This is our third Sunday in Lent and we’re nearing our halfway mark through our Wilderness Journey. The journey that ends with Easter; that ends with Resurrection Sunday. Over the past weeks, we’ve preached on this Season being a time of repentance; a time to renew our faith in Christ; a time to reflect in HUMILITY on our on our MORTALITY. A time to acknowledge that we are sinners, in need of a Savior.

This morning, our Romans’ passage turns our attention to this. But before I dig into this passage, I want to share with you a truth about me; and, if we’re really honest with each other, it may also be a truth with you. With me, I face real struggles every day of my life. Sure, there’s the constant juggling of responsibilities, and the constant reordering of priorities, to just make it through the day. And then, in my life, there’s the day-to-day drama of family relationships. I pray for my wife everyday cause I know I’m not easy to live with….

Seriously though, those are real struggles, but they pale to the struggles I fight within my mind. The horrific things I’ve done to others, and my capacity to do them again. Which is why the divinely inspired words of Paul in our Romans Reading PIERCE my heart. Paul saying, “wretched man that I am!” Again, if we’re really honest with each other, all of us should understand the words of Paul, when he says in verse 15: “I don’t understand my own actions. I don’t do what I want. I do the very thing I hate.” Now Book-Mark That. I’ll come back to it. Because I now want to go into the story of Robert Louis Stevenson.

I knew him first as the author of the novel, Treasure Island. That Book that led to many movies about buccaneers and buried gold, Long John Silver and Jim Hawkins; It’s from Stevenson we get the phrase: “Fifteen men on the Dead Man’s Chest. Yo Ho Ho!” and you know the rest! But his writing, published in 1886, is a story that speaks into our human condition. The story of: The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The story of the internal struggle between two personalities - one good and one bad, competing for control of the same body. The two couldn’t be more different.

Even if you’ve never read the book or seen one-of-over 120 film versions (my favorite being Spencer Tracy and Ingrid Bergman) we know that calling someone a Jekyll and Hyde refers to one with an unpredictably dual nature. The truth is that the struggle of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a familiar story for all believers; because, we have two natures.

We have within us that reality of our fallen nature. That because of original sin, inherited by the fall of Adam and Eve, the tendency to sin is innate within all of us. And yet, we also have our new nature in Christ Jesus. Our new birth and continuing transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit. There’s a struggle going on within us. As Al stated in his sermon two weeks ago: “our cry is to be the Same Christian on Monday that we are on Sunday.” What holds us back? What is holding you back from being the Christian you want to be? What is holding you back
This morning the Apostle Paul draws us into this internal struggle we all face. Paul! The most PROLIFIC missionary, who wrote more in the New Testament than any. Paul! Fearless, passionate, and results oriented. A true hands-on leader who led by example. Paul’s calling distinct, his theology a direct “spiritual revelation.” Paul known for rebuking and correcting the errors of churches and Christians derailed by sin. This is Paul who now tells us that he; that he struggles within. That there’s this continuing battle raging within him. That there’s this continuing battle raging within us. The old us – the Mr. Hyde—trying to emerge.

So many have the desire to do what is right, but the battle is so fierce leading to sin. For some, it’s the rising up of pride; leading to intolerance of others. The arguments, shouting, the rage within us. The Hyde of pornography, infidelity, sin we pray will never be exposed to others. The battle so fierce that many even doubt their own salvation; and walk away from the Church. Believing that no true Christian could ever struggle like they do. For others it’s sin we’ve become comfortable with. Rationalizing the SIN, we do, is ok. Especially, if no one knows about it.

It’s why this season of Lent is so important for all of us. The enemy, Satan, would like for you – to Not – reflect on your life; to convince you that there’s no need for self-examination. But here Paul is very candid about his struggle. About our human condition, the struggle believers continue to face within our fleshly hearts. Wanting to do good but falling into back into sin.

You may know, Paul’s letter to the romans is often seen as a roadmap through the gospel truths. Many of us know the teachings on The Roman Road. Taking key verses out of Romans. The journey beginning with Romans 3:23, Paul reminding us that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Leading us to Romans 6:23, where we acknowledge that “the wages of sin is death.” Many on this Roman Road then jump right to the Good News of Romans 10:13: “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Typically, on the Roman Road, we skip right over Chapter 7. Giving believers false expectations that Christian life is so easy.

Stevenson must have thought it was supposed to be easy. He was raised as an Anglican. He was taught the word of God, and yet Stevenson left the church and became an atheist. When Stevenson was asked why he wrote Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Stevenson said that he struggled with unresolved sin within his life. Leading Stevenson to say, “I drew nearer to my truth... that I am doomed… (without hope)... for I am not truly one… but truly two.” It’s as if he skipped over Romans, Chapter 7. He skipped over the HOPE that Paul points to.

In the midst of agony when Paul calls out: “Who Will Deliver Me from this internal struggle? From this body of death?” Paul is opening the door for our understanding of Sanctification within the internal struggle we all face. Sanctification is the hope we have.

Our Lenten journey would not be complete without understanding the outworking of God’s Holy Spirit within our lives. One of the Holy Spirit’s functions in the believer’s life is to cultivate our Christian character; to transform us more and more into the likeness of Christ.
TODAY, I want us to reflect on three key areas of sanctification: First, it’s the work of God. Without the work of Christ on the cross, without His righteousness, there is nothing of God’s goodness that dwells within us. Claiming Christ is how we have the power of the Holy Spirit to begin God’s work within us.

Secondly, sanctification involves our cooperation. It involves effort on our part with God. In Christ, we are not just free from sin’s penalty of death, we have access to God’s power to: Resist the flesh; To fight and to Flee from the enemy who tempts our flesh. We have God’s power to confront our struggles.

Lastly, the third point, is that sanctification is an ongoing process. Paul tells us in Galatians to: *walk* in the Ways of Christ, To “*walk by the Spirit,”* When Paul encourages us to “*walk*” he uses the Greek verb: *peripateó.* The Meaning is: To conduct one’s life. The tense of the verb reflecting continuous, and on-going activity.

Billy Graham puts it this way: “Being a Christian is more than just an instantaneous conversion - it is a daily process whereby you grow to be more and more like Christ.

Which brings me back to the beginning of my sermon. You see, a twist of the Jekyll and Hyde vernacular was used during a time when I was in the Army. After weapons check, waiting our turn to maneuver outside the perimeter, we would turn to one another and ask, “Are you ready Mr. Hyde?” A way of asking are you ready to do, what many did, that made us into something more different than we wanted to be. And I think about that with those I served with who are now withdrawn, who are easily angered, living trapped within the thoughts and memories of what was done. Veterans coping with PTSD and in need of help. Many getting that help. While sadly, others do not.

So, let’s bring this thought home right now, as so many of us struggle with what was done to us, or by us, in our day-to-day lives - our own PTSD and we are in need of help. BUT Sadly - so many refusing to get help. Refusing to confess their sin, or to forgive another. Turning away from God’s power to deal with and heal all things.

My friends, what Mr. Hyde are you struggling with? What sin has you trapped and keeping you from your Christian Walk?