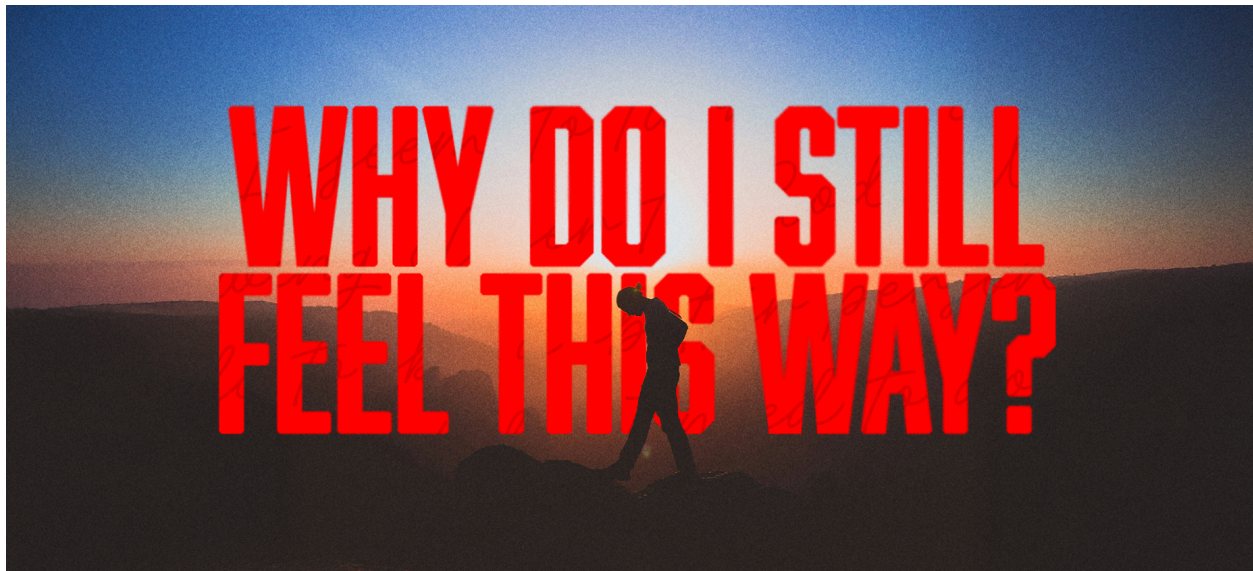




Why Do I Feel Like I Can Never Get Free?

Engage Page

There are few things in the spiritual life that wreak such havoc on our souls as being stuck in a pattern where we have fallen into sin and feel unable to break free. Even though God has given us everything we need for freedom, we feel utterly stuck. Those sinful habits make us feel like we are disappointing God and joy becomes the farthest thing from our minds. Can you relate? So how do we break free from the misery?

For Reflection and Discussion:

Read Romans 7:15-24 aloud (p.1290 *Christian Basics Bible*) and see if any of what Paul says resonates with you. Can you relate to what Paul wrote? How do we deal with feeling so stuck and miserable? Here are some common ways we deal with it:

- The Religious approach:
 - Use Rules to remind you, fail, then beat yourself up and hope that if you can make yourself feel bad enough, you will finally stop failing and disappointing God. This is Romans 7, the vicious cycle of “sin and death.”
 - Problem: 1 Timothy 1:8 (p.1379) and Romans 3:20 (p.1285)

- The Anti-Religious approach:

- Reinterpret the Bible or reject it altogether to make the behavior acceptable -
- Decide that the real problem is Religion; so accept who you are, walk away you'll feel much better.
- Problem: Isaiah 5:20 (p.754), Judges 21:25 (p.21) and Psalm 14:1 (p.608)

The approach that works is Romans 8! Read aloud Romans 7:25 and Romans 8:1-4 and answer the following:

1. How does knowing there is no condemnation for the believer help us to break free from the vicious cycle of sin and death? Based on Romans 8:1-4, read and evaluate the following statement: *"You break the vicious cycle of sin and death by trusting in what Jesus did for you instead of what you're doing for Jesus."*

What makes this so hard to appropriate for ourselves? The way to begin is to focus on what Jesus did for you. Thank the Lord and tell him that you believe it and fully receive it. To say "I don't deserve it, I need to feel worse about myself" is the same as saying, "Nice try Jesus – your efforts fell short and I am my own Savior, not you." Oooooof!

2. Read aloud Romans 8:5, 12-15. Now that you already have a relationship with Christ, now the question becomes how to enjoy it. We now have a choice. What happens when we let our thoughts be dominated by sinful ideas? Does God still love you when you do? What are the benefits of yielding to the Spirit? How does that relate to the statement, *"You break the vicious cycle of sin and death by enjoying God as your Father who delights in you as His child."*

3. Now read Romans 8:31-39 out loud. Soak it in. How does the approach of Romans 8 help us to grow and change so much more than the religious approach of Romans 7 that we read?

Memory Verse:

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. Romans 8:1