

Romans

Romans Chapter Eight

Romans 8:1

August 22, 2010

This is lesson number **54** in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

Title: **“NO CONDEMNATION”**

Romans 8:1-4

8:1 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.] **2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. **3** 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, **4** that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

We have been studying a section of Scripture in Romans Seven that explains the awful power of sin and the purpose of the law. This section includes all of Chapter Seven and continues through verse 4 of Chapter Eight.

We have just completed an in-depth look at Romans 7:14-25 and it is my conclusion after considerable study that many if not most interpretations of this often quoted passage miss its teaching. What I mean is that if you involve yourself in all the arguments as to whether Paul when he writes this passage is an unbeliever, a new Christian, or a mature man of faith you will miss the point.

For example, Arthur W. Pink wrote a small booklet entitled the “The Christian in Romans 7.” Now I recommend that you study any and all of Arthur Pink’s work, especially his book “The Sovereignty of God.” But not everything that Pink writes is dead-on accurate. The same could be said of any other fallible man. Pink’s booklet, the “The Christian in Romans 7,” makes the case that this is the mature Christian and suggests that if you are not in the same state of moral tension and agitation over sin that you may not be a Christian at all.

In “The Christian in Romans 7,” Pink quotes several well known preachers not the least of note are Jonathan Edwards, Augustus Toplady {Rock of Ages}, Adoniram Judson, John Newton {Amazing Grace}, and especially Charles Spurgeon, all of

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whom support this same interpretation – that the man in Romans 7:14-25 is the model of a mature believer. And that is what I taught for many years.

Now it must be true that a believer struggles against all known sin but I do not believe that the life of every believer must be a life of such desperation.

The man in Romans 7:14-25 is **defeated** by indwelling sin. He is “wretched,” exhausted from this struggle with sin.

The interpretation that I am most satisfied with is the one given by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones which says that Romans 7:14-25 is simply about the **power of sin and the futility of trying to use the law for sanctification.**

And so Romans 7:14-25 is a hypothetical picture of a man trying to be sanctified through the law and is not Paul as the model of a mature believer.

I mentioned that much has been made about the use of the past tense in verses 7-13 and the present tense in 14-25. Well that doesn't prove anything because Paul is using the “dramatic present tense.” He is saying that if a man uses the law for sanctification he will be frustrated and wretched!

All that the law can do is to bring the knowledge of sin. By the deeds of the law, by no system of obedience, can a man be made right before God.

Neither can the law help a man who **is** justified improve his condition in sanctification or the process of personal holiness.

Now when we come to Chapter Eight Paul shows us that the walk, or manner of life, of the believer is a life lived in the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Seven is about the law and what the law can and cannot do. Chapter Eight is about the assurance of the child of God.

How can I know that I will finally be with Jesus Christ in eternity? Because God Himself has purposed it and we can trust God to keep His word.

So let us now begin Chapter Eight:

8:1 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.

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Let's first consider a textual matter. If you are using any translation other than KJV and NKJV, such as NIV, ASV, RSVU, and ESV, you will notice that the second phrase, **“who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit,”** is not in verse one. The phrase, however, is in verse 4 in all these translations.

There is general agreement among scholars that Romans Eight is perhaps the **greatest** chapter in the entire Bible. However, Lloyd-Jones believes that Romans Five is the most **important** chapter but that Chapter Eight is the most moving.

A correct understanding of Chapter Five is absolutely essential if you are to know how God saves sinners. Representation: Adam and Christ.

One of the most important things that anyone who reads the Bible needs to learn is to pay attention to the context. It is simply wrong to lift a verse out of the Bible and try to prove anything, even with John 3:16.

Context involves what goes before and after a verse: paragraphs, chapters, entire books and, of course, the whole Bible itself.

This is called Biblical Theology.

So when a section of Scripture begins with “therefore” we should immediately look for the context.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...”

How does this statement connect with the preceding passage? It doesn't!

There is nothing in 7:14-25 that would bring anyone to the conclusion that, **“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,”**

In fact, there is nothing in Chapter Six or Chapter Seven that relates to this conclusion.

You may recall that when we started in Chapter Six we suggested that Chapters Six and Seven serve as a parenthesis. In Chapter Five Paul had made some staggering claims.

In 5:12-21 Paul gives the Doctrine of Representation: Adam and Christ – God deals with only two men in history.

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At the end of Chapter Five he makes a statement of wonder: a **wonderful** statement: Rom 5:20-21

20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, 21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Then because that statement would necessarily be misunderstood Paul had to answer the false notion that a believer could “continue in sin.”

Chapter Six shows two things: 1) that the believer is dead to sin, and 2) that the believer now serves a new Master; but then he writes in 6:14:

**For sin shall not have dominion over you,
for you are not under law but under grace.**

And so on in Chapter Seven he explains how the believer is “not under law.”

In Chapter Four, after using Abraham as the primary example in Scripture of justification by faith, Paul writes in Chapter Five:

5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God.

Now in 8:1 he says almost the same thing as he does in 5:1. So the context of the “therefore” in 8:1 is to continue from the end of Chapter Five.

Try reading to the end of Chapter Five and then skip to Chapter Eight and you won't miss a beat.

That is not to say that we don't need Chapters Six and Seven, it is just the matter of the context of Paul's argument: Justified by faith, therefore no condemnation! Eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Chapter Six is about our union with Christ; about what Christ has done and what He will do for our security, having been justified.

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Chapter Seven is about what the law cannot do in the matter of sanctification and is not about the life of the Christian in the Spirit.

When the law comes in the power of the Holy Spirit and brings the knowledge of sin a man is placed under deep conviction. He understands for the first time in his life that he is justly under the wrath of God. Cf. 7:7

When the Holy Spirit quickens the man who is dead in trespasses and sin he is regenerated. But the man is **passive** in that act of mercy. The wind blows where it wants to and so is the work of the Spirit.

But just as you can see the effects of the wind; even so, you can see the effects of regeneration in genuine repentance. Now the born again man hates the sin he once thought he could not forsake and he turns from sin to righteousness. He begins to walk in the Spirit and not after the flesh.

I want you to see that Christ has actually done something for His people. You don't need to follow anyone's set of rules or some system of law to be holy: you are done with that. Just trust Christ and walk in the Spirit.

The Christian must never fear the condemnation of the law or he will have placed himself back under law. This is what Chapter Eight is about.

The believer in Jesus Christ has complete assurance of eternal life: the believer is predestined, called, justified, and yes, will be glorified!

As I said last week, Paul is a great teacher. He states a conclusion, makes his argument and comes back to his conclusion.

So Romans 8:1 is the conclusion of the whole of Chapter Eight:

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,”

Then the rest of Chapter Eight explains in detail why it is true that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Following verse one Paul offers a series of arguments that prove why the person who is in Christ cannot be condemned. These arguments are all based on what God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit has done and will do.

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Verses 2-4 show us that what the law could not do was accomplished for us in Christ.

Verses 5-13 tell us that it is the Holy Spirit who works in us who will sanctify us.

Verses 14-17 tell us that we are children of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

Verses 18-25 say because we are children of God we are bound for glory and not us only but also the whole creation will be redeemed!

Verses 26-27 say that even though we are weak and will have difficulties we have the Spirit of God interceding for us.

Verses 28-34 contain perhaps the greatest assurance for the believer. How do we know that we are safe in Christ? Because God purposed it!

Verses 35-39 repeat the conclusion and sums up all that has been said by asking: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

Our goal in the following lessons on Chapter Eight will be to work out these seven arguments in detail.

The person who is justified can know that God will keep him as His child and bring him to glory.

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Do you have that assurance at this moment?

Now I cannot convince you by human logic or by pleading to your intellect, to your emotion or to your will to put your trust in Jesus Christ. What I do know is that if God is drawing you to Himself through the foolishness of the message preached you should not resist the message of grace. I do not know how the Spirit moves but I do know that He uses the message of Christ crucified for guilty sinners to pierce the heart and change the will of the one who hates God. He is merciful to save sinners.

A commentary by Gordon Clark on First Peter gives an illustration about a man who in his testimony said: "I was saved partly by God's work and partly by mine." When asked what his part was, the man said, "I resisted and God did the rest!" I can absolutely relate to that man.

But I don't advise anyone to resist God's drawing. If God is drawing you to Himself, He will be successful. But do not think that you can resist God to the point that you are in control of His grace for "a more convenient season. God may let you "win" the fight and send you to hell!"

In one of the most plaintive passages in all of Scripture, Jeremiah says as he weeps over idolatrous Judah: Jeremiah 8:19-20

**19 Listen! The voice,
The cry of the daughter of my people
From a far country:
"Is not the LORD in Zion?
Is not her King in her?"**

**"Why have they provoked Me to anger
With their carved images--
With foreign idols?"**

**20 "The harvest is past,
The summer is ended,
And we are not saved!"**

Don't be one who says, "The summer is ended and we are not saved!"

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There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...
Right now if you are in Christ Jesus!

This is the **greatest truth** that you can ever receive.

Think for a moment about how many religious people there are who spend their lives in fear of losing their salvation. Roman Catholicism and every Arminian sect teach that you may lose your salvation unless you continue to follow their particular “deeds of the law.”

Why is it necessary for a Roman Catholic to receive “last rites?”
We don’t need a “priest” to punch our ticket so we can go to heaven. Why?

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...

My fear is that they have not trusted Christ completely. For those who are ‘in Christ Jesus’ everything has already been done that is needed to satisfy the wrath of a Holy God. Jesus has shed His precious blood and that’s it. Can you believe that? Then,

There is therefore now no condemnation!

When we come to Romans Chapter Eight the Apostle tells us that what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did in His own dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

A couple of lessons ago Brother Gables commented on the idea that some teach of “getting out of Chapter Seven and into chapter Eight”.

What people usually mean by that expression is that going from Chapter Seven into Chapter Eight is moving ahead in the process of personal sanctification. The idea is that in Chapter Seven the Christian is struggling with sin and in Chapter Eight he is victorious over sin to the point that he no longer sins.

But the main teaching of Chapter Seven is that the law is not an evil thing nor is the law void; and that the law cannot be used to sanctify a person.

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My understanding of Romans 7:14-25 is that Paul presents a hypothetical example of the frustration of a man who tries to use the law for sanctification and is not the actual experience of Paul the Apostle.

It is as though there are two “me’s”. The “me” that is spiritual and the “me” that is carnal; both operating at the same time.

My personal experience is that I continue to struggle with indwelling sin but I am not defeated and living in a “blue funk” every moment of the day.

In Chapter Five Paul is talking about **justification** {the one-time act of God when he declares the guilty sinner ‘not guilty’}.

And in Chapter Eight when he says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,” and he is still talking about justification. The context is justification by faith.

Remember that justification is **always** the opposite of condemnation.

And that sanctification is **never** the opposite of condemnation.

Justified means not condemned!

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“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,”

We have a saying that goes: “What is it about **no** that you don’t understand?” Well let me ask you that in the sense of ‘no condemnation.’

“What is it about ‘no condemnation’ that you don’t understand?”

Justified: Now no condemnation!

Far too many people go through life with the idea that the Christian life is like this. A man sins and he asks forgiveness. He is forgiven and at that moment he is not under condemnation. Then he sins again and he is once more under condemnation.

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He repents and asks for forgiveness and is now accepted once more. And back and forth he goes.

But Paul is not writing about our **experience**; he is writing about our **position** in Christ: No condemnation!

“No” means no, not ever, never: Justified means No Condemnation!

If you are in Christ the blood of Jesus covers all of your sins: past, present, and future. In fact, for all those born after the crucifixion all their sins were future! So do not look to yourself for your justification, look to Christ and know that there is therefore now no condemnation.

In verses 1-2 Paul is saying what he will then prove in verses three through the rest of the chapter. He begins with the conclusion, ‘no condemnation.’

After giving his arguments to prove his conclusion he asks, ‘who shall separate us from the love of Christ?’ The answer is that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus! No condemnation!

Some think that if you tell people that all of their sins have been forgiven and that even if they sin they are not ever going to be condemned that they will use that as an excuse to continue in sin.

Well the apostle was accused of teaching that and he answered that charge in Chapter Six. The believer in Christ does not turn the grace of God into licentiousness!

The believer will not continue in sin as a characteristic of his life!

Once more I will give you an illustration that I learned from E. W. Johnson: The tenor of a believer’s life is like the flow of the Mississippi River. If you look at a map of the river at any given point it may be flowing north, west, south, or east. But if you look at its general flow it is moving from north to south. So if you look at a believer at a given moment he may not be acting consistent with a Christian’s testimony but you must look at the general tenor of his life. **That is in no way an excuse to sin presumptuously!**

If you ask people today to define a Christian many of them will say that a Christian is a man {or woman} who has made a decision” for Christ. He has believed in

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Jesus and he has decided to commit to the Christian life. He has joined a church. He has been baptized as a believer. Well, isn't that a description of a Christian?

All of that is true if it is defined in the context of the Scripture.

But the better definition of a Christian is that it is a person who is 'in Christ.'

Sometimes it is the little words that make the difference.

'No,' as in 'no condemnation.'

'In,' as in 'In Christ Jesus.'

If you are 'in Christ Jesus' nothing will separate you from the love of God.

When you learn how a person gets to be 'in Christ' you will know the Gospel.

A good exercise would be to read your New Testament and mark all the places where you find 'in Christ.'

Especially see the Corinthian letters, and Ephesians.

The definition of a Christian, one who is 'in Christ' would include:

We are married to Him, **in Christ!**

He is the Bridegroom and we are His bride.

We are branches of the Vine, **in Christ!**

He is the Vine and we are the branches, in Christ!

We are members of His body, the church, **in Christ!**

He is the Head and we are His body, in Christ!

And when we get to verses 5-8 we have an excellent definition of a believer.

I will quote yet another illustration from Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

"The difference between an unbeliever sinning and a Christian sinning is the difference between a man transgressing the laws of a state and a member of a family doing something that is displeasing to another member of the family. In one case the man commits an offense against the state. In the other case a husband, say, has done something that he should not do in his

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relationship with his wife. He is not breaking a law; he is wounding the heart of his wife. That is the difference. It is no longer a matter of law, it is not a legal matter, it is a matter of a personal relationship, and that a relationship of love. The man does not cease to be the husband, nor the woman the wife. The law does not come into this now. It is much more important not to offend love than to break the law. When a believer sins it is much like a child who has disobeyed his parents. He knows what to do and to whom to go. It has nothing to do with the law.”

That is why I keep saying that acceptable obedience to Christ must be out of love and not out of duty.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.