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## ROMANS 5

Romans Series: How God Changes People

[PRAYER] Lord, your grace is amazing and we need the power of your Spirit to change our lives. Lord, there are struggles that we all face. Each one of us has challenges in our own lives that make it a wrestling to do what's right sometimes. We want to be empowered by your Spirit, controlled by your Spirit, so we ask you this morning to remind us again what that looks like in very practical ways. Heavenly Father, we're going to open your word now and we do so recognizing that you speak to us as we do. So I pray that you would teach us, each one. Lead us to understand more about who you are, then who we are, and what your plan is for us. Lord, teach us each day to pray and ask how we can fit into that plan that you've designed for us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Please open your Bibles with me to Romans 5. We're going through the book of Romans verse by verse, but one of the questions we're asking as we go through the book of Romans is how does God change people? It's a very important question I think.

As you know, I'm a counselor and so I spend a lot of time working with people to help people change. My success is directly related to my understanding of how God changes people. I've found so many interesting things out of this book of the Bible that I felt it helpful to be able to share some of those things as we're going through. So although we're taking this verse by verse, a lot of the applications will have to do with how people change. Whether we're talking about the people that are your friends, or your coworkers, or those people you live with in your home, or yourself, people change.

If we're going to maximize that change, we're going to start with good theology. If we can understand the theology of how people change, we understand who God is and who we are and how we fit into that plan, then we can maximize that change in our own lives in what God wants to do.

Now two weeks ago we looked at verses 1-2, which I'm going to read now just to remind you of where we are in the passage. Because justification, that salvation that we have, is what provides us with peace in our relationship with God to start with. And then verses 3-4 talk more about how that grows inside of us as we continue to grow in our faith and understand how God's working in our lives.

So let me read verses 1-2. This is from two weeks ago. If you want to hear the whole message on this passage you can go to our website or to our app and you can listen to the sermons online. This is one from two weeks ago from these verses, Romans 5:1-2. *Therefore, since we have been*

*justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.*

The first step in getting right with God is to enter in. Notice it says we *gain access by faith into this grace*. So we make a commitment in our hearts to accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We then have access into that presence of God where *we stand*. So there's a standing before God that we are now saved. Saved in the sense that we are completed in Christ.

So if you haven't been saved yet, you haven't accepted Jesus Christ into your life, you want to do that because that will complete you in Christ. But completion isn't the end; it's only the beginning. Because then it's the start of something that starts to grow inside of our lives and build in us.

That's where he's going to take us in verse 3. *Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering is productive*. That's what the word *produces* means. They're productive. Suffering produces something in our lives when we're trusting the Lord in our lives and we're allowing Him to work in our lives. Suffering is unproductive if you don't respond well to it. But it is productive.

As we saw last week, it produces, it works out *perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope*. *And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us*.

Now we understand, first of all, we get saved, we ask Jesus Christ to come into our life. We call that justification. That's the word there in verse 1 – *we have been justified by faith*. Justification is that process of accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and inviting Him to come in. He cleanses your heart, frees you from sin, and frees you from the wrath of God, as we've seen, in essence, so that you can have a close relationship with God. That's justification.

Sanctification is that process of growth. When the suffering produces perseverance, character, and hope, that's the sanctification process that's growing inside of us.

Now he comes to a very important statement in this next verse that I want to talk about. Because he's going to talk about the power that we have once we're in Christ. If change is going to take place in your life or my life, we're going to need power to make that happen. How many times have you said, "I just can't do this." Well with God's power we are able. As the song that we sang just a few moments ago, we are able because of the power of God inside of us.

So he says now, as we continue on in verse 6, *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly*. So if you need power to change, which we all do, then we want the power of Christ inside of us and it's the acceptance of Christ in our lives that does that.

It says, *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless*. Notice it's coming right after this passage of being persevering, to build character; and character, hope. We're powerless

to persevere sometimes. We just don't have what we need. That's the power that Christ provides for us, you see.

It says *Christ died for the ungodly*. That's the word instead or on behalf of. He died in our place. The point here is that the ability to handle life's challenges is directly proportional to your relationship with God. So if you have a close relationship with God, you'll be able to deal with the challenges. God will be able to challenge you to give you the internal strength, as we saw last week, the perseverance to deal with the challenges that you face outwardly.

We know that people who get angry often get angry because their internal strength doesn't meet the external pressures. And so if we can allow God to work in our lives, to build that internal strength, then that's what Christ does inside of us. Then we're able to meet the pressures and the challenges that we all face. And your pressures are different than mine or different from the person sitting next to you.

Verse 7 continues by saying – *Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die*. Someone's not going to give his life for someone who's a bum or a criminal or some wicked person, it's saying. But for someone who is really good, someone might give up his life for that person. That's what he's saying. That's what you would expect.

But God does more than what's expected and in verse 8 it says, *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*. While we were the bums, while we were wicked, while we were criminals, in essence, Christ died for us.

*Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!* So the reality is, once you become a Christian and you ask Jesus Christ to come into your life, you are saved.

What are you saved from? Well one of the things you're saved from is the wrath of God. People don't like to hear about the wrath of God very much, but the reality is that God's anger burns towards sin. So if we have sin in our lives then there's a problem with God having a relationship with us. That's why out of His love, which prompts Him to do more than what's expected, is that He steps in and He sends Jesus Christ to die for us so that we can have this personal relationship with Him. So that He can satisfy the wrath of God and we can know Him as Father.

So Jesus, when He taught us how to pray, He says, "*Pray: Our Father.*" The one who cares for us like *the flowers of the field*, the Bible says, like *the bird of the air*. We have that kind of relationship with Him because the wrath, the justice, and the holiness of God have been satisfied by Jesus Christ on the cross. Salvation is this judicial decree. As we look at justification, that's what it is.

Verse 10: *For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*

So it's the salvation that comes through Jesus Christ that's going to work itself out in our lives because of His sacrifice for us on the cross. We're saved from what? What are we saved from? We talk about getting saved. What are we saved from? First you're saved from the wrath of God. You're saved from hell. Okay. But you're also saved from yourself. We're saved from ourselves and we're going to see what that looks like as it develops a little bit more in the passage.

What does it mean we're saved from ourselves? Well I think you'll see that unfold because this is going to be helpful in the change process. If God is doing something in you to change you to be more like Christ, then you want to understand what the wrestling looks like inside. The passage here introduces the idea here for us so that we can understand it better.

Verse 11: *Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

*Therefore...* Now he changes the subject here – *therefore*. He brings us to an application. Because of the crucifixion of Christ then we're going to talk about something that we have inside of us called the sin nature. The sin nature is this propensity to sin, this magnetic pull towards sin that all of us have in our lives. And we're going to talk about that.

Verse 12 says, *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.* We're born with this. We are now born.

So Adam, in high school he would have been the most likely to succeed. Why? Because here's a guy, he had no baggage from childhood. He had no dysfunctional family to grow up in. He had no parents to mess him up. He was created by God. He was fresh. He was new. And when it was time to get married, he didn't have to choose which one was the right one. God gave him someone special just for him. He was the one most likely to succeed.

But when he sinned, it did something not only to him on the external (he had to leave the garden – that was a consequence), it did something inside of him that affected the rest of the human race. So now we all, because we all are from Adam, have inside of us what we call a sin nature. A propensity to sin. It's a war that we have inside of us, a war against self will. I'm going to make this really practical for you today. This is a spiritual condition that we need to address.

There was a guy named Nicodemus who went to Jesus in John 3. Now this is a guy who was very righteous. This is a guy that we would look up to. He was part of the religious ruling counsel. He was a righteous man. But he had some questions because he heard what Jesus was teaching. So he felt like "I better go find out more about this. After all, I'm a righteous person, but there's something missing and I want to make sure I have what God wants for me." Because he was a man who wanted God, but he was focusing more on his externals, on the activity, his behavior. And being that kind of person, he wanted to know more about something else. What else is this you're talking about Jesus? Because it sounds like you're talking about something different.

When he went to Jesus, by night, at night (probably because he didn't want the other righteous people to see that he was going to find out information about Jesus), Jesus said to him, "*You must be born again.*" The reason for that is because when we're born, we are born spiritually dead. When you accept Jesus Christ into your life, you are born again. You are revived internally and something happens inside of you that energizes something inside your heart. That's what's happening here.

Now Adam when he sinned, it affected all kinds of things. It affected his family. You remember in the garden, what did he do first of all? He hid. He hid from God, but also they put fig leaves on themselves to cover themselves up to hide themselves from each other. There's this sense of hiding that we do in our lives because of sin that's in existence.

What else did he do? He blamed the problem on other people. It's a very common thing that we do. "She's the one, God, that you gave me. She did it." What did she do? "Well, it was a serpent." So blaming continues down the path.

It affects family life. The sinful nature damages or creates this problem in our homes, in our lives, in our personal lives. Even in Adam's family they had a problem with sibling conflict. Cain and Abel were fighting. Cain ended up killing Abel. It's a problem. Sin messes up family life. It messes up all kinds of things.

We can't really appreciate the benefit of God's grace that's so amazing. We sing about amazing grace, but it's so amazing we can't appreciate the benefit of God's grace until we see the problem and what the problem is inside of us and we can start looking at that. Because we all wrestle with sin's influence inside of our hearts.

Verse 13: *To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law.* What he's saying is the law revealed the sin.

So a few weeks ago I got a speeding ticket. Now it wasn't in New Jersey. I was in a different place that I haven't been before, or not that I'm used to. I'm driving on the highway and then all of a sudden we come into a town and so there must have been a speed limit sign that said 35 mph that I missed. So I'm going 50 mph and I'm not even in the town yet before the policeman stops me. I think in this little town that's how they make money. They stop all the people who don't go to this town and they write us all tickets. But I got a ticket.

Now I was speeding whether I saw the sign or not. But when the sign is posted there, the law is posted, it reveals our sin. The policeman was there and he gave me a ticket. He revealed my sin. My sin was present whether he was there or not. That's what the law does, it says.

They're talking about the Mosaic Law because he's writing to Jews. He's saying this is the purpose of the law. It reveals that we are sinners.

*Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command (because the law wasn't written by then), as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.*

I want you to understand three ways that we look at this word saved, get saved. There are three words that will describe this and I want you to understand the difference between them as we progress here because it will give you an idea of how we understand salvation in a practical way.

The first word that I want you to see is justification. Now justification provides us with the freedom from the penalty of sin. When Jesus Christ died on the cross for you and me, we're freed from the penalty that's associated with sin, the wrath of God that is separated from us.

A key verse that might indicate this is Romans 5:1, which is – *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Most of the time when I'm talking about getting saved, that's what we're talking about. We're talking about accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior because He frees you from the penalty associated with sin.

There's another word we need to understand though. It's the word sanctification. And sanctification provides us freedom from the power of sin. That's what we're going to talk about a little bit this morning. There's a wrestling that goes on inside of our hearts and there's this magnetic pull towards sin that's very powerful. Sanctification or getting saved, in this regard, means salvation is working itself out in all of the areas of life to free us from the power of sin.

If you're wrestling with something today, maybe your mouth gets you into trouble. Maybe you're addicted to something. That's the power of the sin nature that you're warring against.

So we need a verse like Philippians 2:12 which says, *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.* Allow that salvation through sanctification to work itself out into your life. That's the second word that will help us understand the use of the word *sozo* in Greek or *salvation* in the New Testament.

The third word, which we're not going to spend a lot of time here, but I thought I'd bring it up so you could see that. The third word has to do with the presence of sin. The presence of sin. It's called glorification.

Romans 13:11 says, *And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.*

Are they talking about justification? No we're already justified. This is Romans. He's already talked about how we've been justified through faith. But he's saying there's a salvation coming. Someday the presence of sin will be gone and we'll be able to enjoy that in some great way. That's what we're talking about here when we talk about salvation through Jesus Christ.

In particular, though, I want to zero in on this part of the sanctification process. What does the wrestling look like and how are we going to enable that to happen and make that happen in our lives?

Look at verse 15. *But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!*

So he's saying we're moving from being a child of Adam to a child of God. One man's sin polluted the whole human race; one man's sacrifice saved us. So he's drawing a parallel between the one man who sinned, providing us with this sinful nature, and the one man who saved us, which is Jesus Christ.

Verse 16: *Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!*

There's this reigning that we can experience. Do you see that? We're going to *reign in life*. Reign has the idea of rule over or control. We can experience what God wants us to do and reign. God wants us to reign. Not to be the victim of a habit. Not to be the victim of a mouth that shoots off or is angry and hurts other people. We want to not be a victim of addiction. We want to reign over those things.

What is that going to look like when we understand who God is? Notice it talks about God's grace there. *Receive God's abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness reigns in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!* So we're able to reign and that is have the power over sin.

God's will is for us to live fruitful lives. Fruitful lives that's producing the fruit inside of us that God wants for us. He wants to be more effective in impacting others. More effective in the growing in our understanding of who we are and being effective in managing our own lives. But it's not just my own healing and my own happiness. This is about growing to share a message with other people. God is the answer to the struggle that you're facing in your life.

If we're growing Christians then we're discovering that there's an internal force inside of us that is drawing us to sin. And for each of us it looks different. If we're going to be deeply fruitful in our lives, we're going to need to develop a deep appreciation for how deeply sinful we are. It's very important for us to understand that.

Verse 18: *Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life. Life. The continuing and the growth of that so that we can experience life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.*

*The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase.* Law doesn't reveal the sin. Law doesn't make sin happen; it just reveals what is going on inside of us and helps us see what's going. It's like a mirror. We look and we see the dirt in our lives. So if you're looking at God's word and it's like a mirror, it reveals, "Oh wow, I've got to work on that." "Oh wow I've got that problem." "Oh that reminds me last week I did this." "Oh I got to work..." That's what God does as we see those things.

Now healthy growing Christians experience a strange paradox. On the one hand we gradually see a definite improvement in our moral lives in various areas, but we also see how deeply sinful we are. So I want to draw your attention to three important principles to remember.

You've got to get this because if you're going to grow and you're going to make changes in your life, you've got to know that no matter how sinful you think you are, you're really worse. [laughter] We've got to get lost before we can get saved. Alright? We've got to understand our sin before we can accept the grace. Because too many of us are saying, "Oh I'm not that bad. I think I'll just practice self-control here," and we kind of put it on ourselves and we pull ourselves up by our bootstraps.

This message I'm sharing with you today you're not going to see on LinkedIn. This is not a message you're going to read on *The Success Principles for Leadership*. This is not something you're going to hear in a motivational class. Because the first thing, if you're going to accept change, you're going to grow in your Christian life, you have to realize you're worse than you thought.

That's going to be very helpful because the second principle that we need to understand is this: No matter how gracious you think God is, He is more gracious. Alright?

Look at verse 20. *The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.* All the more. Super abounds is the idea. It's there.

Now there's the third principle you've got to realize and that is that sin is deceptive in our lives and it causes us to miss one or both of those truths. If you emphasize the first truth and you miss the second one, then you become superficial, you become fake, you become self-righteous, self-sufficient. Because you think you're better than you really are. If we recognize that we are worse than we thought we were because we have this sin nature in us, then we're much more receptive to the second principle.

But if you miss the second principle then you can become fatalistic. "Oh I'm never going to get right. This is terrible. Bad things are in store for me." You become self-condemning in your life. You can become inappropriately sin-focused if you don't have that second principle.

We need them both. If we're going to understand self-esteem from a biblical perspective, it's not self-esteem. We're not building ourselves up. Self-esteem is essentially recognizing that we are sinners, we are bad. Bad things are going on inside of our hearts. We've got to get that. But that Christ has redeemed us. He's placed His Holy Spirit inside of us so that now we are freed like an

airplane flies and not as tied down by gravity. We are not tied to that magnetic pole of sin. We are free with the Holy Spirit's power to overcome that and move forward.

But there's a wrestling that goes on inside of us. That's what it's saying in verse 20. Grace super abounds. This is the story of the Bible. In the book of Genesis God creates the world, in Genesis 3 man messes it up, and the rest of the Bible is God fixing it. That's what the story of the Bible is all about.

When we look at our own lives we can see it's the gospel message that sets us free. Not only free to ask Jesus to come into our hearts and start the process, but you've got to know once you accept Jesus into your life He continues that work, and that wrestling that we have with sin we're able to do it because of God's grace. That's what's so strategic here. Nobody has an excuse.

Verse 21 – *so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* God wants you to reign. That's what He wants. He wants the grace of God to reign in your heart. That's such a beautiful thing.

Let's make this really practical. We wrestle every one of us with the flesh in our lives. The sin nature that we have because of Adam reveals itself in our lives. I'm going to give you three areas where it reveals itself so you can see this. You'll be able to see now more clearly what you wrestle with in your heart in the area of the sin nature.

One, it happens in our strengths. I'm going to spend some time talking about this and sharing with you some things that talk about our strengths. Because every strength that we have in our lives has with it, attached to it inherent temptations that can draw us by the sin nature to do what's wrong. We wrestle with the flesh in our lives. Sin is this magnetic pull that reveals itself. So one of these areas we can find the sin nature working is in our strengths.

The second one is in relationships. I used to think I was a really righteous person until I got married and I had to share life with someone else. When I had to share life with someone else, I really saw how much I had to sacrifice and give up and the wrestling that's there.

I am convinced God created marriage as a sanctification process for us so we can work out some of these areas of our sin nature. It's only by God's grace that anybody can stay married. It is very difficult. And that is nothing like having kids. Five kids. I have five kids. I never knew how selfish I was till I had five kids and I had to be doing this and that and I've got to give up this and I've got to do that and oh man. Relationships, and it's not just family relationships, any kind of relationship that you have will reveal the sin nature because we all have tendencies in that regard.

The other one, the other way that this is revealed is when we are living in a world system. The things that draw you into the world, those temptations reveal the sin nature, the part of you that is attracted to those. If you're attracted to materialism or you're attracted to success or you're attracted to immorality or whatever it might be, when the ads come out in the paper and you're attracted to those, it can be a strength. Oh I'm trying to be frugal. Or it could be the sin nature. I

just got to spend more so I can feel better. So we have to wrestle with the sin nature in a very practical way.

You don't want to use your strengths to rationalize your sin and say, "Oh that's just who I am. That's my personality. I'm that kind of a person." Just look at your personality. It's a good thing. The fact that you have a personality that's good means that you have some inherent weaknesses that are tied to you, weaknesses that can be attractions for the sin nature to get off track and to move the wrong way.

So we have to be very careful as we're moving forward with our personalities. We have to take our personality and hold it up to the light and let the cracks be revealed so that we're sensitive and we're careful about what God wants to do inside of us because He wants to change us. That doesn't mean He wants to take away your personality, but your personality inherently has weaknesses and because it is, you find yourself in trouble. It's a fascinating study to look at various qualities that people have in their personalities and then look at some of the things that can be characterized by them.

For example, let's say that...and you can go both directions. We can start with the side of strengths. A person who is decisive. They can make decisions. I was one of those people. The positive quality in my personality or character, whatever it is, is that I can make decisions quickly. When I was in school, I was the person who finished the test first. I could make decisions. I either know it or I don't. I didn't have to sit there and think about it a lot. I just know it or I don't, I just write the answer down. *BOOM*. I'm the first one done in class all the time. I can make decisions quickly.

Well do you see the inherent weakness in that? I'm sitting in a restaurant getting ready to order some food and I'm sitting with other people and it's not hard for me. "Oh I'll order that." I'm done. "Come on, you guys! Come on. It's only food. If you choose the wrong thing, you can order again and eat something different in a few hours." And so the frustration...my sin nature is tempted to be frustrated with other people in a restaurant because they take so long. "We've got other things to talk about here. You don't have to read the whole menu just to figure out what you want to eat today! Okay?" But some people, you know, they've got to read the whole menu because they might miss out on something.

Are you seeing how the sin nature works inside of me? Okay, I'm a decisive person, but it has a weakness associated with it. So you can start with the strengths and you can move to the weaknesses and see how the sin nature might be tempting a person. Or you can start with the problem.

Maybe you're an anxious person and you know the sin nature is really if you start going down that anxious path and so you can see that, man, that's a problem. But the reality is you're probably the one also who's thinking about things to keep people safe, to get things done, the conscientious person. The conscientious person and the anxious person have something in common. They have an overactive nervous system. And that's okay. There's a good side to that and a bad side to that. Do you see how the sin nature can play into that and draw you into an

anxious situation? It's a problem. We need to be sensitive to what can happen in the midst of that.

Now sometimes people say, "Okay, I've got this strength and I've got this weakness," and so they look at a list and they say, "I just need to work on being more patient." And so they humanistically try to solve the problem. I want you to know if you're going to maximize change in a person's life, this isn't about just humanistically trying to be better or with grit in your teeth trying to be more patient. This is about letting God work in your heart.

There are some people who are like there's houses out there. A person built a small farmhouse and then they started adding this room on and that room on, and pretty soon you've got this whole thing that's a real kind of a...thing. That's how some of our houses are in our lives. God says, "I'm going to come in and I'm going to give you a whole new house. I'm going to give you a big house to start with. I'm going to show you how to work these things out inside of your life." And so God does that in our lives. He says, "I want to give you a new house."

So yes, do unsaved people change? Yes. They can. Are there good people who are not saved? Well if you mean do they do good things, yes. But it's like adding onto this house. God says you want longer-lasting changes, you want more thorough change, you want change that's going to take place more effectively in your life, then you accept Jesus Christ.

Christ reigns, His grace reigns in righteousness. That's what verse 21 is talking about. We want Christ to reign in our lives.

Now when you do this study, I would suggest, and study yourself, understand this theology, it does a couple things for you. One, it gives you tremendous humility to realize I am not only bad, but I am much worse than I imagined. It gives you humility because we think we're better than we are. And so we say, "Oh man, I need to be careful in my life. I need to be on guard against the temptations out there because my sin nature is drawing me in the wrong direction. I need to be careful."

And the other thing it does is it gives you grace for other people. Because yeah, they've got problems and their sin nature is running rampant. But it's easy to see the other person and not see ourselves. If it weren't for God's grace, I would be just like them. Or I know they're struggling in an area and I'm struggling too, and it allows relationships to function more effectively.

This really gets to be a problem in a family. As soon as you start putting people together, man, you better watch out. Because now you've got not one sin nature you're trying to deal with, you're dealing with four of you in the home.

So you've got the talker. The talker is a good person. It's a person who builds relationship, always connecting with people, likes to talk. This is the person that's the last one to leave the church when it's time to go. This is the one who's the last one to leave the party. This is the one who's on Facebook all the time. But the sin nature for them, they're tempted to not get anything done. So they're not very productive. So they have a hard time.

The problem is they marry the analyzer. The analyzer is the person who when it comes to the checkbook they want to know why it doesn't balance. There's a penny missing. I've got to go find it. Where is it? And they've got to analyze the whole thing. And so when they're in a relationship, they're frustrated because, look, the clothes have to go in the drawer in a particular way. And so they're analyzing all of this and they're making sure all the details are in the right place.

That's a good thing. We all need analyzers. If you're going to do brain surgery on me, I want the analyzer. I don't want the talker. I want that person doing work on me. But that person can have a temptation to be critical and be pointing out the things that the other person is not doing.

Let's say they have a child and this child is a leader. Can you have a leader at six years old? Oh. Unfortunately yes. So you have a leader at six years old. Now leaders are the people who get things done. Okay, these are the ones who say, "Dad, this is broken. You've got to fix it." And so this leader comes in and they're the ones who try to accomplish things. They want to get things done.

The problem is, they can appear bossy. The problem with a child who's six years old who's a leader is that he has ideas of how everybody else, including parents, should fit into his plans. Because that's what leaders do. And so he has temptation at six years old, you see, is now to get sucked into this bossiness and telling everybody, his brothers, his sisters, everybody else, what to do.

Then you have another child and this child is the emotional child. And that's great because the emotional person can connect with other people. When the dog gets hurt, this is the person who's over there crying with the dog. Wish he'd do that with his brother, but at least he's compassionate with the dog. This is the emotional person that cares. This is a person who could be a pastor someday. This is a person who's a great counselor because he can connect emotionally. This is a person who's the life of the party. You probably married this person because you like how emotional this person is. Until you get into conflict. Because in conflict this person has a tendency to turn the problem into an episode. And now we have conflict and emotion.

So we've got all these people who have good qualities in their lives, but we all have sin natures. The sin nature draws us to places where God does not want us to go. So we all need the grace of God. Our families need the grace of God. We've got to have the grace of God at work in our lives. Do you want to know how people change? It's with God's grace. We all wrestle with sin in our lives. We all have this magnetic pull.

I'd encourage you to think for a moment about the cutting edge for you in your life. Where's your weakness? What is it that God wants you to grow in that grace, and when you do amazing things start to happen. Because it's amazing grace that allows us to reign in righteousness. That's the beautiful thing about this passage.

The further you go as you're growing in your Christian life, two things happen. One – the more you're able to overcome the sin nature and do better. And the other so you become more

righteous, but you realize how much more sinful you are. The wrestling takes place in a deeper way than ever before.

We've got to watch out for the sin nature. We can't blame it all on the devil. Yeah, I know that there is satanic attack going on in our world today and he is eager to destroy a family, and he does it in a lot of different ways. But it's not just Satan that's out there. Sometimes it's us that's doing the destructive stuff because of our own sin nature. Be on guard. God wants to do some important things.

It starts with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. You want that. If you don't have that, then you're not complete in Christ, then you haven't started the process. If you've accepted Jesus Christ, then He wants to continue to work out your salvation to every area of your life.

So together we're growing in Christ. Together we're trying to understand what this looks like. Together we're asking that, "God, I want to understand your presence today. I want to live in your presence today. I want to be right there so that if I start to err a little bit your presence is there to prompt me." And that's the promise of the Holy Spirit – to come into our life. He lives, He dwells inside of our hearts. We all need that.

That's really the message of salvation. It's a big message of salvation. Romans is talking all about it and I trust that as you continue to grow in your faith that you would allow God's presence to impact you all the more.

Let's pray together. Why don't you stand with me.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we're coming before you now and asking that you would reveal areas where we need to work. Obviously, Lord, you're already doing that in many of our hearts and I pray that you would help us to not feel overwhelmed, but to reveal to us how big your grace is and how much you want to grow us in that grace. For those that we are prone to criticize or want to change, we ask that you would give us wisdom to know how to approach that. We know that we have to confront others and we have to try to impact them, but, Lord, teach us what it means to do that with grace because of what you're doing in our own lives as well. Lord, thank you so much for the privilege of having you as our Savior and for giving us grace so that we can reign in righteousness. In Jesus' name, amen.