



Week 4 – January 27, 2013

Soul Detox: The Tortured Soul

Romans 7:14-20

¹⁴ So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. ¹⁵ I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. ¹⁶ But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

¹⁸ And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. ¹⁹ I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. ²⁰ But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

Daily. Not in a Day.

Paul, the author of Romans, is battling an epic struggle that many of us face: the struggle of sin. At this point in Romans, Paul has entered into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. God is changing Paul. But this transformation doesn't happen in a day. It happens daily. And Paul is obviously still struggling with his past.

Paul was a Pharisee before his encounter with and conversion to Christ. He attempted to earn salvation by keeping the Law. Like every person before and after—he failed. Failure tortured Paul. Constant failure left Paul damaged with scars of sorrow and despair. The scars remain. Paul doesn't do what he wants to do (verses 15 and 18) and he does the things he doesn't want to do (verses 15 and 19). Many of us are a lot like Paul.

The Greek word for sin is *hamartia*. It means to miss the mark or be separated. Even after his conversion, Paul experienced separation from God. Habits don't change overnight. Patterns persist. Paul, like many of us is changing, but not changed. But Paul kept changing and so can we. He later wrote: *Nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 8:39*

Questions for Reflection

1. Do you ever feel like Paul: you do the things you don't want to do and don't do the things you want to do? Why do we sin when we know sinning is wrong?

2. Sin can be thought of as separation from God. Do you feel distance and separation from God when you do something you know is wrong or when you don't do something you know is right? When you experience closeness and intimacy with God, how likely is it that you will do something you know is wrong or not do something you know is right?

3. Sin has consequences. It is self-destructive and destructive. It hurts us and those around us. When has your sin hurt you? When has your sin hurt those around you? When have you been hurt by another's sin? Even though we have experienced the consequences of our sin and the sins of the others, why do we continue to participate in harmful behaviors?

4. God's grace is greater than our sin (Romans 5:20). Grace is forgiveness of the past, power in the present, and hope for the future. Paul experienced this. Are you experiencing God's grace? What does a second chance feel like? Do you have areas in your life where you are not experiencing forgiveness? If areas of unforgiveness exist, what is it going to take for progress to happen so that accepting God's forgiveness and forgiving yourself can happen and you can move forward?

5. Connectedness and intimacy with God is the opposite of sin. This closeness with God is the best hope for diminishing the self-destructive and hurtful behaviors that exist in our lives. What are some environments where you experience the presence of God? What are some ways you best experience God's presence? Are you frustrated that you are not where you want to be in your relationship with God? What are some daily practices you can implement to experience God's grace and God's presence? What steps are you going to take to experience daily growth as a disciple?

This Week's Prayer Focus - For All Who Have Sinned

Pray this prayer daily. Spend additional time focusing on a short section of the prayer. Spend a few moments in silence listening to God and being attentive to the ways God is speaking to you.

Dear God,

I do things I know I shouldn't be doing.

And I don't do some of the things I know I should.

I want to do what is right and acceptable to You, but I often fail.

I have hurt myself.

I have hurt others.

I have created distance between You and me.

The scars remain. So does the shame.

Grief is still present. So is the guilt.

My soul is not free from remorse or regret.

But Your grace is greater than my sin.

Your love is larger than my inequity.

Your presence is more powerful than my temptations.

I confess my sins to You.

The thoughts, the words, the actions, and the inactions.

The times I have separated myself from You and from others.

Give me Your mercy to replace my guilt.

Lavish me with Your love to heal my hurting soul.

Provide me Your presence to set me free from my past.

Teach me again that Your grace forgives my failures.

Grant me the wisdom to know Your ways are holy, pure, and good.

Bless me with the strength to conquer my enticements.

Connect me to You and Your ways.

Furnish me the faith to live devoted to You and others.

And let nothing, absolute nothing, separate me from Your great love.

Amen.

This Week's Bible Memory Verse

Nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 8:39

This Week's Resources

Follow our daily Soul Detox blog at: wesouldetox.blogspot.com. Seven diverse Water's Edge writers will post a daily devotional for the next five weeks. You are invited to experience their journey, read their perspective, and join the conversation.

The Soul Detox Bible Reading Plan includes a daily scripture reading, a daily insight, and a question for reflection. Download the You-Version Bible app on your smart phone or tablet. This app includes the Soul Detox plan. Or you can find the Soul Detox plan online at: <https://www.youversion.com/reading-plans/257-soul-detox>

This Week's Challenge

Identify an area of sin in your life. Think of ways this is both self-destructive and hurtful to others. Spend some time daily investigating and dreaming what your life would look like if you completely accepted and embraced God's forgiveness in your life. Spend some additional time growing closer to God so that your life continues to daily be more defined by God's grace than by your sin.

Next Week – Soul Detox: The Seduced Soul