

Romans

Romans Chapter Eight

Romans 8:1-4

August 29, 2010

This is lesson number 55 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

“THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH”

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 you [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.

Our last study was devoted entirely to verse 1:

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

The opposite of condemnation is justification; condemned or not guilty.

There is no middle ground!

Now we will take up verse two.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made you {me} free from the law of sin and death.

There are a couple of textual matters that we need to note.

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First , the verb tense of ‘has made’ indicates an event that has happened once for all in the past. In Christ: made free. Not present tense as in sanctification nor yet future tense as in glorification.

Christian you are already ‘made free! In Christ!

Second, the word ‘me’ should be ‘you.’

This is not a mistranslation it is a matter of which manuscripts were used as the source for the translation. The translators are divided. KJV, NJKV, NIV and others opt for ‘me.’ NAS, NLT, and ESV opt for ‘you.’

The way I come out on this matter is that Paul is not writing only about himself here, he is writing about anyone who is a Christian. So it is ‘made **you** free...’

One of the most important words to notice if you want to understand what Paul is saying in this letter is ‘**for.**’ “For,” means ‘because.’

In verse two the Apostle is going to give the first of seven reasons for this great statement of assurance ‘that there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.’

2 For {because} the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made you [me] free from the law of sin and death.

Paul is talking about justification in Chapter Five. And when he says in Chapter Eight, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,” he is still talking about justification.

Remember that justification is always the opposite of condemnation.

Justified means not condemned!

But the way many commentaries explain this verse is to make it apply to sanctification. This is typical of what they say.

Remember in Chapter Seven when Paul referred to the power of indwelling sin as ‘the law of sin?’ Sin is so strong that it operates as a law.

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It may be a poor illustration but think of gravity. There is a gravitational attraction between any two bodies of any mass no matter how small they are. The law of gravity is always active.

Well the sin in us is always trying to cause us to rebel against the goodness of God. Sin operates as a “law.” That much is true.

But they go on to say that in a believer the Holy Spirit has taken up His abode. He dwells in the believer and as a consequence they live a life in Christ. That also is true.

But then they make an equivalence between the law in our members {7:23} which is sin and the law of sin and death {8:2}. The Spirit operates as a “law,” a principle of action, a fixedness of action as to be the law of our new being in Christ Jesus.

So then the Holy Spirit frees us from the law of sin and death in sanctification.

In this interpretation by making the ‘law of sin and death’ to be the same as the ‘law in my members’ in 7:23 they make this to be about **sanctification**.

What is wrong with that interpretation? Simply the little word **‘for.’**

The **reason** that there is therefore now no condemnation is not because we are **sanctified** it is because we are **justified**. If we take this verse to mean our sanctification then the verse is saying that we are not condemned **because** we are sanctified.

That is exactly the Roman Catholic doctrine of infused righteousness; that God cleans us up through the sacraments of the church, sanctifies us, and uses our sanctification as the basis of our justification.

But God justifies the ungodly!

That is why there is no real assurance in Roman Catholicism. They hold people through fear of losing their salvation. The Roman Catholic Church is not the only sect that teaches that you can be lost after you have been justified. Any group that teaches that you can be saved and then lost is ruling by fear and legalism. In that teaching your security depends on you and not on what Jesus Christ has already done.

There is therefore now no condemnation **because** we have been justified not because we are being sanctified.

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There is not a single hint in the Bible that the opposite of condemnation is sanctification. The opposite of condemnation is always justification.

In the next place, as we have already said, this is not an **experience** in sanctification to be gained; this is a **position** that has already occurred in the past to all those who are in Christ Jesus.

If you are a Christian you have been made free from ‘the law of sin and death.’

This is very important. If this verse is talking about our sanctification and because this has already occurred it would mean that we are already **completely sanctified**. But, I repeat, it is not about sanctification it is about justification.

So we must deal with what ‘the law of sin and death’ means.

If 8:2 is not this principle of the power of sin in 7:23 what is it?

It is the Law of God.

It is the law given to Moses, especially the Ten Commandments. The law that is written on the hearts of men and that was written on tablets of stone by the finger of God is the ‘**law of sin and death.**’

Follow my argument about the Law of God being the ‘law of sin and death.’

We are condemned by the one sin of the one man, Adam.

There is natural law in every person born from Adam onward.

As generations go by from Adam to Moses men died because of imputed guilt. Babies die because of imputed guilt. During this time some men were justified because of imputed righteousness: e.g., Adam, Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph and all those who believed God; their faith was reckoned to them as righteousness.

But then the written law came in alongside of sin {5:20} and by the law is the knowledge of sin. And to have the knowledge of sin is to be convinced of your condemnation. When a man has spiritual knowledge of the law he agrees with his condemnation.

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Why does Paul say that he is not ashamed of the Gospel {1:16-17}?

For {because} the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. {1:18}

God's wrath against sin is best seen in the law. Romans 3:19-26

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

In 3:31 Paul says, **“Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.”**

In 4:15 **because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.**

In 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.**

We could go to many other places in the New Testament where Paul refers to the Law of God as the Law of Condemnation, or the ministration of death, where the law of God is clearly ‘the law of sin and death.’

To me the argument that cinches that ‘the law of sin and death’ is the Law of God is that is the only thing that makes sense when you read verse 3.

We have another ‘for’ in verse 3.

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“For {because} what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh,”

This must be the law of God in verse 3 and so it is the same law in verse 2.

He is not referring in 8:2 to the law in our members {7:23}, the indwelling sin that acts as a law, but to the holy law of God that condemns us because we have broken every aspect of it!

Now we must deal with the rather strange phrase ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ.’ Whatever this “is” “is” is what has set you free from ‘the law of sin and death.’ Whatever this “is” “is” is the opposite of the Law of God.

We were under law and now we are under grace. So the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is the opposite of being under law.

This is not the working of the Holy Spirit in sanctification because it is the opposite of condemnation. Justification is always the opposite of condemnation.

The opposite of the law is grace.

How can the word ‘law’ be used in association with the Gospel?

Back in Rom 3:26-27

26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. 27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.

This is the way of salvation in 3:23; it is the righteousness of God which is by faith. It is the ‘law’ of faith.

In 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.

The opposite of law is grace.

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Notice that it is a 'reign' of grace.
A 'reign' and a 'law' are the same thing.

You are not under law but under grace.
What you are "under" may be called a law.

A law of grace; a reign of grace.
The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Back in 7:1-4 the woman in the illustration was under the law of her husband but when her husband died she was free to marry another, free to be married to Christ.

How does this life in Christ come to us? Through the Holy Spirit.

I said that when you understand how a person gets to be 'in Christ' you will know the Gospel.

Back in 6:3 we spent a lot of time on the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? **NOT WATER BAPTISM!**

Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. **NOT WATER BAPTISM!**

Cf. 2 Corinthians 3:4-18

4 And we have such trust through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 7 But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, [THE TEN COMMANDMENTS] was glorious, so that the children of

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Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, 8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?

9 For if the ministry of condemnation [THE LAW OF GOD] had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. 10 For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. 11 For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. 12 Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech-- 13 unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. 14 But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament [COVENANT], because the veil is taken away in Christ. 15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. 16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

So we must see that verse 2 is about justification or we will follow an incorrect application of this Scripture. It is about justification and not about sanctification.

A correct understanding of Verse 2 is extremely important to the arguments of the Apostle that follow. The reason that there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, is,

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made you [me] free from the law of sin and death.

Do you have this firm assurance at this moment?

If you are troubled about sin and about your standing before God I urge you to talk with one of the elders. Perhaps it will please the Holy Spirit to open your heart and grant to you repentance and faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In one sense the Gospel is very simple. It is simple {uncomplicated} because it is all of grace through faith in Jesus Christ. In another sense it is impossible because the Gospel demands that you relinquish all claims to your imagined control over your eternal destiny. You cannot make deals with God. You can only come to Christ on His terms. You and I are the beggars. Jesus Christ is not a beggar. He shall see the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied!

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Someone said, "The way to witness is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread."

Come to Christ Jesus as a guilty and condemned sinner pleading for mercy and there is hope. Jesus is the Savior of sinners.

What if I asked each of you this morning to tell me what is the essence of the Gospel message? What is the heart, if you will, of the Gospel? What would you say? Most of you would answer correctly because you have been taught the truth. However, much of what is called the Gospel today is simply not, in fact, the Gospel.

Is Paul's warning to the churches in Galatia relevant in the year 2010?

Basically Paul's warning in the letter to the Galatians is against confusing works with grace. Paul in Galatians teaches that anyone who adds only the tiniest amount of works, what they do, to what Jesus has done for sinners and believes that what they contribute completes the transaction they will be condemned.

Illustration: take a glass of pure spring water and a single drop of sewage; would you drink it?

Is that relevant today? I believe it is. When someone tells you that God has done 'thus and so' and then you must do 'this and that' in order for God to save you that is a system of works salvation. Whatever you add as your 'this and that' becomes justification by works!

Sincerity is not what matters. Were not the Judaizers in Paul's day sincere? They were sincere and sincerely wrong!

When a person adds an act of obedience to what Christ has already done, such as baptism and insists that you must obey 'in order to be saved,' that is salvation by works. When someone tells you that you cannot be saved unless you are a member of a particular group or church that is salvation by works.

As ironic as this is the Primitive Baptists that I have known stress that you cannot be saved by works and then teach that you must be one of their number to be saved.

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People who preach works have missed the heart of the message; they have missed the sufficiency of what Jesus Christ has done, they have missed the Gospel.

These two verses, Romans 8:3-4 are, as close to a complete statement of the Gospel as anything you will find in the Bible.

Notice that verse 3 begins with 'For.' Remember that when Paul follows something he has just written with 'for' he is going to explain what he meant.

E.g., in verse 2, he explains verse 1, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made you free from the law of sin and death." That explains why there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

Now in verses 3 & 4 he is going to explain verse 2.

Verse 1 gives us the great truth that 'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.'

Recently at a local restaurant, I was talking with a brother about this passage and he asked me a question that made me realize that I had not adequately explained 'condemnation.' We preachers often make the false assumption that everyone understands the meaning of the Bible words that we use.

The way he put it was, "would my nine-year old daughter understand 'condemnation?'"

We had a lively discussion and he offered the illustration of an old house that was condemned and when you tried to fix it up you had to scrape off the old paint and I responded, 'And it ain't worth fixing!' And he shouted "Amen" and everyone looked at us.

But that's the point. Do we communicate?

So what does 'condemnation' mean?

I thought I knew the meaning but I looked the word up.

CONDEMNATION. The Greek word *krima* is translated "judgment" and (often wrongly) "damnation." **Condemnation signifies the declaring of an evildoer to**

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be guilty; the punishment inflicted (1 Corinthians 11:32, 34); testimony by good example against malefactors (Matt 12:41-42). We use the word with the lighter meaning of censure, disapproval, blame, etc. As far as the justified believer is concerned, he faces no condemnation or judgment (Rom 8:1). The guilt of his sin has been removed (Rom 3:7), and he stands positionally "in Christ" and hence accepted "in the Beloved" (Eph 1:6).

(From The New Unger's Bible Dictionary. Originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois. Copyright (c) 1988.)

The way the Apostle uses the phrase 'no condemnation' he means 'no judgment, no punishment.' Those who are now 'in Christ', who were actually guilty, and under the wrath of a holy God. But God, who justifies the ungodly, declared them to be 'not guilty.'

To be 'not guilty' means 'no punishment.'
'Justified,' therefore now 'no condemnation.'

Now to connect verses 3 & 4 from the last message on verse 2:

'For...' In verse 2, **'For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus...'**
Is simply grace!

And the 'law of sin and death' in verse 2 refers to the **Law of God.**

Most interpretations of verse 2 make 'the law of sin and death,' to mean 'indwelling sin' or the 'law of sin,' in 7:23. But it cannot mean that and the reason is because this verse is referring to justification and not to sanctification.

They are saying by that interpretation that 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus' is working to **destroy** 'the law of sin and death.' By that interpretation it would mean that there is no condemnation, no punishment because indwelling sin is being destroyed, no punishment because we are being sanctified, being made holy. That is not what it means at all.

Condemnation means guilt and subject to punishment.

Try this as a paraphrase of 1 & 2:

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There is therefore now no punishment for those who have been regenerated and born again, or baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ Jesus because grace operating as the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made you free from the law of sin and death, namely the law of God.

So having made this grand declaration of no punishment in 1 & 2 for those who are in Christ Jesus Paul proceeds to give us the reason why that is true.

For, because...

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 {punished} 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.

Verses 3 & 4 are an exposition of 6:14.

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

Verses 3 & 4 are a continuation of Romans 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.

Even those commentators who make 'the law of sin and death' in verse 2 to be indwelling sin have to change here in verse 3 to make the law to mean the law of God. In verse 3 the law cannot mean anything but the law of God.

The law in verse 2 and in verse 3 refers to the law of God.

We must take verses 3 & 4 together because you cannot get the meaning of verse 3 without going on to verse 4.

As I said, we are now considering the very heart of the Gospel.

Anything that is put out as a 'plan of salvation,' that does not find its foundation in the truth of verses 3 & 4 is simply not the Gospel.

The way you eat a whole elephant is one bite at a time.

These two verses, because they are so rich, could be used to expound the entire Bible. They loomed as large as an elephant to me when I began to study them.

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Let's just skim over these two verses and notice the doctrinal assumptions, i.e., the doctrines that are assumed and not explained. For example:

The Law of God {the moral law} or the Ten Commandments.

The righteous requirement or demands of the law.

What the law could not do and why it could not do it.

The doctrine of God.

God's purpose.

The Trinity. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The incarnation of the Son of God.

The humanity and deity of Jesus of Nazareth.

The impeccability of Christ. He was not able to sin.

Substitution.

The atonement.

The victory of Christ over sin.

The imputation of righteousness in justification.

The impartation of righteousness in sanctification.

And surely I have not discovered all of the doctrinal allusions in these two verses of the Bible.

How rich and full is the inspiration of Holy Scripture!