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## ROMANS 6

Romans Series: How God Changes People

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Lord, the idea of grace is so important to us that we need it. We're so grateful that you demonstrated your grace by sending Jesus Christ to die on the cross for us. But your grace doesn't stop there; your grace just helps us every day of our lives to be able to face the challenges that we face. Each one of us faces challenges. Those challenges aren't always on the outside; many times they're on the inside in our own hearts. As we try to meet those pressures from without, we need the strength from within. So thank you for your grace that you provide each one of us. Lord, now as we open up your word we ask that you would teach us and prepare us for the week ahead as we continue to grow and to learn in you. In Jesus' name, amen.

We're studying the book of Romans verse by verse. As we go through the book verse by verse we're looking at it from a particular perspective this time through. This time as we look through it, we're looking at it through the eyes of a counselor or through the eyes of a parent with the idea of how do we help people change or how does God change us? It's a fascinating study for me, partly because I'm a counselor, but also because I see it in my own life. How does God change me? I want you in the course of this to be able to see your own heart and to be able to allow God to move you to a new level in your personal development.

There are a number of hindrances that we experience in our lives and I think God wants to move us past those. The book of Romans has great truth in it that can help us to do that. So as we go through this book, I think you're going to find this to be very practical and helpful.

Two weeks ago we talked about suffering. *Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; character, hope.* But we talked about suffering in terms of pressure or stress because that's what the word means. Any kind of a pressure or stress that you experience has the potential to help you grow in character if you'll respond the right way. If we don't respond the right way, well, then you're on your own. But there's a way that God can empower us to respond well and it builds that character inside of us.

Last week we learned that we all have a sin nature and the sin nature is that pull, the magnetic pull towards sin. And we see it in several ways. One of those ways is when we see it in the strengths that we have because those strengths all have with them an inherent weakness that often the sin nature is attracted to.

So the person who's frugal as a strength, the sin nature can tempt them to be stingy. The person who's talkative, the sin nature can prompt them to not be a good listener or to talk too much. The sin nature reveals itself in common ways. So what I'm trying to do is take the theological concept of the sin nature and bring it down to the everyday parts of our lives.

I wrestle with the sin nature every day, as do you, and I think we can see that when we see heart patterns in our lives or tendencies. If you have a tendency to react a particular way that's negative, that's a heart problem. See, Jesus says it's out of the heart that the mouth speaks. So if you tend to react when someone challenges you, someone corrects you, you tend to get angry, or you tend to have sarcasm, or you tend to react to negative thinking, or you tend to have anxiety, then that reaction that you have is a temptation that you have that the sin nature is drawing you toward. So we need to be careful about that.

We've been talking about the sin nature and we looked at that more in Romans 5.

So today as we look at Romans 6 we're going to see how do we overcome? This is the question that we're asking today. How do you overcome those tendencies? "Okay, you've told me I got it. I have an anger problem. I know it. You told me. It's part of the sin nature that's drawing me, I'm tempted to get angry or anxious or sarcastic or mean or lazy or whatever it is. I see it. I see it on the list. Yes, I'd like to get rid of a pattern like that. How do I do it?" It's a very important question and I think we're often asking that question.

If you're trying to better yourself, then you're going to be asking that question. But I would suggest we want to better ourselves using God's plan and not using a humanistic strategy. There's a lot of strategies out there from the world that say just use will power or use this technique or this product and it will help you to be better. I'm telling you what God is saying here. That if you want to move to the next level in your spiritual development, you want to overcome your tendency to do whatever, think negatively or be disorganized or get over an addiction, or whatever it is, I'm going to show you right now from Romans 6 how you do that.

There are four words and I'm going to take you through the words because these four words will guide you through the process of understanding how to move from where you are now, which is dealing with some kind of a problem, to where you need to be.

These four words are these (and you might jot them down on your sheet of paper there): The word *know*, the second word is *decide*, the third word is *yield*, and the fourth word is *obey*. Now we're going to take those four words and I'm going to guide you through the passage to show you where I got them, because I didn't make them up and then go find the passage. They come right out of the passage of scripture. Know, decide, yield, and obey. We're going to see how that will help us to make changes in our lives.

So, children, if you're here and you're trying to not be so angry, this is how you're going to do it. Young people, if you're here and you're trying to be more diligent or you're trying to overcome some kind of a weakness, this is how you do it. Parents, if you're trying to work with children, you want to understand this process because you're going to incorporate that with your kids. Alright?

So let's look at the first of those words, the word *know*. *What shall we say, then?* (verse 1) *Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?* If you know that grace is so big and that sin reveals grace, then you might logically think, "Well, I'm just going to sin more so grace can reveal itself more!"

He says in verse 2, *By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know* (there's our word *know* again) *that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

So some things we have to know first. We saw last week that we have a sin nature. We have to know that because the sin nature is what's tempting us to be drawn to look at inappropriate things on the internet. It's the sin nature that's tempting us to get angry. We need to know that, but we also need to know that the sin nature that we have inside of us, this magnetic pull towards sin has been crucified by Christ. We have died to that sin nature. So the power of sin doesn't have to overcome us now. We now have a choice. We can live for Christ.

He uses the illustration of baptism. If you've been baptized then what's happened is you've gone under the water and come back up as a picture of something that's happened inside of you. If you haven't been baptized today, I would encourage you to get baptized as a step of obedience. But it's not baptism that saves you. It's baptism on the outside, that picture of going under the water, like Christ was buried, and like we have died to our old self, and then coming up in this resurrected life, this new life. That is a picture of something that's happening on the inside. We've died to the old self and we're living for Christ.

So that picture of baptism is a significant one here. We need to know that Christ died for us so that that sin nature could be rendered powerless. It's still there. It's still warring in there. It's still tempting us and we have to be careful of it, which we have to see today. If we're not careful then we'll get into trouble in this sin nature. But we have to recognize that Christ died so that we are no longer slaves to sin. It's been killed. We're buried in that regard.

Notice the last phrase that it says there. *We too may live a new life*. The word there is to walk. To walk in newness of life. Walking has the idea of taking steps one at a time. Put one foot in front of the other. Now because I have Christ in my life, I don't have to live according to the sinful desires that pull me. I now can live, I can walk a new life. I have a new way of walking and that new way of walking is going to be described here.

So what do I need to know? I need to know that my sin nature inside of me is the cause. I can't be blaming the problem on the devil, although Satan does attack us. I can't always be blaming the problem on my neighbor or the other people in my family. "They make me angry. I have an anger problem because of something that's in my heart." We have to know that the sin nature is the cause of the current problem. We have to know that Christ died to free me from the power of sin. And we have to know that we can live a new life.

I want to make this really practical for you, so I want you to understand what this looks like in daily life. So I'm going to use a personal illustration from my own life. But the illustration I share is likely different than whatever God's doing in your life. I can share this because it's a year and a half old for me, so it's not as crucial in my life. Maybe I wouldn't have shared it with you back then, but I can share it with you now.

Many of you know I lost twenty-five pounds last year. On July 1 I started a forty-day program and the program was a spiritual program where I was going through a book for forty days. The number forty is seen many times in the scriptures as a point of transition. Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days before He started His public ministry. Moses was up on that mountain for forty days before he brought down the Ten Commandments. So the forty day period of time is used a number of times in the Bible. So I set out on a forty-day spiritual pilgrimage starting July 1 last year to lose some weight. But I did it from a spiritual perspective.

I'm going to share with you the wrestling that was going on inside of my own heart. Because I had to come to a place where I knew some things. The sin nature was revealing itself to me in three different areas.

One is that my sin nature provides for me a desire for pleasure. The fact of the matter is I love to eat and I love how good it tastes. So my desire for pleasure was a problem for me. Now there's nothing wrong with eating good food that tastes good. For me, though (I'm just talking about me), there was something inside of me that was drawing me to that more so than was good for me. I was making that more important than being responsible with my food choices.

The second way that the sin nature was revealing itself to me was that I don't like pain. I like to avoid pain, and hunger is a pain for me. So sometimes I was eating not only because I was hungry, but to comfort myself. So there's comfort eating that I was doing. Because I was bored. So I would eat something. I realized the sin nature was drawing me in that regard.

The third area of the sin nature has to do again (and I've shared this with you) that I'm a very productive person and I get a lot of things done in a short amount of time and I do a lot of things. But in this case the weakness of that for me is that I would make choices, that productivity became an idol for me. So in order to keep up my productivity to go, then I would have to eat at times and eat food that were not best for me and eat at times that wasn't the best for me in order to keep my energy level up so that I could be productive. So I realized that productivity was becoming an idol for me. My desire for that to be important was part of my sin nature and it was getting me into trouble.

So I came to the point in my life last year (it was my birthday on June 14<sup>th</sup> last year in 2014) and I realized I was getting older, I was feeling old and it just came for me to a head at that time. So in the midst of that I met some folks, including my doctor, who gave me some input that led me to believe I need to deal with this. So on July 1 I started that pilgrimage.

So I'm going to illustrate this with you as I go through this because for me I had to know some things if I was going to change. Those things became clear to me and they were revealed to me so that I could move to the next step. So knowing them was important.

Now I want you to keep a side list. I've given you four words. We're going through them, but keep a little side list, like a tally list of the benefits or the results of following the Lord with these four words. On your side list we have we'll be able to *live a new life*, in verse 4. The word is walk in newness of life. I wanted to be able to do that in my own life.

So verse 5 now. Let's go on. *For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.* So what he's saying is there is resurrection power available to us in our lives when we call upon Him to help us to deal with the sin nature challenges that we face in our own hearts.

Verse 6: *For we know...* There's our word *know* again. We'll see the word *know* several times in this passage because that's a very important thing. We have to come to that knowledge. We have to know there's a problem. And sometimes it's teaching that does that. Maybe teaching from here on Sunday morning, but sometimes it's teaching from some other source.

*For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*

If you're keeping track of the results, slave to sin is one of the bad things and we're going to see in the next verse where we're *set free from sin*. So *slaves to sin* versus being *set free from sin*.

*Slaves to sin.* When it became clear to me in my life that my sin nature is what was getting in the way of me being free and walking in the newness of life, then I realized that I was acting like I was being a slave to sin when I had the freedom to live in Christ.

Verse 7 – *because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.* Set free. On your results list that's one of the positive things about going through this process of these four words is you're going to be set free.

Some of you know you're in a struggle right now and you need those words. "I need to be set free from..." and you fill in the blank for yourself. Okay. All of us have to deal with the sin nature, but I want you to think in terms of sin nature as slavery to sin. If you're stuck there, then you're going to want to think about these four words that God gives us in Romans 6 to move out of that.

Verse 8: *Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.*

Verse 9: *For we know (there's that word know again) that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.*

So that's the *know* part. We have to know first. Once we know, once you know the sin nature is there, once you know that it pulls on you and you've identified really those areas of pull, then you can go to the next word.

I want you to see that the next word in verse 11 in your version of the Bible. So if you have a Bible, look at it. It says, *In the same way*, what is the word? Mine says *count yourselves*. Does somebody have something different than *count yourselves*? *Reckon*. Okay. King James Version has *reckon*. *Consider*. Okay.

I want you to see the word because I'm using the word *decide*, but the word *decide* is not in the text. But I think it's easy to understand what it means when we use the word *decide*. It's the word *reckon*, *determine*.

Here's what the word actually means. When it says *count yourselves*, it's a mathematical term to say I'm going to reckon it. You know when you reconcile a checkbook, you make sure that the accounts balance. In this case you're reckoning something into the other account. So it's not a debit, it's a credit. Or it's not a credit, it's a debit. However you're going to say it, you're going to put it into an account. So what this means – *In the same way*, it says, *count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus*.

There comes a point when in the process you not only know that this is a problem, but you decide I'm not going to live this way anymore. I'm going to put this over here in this category because I know that God wants to work with me on this. So I'm moving this into this place where He can make some changes in my life. I'm deciding this, I'm reckoning. So the word *reckoning* is this mathematical term that has to do with this decision to move it from one place to another.

It's a decision to stop blaming the problem on other people, to stop excusing ourselves and saying, "Well I'm just a busy person" or "I just live with a family of crazy people." Or whatever we say to ourselves that keeps us where we are. We cannot do that anymore. Now we have to say, "I have a problem. My sin nature is drawing me in this direction. I need to reckon it. I need to *count myself or consider myself dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus*." This moves it from our head where we know it to our heart where we determine to do something about it. It's saying I'm not going to live this way anymore. I'm going to count myself dead to sin in this area. I'm going to decide. And that's why I chose the second word to be *decide*, but you can choose any of those other words that you want – *reckon*, *consider*, or *count yourself*. It basically says I'm going to deal with this.

So July 1 last year I came to that place where I said, "I'm going to deal with this," and that became that point where I reckoned this to be this place where it was not just a mental decision, but it was a choice of my will, a choice of action. I'm not going to live this way anymore.

Now verse 12 is really a summary of the rest of the passage. Let me read verse 12 and then we'll describe it some more. Verse 12 says, *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires*.

The idea of reigning has the idea of jurisdiction over or power over. So what I essentially said in my own heart is I'm going to stop allowing my sin nature to dictate this area of my life. I am going to not allow sin to reign in my life. I'm going to make a significant change in who I am. I am going to adjust that and I'm going to live differently.

Now so far all we've said is human kinds of things. When I make that decision this is a human decision that I make. It says *consider* or *count yourself*. This isn't about God necessarily doing it for me; this is about me saying I'm moving it over here so God can work in it. I'm going to count myself dead to sin and that's a very human part that we do so that we can get to the next word.

The next word that we talk about is the word *yield*. In verse 13 I want you to look at this because this is God's part. When we put it over here and we start yielding ourselves to God then God does this work inside of us to overpower the tug toward sin. This is like when the airplane takes off it is able to defy gravity because of another law of physics that allows it to fly. In the same way when we put ourselves over here and we reckon this area of our lives as now this is God's. I'm not going to just use this as a human problem that I have for whatever reason. I'm giving it to God and I'm going to yield.

Let's look at the word *yield* there. Verse 13 in the New International Version uses the word *offer*. It says, *Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather [yield or] offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life.*

I've gone from this side of reckoned it over here to this side which is going to be life, and now I'm going to yield myself to God and He's going to do something inside of me using the power of Christ resurrection in my own life.

If we read that verse, the rest of it in verse 13 – *and yield every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.*

So now I've moved myself. I know it, I've decided, I moved myself over here, and now I'm in a powerful place because of not my power, not your will power, and you're not going to read about this on LinkedIn and how you can be successful. This is where you're going to move yourself into a place where God can do something significant in your life. You're going to yield yourself to the Holy Spirit's power which lead to righteousness, which we're going to see in the next verses.

So how do you do this? How do you yield this to the Lord?

I'm going to tell you another personal story about myself. I could share stories about my counseling practice because I work with people in counseling to do this, and maybe I will. But I'm going to share another story about myself.

About twenty-five years ago I was feeling a lot of stress in my life. It was causing me a problem and I felt like I needed to deal with stress. How do we respond to stress better than I was responding? So my doctor, Doctor Jass, who was not a believer at the time (since then he has become a Christian and he was attending our church over at the other Calvary), but he had a stress reduction program. He was a new age guy and so I went to him for his four-session program on dealing with stress. He gave me a lot of ideas that I still use today in my counseling practice to help people deal with stress in their lives.

In the last session it was so significant for me in that last session because this is what he said. He said to me, “Now here’s what you need to do. We talked about all these techniques and you practiced them for a while. Now you need to tie all these things into your purpose in life.” He knew that I was a pastor. He says, “What is your purpose in life and how does that fit in?”

In that moment God opened the door for me to see that this was a spiritual issue in my life. I needed to tie this peace that God wanted to develop in my heart, maybe using some techniques, but there was something more than that. He wanted to do something spiritual. So in that moment God gave me the knowledge and then the deciding. This unsaved doctor moved me over here to make a decision to reckon this as a spiritual issue tied into my purpose in life so that now I could yield myself to God and I could discover that *peace that passes all understanding*, just this spiritual peace that God has called me to every day. So when I get up in the morning, that’s what I need to be praying about.

It’s a beautiful thing that God did in my life through someone who wasn’t even a Christian. But God led me through the same process in order to move through this.

What does it mean to yield yourself?

I’m working with a fifteen year old girl right now who’s suffering from anxiety and so I’m giving her techniques to deal with her problem. But then I’m saying the greatest solution for dealing with your anxiety is to yield yourself to the Holy Spirit.

Can a fifteen year old yield herself to the Holy Spirit? The answer is yes. How do you do it? You take the anxiety that you’re experiencing or your anger or whatever it is and you put it in this suitcase and you say, “I am not strong enough to carry this suitcase myself. I must give it to someone who’s stronger” (that’s God). That means I’m yielding myself to God to manage this in my life.

So as we make decisions then every day, we’re choosing to see the problem we’re working on, whatever is on your list, that the sin nature is drawing you to. Now it’s the decision of lordship for the Lord. I want to serve God, therefore I’m going to choose to yield myself to Him today and do the right thing. I’m going to say no to the sin nature and I’m going to say yes to God.

Verse 15 says, *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! Don’t you know (there’s the word know again) that when you offer yourselves (that’s the word yield) to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey (there’s our last word, obey)—whether you are slaves to sin... Think about this inside your heart. A slave to sin – allowing the sin nature to pull me in that direction to make that sarcastic remark, or to spend that money I don’t have, or whatever it is, that sin nature pulls us in that direction. Am I going to be slave to sin, which leads to death (in your results category you’ve got your results that are bad and results that are good), or to obedience (that’s our fourth word, obeying), which leads to righteousness?*

Notice you're either slaves to sin or you're slave to obedience. Either way you're a slave. All of us are slaves, you just choose your master.

Just think about the prodigal son. The prodigal son decides, "I'm going to take my part of the inheritance. Even though my father hasn't died, I want my part now. I want to go spend it and be free from this house." That's his idea. "I want to be free. I want freedom."

So he goes out there and he spends money. Spends his money on all kinds of things. He has lots of friends when he's spending the money. But then the money's gone, friends are gone, and he finds himself in a pigpen, and this is what he says: "It would be better for me to go back and be a slave in my father's house than to be here."

We choose our master. You get to choose what master. Are you going to be a slave to the sin nature that allows you to keep going and going and doing the wrong thing? Or are you going to be a slave to the Lord, slave to righteousness? So we yield our hearts to the Lord and we say, "I want to obey you, Lord, in my actions."

See, I would suggest that we've all become prodigals in some way or another saying, "I don't want to live under this rule. I want to be free." And so as soon as we say I want to be free, sometimes that freedom leads us to indulge the sin nature and we get ourselves into trouble. That's not freedom, that's bondage and we find ourselves into some really difficult places.

Verse 17. Let's go on. *But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey (there's our word obey again) from your heart the pattern of teaching (the teaching is so you can know) that has now claimed your allegiance.*

Verse 18: *You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.* You are no longer slaves to sin is the idea here.

As I'm studying about the sin nature and I'm just living life, it's rather striking to me to come across people every once in a while who have what I would call an unbridled sin nature. They're not Christians obviously. You can tell sometimes. You look at that person and you can say, "That person is obviously not a Christian," just by the way they're living. Now maybe they are and they're just backslidden and they're just not living under the Lord's leadership. But there's another person. You can just tell the difference sometimes. Someone's living and you go, "I think that person's a Christian," because you can see they don't have an unbridled sin nature.

This week I was at a counter getting ready to purchase some food. The man in front of me was yelling at the cashier because he didn't like something about their company. There's nothing she could do, and I'm just looking at this in amazement. Instead of getting angry as I sometimes do, I was looking and I'm saying, "This is the example. God, thank you for the example." The unbridled sin nature because I could be just like that person if I didn't yield myself to the Holy Spirit and the righteousness that God provides.

Verse 18: *You have been set free from sin and have becomes slaves to righteousness.*

Verse 19 is the summary. *I am using an example from everyday life (that's the idea of slavery) because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves (that's yield) as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves (that's yield again) as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness.*

The word *holiness* is the word sanctification. Whenever you see the word holiness, in this holiness we're talking about sanctification. That God is moving us toward this better place. So God is taking us from where we are, that is being controlled by or enslaved by the sin nature, demonstrated by common things in life when we choose to do the wrong thing and He's moving us to something better. He's moving us toward holiness. That's what he's saying here.

Verse 20: *When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.* Like the man in the story. He's not under the control of righteousness. He's a slave to sin. *What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!*

There's our world *result* in verse 21. It says *what benefit did you receive. Those things result in death.* So there's benefits, results. I suggested you keep a little side list here of the good and the bad results, benefits, and that's where the words are there that take us in that direction. He's basically saying there are two paths. There's one of sin that leads to slavery and the other leads to Christ.

Verse 22: *But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness (that's sanctification), and the result is eternal life.*

And then it says in verse 23, *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* It pays to sin. That's what he's saying. The penalty is death. The gift is the grace. We don't deserve it. It is a gift.

How do you gain victory over sinful patterns in your life? You have to use these four words. Know the truth, decide or reckon yourself dead to sin, yield to Christ, and obey the Lord in service to Him.

Let me just share with you one more story. The rich, young ruler comes to Jesus and he says, "What must I do to be saved?" And Jesus looks at him... This guy's rich. He has all the money he needs. He's young, he's got youth, as many of us would appreciate. And he's a ruler. He's got power. Three things that many people are after today. He has all of those things, but he's coming and Jesus says, "There's just one thing you lack. Go and sell everything you have, give it to the poor, *take up your cross, and follow me.*" Wow. One thing. For that guy, Jesus knew what it was.

I would suggest for each of us there's one thing – I'm glad He doesn't share with us more than one thing at a time. But one thing He puts his finger on it and He says, "This is something you can't just let go. You've got to make a change here. This is death in your life. I want to make it life in your life. So let me help you to move forward in this. That means you're going to decide reckon it over here and you're going to yield to me." So I would suggest that's what we need to do in our lives.

Now if you do this and start practicing it this week and you start saying, “Okay, I’m going to give this to the Lord, I’m going to yield myself to Him,” here’s what’s going to happen. You’re going to fail at times. So you better come back next week because chapter 7 is all about failure. It’s such a powerful passage of scripture through the Romans as we go and look at it from this perspective or how God wants to change us. I think you’ll find it to be fascinating as we look at the failure.

So don’t get discouraged this week if you fail. Just practice reckoning and yielding yourself to God and let’s see what happens. See what God does. God is in the business of changing people. Not just other people. He changes you and me.

Let’s stand together and pray.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we come before you now and we thank you for the privilege we have to be changed people. We thank you that you grow us in grace and you help us to understand more about our own hearts and lives and that you give us a path, a way to change and a way to grow and it’s through the power of your Spirit. So Lord, we know that’s yet coming in chapter 7 and chapter 8, but right now we know that you are convicting us of areas in our lives where we need to make some adjustments. So take us now through chapter 6, Lord, in our lives this week. Guide us and lead us. We ask in Jesus’ name, amen.