WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM…

“So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 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. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:21-24)

I am a mass of contradictions; I don’t want to be, but I am.
I preach a gospel of peace, but my life isn’t always driven by peace.
I talk about a Jesus who alone can fully satisfy the soul, but I am often not satisfied.
I celebrate a theology of amazing grace, but I often react in ungrace.
And if I rest in God’s control, why do I seek it for myself?
Even in moments when I think I am prepared, I end up doing what I didn’t want to do.

Irritation
Impatience
Envy
Discontent
Wrong talk
Anger
Self-focus
These are not the fruit of the new life, are not the way of grace.

So, there is this law operating inside of me.
When I step out with a desire to do good, evil follows me wherever I go.
There is this war that rages inside of me, between a desire for good and sin.
There are times when I feel like a prisoner, held against my will.

I didn’t plan to get mad in the grocery store, but that guy made me mad.
I didn’t plan to be discontent, but it just enveloped me in the quietness of the car.
That discussion wasn’t supposed to degenerate into an argument, but it did.

I am thankful for God’s grace, but there is daily evidence that I’m still in need of help.
That battle inside me cannot be solved by:

Theology
Strategies
Principles
Techniques
Plans
Preparation

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Helpful hints
Outlines.

I have been humbled by the war I cannot win.
I have been grieved by desires I cannot conquer.
I have been confronted by actions I cannot excuse.
And I have come to confess that what I really need is rescue.

So, have mercy on me, O God,
According to Your unfailing love
According to Your great compassion
Blot out my transgressions.
Wash away all my iniquity
And cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions
And my sin is always before me.
I embrace the rescue that could only be found in You.

“Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:25)

Discussion & Application Questions:

1. Where are you experiencing spiritual contradictions in your life right now?
2. How do you respond when these contradictions surface again and again in your life? Do you tend to: A) Give up in hopeless discouragement and cease to fight against sin; B) Self-atone and shift the blame to someone or something else; C) Hide and panic in depressed guilt and shame
3. Instead of those responses, meditate on the One who was consistent so that you could be accepted and forgiven even in your moments of greatest inconsistency.
4. How can you help others hold on to and celebrate the grace that we have been given, grace that that is greater and more powerful than any sin that hooks us?