

# **The Door into Romans 8**

Romans 8:1-4

When I was a baby Christian, I remember reading this good instruction that a believer will find the best riches behind some very poor doors, and the richest doors will open sometimes upon wood, hay or stubble.

Think of the doors in front of the Savior's manger in Bethlehem. And then consider Satan's promised kingdom to Jesus in the three temptations.

But this is not the issue here in Romans 8, for here is a most golden gate to a most golden chapter!

This has been rightly called the sanctuary in the cathedral of Christian faith; the tree of life in the midst of the new Eden, where Rom. 1:16 was, as Luther called it, the gates to paradise. Were the whole Bible likened to a ring above all rings, then Romans would be the chief jewel on that band, and Romans 8 the sparkling point of that diamond.

What a beautiful door into this magnificent chapter! A lovely and inviting door into this great and gracious chapter; a chapter which begins 'no condemnation' and ends with 'no separation'! Those who truly walk through these doors not only possess eternal life, but are assured of the glory of God and of heaven!

We need to get our bearings for Romans 8:1 is a pivotal verse. What a different atmosphere we find, says Leon Morris, from where we have been! The word "THEREFORE" greets us at the outset.

So, our first point is **looking backwards and forwards**.

Let's look forward to these 39 verses – where we find not a single command! All is given as fact!

1-11 is all about LIFE: life freed from condemnation, from sin and from death; life and peace; life in fellowship with God; eternal life, life in the Spirit.

The Spirit is very prominent in this chapter, used 21 times; the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ.

12-17 is about sonship and adoption; the high, future privileges of every believer. You have received not only a Spirit of life but the Spirit of adoption, crying Abba, Father! You are a child of God, and thus an heir of God and joint heir of Jesus!

18-30 is about hope and the future. This is a hope that overcomes the sufferings that are here; the hope that fixes our hearts on what is sure to come. And this is not only hope for us, but for this groaning, futile, broken world!

Last but not least, 31-39 presents the greatest triumph – ‘GOD IS FOR US’! What shall we say to these things? You are more than conquerors through the love of God shed abroad in you by the Spirit of Jesus.

The Spirit of life, the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of hope and the Spirit of triumphant love in us. And yet the Spirit points away from himself to the Lord Jesus. “In Christ Jesus” begins in 8:1-2, and “in Christ Jesus” is where we are found at the end!

Romans 8:1 is the beginning of these rich shining glories that await us. But Romans 8:1 is a summary looking back as well.

“Therefore” carries forward what we have been taught in 1-7 already.

Romans 8.1 **and** 2 is the summary of Romans 1 through 7.

3.20-5.11 is our NO CONDEMNATION – freed from guilt and condemnation of sin.

Romans 6 and 7 – freed from the dominion of law and death of sin.

These are twin streams which flow from being freed from sinful Adam and now set in your new King of grace, Jesus, in Rom. 5.12-21. His reign of grace has two sides: a **legal** side in justification by faith alone in Christ; and a **dynamic** side in a new kingdom by union in the Spirit with Christ – you have been crucified and now are raised with him! Neither of these are through the law!

The gospel of Romans is both the righteousness of God and the power of God in Jesus; we are rescued in the courtroom from his wrath; and in the slave market from sin’s dominion.

What a timely word this is then! Paul just diagnosed the weakness of the law in the Christian in Romans 7, Paul reminds us: we are not condemned by the law in Christ Jesus – nobody can bring a charge against us! And further, we are now under a new law – the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus!

This brings us to the rest of 8:1, which orbits around the two words, “no condemnation”.

And here we find three points of greatest interest:

1. First, the *completeness* of NO Condemnation and what that means
2. Second, the *certainty* of No Condemnation and why that is so

3. Third, the *comforts* of No Condemnation and how you are to enjoy this gift

**First of all, the completeness of no condemnation.**

None of our versions bring this out, but the word “NO” is thrown emphatically to the front of the line. There is no, none, nada, nothing of any sort; the Lutheran Greek scholar Lenski writes, ‘no condemnation at all; no condemnation of any kind.’” In its entirety, in all of its parts, NO!

Now to what does condemnation refer? Condemnation is at least the opposite of justification; look at 8:33-34. The pronouncing ‘guilty’ is what we think of when we think, ‘condemned’ – you are legally bound now to be punished.

But in the ancient world this carried more than just sentencing; to condemn was also to punish, to bring righteous wrath upon the guilty, as well as declaring him, or her, guilty.

So Paul is saying that not only are we not guilty, but we are, as we have seen, declared righteous in his sight. The ungodly who believes, the ungodly who does not work, is by faith credited as righteousness, and justified. God credits righteousness apart from works! (4:5-6)

This is the righteousness of God and not man.

Further, this means the wrath of God revealed against the unrighteousness of men is satisfied. Why? How? That wrath has been poured out on another, even our substitute, Jesus!

This is the wonder, the miracle of the gospel! Christians are as worthy of being found guilty, declared unrighteous, and sent to hell as every

unbeliever still in their sins! But the Lord intervenes; and the perfectly just God, who will never bend the law, is satisfied by the cross-work of Jesus. He provides both the payment of the penalty and the robe of righteousness entitling us to heaven!

This is the **completeness** of no condemnation. Jesus paid it all, not some, not most, not part – no! That would be a half-gospel, no gospel!

This is a complete “No condemnation” As surely the sin he bore was not his own, so the righteousness we have from him is not our own! His was an alien unrighteousness to him; ours an alien righteousness from him.

So God the judge bears no continued righteous anger toward those who are in Christ Jesus!

If you are not in Christ Jesus, you are condemned in and for your sins, right now! God’s wrath is present – see John 3:16-18. Christ Jesus alone is the exclusive door to God being your Father – John 14:6!

If you are in Christ Jesus, this will never, ever depend on you! What about after we are saved, and we continue to sin, to fall, to stumble, to do what we know is wrong? Again, no condemnation, none at all - COMPLETE! There is no NEW Condemnation!

Now there is no condemnation at all, because of how certain this is in Christ Jesus.

We turn now to the **certainty** of NO Condemnation, because this is found *in Christ Jesus*.

He is the Rock of your Salvation; He is the foundation of Redemption; He is the sure and steadfast Way, to whom if a man should come he will never be cast out!

Man does not like this one bit – we want control so badly.

But as uneasy as it is to have all of our redemption in the hands of Another, we really should want it no other way!

First of all, because what we touch comes to nothing. Our ways, the ways of man, are so full of vanity and strife! Do we really want to place the salvation of our souls in our own hands?

Second, this desire to control comes from an evil place. Mankind is still lured by Satan's promise that "You shall be as gods!" Arrogance, self-centeredness, is in our DNA!

Third, there is no redemption in our hands; and there is all redemption in his nail-pierced hands! There is no condemnation at all in Christ Jesus; it is complete, because He is such a complete Savior! Complete in Him, fullness in Him, including especially the full pardon and righteousness from him.

"In Christ they were chosen; to Christ they were betrothed; with Christ they were united; by Christ they are saved; and, sitting with Christ on his throne, they shall reign with him forever and ever." O Winslow

Christ is perfectly fitted to be your Savior, your justification, your righteousness, and much else besides! And to look to any other is IDOLATRY! Auto-soterism, self-salvation, is the worst kind of idolatry, for it takes from God his chief glory!

The only thing to add here is being in Christ is not some external thing. Being united to Christ, being in Christ, is not nominal Christianity, in name only. No, we become one with him, united to him. There are those who teach to come first to the church, and then through the church and membership, you have union with Christ. But this union is by the Spirit on God's part and faith on your part. This is modelled after the Trinity! Jesus prayed in John 17: "You in Me, Father, and I in You, and they in Me, and I in them!"

You become one flesh, one spirit, one mystical body with the Lord Jesus! Faith **IN** him, not faith only about Him!

He engrafts you into himself; I am the vine, you are the branches! He holds you, by faith in him. Yours is the hand of a little weak child, placed in his strongest of all hands! From which none can pluck you. He is your refuge indeed.

This then pours into our last point: the **comfort** of no condemnation, as we conclude with this little big word, **NOW**.

This is not a future matter. He who has the Son **HAS** eternal life. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God **IS** eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ!

Many things are future to our salvation. There are many things in Romans 8 that are eschatological, which are part of the last things. There are things for which we must hope and wait – especially the revealing of the sons of God in glory and resurrected bodies.

But justification, no condemnation, is **NOW**. It does not look for some future finishing of justification; for it looks upon the finished work of Christ alone apart from our works, good or bad!

This is a present *immunity*; an entire exemption from God's curse and wrath!

“Though in the godly there remains some sin, yet no condemnation shall be to them!” Manton

This is also told us to be assured in our hearts and lives. We are not called to be in terrible doubt all the time as to our state before God's judgment. Every believer should be able to say “there is now no condemnation for me on account of Christ Jesus in whom I am hidden and kept safe!”

Some attack the teaching of assurance. The Roman Catholic Church, for instance, has taught that no Christian can know they are going to heaven! Little wonder, since their salvation rests partly on the church and partly on their actions!

But listen what John wrote in his first letter:

<sup>9</sup> If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son. <sup>10</sup> The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. <sup>11</sup> And the testimony is this, that God **HAS** given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. <sup>12</sup> He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. <sup>13</sup> These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. (1Jo 5:9-13 NAU)

This is not some vague hope-so! Christian assurance is based on



1. God's promise in his infallible word – all who come to Me will never be cast out;
2. God's change wrought toward sin and Christ, by grace alone received by faith alone;
3. God's seal of the Spirit within by faith.

Do you know this for yourself? Is there anything more important? Especially when the sword of condemnation and wrath dangles over so many! Nothing upholds the sinner out of hell but the mere pleasure of an almighty God, and, an angry God at that! Read that most famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"!

How in your hearts should the bell of Romans 8.1 ring!

"Strange mystery of wondrous grace! I'm full of sin, yet not condemned! I stand in Jesus' righteousness; from every sin redeemed!"

The completeness of no condemnation; the certainty of no condemnation; and the comfort of no condemnation.

I conclude with a *contrast* and a *caution* about no condemnation:

If there is now no condemnation at all of any sort, for all those who are in Christ Jesus, then there is now and forever all kinds of condemnation, **EVERY** condemnation, for all outside of Christ Jesus.

What a contrast. For on the one hand, this world is all the *heaven* many will every experience; but for you in Christ, this world is all the *hell* you will experience. And compared with the true hell, well, this is

not hell! No one in this world has seen or felt the full force of God's burning wrath except One, who died on a cross at Calvary!

What a contrast! And then a *caution*.

“No condemnation” is a very full part of the gospel. There is no gospel without it! All our sins are pardoned, drowned in his blood; and we are dressed in Christ's perfect righteousness. This is His passive and active obedience.

But the gospel is not only justification by faith alone. The gospel saves us from the power of sin as well as the guilt; from the pollution of sin as well as the debt.

Paul is about to open the fullness of that salvation, in which Christ is made unto us all things, such as wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

The Spirit of life, the privilege adoption, the encouragements of hope, and the certitude of eternal triumph are before us all.

The point is – the caution is – do not look to justification for what adoption, or sanctification, or hope can do! Anymore than you would look to sanctification or adoption for what only justification can do!

I hope you will see more clearly the full richness of these treasures of your salvation in Jesus Christ, your Redeemer and Reconciliation with the Father. Amen.