

# Law of Sin and Death

by Charles Anderson

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*The law of sin and death is still operative in the lives of believers, but the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus provides a new way of living that leads to life and righteousness.*

**Duration:** 44:30

**Scripture:** Romans 8:2-13, Galatians 5:16, Galatians 5:24, James 1:15

**Topics:** "Law Of Sin"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the issue of watching movies and videos in the privacy of one's home. He argues that while there may be logical explanations for why certain prohibitions no longer apply, the most important thing is to live a life that pleases the Lord. The speaker emphasizes the importance of receiving the Lord's approval and choosing to live after the Spirit rather than the flesh. He also shares a story about Verdi and his operas to illustrate the significance of applause and recognition, suggesting that we should not discount the importance of passages in the Bible that we know well. Overall, the sermon highlights the need for a dynamic and pleasing life in accordance with God's expectations.

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## Transcript

I'd like to press on just a bit further in our considerations that began yesterday in the eighth chapter of the Book of Romans. I am certainly well aware of the fact that this is extremely familiar territory over which we're traveling, but it's, I'm certain you have found out in your Christian life that oftentimes you walk the same old paths of Scripture and suddenly there lies a nugget at your feet that you hadn't noticed before, a nugget of truth, and you say, how come I missed that the last time? Or I didn't see that when I was reading it before. And so we mustn't discount the importance of passages in the Bible that we know so very well, and therefore I do not hesitate too much to speak on this in this area of Scripture.

Just a brief moment of review, however, the connection between this great eighth chapter of Romans and what has preceded it seems to be a very logical connection when we remember that the apostle is using the connecting word, therefore, to tie in what he has been saying in previous chapters to what he wants to say now that's a very important subject matter, which namely is that there is a dynamic provided for the kind of life that God is expecting us to live. Call it by any name you wish, victorious life, abundant life, overcoming life, whatever, there is a high and lofty standard of Christian living that ought to characterize God's people, and in these days in which we're living, one fears that there ought to be more emphasis upon the victory over sin that is provided for us in our inheritance in Christ Jesus. Now, Paul has said that

there is a new law in operation in the Christian's life.

It is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and I'll not repeat by way of review here our rather clumsy illustration which we used yesterday of the book that was sustained by holding it aloft, but remind you again just this much that even though that book was apparently defying the law of gravity, nonetheless the law of gravity was still in operation, and if for one second the strength of the hand that supported that book should be withdrawn, the law of gravity would take over immediately and draw the object to the surface of the earth, or to the platform. And so, we mustn't think that because we are saved and have been living for maybe some years or some length of time in triumph over sin in our lives, a measure of triumph at least, that we have arrived at a state of perfection. There are some believers who have taught that it is possible to arrive at a state of perfection while we are still in the flesh.

They talk about sinless perfection, and I recall when I was first converted, I got introduced to a people who had an old-fashioned Methodist camp grounds in the southern part of our state, and I was intrigued by the warmth of these people, and so I went to some of their meetings, and they would have their testimony times, and I heard some astonishing testimony. People would get up and say, I was converted 12 years ago on the 15th of March 19-whatever, and then I was sinlessly perfected on August the 12th, some six or seven years later, and thank God I have not sinned for 17 years. I was awed by those testimonies, and I thought, isn't that wonderful? I wonder how you get there? Until somebody said, have you ever talked to that brother's wife? She could tell you quite a different story about his sinless perfection, but they were deadly earnest and sincere.

They honestly believed that the Christian could arrive at a state of perfection in this life. He could have the old nature removed, much as one has a tooth extracted, and it would no longer exist. Now, I'm opposed to that teaching for a simple reason.

It just ain't so, and it doesn't work out in Christian life and experience. Furthermore, it is in contradiction to what seems to be the clear teaching of the scriptures. So, the law of sin and death is still operative upon the new creature in Christ Jesus.

It is there, and it will take over and conquer if it be allowed to do so, and it's that that Paul now addresses himself to in the little segment that follows. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has indeed made me free from the law of sin and death, and then he goes on to say that the purpose of God in verse 4 is that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us. Now, that is a great statement, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.

Does that mean that the kind of righteousness or righteous life which a keeping of the law of Moses would have produced is a possibility in the new life in Christ Jesus? Is that what he is saying? That what the law, before the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus came on the scene, the law of Moses couldn't produce what it demanded of people, and the reason was because of the weakness of our flesh. See, there was no strength in the flesh so that it could produce what the law said God demanded, God expected. But now, something brand new and excitingly new has been introduced.

Despite the weakness of our flesh, and it still is weak, and it still has appetites and desires that sometimes shock us, despite all of that, there has now been introduced into our experience a new law. It is that law called the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Because of our union with him in his death, burial, and resurrection, his risen life is now operative in us.

This is not an academic thing merely, this is a reality. Christ's risen life is in you and in me. We have a new life, and with that life comes a law that governs that life.

Now, since that has happened, we have been set free from the domination and control of the old law of sin and death, so that now what the kind of life and righteousness which the law of Moses was expecting and demanding, it can be produced in us, in the believer, in Jesus Christ. It can happen. However, however, there is now introduced a condition in that phrase, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

You see, while it's true that the victorious man was a man in Christ, it does not necessarily follow that all men in Christ are victorious men. That's a reality of life. In Christ there's a law of life by which we may live above the level of the average and the ordinary life.

There is, it's true. If we find and follow this spiritual law, then a victorious life is the effect of a triumphant cause. But, the important point in this first section here is to note that it is not only the application of a new law, but it is the identification of the believer with a new walk, a new lifestyle we call it in our more modern language today, that issues in this kind of life.

So, this means some discrimination and decision must be made as to how we shall live. All of this is not automatic. There are some elements, some phases of the kind of life that he's talking about here that depend upon decisions that we make, and he's going to raise that issue right now, and talk about it, and we'll think a little bit about it too.

From the natural world comes an illustration. There are two factors that govern life, and the psychologists and the philosophers of our day are always in conflict as to which is the dominant factor in life, heredity or environment. Okay, now we're placing a great deal of stress today upon the traits we inherit because of our genes, and they'll go back to genetic origin as for explanations of why we behave the way we behave.

Because, you see, after all that is the business of psychology. Their business is to find out why we tick the way we tick, and how we can get unpicked and tick a different tick. They play with the machinery of the clock, and they want to get us back in balance, and so they argue that it may be your heredity is the way you are the way you are.

You inherited this trait or characteristic or whatever, and it becomes the dominant factor in your whole experience. Then there's the other school who says, while not ignoring totally the importance of heredity, nevertheless it's your environment that is the most powerful factor in your growth and development, and the way you behave. And it is argued then that the whole purpose of environment is to sustain life, with which I guess we have no argument.

Our physical environment is the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat, and the atmosphere in which we live, and move, and have our being. Our environment then becomes a very important factor in our life. I think Paul is now saying this, as far as heredity is concerned, you've had a good and proper birth.

You are born into the family of God, and you are a child of God, and you haven't because of that you have inherited his very nature, and his very life, sinless life. There's nothing wrong with your birth as a Christian. Then why do we behave the way we behave? Why do we act the way we act? And let's be honest and brutal with ourselves, we don't always behave and act properly, so do we now.

I'm ashamed of how I act when I get in my automobile these days, and drive down the road. First of all, I'm extremely impatient with a lot of other drivers, particularly young girls in these red-hot cars they're driving, who hit 90 miles an hour as easily as you can imagine, and go whizzing right past you, and even cut you off. Boy that's when my fuse sputters, see, and I want to say things, I do.

I say look at that gal driving, where do you think she got her driving? Then I'll go after her. That's why I haven't got the kind of buggy she's got, and she can beat me up. So my kids, in order to keep my blood pressure from going through the top of my head, my kids bought me a gadget, and in this gadget, which I haven't used very much, it, you plug it into your cigarette lighter in your car, and when you are mildly upset by what happens, you push button number one, and it says, you know, and you say yeah that's how I feel, but if you are a little bit more upset, you push button number two, then it starts to go, and if you really have had it, you hit button number three, and it sounds like a fire truck.

Now fortunately, it all happens inside your car, and nobody outside can hear it. That's the one complaint I have. I think it ought to be hooked up to a loudspeaker system on the roof of my car, so that the other drivers can hear my frustrations.

Well here I'm, what am I doing here, confessing all these sins of mine, but whether it's driving the car, and the loss of temper, or impatience, or you know, whatever it is, why do we act the way we act? Maybe there is some malfunction in our adjustment to our environment, and one scientific definition of life was this, life is the correspondence with our environment, with its environment. Life is correspondence with its environment. Now with that in mind, Paul says that there are two walks, two choices of ways of life that a Christian can live.

Who makes the choice? You do. I do. The choice is not made for us, but we make the choice.

It is ours to make, and you may walk after the flesh, or you may choose to walk after the spirit. Now that opens up for him a fairly lengthy discussion about this whole subject of walking after the flesh and after the spirit. See what he says, they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.

Now what he means by that, this word mind, this verb used here means to pursue, or to set your heart on something. To set, as it says in Colossians 2, set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. And so he says those that walk after the flesh, they have set their affections, they are pursuing, they've set their goals and their heart on the things of the flesh.

Not by way of contrast, they that are after the spirit, they set their minds on the things of the spirit. Now that seems to me to be the crux of the matter of Christian conduct. What is it that dominates one's life? What is our chief interest in life? What are the things that control us? Now you know that we can get into nitty-gritty debates on smaller things, lesser things, if we're not careful.

You know we get into debates, and I have my own opinion about what Christians should do, um, whether they should attend movies, or the theater, or play cards, or should dance, or drink, or smoke. And you know something that has happened, a phenomenon that has occurred in our time? Little by little, what used to be, if you recall, some of us can recall it, we had sort of a five cardinal sense that we said Christians ought not to be indulged, or ought not to indulge themselves in smoking, drinking, dancing, going to the movies, I don't know what the other was, other things, but what was it? Oh, playing cards? Got to look out now, because we got rook chapters, you know. I know some Christians have a rook night, they meet together for rook once a week.

You cannot try them away from that night either, it gets to be a controlling thing for them. Well, you know what's happened, the phenomenon is, it's interesting, the smoking situation has been pretty well taken care of by the American Cancer Society, right? Anybody that's got any two grains of common sense doesn't smoke. It's only idiots who do it anymore, who want to commit slow suicide, but it's got nothing to do with spiritual prohibitions, or whatever, just you've got any sense, you don't smoke, because of all the terrible things that can happen to you.

When it comes to dancing, well, that's sort of out, when one looks at that, I just can't imagine seeing Christians go through the gyrations of what we see on television today, and they call it dancing. It's a different kind of dancing a few years ago. Now, the movie problem is another problem, except you know what's happened to it.

Now, with our videos, we can go out and buy anything that you see on the screen, and show it in your home, so long as you pull the shades down, and the elders who pass by don't see you indulging in watching in your home what you would have watched, or would not have watched, rather, in the open theater, and so it goes across the board until nearly all of these prohibitions find some logical explanation as to why they no longer ought to occupy the time and the attention of the Christian. Well, maybe when that set of prohibitions moves off the scene, a new society may produce a new set of prohibitions, and so we tick them off and say Christians ought not to do this, and this, and this, and this, and this. I had a man one time who said to me, you know, I don't know what you preach to your people, but I think you must use a rubber hose.

I understand that when your members go out the door and shake hands with you on Sunday morning, you say to them, you go to the movies this week, and if they say yes, you bell them over their head with a rubber hose. If they say no, you say fine, you can go and come back the next time. He said, it seems that way because your folks are afraid to do all these things.

Well, he was misinterpreting the whole situation, but we can argue and debate these little nitty gritty, but that's not the thing that Paul's talking about here. The flesh is a whole new approach to life. It has a thousand different aspects the flesh does.

One does not have to indulge in what we have just talked about as fleshly pursuit in order to escape being called fleshly. You can be obsessed with other habits, other things. Gossip is a bad thing, it's of the flesh.

Putting down other believers, being highly critical of other folks, being unmindful of other people's feelings, being cold and callous and un-Christlike in our judgments of others. This rises from the flesh out there in that world that we're not a part of, because we've been separated from it by our relationship to Jesus Christ. It's a dog-eat-dog world.

Men in the corporate world climb up on the fingers of others on the ladder as long as they get to the top. They care not who gets crushed on the process of moving upward. A selfish goal, as the aggrandizement of the flesh.

That's what Paul's talking about. Are all of these things what occupies your thinking, what obsesses you, or are there other things that grow not out of our fleshly nature, but come from the Holy Spirit of God? Divine things, the things of the Lord, so that the music of God attracts us. We want to be with God's people, we delight in the things of God.

He says that's minding the things of the Spirit, so that if you mind the things of the flesh, you will be one who lives after the flesh. And that is what he calls being carnally minded, to be carnally minded. And he says it issues in death.

Now, in a moment or two, he'll say something else, and I will reserve this comment if we can get to it, about what he means by that. But to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Now, let me explain, says Paul, why this is so important.

The carnal mind is enmity against God. I think he has reference here to the mind of a man who is unregenerate. Our old nature, there it is, that nature we inherited from our parents, they inherited from theirs, they from theirs, and so on.

And that fallen sinful nature has no time for the things of God. In fact, there is developed in it a strange animosity toward God. It is enmity toward God, and it isn't subject to the law of God.

No way. In fact, if it should in any sense want to be subject to the law of God, it finds that it is incapacitated. It cannot be.

It cannot be subject to the law of God, because it is weak, it is poison. The old divines used to talk about the total depravity of human nature. What they meant by that was that man is made up of at least three intrinsic and basic elements.

His intellect, his emotions, and his will. And they said that sin, the disease of sin, had poisoned all departments of public, of personality, of human personality, so that man was a totally depraved creature. In his intellect, he was incapable of really understanding and comprehending God.

I wish we could get that across to some of our young people. When I became a student at New York University, I took some courses under ungodly men. I paid a lot of money for those courses, not what they're paying today by any means, but I think I was paying \$75 an hour.

And you have a five-hour course, a four-hour course, and that's a lot of money. And I figured that I'd take this course from this man. He's a philosopher, or he's a historian, or whatever, and I want to get my money's worth.

So, when he talked about philosophy, or he talked about psychology, or sociology, or history, I said, because I was a Christian then, I said, Lord open up all the pores of my mind, so that I can take in all the wisdom of this man. He's expert in this field, and I want to soak up everything he says, so that I'll not forget it. But, you know, it wasn't too long.

In fact, the end of the first hour, I realized this man wasn't a Christian. Now, he had so many doctor's degrees after his name, that he had more letters in his degrees than he had in his name. He was a smart man, brilliantly educated, but when he talked about God, you know, he became an imbecile.

He really, overnight, I mean instantly, he was an imbecile, an idiot. He didn't know what he was talking about. He denigrated God.

He dishonored God by the way he spoke of him, and with what scorn he often, or they often, spoke about divine things. And so, I said, Lord give me an automatic opening and closing process in my brain, will you please? The minute that professor talks about God, would you let all the pores of my head be closed up,

so that I don't hear a letter word he's saying? Because he's such a dummy when it comes to divine things. Teachers in our beginner's department of Sunday school knew more about God than he did.

Why should I listen to his truck, huh? So, I closed my head. Then, when he turned away from divine things, and he talked about natural things, I opened my head again, because he was a man expert in that field. But, you see, the natural mind, the mind of the man who's unregenerate, has been poisoned by sin, so that he cannot think right about God.

His intellect is twisted and poisoned. It can't even be subject to God's laws. As far as his emotions are concerned, he doesn't like to have God in his knowledge.

He doesn't want to talk about God. We find that true in our contact with people on the street, don't we? The minute you talk about God. If on an airplane, somebody says to me, I remember an experience, somebody said once, I was riding by myself, my wife wasn't with me, I was by myself, and this person was a talkative person.

You get them sometimes. You want to sleep, but they want to talk. But, this fellow said, I finally got around, he said, what do you do for a living? Well, what am I going to say? The minute you say Bible teacher, or preacher, they turn away.

So, I said, I smiled as sweetly as I could, and I said, I'm a hagiologist. Oh, he says, that's so. Now, I knew he didn't know what I meant, I knew that, so I just let him stew in his own juice for a couple of minutes longer, and then he finally said, and I expected this question.

He turned, he said, what was it you said you were? I said, a hagiologist. He said, never heard of that before. I said, no, I don't suppose you have.

Well, he says, and I knew he was going to come to this question. I just knew it, but I wanted him to maneuver himself into a corner. He said, I'll tell you this, whatever that is that you do, you look like you are enjoying it.

I said, man, I'm delighted and thrilled with it. I wouldn't be anything else than this. Well, he said, what in the world is a hagiologist? Now, I knew he was going to say that to me.

Oh, I looked at him as though, you dummy, don't you know? But, I didn't say that. But, I said, don't you, I did say, I guess, don't you know? No. A hagiologist.

Why? I thought a lot of people knew. You see, that comes from a Greek word, hagios, which means holy. My job is to go around the world trying to make people holy.

Oh, and he moved over a little bit. Almost as if, oh, I didn't know you had a communicable disease. All of a sudden, that man didn't want to talk much anymore, because we talked about God, and God was interfering with his thought patterns, you see.

So, he didn't like that very much. He wasn't comfortable. The natural mind is not comfortable with God.

Its emotions are not attached to God. As far as the will of man is concerned, that's been bent all out of shape, and he cannot be obedient unto the law of God, so that intellectually, and emotionally, and volitionally, man is a creature who is way out beyond the circumference of the life in God. Now, he says, you certainly don't want to have a mind like that, because the carnal mind is envy against God.

It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. They can't please him.

It's impossible for them to please him. But, you are not in the flesh. He doesn't mean they were not alive.

Of course they were alive. He meant you are not in that circle, in that environment, which we call the flesh. The principle that will dominate and control your whole life pattern.

You're not in that anymore, but you're in the spirit. You're in that realm in which the Holy Spirit is in control, and he dominates all of your life, and all parts of it. If so be that the spirit of God dwell in you.

Now, if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. He doesn't belong to him. And, if Christ be, notice these it's running down through here, quite a few of them, and if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.

See, the body happens to be the vehicle in which is deposited this sinful nature. Like a flower pot, the contents are in the pot, and so he says, if Christ be in you, now something has happened to you, and this vehicle, this body in which the old nature has been deposited, this body no longer has its legal claims upon you. It's legitimate demands upon you.

It's dead, really, and this takes us way back to chapter six, where we're to reckon ourselves with being dead in Christ. But, now this new principle, the spirit of life is life because of righteousness. But, if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his spirit that dwelleth in you.

What does that mean? Well, obviously, the Holy Spirit is the one who will, to whom I think of the divine trinity, will be assigned the mysterious task of putting back together the dust of our bodies, and raising them from the grave, and presenting them in heaven for the new body in Christ. The Holy Spirit becomes the divine factor or personality who works in the quickening, bringing back to life of this mortal body of ours. That refers to the resurrection.

There may also be, may I say this, there may also be some reference to the idea that even now, while we're living in this mortal body, there is a quickening, a rejuvenation of this body by virtue of the fact that it is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. If it's true, listen, if it's true that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost, then their bodies are clean. They should be, and we are living this new life in a clean body.

And so, there has been a quickening, a quickening of our mortal body by his spirit that dwells in it. Therefore, brethren, now he comes to the bottom line, and we better come to it too. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after it.

That's past. For if you live after the flesh, you shall die. There are some sober passages in the scriptures that we sometimes pass over too rapidly.

It may well be that some believers have given themselves over so totally to a life dominated by the fleshly, sinful nature, instead of controlled by the Holy Spirit, that God says, that's enough. Is it possible to shorten one's life here on this earth by the way one lives? I think that's possible, and it may well be that some believers please don't go out and say I said this of all believers, it may be that some believers have had their time cut short because of the type or kind of life they have deliberately chosen to live. And it's not a spiritual life, and therefore they are a disgrace to the name of Christ.

They don't bring honor to him, they don't bring glory to him. It's far better that they should be at home in heaven than that they should be allowed to continue living on the earth in a disgraceful condition. But if you, through the Spirit, do put to death the deeds of the body, you shall live.

What is the bottom line of everything? Oh, in order that we might please him. Please him. That's it.

Have I chosen in my life, now that I'm a new creature in Christ, and I have the indwelling Holy Spirit, have I chosen that the whole environment of my life shall be that which pleases the Lord? I don't mind whether it pleases you, or you, or them, or they. Does it please the Lord? That's the important thing. There's a rather fine story told about Verdi and his operas.

They say that when he first performed one of his famous operas in Italy, it was such a brilliant performance that at the conclusion the whole audience rose, and the applause was so great it made the whole house ring. Wave after wave and wave after wave of applause, it seemed that they weren't going to let Verdi go. He stood in the midst of it all, seemingly unmoved, and up there in one of the high balconies was a man.

Verdi fixed his eyes on that man. It was Rossini, his maestro, his teacher, and all Verdi wanted was just one indication from Rossini that he had done well enough to please the maestro, and when he received that little sign that he had done well enough, the maestro was pleased, then he was willing to accept the plaudits of the audience. When it's all said and done, my friends, to receive the Lord's approval is the most important thing, isn't it? To live our life so that when we're finished, he says, I know you chose to live after the Spirit, not to mind the things of the flesh, but to mind the things of the Spirit of God, and I was pleased with that.

Lord, we pray that thou help us to desire above everything else, day by day and every day, to be pleasing to thee, to search for the eye of God, to see if there is in it the glimmer of satisfaction, and when we come to the end of the journey, and the whole of life, the pattern of it put together, we want thee to say, well done, pleased me. Help us so to live, Lord. We need the empowering and strengthening of thy Spirit, who dwells within us, to overcome the flesh with all of its appeals, and to live triumphantly for him.

We give thee thanks in Jesus' dear name. Amen.

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