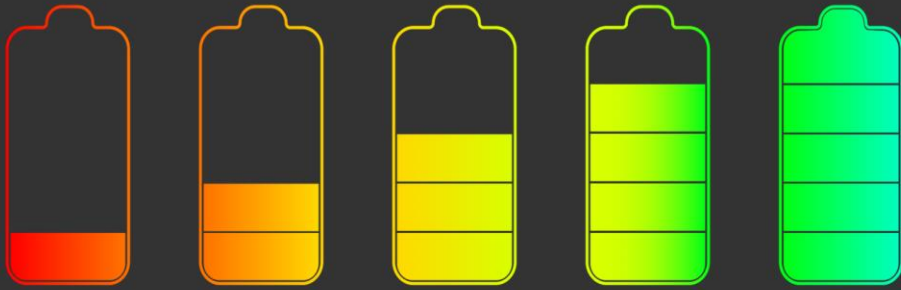
You see friends when we struggle in this world, in our flesh/sin nature, it is like having our batteries ***drained***.
[pause]

Illus:

When our family lived in Colorado it was common in the winter to see cars that were left outside connected to a battery heater.

Because when temperatures plunge well below zero, few cars left outside overnight will start. The oil thickens and holds engine parts like heavy syrup. Cold batteries are incapable of giving enough power to just start an engine.

And this same analogy applies to our spiritual lives as well.



OUR POWER

THE STRUGGLE

You see Church many people are trying to fix what is broken within us [*we try to fix our sin problem*] but we have no power because ***our battery is dead or dying.***

And because of this we STRUGGLE, and here in chapter 7 Paul sheds light on what our source of POWER is and also what it isn't.

Not only is Paul going to help us see OUR POWER IN CHRIST (*so we can begin to fix what is broken*), but he is also going to let us in personally.

Paul is going to share his own personal struggles in a effort to help us through our own.

Romans 7:5, 6 (ESV)

⁵ For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

⁶ But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.



Alright so let's dive in!

Paul begins this chapter with an analogy about how a spouse becomes freed from marital vows when his or her partner dies. *[Death severs the marital covenant].*

Paul then relates that to our spiritual situation...[that] death changes our relationship to THE LAW.

Here we see that once we were married to the LAW, but in Christ things have changed.

Lets read what Paul says about this in Romans 7:5, 6



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You see when it comes to our relationship with THE LAW we are the ones that have died [In Christ] so we are no longer obligated to the demands of THE LAW.

But why is this important?

Here Paul explains that the true ***purpose of the LAW*** was to make sin obvious to.....meaning that prior to our conversion we were ruled by sinful passions which were aroused by the law. It's not that the law caused us to Sin, the Sin was already baked into us through Adam.

However THE LAW helped to reveal to us what sin was.....again THE LAW didn't originate sin but it stirred up the desire to do sin.

God's Law Reveals Our Sin



And that brings us to our first TRUTH for this morning.

God's Law Reveals Our Sin

Illus:

As and example of this, have you ever noticed that as soon as you tell a child that they cannot do something, that is the EXACT moment they want to do it? It's like you gave them the idea to misbehave that they didn't have previously.

Do not hit you sister...they immediately hit their sister.
Do not misbehave in the store...WWIII breaks out in the store.

Romans 7:5, 6 (ESV)

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⁶ But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.



My wife is a school teacher and school teachers are well aware of the inward struggle against sin. In fact they serve on the front lines of that battle everyday.

But my wife tells me that teachers are trained to always phrase things in the positive to their students.....because if you tell student, don't push in line.....guess what they want to do. But if you say, hands by your side they are more compliant.

You see when we become **aware** that is the moment in which the struggle starts. The same thing happened to mankind when the Law was given.

When we became **aware** of the things we could not do, that is when the desire for sin came alive within us and we wanted to do those things.

Romans 7:5, 6 (ESV)

⁵ For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

⁶ But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.



And so **THE LAW** was meant to show us what **SIN IS**...and also to highlight that we cannot reach God's perfect standard on our own.

In verse 6, we are reminded that we are released from that ***captivity*** to no longer serve the "***old way***" of the written code but rather the "***new way***" of the Spirit. And the **STRUGGLE** is often found in that we cannot get ourselves to stop serving the **OLD WAY**.

Church how this error manifests itself in a person's life is believing that your struggles need to be fixed by you being good enough. You believing that if you work harder, longer, if you restrict yourself, and live a good enough life you will be free of **STRUGGLES**, while the exact **OPPOSITE** is true.

INVICTUS

"I am the master of my fate /
I am the captain of my soul."

William Ernest Henley



The more we rely on ourselves ***THE MORE WE STRUGGLE.***

Illus:

In 1875 a British poet named William Ernest Henley published a short poem that expressed one way to cope with life. The poem, called "Invictus," ended with these famous lines: "I am the master of my fate / I am the captain of my soul."

In popular culture, those last two lines usually represent some kind of heroic and self-sufficient stand against evil and injustice....without relying on God.

INVICTUS

"I am the master of my fate /
I am the captain of my soul."

William Ernest Henley



For over a hundred years, Henley's poem has inspired many people. In the 1980s, the poem encouraged former South African president Nelson Mandela throughout the dark days of his imprisonment. Years later, Clint Eastwood used it as the title for his popular film about the South African rugby team.

Sadly, it was also a great influence on Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh, who was responsible for the deaths of 168 men, women, and children, and the injuries of 800 more. He scribbled out the words of "Invictus" and handed it to authorities as his last words before his execution.

Every [person] must serve somebody: we have no choice as to that fact. Those who have no master are slaves to themselves. Depend upon it, you will either serve Satan or Christ. Either self or the Savior. You will find sin, self, Satan, and the world to be hard masters; but if you wear the uniform of Christ,



Sixteen years after Henley first published "Invictus," the British preacher Charles Spurgeon offered another philosophy of life. On June 7, 1891, in the closing words of his final sermon, Spurgeon urged people to submit to a better "Captain" for our soul. Spurgeon said:

Every [person] must serve somebody: we have no choice as to that fact. Those who have no master are slaves to themselves. Depend upon it, you will either serve Satan or Christ. Either self or the Savior. You will find sin, self, Satan, and the world to be hard masters; but if you wear the uniform of Christ,

you will find him so meek and lowly of heart that you will find rest unto your souls If you could see our Captain, you would go down on your knees and beg him to let you enter the ranks of those who follow him. It is heaven to serve Jesus.

-Charles Spurgeon



you will find him so meek and lowly of heart that you will find rest unto your souls If you could see our Captain, you would go down on your knees and beg him to let you enter the ranks of those who follow him. It is heaven to serve Jesus.

Romans 7:7 (ESV)

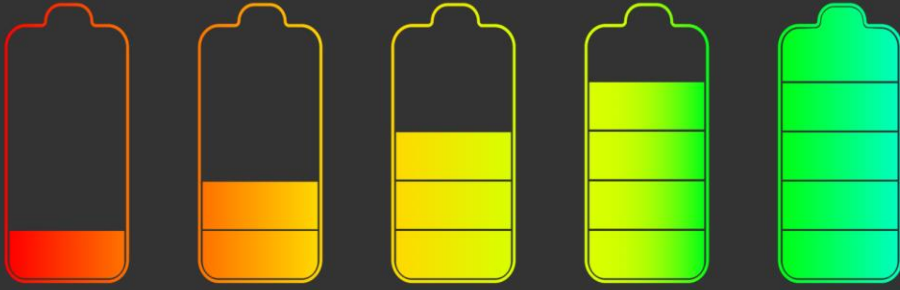
7 What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”



You see friends the STRUGGLE is that we often serve the wrong MASTER. Jesus Christ invites us into the POWER that comes from serving HIM....not ourselves, not even the written code anymore.

And you see this point gets a bit confusing because some might say, **Well why did God give us the law then? Is it even good?**

Paul explains that again starting in verses 7 stating, ***“What shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.”***



OUR POWER

THE STRUGGLE

And in the following verses Paul goes on to describe the important role which THE LAW played in his own life before he was saved.

Paul's ability to see his sin through [the lens] THE LAW revealed to him his desperate need for SALVATION.

God's Law Reveals Our Need



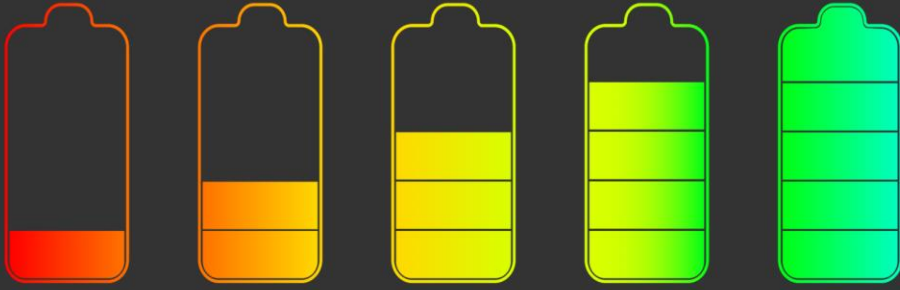
And that brings us to our 2nd truth for this morning.

God's Law Reveals Our Need

You know many of us have a testimony whereby we saw our sin for what it was, it brought us to our knees, and we knew we needed salvation.

And while it is painful/bitter to fully recognize our sin, ***it is sweet to know we need saving.***

There is POWER in recognizing our weakness, and the role the LAW can continually to play in our lives is keeping us humble...before a Holy God.



OUR POWER

THE STRUGGLE

I remember when I fell in love with Jesus, I thought that I'd eventually get to the point where I'd just stop sinning.

I'm still waiting for that era of my life BTW. But seriously as a teenager I thought that within a few years my struggle with sin would be over.

And while I have grown as a disciple of Christ.....I still SIN, I STILL STRUGGLE.

Here in Romans 7 Paul explains why that is....we are of the flesh.

Let's read together verses 14, & 15

Romans 7:14, 15 (ESV)

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.



Read: 

Church when we become Christians and the Holy Spirit comes into us and gives us desires for right living, A WAR RAGES INSIDE OF US. ***Spirit Vs. Flesh***....[by flesh we mean the fallen corrupted human body.]

Because we live in a fallen world, we must constantly fight using THE POWER that the Holy Spirit gives us to put to death the sinfulness that still dwells inside each and everyone of us.

Paul describes that inner battle in verse 15. ***“For I do not understand my own actions. I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.”***

Romans 7:14, 15 (ESV)

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.



Virtually every Disciple of Jesus resonates with Paul's words here.

The Spirit within us craves *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

The Flesh within us, not so much. Our flesh craves *sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition etc.*

Paul lays this all out in Galatians 5, and you see this creates a HUGE problem. How are we supposed to avoid struggle when a CIVIL WAR is going on within us?

Galatians 5:25 (ESV)

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.



In Galatians 5 verse 25 Paul also says, *“If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”*

Church “keeping in step” means that you are committed to follow the Spirit’s leading in your life.

When we “do the thing we hate” [as Paul describes here] it is often because we have fallen out of step.

But praise be to God that he has given us his Spirit, to guide us, counsel us, lift us when we seek Him.

This Power is available, but how often we do not even seek it.



Illus:

You know there are two types of people in this world.

Those who use the moving sidewalk at the airport...and those who like to walk half as fast for some unknown reason. 😊

You know the Holy Spirit is kind of like the moving sidewalk *[don't worry this isn't blasphemy]* in that He comes underneath us and bears us along...we are still walking but we walk dependent on Him.

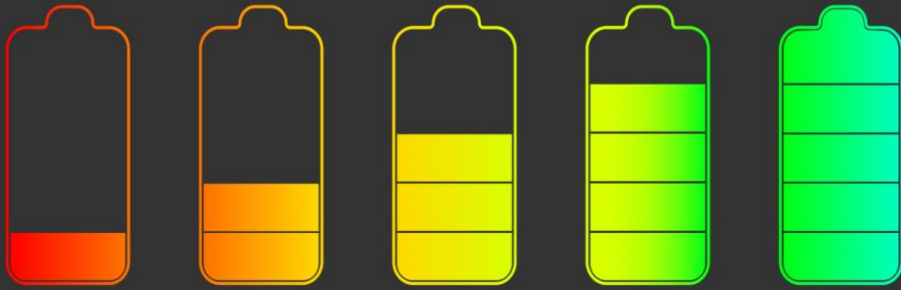
When we are keeping in step with the Spirit.....the struggle doesn't anywhere near as bad.

God's power can lift us in our current struggles



And that brings us to our 3rd truth for this morning.

God's power can lift us in our current struggles.



OUR POWER

THE STRUGGLE

Friends are you living in this POWER that is available to you?

Because you can't win the CIVIL WAR that rages within you on your own.

There are some who are listening to this today who have grown so weary of this internal struggle that they want to give up.

I say friend make today the day that instead of giving up.....you give ALL of your burden to the Lord.

And one of the reasons why the Bible is so awesome, is because it is so raw and real. Clearly Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, he was weary too, listen to his words here in verses 22 -24.

Romans 7:22-25 (ESV)

²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ 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. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!



Read:

In these verses Paul expresses another dimension of this internal CIVIL WAR.

War on his mind!

He says he delights in the Law of God....but another law [the law of sin] seeks to infiltrate his mind/moral judgements, attempting to enslave once again the freed captive.

I think this does accurately describe THE STRUGGLE.

[pause]

DR. JEKYLL and MR. HYDE



Illus:

You know one of the most famous stories of the 19th & 20th Century is Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde.

In the story Dr. Jekyll is working on a potion that allows him to actually become the man of Edward Hyde. The two men couldn't be more different, Dr. Jekyll is nice and well respected whereas Edward Hyde is malicious and a cold blooded killer. At first Dr. Jekyll can control the Hyde within him but then after a while Hyde begins to emerge on his own taking control of Dr. Jekyll's life. The two men fight for control over the body in which they live. There is literally a war for his mind. Robert Louis Stevenson's story mirrors the battle that rages within the heart of mankind.

Romans 7:22-25 (ESV)

²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ 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. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!



Paul recognizes this same duality within himself, and he cries out in **verse 24, “Wretched man that I am!”**

And we’ve all been there as well.



When we crave righteousness...but choose our lusts.
When we crave mercy...but choose resentment.
When we crave patience...but choose intolerance.
When we crave generosity...but choose self-centeredness.

Paul asks, ***Who will deliver me from the body of death?*** This is rhetorical, Paul knows WHO HIS deliverer is...he says... ***“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”***

Romans 7:22-25 (ESV)

²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ 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. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!



Friends, In Christ we have already begun to taste the goodness of our freedom from sin. *[I hope you can taste that reality in your life]*

In Christ we have claimed victory over our enemy and so we FIGHT against the “law” at work in our bodies in the present.

And then we look forward with hope of full freedom to come, when God takes these wretched bodies, and replaces them with *[Philippians 3]* glorified bodies.

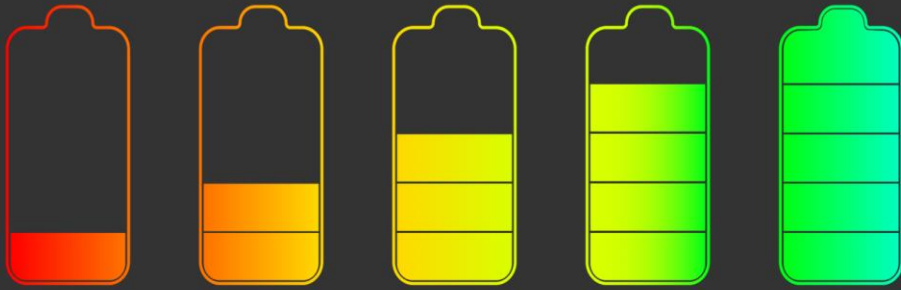
You see friends when Christ returns for us, we will be free to live God’s way, in God’s presence, free from our own sin and each other’s sin.

**God's power can give us
hope that one day we
will struggle no more**



And that brings us to our 4th and final point for this morning.

**God's power can give us hope that one day we will
struggle no more.**



OUR POWER

THE STRUGGLE

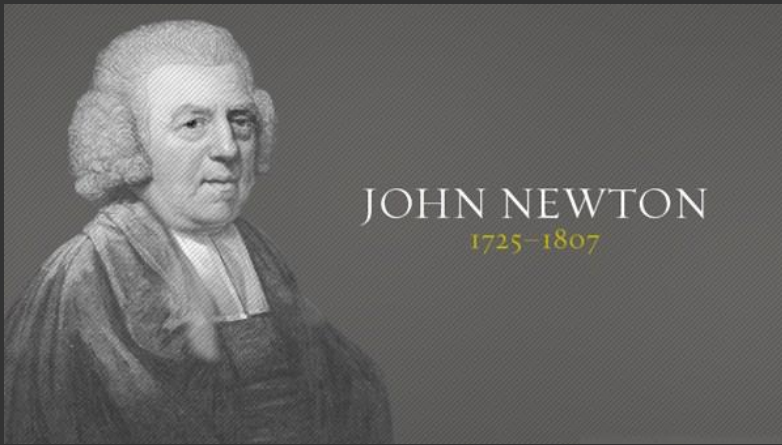
Alright friends as we begin to close I want to get really practical with our remaining time.

Because I think we've covered what both the ***problem*** and ***ultimate solution*** are.

But I know that many of us still feel wretched about the sin in our lives. Day by day we struggle with feelings of inadequacy [*b/c of sin*] powerless to change.

Illus:

Consider this.....the man who wrote perhaps the most famous Hymn of all time "Amazing Grace," John Newton lived an dynamic life, having been a slave ship Captain....who later found Jesus and became a Pastor.....talk about inner struggle.



Well there is a collection of John Newton's letters, letters that he wrote to his Pastor friends back in the 16th & 17th centuries, and in one of those letters John wrote this, [quote] "Why at 80 years of age are the temptations of the flesh still as strong in me as when I was a young man?" He continued, "I thought that growing in grace meant that I'd get to the point that I'd no longer need it anymore."

He finally concluded that, "Growing in grace means growing in your awareness of your need of it, not getting to a place where you feel like it's no longer necessary."

God uses our ongoing struggles to grow our appreciation of His grace



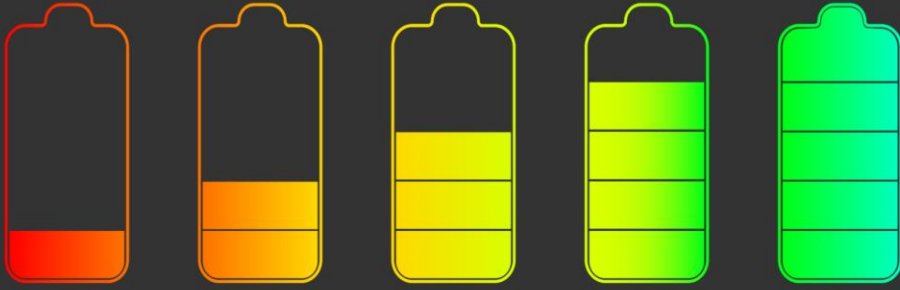
You see Church, God uses our ongoing struggles to grow our appreciation of His grace.

You see in our text [*Romans 7*] the Apostle Paul fully knows and recognizes his need for Grace.....**Oh Wretched Man That I Am!**

And because of this recognition he is more surrendered to God....he's more usable by God....and he is more prepared to do battle against the enemy.

And so you say, Why do I still sin?, Why do I do what I don't want to do?.....friend it's an opportunity to GROW IN GRACE.

[pause]



OUR POWER

THE STRUGGLE

C.S. Lewis once said, “Sometimes God will let you struggle with a smaller sin to keep you from a bigger one” : *[you know what the bigger sin is].....pride.*

Sometimes you will struggle so that you can do nothing else but fall down in worship God like Paul.

Friends, view your current struggles as opportunities.

Because again, ***God uses our ongoing struggle with sin to grow our appreciation of grace.***

God's Law Reveals Our Sin

God's Law Reveals Our Need

**God's power can lift us in our current
struggles**

**God's power can give us hope that one day
we will struggle no more**



To recap our points from today...

God's Law Reveals Our Sin

God's Law Reveals Our Need

God's power can lift us in our current struggles

**God's power can give us hope that one day we
will struggle no more.**