

## The Epistle to the Romans

### Ch. 5 & 6

**I**t's the pastor's last sermon. As he's saying farewell at the door, an elderly lady whispers, "Your successor won't be as good as you." "Oh, not true," he smiles. "Sonny," she says, "We've had five preachers, and each has been worse than the one before."

Did she really say that? As Snopes disclaims, "The difficult thing with quotes on the internet is verifying them. - Abraham Lincoln"

What *is* verifiable is that most Bible scholars agree that Romans is *the* "How To Know God and Really Live" tutorial which helps us better understand the entire Bible. It was penned in A.D. 57 by Paul – God's first envoy to Gentiles, Jewish scholar, Roman citizen and alpha male of religion's coup against Christ (1 Timothy 1:15).

A quarter century after Jesus left earth, Paul sends this sea-change letter to Jewish and Gentile Christ-followers in Caesar's capital. They had only the Old Testament, so Paul explains the essentials of this new, by-faith-only way of getting right with God. In the diatribe writing style, Paul anticipates the readers' questions that this news will arouse.

**Let's read Romans 3:21-31 (p. 838, NIV).**

Faith ignores impossibilities, being confident in the object of its trust. Because Abraham *believed* God, the Jews were given their own land, and his 95-year-old wife Sarah delivered their son Isaac (Genesis 21:1-7). **Now let's read Romans 5:1-21 (p. 326, Msg).**

### *Cross Purposes Romans 5:1-11*

No longer at war with God, the believer is at peace, even in suffering (2 Corinthians 4:7-18, 6:3-10; 12:7-10). Tough times build patience, character and the certainty that Christ's followers will not face God's wrath or His judgment for sin (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 5:9-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8).

Is Paul daft saying, "Rejoice in suffering?" Quoting Michelangelo, "As the chips fall, the image emerges." We must focus not on what's being chipped away, but on the Christ-like image of us that God is sculpting. Maturity emerges from pain inflicted by life's chisels.

**DISCUSS: Describe one lesson you've learned through a hardship.**

If you ever doubt that God loves you, just look at the cross. Long before you were born, God proved that “Jesus loves me” is not merely a Sunday School tune. It was His act of ultimate love for you.

Instead of saying, “I *hope* I’ll go to heaven,” by anchoring your life in Jesus you can have peace since God no longer holds your sin against you because He sees you as being “in Christ” (Colossians 3:1-3; Ephesians 2:3-7)!

**DISCUSS: What does your life announce about God? What do you want it to say?**

### *Dying to Live* *Romans 5:12-21*

The Chaos theory says upstream actions affect things downstream. Adam’s and Jesus’ actions touch every human. God instructed Adam to avoid the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:15-17; 3:6). But, on behalf of our entire species, Adam chose to live his way. His sin bequeathed to us both physical and spiritual death.

**But Jesus** chose to obey His Father and go to the cross (Luke 22:42; John 1:29). There God dealt justly with *all* sin by crediting you and me with His Son’s substitutionary sacrifice for our sins (Isaiah 53:11-12; Mark 10:45). Without the cross, we’d fry forever (John 3:36).

**DISCUSS: Why are we reluctant to think of life after death?**

If you opt to live a religious rules-driven life to earn God’s approval, you’re stuck trying to meet God’s standard of perfection. Your inevitable failure gags you with guilt and more sin. **But God’s** grace is, as the old hymn goes, “greater than ALL our sin.” Whoa, is that *too much* freedom? **Let’s read Romans 6:1-23 (p. 840, NIV).**

### *Necessary Ending* *Romans 6:1-14*

Does God’s inexhaustible grace encourage us to test our freedom as believers whose sins -- past, present and future -- God has totally forgiven and forgotten (Romans 4:7-8)? If so, why not O.D. on sin so God can download even *more* grace? Paul snaps, “Fogeddabowdit” (1 Corinthians 10:23-23)! This always pops up when God’s grace is fully presented! It feels like God gave us His MasterCard!

Today we walk on the shoulders of Pres. Lincoln, Dr. King and other giants who engineered reform to heal our land. Even so, the believer’s old sinful nature died with Christ when God’s sinless Lamb took our sins to the cross and buried them for good!

Emancipated from being slaves to sin, by faith alone we rise to new life *in* Christ, free to love and serve God (Hebrews 10:11-24).

We are spirit, soul and body. When you give Christ the wheel, God's Holy Spirit moves in to inhabit your spirit. Still, your soul (emotions, mind and will) and your body keep struggling with sin because sinning is their habit (Romans 7:14-20). How do you bust up this logjam? The more time you spend with Christ (in your spirit), the more you begin to think and act like Him (Romans 8:29).

Believers are transformed when they see themselves as God does: *PERFECT, BLAMELESS, IN CHRIST* (Ephesians 4:20-24)! Dead to sin's control, and alive with Christ for always.

Your sinful nature had to die since sin can't cohabit or time-share your spirit with "Christ in you" (Colossians 2:6-10). Each believer is in "the Body of Christ," "baptized" into it not with water but by "the baptism *by* the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:3-6).

Water baptism is but a symbol of Christ's having died, buried our sins and risen to new life. In God's eyes the moment we trust Him, we participate *with* Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. *Everything* in our life gets a fresh start (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

God sees you, the believer, as one with His Son, so He understands you and loves you unconditionally! Sin has *natural* consequences now. But for Christ's man, there are none for eternity (Romans 8:1).

**DISCUSS: Why is it so hard to believe this? What if we did believe it?**

### ***Who's Your Boss? Romans 6:15-18***

A negative boss creates fear, disloyalty, even death of the business whereas an inspiring leader ignites productivity and vibrant growth.

For the believer, sin was his former master, but God is now his Leader and his Life (John 8:34-36). God told Israel, "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God ..." (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

Sin no longer owns us; Christ does! With Christ, we're free to live His way. Before Christ we could do good, but our rejecting the Gospel was a deal-breaker. "No take God's gift of forgiveness -- no credit for good works." Our enemy, Satan, plays his garden game by having us question God's authority. Trying to "live a good, moral life" without Jesus, Paul says, is impossible (Hebrews 11:6).

**DISCUSS: What makes us risk trying to be good enough for heaven?**

## ***Sin Pays*** ***Romans 6:19-23***

Sin takes you farther than you want to go, keeps you longer than you want to stay, costs you more than you want to pay. Sin's a deceitful boss. "Don't kid yourself. God's no fool. You reap what you sow" (Galatians 6:7-8). That creates the market for forgiveness.

### ***Diving In Faith First***

God graciously offers to swap what we deserve (endless punishment from God in hell) for what we don't deserve (living forever in God's loving presence in heaven) Ephesians 2:4-8; Titus 3:4-7.

The final verse of ch. 6 is the tipping point for millions who've chosen real life: "The paycheck of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." Jesus told His Father, "...eternal life means to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You sent" (John 17:3). Do you want that life? Just ask.

"God, I've been working for the wrong boss. I resign from that death march and choose life, the life Jesus rose from the grave so that I might live for You and with You. Thank You for forgiving all my sins. By faith I'm giving myself to You, Father. Thank You, Jesus. Here are the keys to my spirit, soul and body. Amen.

His Deal

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