

# Studies in Romans-05

by William MacDonald

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*The gospel teaches that salvation by grace through faith does not encourage sinful living, but rather encourages holy living, and that believers are free from the law and under grace.*

**Duration:** 42:31

**Topics:** "Studies"

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## Description

In this sermon, Marcus Rainsford discusses the consequences of living an unsaved life. He highlights how our faculties are abused, affections are prostrated, and time is squandered when we are not living in accordance with God's word. Rainsford emphasizes the importance of focusing on Christ rather than constantly introspecting, as victory can only be found in Him. He also explains the conflict between our two natures and the struggle to do what is right. Rainsford encourages believers to dedicate their bodies as slaves of righteousness and to yield control of their members to God for the cause of righteousness. He reminds us that sin no longer has dominion over us as believers because our old selves were crucified with Christ and we are now under grace, not under the law.

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## Transcript

Now we will look at chapter 6 of Paul's epistle to the Romans. What he had said at the close of chapter 5, namely that grace superabounded over all man's sin, raises another question, and a very important one. The question is this, does the teaching of the gospel, that is, salvation by grace through faith, encourage or even permit sinful living? The answer, an emphatic denial, extends over chapters 6 through 8. It will help us to follow Paul's argument here in chapter 6 if we understand the difference between the believer's position and his practice.

His position is his standing in Christ. His practice is what he is or should be in everyday life. Grace puts us into the position, then teaches us to walk worthy of it.

Our position is absolutely perfect because we are in Christ. Our practice should increasingly correspond to our position. It never will correspond perfectly until we see the Savior, but we should be becoming more and more conformed to his image in the meantime.

We will see that the apostle first sets forth the truth of our identification with Christ in death and resurrection, then exhorts us to live in the light of this great truth. Verse 1, the Jewish objector comes forward with what he thinks is a clinching argument. If the gospel of grace teaches that man's sin provides

for an even greater display of God's grace, then doesn't it suggest that we should continue in sin that grace might be magnified all the more? A more modern version of the argument is as follows.

You say that men are saved by grace through faith apart from the law. But if all you have to do to be saved is believe, then you could go out and live in sin. According to this argument, grace is not a sufficient motivation for holy living.

You must put people under the restraints of the law. And in connection with this, Oswald Chambers says, it has been helpfully suggested that there are four answers in the chapter to the initial question, shall we continue in sin? First answer, you cannot because you are united to Christ. Reasoning, verses 1 through 11.

You need not because sin's dominion has been broken by grace. Here you have Paul appealing, verses 12 through 14. Third, you must not because it would bring sin in again as master.

Here Paul is commanding, verses 15 through 19. And fourthly, you had better not for it would end in disaster. And here you have Paul warning, verses 20 through 23.

Verse 2, Paul's first answer is that we cannot continue in sin because we have died to it. This is a positional truth. When Jesus died to sin, he died as our representative.

Therefore, when he died, we died. He died to the whole question of sin, settling it once and for all. All those who are in Christ are seen by God as having died to sin.

That doesn't mean that the believer is sinless. It means that he has identified with Christ in his death and in all that his death means. Verse 3, water baptism gives a visual demonstration of this glorious truth.

All those who are baptized unto Christ Jesus publicly identify themselves with him in all that he has done for them. One outstanding part of his work was his death. Therefore, believers are baptized unto his death.

They are seen as having died with him. Verse 4, baptism by immersion depicts the believer's burial unto death with Christ. It is a figure of what took place in the death of Christ.

When the Lord Jesus was immersed in death's dark waters, every child of God was immersed thereto. So, in a sense, a believer attends his own funeral when he is baptized. It should be clear that the apostle is referring to water baptism and not to the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The latter is not a picture of death and resurrection, but is the actual incorporation of the believer into the body of Christ, as we see in 1 Corinthians 12, 13. Only baptism by immersion illustrates death and resurrection. Paul goes on to teach the twin truth of our identification with Christ in his resurrection.

Our Lord Jesus was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, which simply means that all the divine perfections of God, his righteousness, his love, his justice, etc., demanded that he raise the Lord. In view of the excellency of the person and work of the Savior, it would not have been consistent with God's character to leave the Savior in the tomb. But he did raise him, and because we are identified with Christ in his resurrection, we can and should walk in newness of life.

W. P. McKay wrote, The Lord is risen, with him we also rose, and in his grave he vanquished all our foes. The Lord is risen, beyond the judgment land, in him, in resurrection life, we stand. V. 5. Just as we have been united with Christ in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection.

I understand the words, the likeness of his death, to refer to the believers being put under the water in baptism. The actual union with Christ in his death took place nearly 2,000 years ago, but baptism is a likeness of what happened then. We not only go under the water, we come up out of the water, a likeness of his resurrection.

While it is true that the phrase, in the likeness, is not part of the original text in the second part of this verse, it must be supplied to complete the meaning. V. 6. We confess in baptism that our old man was crucified with Christ. Our old man refers to all that we were as children of Adam, our old, evil, unregenerate selves with all the old habits and appetites.

That conversion we put off the old man and put on the new, as if exchanging filthy rags for spotless clothing. Colossians 3, verses 9 and 10. The crucifixion of the old man at Calvary means that the body of sin has been put out of commission.

The body of sin does not refer to the physical body, rather it means indwelling sin, personified as a tyrant ruling the person. This body of sin is not destroyed, as is suggested in the RSV, or done away with, as suggested in the New American Standard Bible, but it is annulled or rendered inoperative as a controlling power. The last clause shows that this is the meaning.

It says in the New International Version that we should no longer be slaves to sin. The tyranny of sin over us has been broken. V. 7. When a man dies, he is justified from sin.

You get that expression in the American Standard Version. Here is a man, for instance, who is sentenced to die in the electric chair for murdering a police officer. As soon as he dies, he is justified from that sin.

The penalty has been paid and the case is closed. Now we have died with Christ on the cross of Calvary. Not only has our penalty been paid, but sin's stranglehold on our lives has been broken.

We are no longer the helpless captives of sin. V. 8. Our death with Christ is one side of the truth. The other side is that we shall also live with him.

We have died to sin. We live unto righteousness. Sin's dominion over us has been shattered.

We share Christ's resurrection life here and now, and we shall share it for all eternity. Praise his name. V. 9. Our confidence is based on the fact that the risen Christ will never die again.

Death has no more dominion over him. Death did have dominion over him for three days and nights, but that dominion is forever past. The Christ can never die again.

V. 10. When the Lord Jesus died, he died to the whole subject of sin once for all. He died to sin's claims, its wages, its demands, its penalty.

He finished the work and settled the account so perfectly that it never needs to be repeated. Now that he lives, he lives unto God. In one sense, of course, he always lived to God.

But now he lives to God in a new relationship as the risen one, and in a new sphere where sin can never enter. Before going on, let us review what we have learned in the first ten verses. The general subject is sanctification, God's method for holy living.

As to our standing before God, we are seen as having died with Christ and having risen with him. This is pictured in baptism. Our death with Christ ends our history as men and women in Adam.

God's sentence on our old man was not reformation, but death. That sentence was carried out when we died with Christ. Now we are risen with Christ to walk in newness of life.

Sin's tyranny over us has been broken because sin has nothing to say to a dead person. We are now set free to live unto God. Verse 11.

Paul has set forth what is true of us positionally. Now he turns to the practical outworking of this truth in our lives. We are to reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

To reckon here means to accept what God says about us as true and to live in the light of it. It means believing what God says in Romans 6.6 and knowing it as a fact in one's own personal salvation. Ruth Paxson says this demands a definite act of faith which results in a fixed attitude toward the old man.

We will see him where God sees him, on the cross, crucified with Christ. Faith will operate continuously to keep him where grace placed him. This involves us very deeply for it means that our hearty consent has been given to God's condemnation of and judgment upon that old I as altogether unworthy to live and as wholly stripped of any further claims upon us.

The first step in a walk of practical holiness is this reckoning upon the crucifixion of the old man. That concludes the quotation from Ruth Paxson. We reckon ourselves dead to sin when we respond to temptation as a dead man would.

One day Augustine was accosted by a woman who had been his mistress before his conversion. When he walked away quickly, she called after him, Augustine, it's me, it's me! Quickening his pace, he called back over his shoulders, Yes, I know, but it's no longer me. What he meant was that he was dead to sin and alive to God.

A dead man has nothing to do with immorality, lying, cheating, gossiping, or any other sin. But we are now alive to God in Christ Jesus. This means we are called to holiness, worship, prayer, service, and fruit bearing.

We saw in verse 6 that our old man was crucified in order that sin as a reigning tyrant might be knocked out, so that we would no longer be the helpless captives of sin. Now the practical exhortation is based on what is true positionally. We should not let sin reign in our mortal bodies by obeying its evil desires.

At Calvary the reign of sin was ended by death. Now we must make it so practically. Our cooperation is needed.

Only God can make us holy, but he will not do it without our willing involvement. Verse 13, that brings us to the third key word in this chapter. The first is know, K-N-O-W, verses 3 and 6. The second is reckon, verse 11.

Now the third is yield. We must not yield the members of our body to sin, to be used as weapons or tools of wickedness. Our obligation is to turn control of our members to God, to be used in the cause of righteousness.

After all, we have been raised to life from death. And as we were reminded in verse 4, we should walk in newness of life. Verse 14, now another reason is given why sin will not have dominion over us as believers.

The first reason was that our old man was crucified with Christ, verse 6. The second is that we're not under law, but under grace. Sin does have the upper hand over a person who is under law. Why? Because the law tells him what to do, but it doesn't give him the power to do it.

And the law stirs up dormant desires in fallen human nature to do what is forbidden. It's the old story that forbidden fruit is sweet. Sin does not have dominion over the man who's under grace.

The believer has died to sin. He has received the indwelling Holy Spirit as the power for holy living. And he is motivated by love for the Savior, not by fear of punishment.

Grace is the only thing that really produces holiness. As Denny put it, it's not restraint, but inspiration that liberates from sin. Not Mount Sinai, but Mount Calvary, which makes saints.

Verse 15, those who are afraid of grace insist that it gives license for sinning. Paul meets this error head on by asking the question, then flatly denying it. He says that we are free from the law, but not lawless.

Grace means freedom to serve the Lord, not to sin against Him. In verse 3, the question was, shall we continue in sin? Here the question is, shall we sin just a little? The answer in both cases is a horrified no. Verse 16, it's a simple fact of life that when we submit ourselves to someone as master, we become that person's servant.

Well then, if we sell out to sin, we become slaves of sin, and death lies waiting at the end of that road. If, on the other hand, we choose to obey God, the result is a holy life. Sin's slaves are bound by guilt, fear, and misery.

God's servants are freed to do what the new nature loves. So why be a slave when you can be free? Verse 17, Phillips paraphrases this verse as follows, Thank God that you, who were at one time the servants of sin, honestly responded to the impact of Christ's teaching when you came under its influence. The Roman Christians had given wholehearted obedience to the gospel of grace, to which they had been committed, including all the doctrines which Paul has been teaching in this letter.

Verse 18, correct doctrine should lead to correct duty. Responding to the truth that they had been made free from sin as master, they became bond slaves of righteousness. The phrase, free from sin, does not mean that they no longer have a sinful nature.

Neither does it mean that they no longer committed acts of sin. The context shows that it is referring to freedom from sin as the dominating power in their life. Verse 19, in the previous verse, the apostle had spoken of bond slaves of righteousness.

He realizes that this is a misnomer. Those who live righteously are not in bondage. Colonel Gahan said, practical righteousness is not slavery, except when we speak after the manner of men.

Those who practice sin are the bond slaves of sin, but those whom the Son sets free are free indeed. John chapter 8, verses 34 and 36. So Paul explains that he had used this simile of bond slaves because of the difficulty people have in understanding truth when it is stated in general terms.

It often needs to be illustrated from everyday life to become intelligible. Before their conversion, the believers had surrendered their bodies as slaves to all kinds of impurity and to one kind of wickedness after another. Now they should dedicate those same bodies as slaves of righteousness.

So that their lives would be truly holy. Verse 20, when they were in bondage to sin, the only freedom they knew was freedom from righteousness. It was a desperate condition to be in, bound by every evil and free from every good.

Verse 21, Paul challenges them and us to inventory the fruits of an unsaved life. Fruits in those activities which now bring shame to a believer. Marcus Rainsford has drawn up such an inventory as follows.

This is what happens, the fruit of an unsaved life. Faculties abused, affections prostrated, time squandered, influence misused, best friends wronged, our best interests violated, love outraged, especially the love of God, or to sum it up in one word, shame. The end of these things is death.

A.T. Pearson said, every sin tends to death, and if persisted in, ends in death as its goal and fruit. Verse 22, conversion changes a man's position completely. Now he is free from sin as master and becomes a willing servant to God.

The result is a holy life now, an eternal life at the end of the journey. Of course the believer has eternal life now too, but this refers to that life in its fullness, including the glorified body. The apostle summarizes the subject by presenting these vivid contrasts.

Two masters, sin and God. Two methods, wages and free gift. Two aftermaths, death and eternal life.

Notice that eternal life is in a person, and that person is the Lord Jesus. All who are in Christ have eternal life. It's as simple as that.

Chapter 7. The apostle now anticipates a question that will inevitably arise, namely, what is the relation of the Christian to the law? Perhaps Paul had Jewish believers especially in mind in answering this question, since the law was given to the nation of Israel, but the principles apply just as much to Gentile believers who foolishly want to put themselves under the law as a rule of life after they have been justified. In the previous chapter we saw that death ended the tyranny of the sin nature in the life of the child of God. Now we will see that death likewise ends the dominion of the law over those who were under it.

Verse 1 is connected with chapter 6, verse 14. We are not under law, but under grace. The connection is this.

You should know that you are not under law, or are you ignorant that the law has dominion over a man only when he is alive? Paul is speaking to those who are familiar with fundamental principles of law, and who therefore should know that the law has nothing to say to a dead man. Verse 2. To illustrate this, Paul shows how death breaks the marriage contract. A woman is bound by the marriage law to her husband as long as he is alive, but if he dies she is discharged from that law.

Verse 3. If a woman has sexual relations with another man while her husband is living, she is guilty of adultery. If, however, her husband dies, she is free to marry again without any cloud of wrongdoing. Verse 4. In applying this illustration, we must not press each detail with exact literalness.

For instance, neither the husband nor the wife represents the law. The point of the illustration is that just as death breaks the marriage relationship, so the death of the believer with Christ breaks the jurisdiction of the law over him. Notice that Paul does not say that the law is dead.

The law still has a valid ministry in producing conviction of sin. And remember that when he says we in this passage, he is thinking of those who were Jews before they came to Christ. We have been made dead to the law by the body of Christ, the body here referring to the giving up of his body in death.

We are no longer joined to the law. Now we are joined to the risen Christ. One marriage has been broken by death.

A new one has been formed. And now that we are free from the law, we can bring forth fruit unto God. Verse 5. His mention of fruit reminds Paul of the kind of fruit we brought forth when we were in the flesh.

The expression in the flesh obviously doesn't mean in the body. In the flesh here is descriptive of our standing before we were saved. The flesh then was the basis of our standing before God.

We depended on what we were or what we could do to win acceptance with God. In the flesh is the opposite of in Christ. Prior to our conversion, we were ruled by sinful passions, which were stimulated by the law.

Not that the law originated them, but only that by naming them and then forbidding them, it stirred up the strong desire to do them. These passions of sin found expression in our physical members. And when we thus yielded to temptation, we brought forth poison fruit that results in death.

Elsewhere the apostle speaks of this fruit as the works of the flesh. Immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, and carousing. Galatians chapter 5 verses 19 through 21.

Verse 6. Among the many wonderful things that happen when we are converted is that we are discharged from the law. This is a result of our having died with Christ. Since he died as our representative, we died with him.

In his death he fulfilled all the claims of the law by paying its awful penalty. Therefore we are free from the law and from its inevitable curse. There can be no double jeopardy.

Payment God will not twice demand. First at my bleeding surety's hand and then again at mine. We are now set free to serve in newness of the spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

Our service is motivated by love, not fear. It is a service of freedom, not bondage. It is no longer a question of slavishly adhering to minute details of forms and ceremony, but of the joyful outpouring of ourselves for the glory of God and the blessing of others.

Verse 7. It might seem from all this that Paul is critical of the law. He had said that believers are dead to sin and dead to the law, and this might have created the impression that the law is evil. But this is far from the case.

He goes on to describe his own experience in putting himself under the law as a rule of life. Though justified by faith apart from the law, he sought to achieve holiness through law keeping, but he found that the law cannot sanctify any more than it can justify. All that the law did was show him the reality of his sin

nature.

He had already learned that it was wrong to commit certain forbidden acts, but now he was to learn that sin dwelling in him was a lot worse than anything he had ever done. The law exposed the depravity of his old nature. For example, the law said, Thou shalt not covet.

Coveting takes place in the mind. This showed Paul that his thought life was polluted. It was not only his outward acts, but his inward life as well.

Verse 8. And so what happened was this. The law forbade all forms of coveting, but it did not give the power to overcome. Instead, Paul began to think lustful thoughts, and the more he thought them, the more he wanted to do them.

It wasn't the law's fault. It was indwelling sin's fault. Whenever an act is forbidden, the sinful nature wants to do it all the more.

Proverbs 9.17. Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. Apart from the law, sin is dead. That is, relatively speaking.

The sinful nature is like a sleeping dog. When the law comes and says, the dog wakes up and proceeds to do whatever is forbidden. Verse 9. Paul was alive apart from the law at one time.

After his conversion, there was a period during which his sin nature was comparatively dormant. But when he turned to the law as a means of achieving holiness, the full meaning of the law came home to him with convicting power. All at once he realized what a pit of corruption was in his heart.

Indwelling sin became thoroughly inflamed. He died as far as achieving holiness through law-keeping was concerned. Verse 10.

He found that the commandment which was unto life actually turned out to be unto death for him. But what does he mean that the commandment was unto life? This probably looks back to Leviticus 18.5 where God said, So shall you keep my statutes and my judgments, by which a man may live if he does them. I am the Lord.

That's quoted from the New American Standard Bible. Ideally, the law promised life to those who kept it. Actually, no sinful son of Adam could keep it.

The sign outside a lion's cage says, Stay back of the railing. If obeyed, the commandment is unto life. But for the child who disobeys and reaches in to pet the lion, it is unto death.

Verse 11. Once again the apostle emphasizes that the law was not to blame. It was indwelling sin that incited him to do what the law prohibited.

Sin tricked him into thinking that the forbidden fruit wasn't so bad after all, that it would bring him happiness and that he could get away with it. It suggested that God was withholding pleasures from him that were for his good. Thus sin slew him in the sense that it spelled death to his best hopes of achieving holiness through the law.

Verse 12. The law itself is holy, and each commandment is holy, righteous, and good. In our thinking, we must constantly remember that there's nothing the matter with the law.

It was given by God and therefore is perfect as an expression of his will for his people. The weakness of the law lay in the raw materials it had to work with. It was given to people who were already sinners.

They needed the law to give them the knowledge of sin, but beyond that they needed a savior to deliver them from the penalty and power of sin. Verse 13. Is it possible then that something as good as the law could have become death to Paul? No, it was not the law, but indwelling sin using the law.

Spurgeon says the sinfulness of sin is most clearly seen in the perverting of the best things to deadly purposes. There might seem to be a contradiction between what Paul says here, that is in verse 13, and back in verse 10. There he said he found the law to be unto death.

Here he denies that the law became death to him. The solution is this. The law by itself can neither improve the old nature on the one hand, or cause it to sin on the other.

It can reveal sin just as a thermometer reveals the temperature, but it cannot control sin like a thermostat controls the temperature. But what happens is this. Man's fallen human nature instinctively wants to do whatever it is forbidden to do.

So it uses the law to awaken otherwise dormant lusts in the life of the believer who seeks sanctification by the law. The more he tries, the worse it gets, till at last he is brought to despair of hope. Thus sin uses the law to cause any hope of improvement to die in him.

And he sees the exceeding sinfulness of his old nature as he never saw it before. Verse 14. When he was in that crisis of despair, Paul acknowledged that the law is spiritual, that is, holy in itself and adapted to man's spiritual benefit.

But he realized that he was carnal because he was not experiencing victory over the power of indwelling sin in his life. He was sold under sin. He felt as if he were sold as a slave with sin as his master.

Verse 15. Now the apostle describes the ding-dong struggle that goes on in a believer who does not know the truth of his identification with Christ in death and in resurrection. It is the conflict between the two natures in the person who climbs Mount Sinai in search of holiness.

You will notice the prominence of the first personal pronouns I, me, my, myself. People who go through this Roman 7 experience have taken an overdose of vitamin I. They are introspective to the core, searching for victory in self where it cannot be found. Incidentally, most of modern Christian psychological counseling focuses the counselee's attention upon himself and thus adds to the problem instead of relieving it.

People need to know that they have died with Christ and have risen with him to walk in newness of life. Then instead of trying to improve the flesh, they will relegate it to the grave of Jesus. In describing this struggle between the two natures, Paul says, I do not understand my own actions.

That's the way it's translated in the Revised Standard Version. He is a split personality, a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He finds himself indulging in things that he doesn't want to do and practicing things that he hates.

In thus committing acts which his better judgment condemns, he is taking sides with the law against himself because the law condemns them too. So he gives inward assent that the law is right. This leads to

the conclusion that the culprit is not the new man in Christ, but the sinful, corrupt nature that dwells in him.

But we must be careful here. We must not excuse our sinning by passing it off to indwelling sin. We are responsible for what we do and we mustn't use this verse to pass the buck.

All Paul is doing here is tracking down the source of his sinful behavior, not excusing it. Verse 18. There can be no progress in holiness until we learn what Paul learned here, that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing.

The flesh here means the evil, corrupt nature which is inherited from Adam and which is still in the believer. It is the source of every evil action which a person commits. There is nothing good in it.

When we learn this, it delivers us from ever looking for any good in the old nature. It delivers us from being disappointed when we don't find any good there. And it delivers us from occupation with ourselves.

There is no victory in introspection. As the saintly McChain said, for every look we take at ourselves, we should take ten looks at Christ. To confirm the hopelessness of the flesh, the apostle mourns that although he has the desire to do what is right, he doesn't have the resources in himself to translate his desire into action.

The trouble, of course, is that he's casting his anchor inside the boat. Verse 19, And so the conflict between the two natures rages on. He finds himself failing to do the good things he wants to do and doing the evil that he despises.

He is just one great mass of contradictions and paradoxes.

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