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Romans

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. Romans 8:1

This first verse of chapter 8 shows the culmination of all of Paul's previous discourse. He has worked slowly and methodically through the various doctrines of the previous seven chapters to come to this marvelous conclusion. It is a conclusion which needs to be evaluated in connection with everything that has thus far been said, or it will lead to further confusion. If properly understood, the fact that the chains of bondage are destroyed in Christ becomes evident.

In this coming chapter, as evidence of this certainty, Paul will deal extensively with the role of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Spirit will be spoken of 19 times in the NKJV translation. The work of Christ had to come before the giving of the Spirit and this is the logical progression of thought in Paul's writings -

- 1) The state of man
- 2) The introduction of the law and its consequences
- 3) The work of Christ
- 4) The effect of the work of Christ in man
- 5) Life in the Spirit for man in Christ

Obviously, much more has been involved thus far, and the thoughts have moved back and forth through a vast array of interwoven concepts, but he has given us

an overall framework which has led to today's verse and which will carry us through the coming verses.

"Therefore" is the key to connecting us back to what has been submitted. Based on these things, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus..." The things which bound us are gone "in Christ Jesus." This doesn't mean that those who are in Him have been given a free pass to sin, nor does it mean that sins committed in Christ aren't to be condemned. Instead, we are given a contrast.

Based on the discussion of the law in chapter 7 we see that in Christ condemnation isn't pronounced in the same manner as it was under the law. Where the law always condemns, the gospel graciously pardons.

A problem and a misunderstanding does arise though from the rest of the verse - "who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." Is this a conditional statement on ultimate "condemnation" of the believer? In other words, is this saying that if one doesn't outwardly walk "according to the Spirit" they can lose their salvation and go back onto the avenue of destruction?

The answer is, "No." However, because of the wording and a misunderstanding the context of Paul's thoughts, this is often what is proposed by scholars. As always, the context of a passage must be considered. Right from the beginning of Chapter 7, Paul gave the example of death nullifying law and then he equated that with Jesus' death nullifying the law for us. Thus we are positionally "in Christ" and dead to the law and thus "in the Spirit." He then said that because of this "we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter."

The choice is still given to us how we will conduct our earthly walk, regardless of our heavenly position. "Condemnation" in this verse is the word *katakrima*. FF Bruce rightly calls it "punishment following sentence - in other words, penal servitude. There is no reason for those who are in Christ Jesus to serve sin as if

they had never been pardoned and never been liberated from the prison-house of sin."

If you follow the logic, this isn't speaking then of condemnation in eternal hell, but the condemnation of living in prison which results from living in sin. If we "walk according to the Spirit" we are living a life of freedom from the bondage of sin. If we fail to conduct our lives according to this walk, then we will suffer the prison of our walk. As evidence for this, the rest of the New Testament shows us it time and time again.

For example, Paul says to those in Ephesus, "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."
Ephesians 4:28-32

For those in Christ who fail to follow the instruction and live in agreement with the Spirit they have been granted, they will receive the condemnation in the flesh that they deserve. However, this doesn't effect their eternal state in Christ. As always, the biblical truth of eternal salvation is upheld.

Life application: In Christ, we have freedom from the penalty of the law and we stand justified in God's presence because of the work of Jesus. We also have the ability to serve God in the newness of the Spirit. Why would we want to cling to the flesh and suffer the consequences of such a choice? Instead, let us endeavor to live in Christ in holiness and virtue.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:2

In the analysis of verse 7:22, the various "laws" were noted which reflect our state as humans. Some are negative laws, such as the "law of sin and death." Others are positive and which are granted to those who believe in Jesus. These are called "laws" because they work in a governing way, just as the laws of the universe do - gravity, motion, energy, thermodynamics, etc.

The "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is a governing law. This law is granted by faith in Christ. The moment a person believes the gospel which they have heard, they are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13, 14). A new law is available to govern us and it "has made me free from the law of sin and death." One law replaces another in this case. We move from a position "in Adam" which carries the sentence of death and condemnation, to that of being "in Christ" which frees us from both.

Actually there are three principle ways of being united to Christ. The first is that we are united by faith. Because of this relationship, we are born again and thus we are united by birth. Just as we were born into Adam, we are now born into Christ. And this means that we are in Christ in a third way, by essence. Jesus uses the symbolism of the vine and the branches. We share the same vitality and life source - this is the Spirit.

The Spirit is our guarantee of eternal life. He is the deposit which assures us that, despite the failings of our flesh, we are now children of God and "co-heirs" with Christ. But one final thought should be considered. We can work against the law of gravity through the use of an opposite force, a rocket for example. In the same way, we can work against the Spirit in us by not yielding to the Spirit. This goes back to the war Paul speaks of in chapter 7.

Life application: By faith, we are granted the Holy Spirit of promise. We are granted new life and a new direction. Let us not work against this great blessing, but yield to God. Stay in touch with the Lord through prayer, meditation on His word, fellowshiping with other believers, etc. What we have been granted is infinitely superior to what we gave up, so let us endeavor to move forward in this wonderful new life.

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,... Romans 8:3

Romans 8:3 is one of those verses worth putting to memory. It succinctly states a fact which is otherwise unimaginable. God gave the law to the people of Israel. Within that law is a statement which seemingly is one of the granting of life -

"You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord." Leviticus 18:5

However, the reality is that the law actually brought about death. It couldn't grant life because "it was weak through the flesh." Man, because of his inherited corruption, is incapable of meeting the demands of the law. What was to bring life, actually brought death (Romans 7:10). And so the law seemed to merely add heavy baggage on the highway to destruction. But then the news of eternal wonder was introduced into the stream of humanity.

What the law couldn't do, God did for us. Such is the nature of the work of God. It is a gift and it is solely of His doing. Where the law further condemned us, we found a new avenue of release when God sent "His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." This is the incarnation - God united with humanity and dwelt among us (John 1:14). He bore the garments of flesh that we bear, but unlike ours which have the inherited baggage of Adam's fall, Jesus came through a woman, but not a man. He was conceived without sin; He had the "likeness" of sinful flesh, but actually was sinless.

God did this, sending His Son, "on account of sin." Sin entered the world when the devil wrought his work of deception in the Garden of Eden. The devil seemed to have gained the victory, but John tells us in his first epistle that it was, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8)"

This is what it means when Paul says "on account of sin." The devil is the master of this world of sin, but Jesus came to undo his work - and He did! "He condemned sin in the flesh." By coming as Adam was, Jesus was fully qualified to replace the error he committed. Born sinless, Jesus was capable of prevailing over the law which was given. As it says in Leviticus, "if a man does, he shall live by them."

The marvel of the incarnation is that by coming in the likeness of sinful flesh, but bearing no sin, Jesus could do what no other person could even come close to doing. Through His work, we are now granted an offer - we can accept the work of Jesus on our behalf and be reconciled to God through Him, or we can choose to stay "in Adam" and attempt to be reconciled on our own merits.

This verse then is an explanation of the first two verses in Romans 8 - "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

Life application: We are weakened by the sinful flesh we inherited, but Christ had no such limitation. He prevailed over the law, thus condemning sin in the flesh. As great as that sounds, we need to remember that in order for this to happen, Christ had to go to the cross. When you rejoice in His work, never forget the high cost which was paid in the process.