

Romans

Romans Chapter Eight

Romans 8:3-4

September 5, 2010

This is lesson number 56 in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

Romans 1:16-17

“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 RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENT OF THE LAW”

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.

First the law: And to see this we must take verse 3 and verse 4 together.

Vs 3 For what the law could not do...

Vs 4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled ...

The law demands righteousness! The Ten Commandments:

My paraphrase: Remember the Law is spiritual.

Worship the only true God,
Do not be an idolater,
Do not blaspheme God,
Remember your Creator,
Honor your parents,
Do not murder,
Do not commit adultery,
Do not steal,
Do not lie,
Do not covet.

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The law demands righteousness!

As someone has rightly said, these are not the ‘Ten Suggestions,’ they are Ten Commandments. The law demands righteousness! Are you righteous?

By righteous I mean are you perfect? Would you dare, at this moment, to stand before the Judge of all the earth and claim any part of your pitiful obedience as your righteousness?

Sadly many people are doing exactly that! They have believed a lie that God has a ‘plan’ and that if they will only follow that ‘plan,’ then God will do something for them. But the ‘plan’ as it is called puts man in control of his justification and that is a lie.

The only ‘plan of salvation’ that God has must be **revealed** in the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 1 Corinthians 1:21

In the second place, the law not only demands righteousness, it also condemns. To condemn is to declare that you are guilty and therefore subject to punishment.

So the law has these two aspects. 1) The law demands righteousness, and 2) it condemns, or makes you subject to punishment.

The law brings the knowledge of sin and convicts us of our guilt but it cannot provide a righteousness that God will accept.

That’s what the law cannot do? The law cannot produce a righteousness that God will accept. What is amazing is that people will acknowledge that you cannot be saved by keeping the law, the Ten Commandments and then tell you that if you do ‘this and that’ that God will save you!

They can’t obey the Ten Commandments so they come up with something easier and say, “Okay, let’s do that.”

What did the Apostle say about Abraham’s justification in 4:1-5?

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4:1 What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.* 3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." 4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. 5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,

* Works may be identified as anything that you can be praised for or blamed for. If faith originates in you then you can be praised for having it. You can boast, but not before God. If faith is a gift where is the boasting?

OT Abraham is the premiere NT model of justification by faith alone.

What does Paul say about his Jewish brothers of his day? Romans 10:1-4

10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

So here in verses 3 & 4 we have the righteous demands of the law and the guilt and punishment, the condemnation that issues from our failure to meet those righteous requirements of the law.

But God did something that man could not do; yea man could never have imagined what God purposed in Christ before the foundation of the world.

And this is very important; **God did it!**

God the Father sent His own Son, **'For {because} God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes {is believing} in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.'**

When you learn how a person becomes a 'whoever' in John 3:16 you will know the Gospel.

It was God the Father who did something about sin. The God who reveals His wrath sent His own Son into the world for sinners.

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For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh.

The law is weak through the flesh but the law itself is not weak. If you think the law is defective in any way just try to gain righteousness by keeping it. The law is holy and just and good.

The 'weakness' is 'through the flesh.'

Our sinful nature is not able to obey the law sufficiently to acquire our justification. As hard as you and I try to obey God's righteous demands in the law we will fail. When a man sees the law as **spiritual** and then he tries to be holy through obeying the law he will cry:

"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

But someone did keep the righteous requirement or demands of the law. Jesus Christ who came in the likeness of sinful flesh on account of sin, or for sin, for atonement, met the righteous requirement of the law of God.

Why did He do that? He did that so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.

Justified; therefore no punishment: saved!

Just as there are two aspects of the law there are **two aspects of salvation**.

We first must be declared not guilty by God. Justified.

Declared not guilty and therefore no punishment, no condemnation!

That's one aspect.

But we also need a positive righteousness. It is not enough to be 'not guilty,' we must also be righteous. And that is what God does in our justification.

He imputes to us the righteousness of His own Son.

God takes our sin and puts it on His own Son and He punishes our sin in Christ. He takes the righteousness of His own Son and gives that righteousness to us. How does one receive such a transaction? By faith!

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

For it is the power of God to salvation...

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Why is it the power of God? For in it, in the Gospel, the righteousness of God is **revealed**. The righteousness of God must be revealed

A man does not receive the righteousness of God by agreeing with a proposition and doing his 'this and that'; he is declared righteous when he is justified and that is a revelation from God the Holy Spirit!

'Little children keep yourselves from idols.' The idol of self.

Only the power of God can reveal what Jesus has done for His people.

Can you say with bold assurance right at this very moment that you have the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus?

Can you abandon any idea that your "this or that"; something that you did to cause God to save you?

All I am asking is for you to put your faith in what Jesus Christ has done. Trust Jesus alone for your righteousness.

I said that Romans 8:3-4, was as close to a complete statement of the Gospel as anything you will find in the entire Bible. Only when you understand what man's condition is and what God has done about it will you know the Gospel?

These two verses are so loaded with doctrinal truths that I described my first impression as to how to explain them as being similar to trying to eat an entire elephant. The way you eat an elephant is one bite at a time. We took the first bite and discussed the **law of God** in relation to these verses.

The law of God is holy and just and good.

The law was weak through the flesh. Neither the law of God nor any other 'law system' or 'deeds of the law' was meant to be a means of gaining a right standing with God. And we must have a right standing before God or we remain condemned! Cf. John 3:36

The Bible makes it very clear that a person cannot be justified or made right with God by works. You must not confuse grace and works.

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Yet many people do just that. They take an expression of faith and turn it into a work. They take a result or an effect of being saved and try to make it the cause of being saved. Cause and effect: They confuse grace and works.

The Jews did it in Old Covenant days with circumcision. They confused the sign of the covenant with the reality of God's grace in the covenant. They confused grace and works.

In the New Covenant days before the New Testament had been completed the Judaizers came along and said, "Oh no, justification cannot be by faith alone, you must be circumcised; you must become a Jew before you can become a Christian." They confused grace and works. Cf. Acts 15:1

The "Judaizers" of today, are the legalists who say, "It cannot be by faith alone, a person must be baptized in order to be saved." They argue that baptism is a part of your faith and so they falsely claim that baptism is not a work. They confuse grace and works.

There is a way to distinguish between grace and works. Ask whether you can be praised or blamed for what is done. If you can be praised or blamed for it then it is works. You can be praised for good works and blamed for wicked works. But you cannot be praised or blamed for grace because grace is a gift of God.

And so a person can even make faith a work if take any praise for that faith. Many Baptists have been taught to say, "God saved me **because** I made a 'decision.'" When anyone says God saved them and then says it is **because of** something they did, that something, even professed faith, becomes works. They are asking to be praised for what they did. That is man-centered religion.

The only correct reason anyone can give that God saved him or her according to the Scripture is because He chose to do it. Cf. Ephesians 1:11

What the law does and what the law cannot do:

The law will show us what it takes to be right with God by our works.

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Simply keep the law perfectly and you would have a personal right standing before God. That is not hard to understand but it is impossible to do!

The law demands righteousness!

The Ten Commandments:

Worship the only true God,
Do not be an idolater,
Do not blaspheme God,
Remember your Creator,
Honor your parents,
Do not murder,
Do not commit adultery,
Do not steal,
Do not lie,
Do not covet.

If you have never once in your entire life transgressed any one of those precepts then you could claim your right standing before a holy God.

But because we were represented in Adam we ‘spring from the womb speaking lies.’ We are born altogether in sin. And that is why the law is weak through the flesh.

The ‘flesh’ here is not our physical body; the ‘flesh’ here is our nature, which is sinful.

The law demands perfection and the law condemns us because we are not perfect. I remember reading somewhere that Martin Luther was angry with God because God had given us commandments that were impossible to obey perfectly.

The law declares that we are guilty and subject to punishment.

That is what the law does: The law demands perfection and the law condemns us for our failure to keep it perfectly.

Verses 3 & 4 explain **why** there is therefore now no punishment for those who are in Christ Jesus. Those who are in Christ Jesus have been put ‘into Christ’ by grace, by an act of the sovereign God, by the Holy Spirit.

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And that is what ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ in verse 2 means: **grace!**

We are ‘free from the law of sin and death,’ or the law of God, by grace and there is therefore now no punishment.

And that is what verse 3 & 4 is explaining to us about verse 2.

What did it take for God to grant us His infinite grace?

God did it by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin; He punished sin in the flesh, the human body of His only begotten Son.

But wait a minute Jim. You just said that the ‘flesh’ is not our physical body and we know that Jesus was put on that cruel cross in His earthly body and He had no sin. Jesus was crucified in His physical body and yet He had no sin to be punished.

Jesus had no personal sin, but listen to 2 Corinthians 5:21

For He {God the Father} made Him {Jesus Christ the Son} who knew no sin {personally} to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

When Jesus was on the cross He actually became sin for us.

When God the Father constituted [put Him in the rank of sinners] His own Son to be sin He actually became SIN for us.

In the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before He went to the cross Jesus sweated great drops of blood and prayed “Father, if it be possible let this cup {of suffering} pass from Me, nevertheless Thy will be done.”

Jesus was not cowering before the physical suffering it was the thought of being made SIN that horrified the Son of God.

God punished sin in the flesh and did it by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. The sinless Man became sin for us.

John 3:16

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For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

As I said, I believe John 3:16 as much as anyone. But I must tell you that until you learn how a person becomes one of the “whoever’s” you will not know the Gospel.

God actually accomplished something by sending His own Son. This was not an act of frustration on the part of God. Christ is as a lamb slain before the foundation of the world. Have you grasped what that must mean?

When Peter says in Acts 4: 29, **“to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done,”** what did he mean? He means God purposed it and it must come to pass. We will have more to say about God’s purpose in later lessons from this chapter.

Spend some ‘quality time’ in your Bible and trace out God’s purpose.

Now the reason the Apostle can boldly state that there is therefore now no condemnation is because God did something. God did not make salvation possible; God made salvation certain for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The reason that many people who profess to be Christian do not have this firm assurance of ‘no punishment’ is because they are looking to themselves. They look at what they did or did not do. What they might do or might not do. They confuse grace and works.

But when God gives you the assurance that what you could not do because of the weakness of the flesh He did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh then you can look to God and not to self.

As we work through Chapter Eight we will see that God purposed the salvation of His people, and He calls them and He keeps them.

You are not saved because you make a ‘decision’ to allow God to save you. If you are saved it is because God arrested you in your sin and convinced you of your guilt and by His grace He put you into Christ Jesus.

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What's the evidence of that? You know that you are a guilty sinner and you believe that Jesus Christ is the righteousness of God and that you now have the righteousness of God forever.

You may have had a remarkable religious experience, a dramatic conversion experience, but do not look to that experience. Look to Jesus Christ. Trust in the righteousness that only God can give to you.

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,

God did that by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.

We have already emphasized that this is something that God the Father did and now let's see **how** God did what He did.

God sent His own Son: **His own Son.** God the Father sent His own Son.

This phrase, '**His own Son,**' answers many questions and should stop the many heresies about the person of Jesus.

The Bible calls angels 'sons of God' but angels are created beings.

The Bible calls believers sons or children of God but that is by adoption.

But God has a unique Son who is not a created being.

The Son of God, the second person of the Trinity is eternally begotten of God the Father.

The Arian heresy is that Jesus the Christ was the first created being of God and then Christ created everything else. That is what the Jehovah's Witness cult teaches. That is why the Jehovah's Witness' teach that you must not worship Jesus. They do not believe that Jesus is God in human form.

Consider this. A created being does not have the power to create; only God can create out of nothing!

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This Bible truth that Jesus is God in human form is especially important today with all the media attention on Islam. Islam teaches that Jesus was a prophet but Islam teaches that Jesus is not God.

Some time ago I heard a man tell about his college roommate who was Muslim and how he used to challenge him about the Trinity.

The Muslim said it was a simple mathematical formula:

One {God the Father} plus One {God the Son} plus One {God the Holy Spirit} equals Three gods.

No, if you use a mathematical formula it must be;

Infinity ∞ times infinity ∞ times infinity ∞
And any math student knows the answer is infinity ∞

God the Son came in the likeness of sinful flesh.

Jesus did not become the Son of God or the Christ at His birth. Christ is the eternal Son of God. Hebrews 1:3

who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person,

He is the express image of God.

No man has seen God at any time, but we see Jesus.

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John 5 is Jesus' own sermon on His deity.

John 5:16-19

16 For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." 18 Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

The Jews clearly understood that Jesus claimed equality with God.

The cults say he is not God and Islam says He is not God but God the Father and Jesus Himself says that Jesus is God.

In the likeness of sinful flesh.

That little babe of Bethlehem is the very Son of God.

When Simeon {Luke 2} held the baby Jesus in his arms he said now I can die for I have seen the Consolation of Israel, I have seen the Christ.

There are many passages that tell us that Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal Son of God. Just a few to refresh your memory:

John 1:1-3

1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

John 1:14

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Galatians 4:4

4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

Philippians 2:5-7

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

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Illustration of a preacher who was to speak to a group that denied the deity of Jesus and was asked not to say anything 'controversial.'

1 Timothy 3:16

16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:

God was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the Gentiles,
Believed on in the world,
Received up in glory.

Heb 10:5-7

5 Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:

"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.

6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin
You had no pleasure.

7 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come--
In the volume of the book it is written of Me--
To do Your will, O God.' "

But none of these or any other reference gives us the important truth that we have in Romans 8:3. They state that He is truly human but there is more.

In the likeness of sinful flesh. **True humanity but without sin.**

The incarnation of the Son of God. God becomes a man.

A real human body with a real human soul with no sin.

He is not an apparition or a ghost He is true man.

1 John 1:1-4

1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life-- 2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

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1 John 4:1-4

4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

Luke 1:26-38

26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" 29 But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. 30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." 34 Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" 35 And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing will be impossible." 38 Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

The Son of God took unto Himself a human nature that had been rendered free from sin. How was Jesus born sinless?

The Roman Catholic doctrine of 'Immaculate Conception' goes too far in that it teaches that in order for Jesus to have been sinless that Mary was sinless. There is not one bit of Scripture for that, in fact, Mary calls God her Savior. Only sinners need a Savior.

Dr. Lorraine Boettner correctly says that for Mary to be sinless only pushes the problem back one generation.

The Son of God was made in the likeness of sinful flesh.

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Jesus was human and ‘normal.’ He had all the traits of a normal human. He became hungry and He ate, he grew weary and He rested, He had righteous anger, He wept and had great compassion.

But sin is not ‘normal.’ Sin is common to sinful man but sin is abnormal.

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,

We will next look at ‘on account of sin,’ or ‘for sin,’ and how the ‘righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us’ in the next section.

God becomes a man and takes the sin of His people on Himself and suffers the punishment due for the sins of His people.

Matthew 1:18-25

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. 20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." 22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." 24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, 25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.

Are you at peace with God? Do you have the absolute assurance that for you there is therefore now no condemnation?