

Romans 8 -Set Free

Romans 8:1-4

¹Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Proof of the resurrection

- Jesus appeared to Mary first – If you are trying to perpetuate a **conspiracy theory** in the first century you do not use women as your first and primary witness. You use men.
- Jesus appeared to his disciples numerous times.
- No Tomb Was Ever Established as the Burial Place of Jesus
- The burial places of famous people were often venerated in the ancient world.
- However, Jesus Christ is arguably the most famous person in all of history, and yet no grave or tomb was ever said to have permanently contained his body.
- According to his apostles, Jesus's tomb is empty for his body has been raised.
- The unique Christian truth-claim is that the one-of-a-kind Jesus, the very Son of God, conquered death.
- The radical transformation of his disciples after the crucifixion.
- **Peter died a martyr**
- Andrew was crucified in a Greek city called Patras in the year 60 CE he was tied, not nailed, to his cross.
- This James (there are several in the New Testament) was one of Jesus' inner circle along with his brother John and Peter. (Acts 12:1-2)
- **The Death of the Apostle Thaddeus/Judas**
- Thaddeus was decapitated in Beirut, Lebanon in 65 CE along with Simon the Zealot, who is often said to be his preaching partner.
- Paul was in Rome at the time of Nero's persecution of Christians and died a martyr.
- **Josephus accounts for Jesus' resurrection**
- Jesus has been the most influential figure in world history based upon the idea that he was crucified and was raised to life. If this did not happen then how do you account for his impact on human history.
- The Gospel message of Jesus was spread to the entire known world population in the remaining lifetime of his initial disciples. How do you account for this type of commitment from a man that did not raise from the dead but would have been proven a deceiver or a nut or quack?

- Thousands upon thousands of first century Jews converted their day of worship from Saturday (Sabbath) to Sunday in honor of the resurrection. How do you explain that impact to break from thousands of years of tradition and go against mainstream Judaism unless there is a resurrection.
- The birth and growth of the church as predicted by Jesus in the Bible. How do you explain the global growth, historical impact and ongoing effectiveness of the Church if there is no resurrection POWER?
- I cannot prove to you scientifically that Jesus is resurrected but I can point you to **the overwhelming evidence** that he was crucified and was resurrected from the dead.
- What if you are wrong?
What if Jesus did not do what He said he would do – be raised up on the third day?
- Question
Are you so sure you want to - ignore all of the evidence - take that chance?
- My response to that is that if he was resurrected then you should sit up, take note and do something with that information.
- **Personally I am convinced. I don't need any more evidence.**
- I have moved past examining the evidence to knowing the inner witness inside of me.
- I now believe.
- I now put my faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of my sins.
- I now confess Jesus Christ as the Lord of my life.
- Jesus Christ who rose from the dead **is in charge**.
- He is in **charge of my life** and he is in charge of **this church**.
- This is **his church** and we boldly profess the Resurrection and Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Illustration

On January 6, 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt addressed Congress on the state of the war in Europe. At the close of his address, he said that he looked forward

“to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.”

Freedom of **speech**, freedom of **worship**, freedom **from want**, and freedom **from fear**.

These words are still remembered, even though their ideals have not yet been realized everywhere in the world.

Romans 8 is the Christian's “Declaration of Freedom,” for in it Paul declares the four spiritual freedoms we enjoy because of our union with Jesus Christ. A study of this chapter shows the emphasis on the Holy Spirit, who is mentioned nineteen times. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17).

I. Jesus sets me free from condemnation.

Romans 8:1

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

Therefore

- Where is the starting point?
- “Therefore” is a reminder for the Church to resist the temptation to think about Faith in Jesus Christ like the world thinks about it.
- Be careful not to fall into the trap of defining Christianity and explaining the reason for the existence of the church from the worlds perspective.
- The world views Christianity and other religions as **useful**, depending on what **social, psychological, or physical benefits** it brings.
- In other words, the world doesn’t **evaluate** Christianity in the categories of **true or false**, but in the categories of **beneficial** or **harmful**.
- The world **does not** think of Christianity as **divine revelation** but as **human opinion**.
- The world **does not** believe that God must reveal our deepest need, and then provide the remedy in Jesus Christ.
- The world believes that **we know our deepest needs** and that religion **can be respectable** if it helps meet them.
- The world **does not** see Christianity as a **divine revelation** from God **necessary** to redeem them.
- The world sees Christianity as **an organization that exists to make life better**.
- **If it helps** make life better **then it is legit**.
- There is a danger that Christians start to think this way.

Illustration

- A reporter interviews a pastor, and immediately defines, by his questions, the categories for explaining Christianity:
 - What are you doing about childhood hunger?
 - How do you help the unemployed?
 - What’s your plan for improving health care?”
- Those are valid questions.
- But if you let that viewpoint determine your starting point and define the categories for explaining Christianity, then you will promote the erroneous notion that the church of Jesus Christ and the gospel of Jesus Christ are not an authoritative revelation from God that is true and necessary, but instead, an activity of man that is useful.

A. Therefore – speaks about what was discussed previously.

1. The bondage of sin and being bound to the law.
2. This is about the necessity of seeing your need, realizing that you are absolutely hopeless and helpless.... Doomed and Damned
3. But along comes Jesus Christ

– **Therefore...** there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

“With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved.

Those who enter into Christ’s being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud.” (MSG)

B. I was condemned

Ephesians 2:1-3

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

1. Dead in your transgressions and sins.
2. Justification is an act of God not man.
3. It is a *divine* decision to acquit the guilty, to give all the benefits of the children of God to us who deserve hell.
4. It is based on a transaction that happens **outside of ourselves.**
The death of Jesus Christ in our place.
5. Nevertheless, even though justification is God's act and not ours, and its foundation happens outside ourselves, something must happen in *our* life, if we are to benefit from these things.
6. Not every sinner is justified.
7. The death of Christ does not turn away the wrath of God from **all people.**
8. In order to benefit from the work that God has done outside of us, we must now experience the work that he does within us by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

C. No condemnation!

1. I wonder what would make it to the list.
2. Make a list of the things that cause the most **tension** and **pressure** and **anxiety** and **depression** in your lifw.

3. The things that make days look like they are not worth getting up for.
4. The things that make the going on of life as it is now a very unexciting prospect.
5. I do not know what that list would look like for each of you, but I know this...
6. If you were to add to that list a **constant** sense of guilt before God and **fear** of his displeasure, then life would indeed become almost unlivable.

Guilt paralyzes us with depression and creates suicidal tendencies.

Application

- If that is true, then I tell you the words "**No condemnation!**" are the most beautiful words in the world.
- Come in off the ledge, there's no condemnation!
- Rise up off your bed of dismay, there's no condemnation!
- Take a deep breath of clean autumn air and give to the winds your fears, there's no condemnation!
- O, how I want those words for this church and my family and myself.
- But are they addressed to me? Are they addressed to you?

Application

- The heart of Christianity is that God is the highest value in the universe.
- We do not honor him as supremely valuable.
- We are therefore guilty of sin and under his all-powerful wrath.
- And he alone can rescue us from his own condemnation.
- Which he has done through the death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ, for everyone who is in Christ.
- Knowing this, if what we promote is **housing, jobs, healthcare, sobriety, family life, minus** this message, we are not Christian — we are cruel.

"We comb man's hair in the electric chair and hide his freedom in our hands."

Jesus sets me free from condemnation.

II. Jesus sets me free now.

Romans 8:1

Therefore, there is **now** no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

A. The word "now" can have two different connotations.

1. One is that finally, everything is in place, everything has been done, finally, *now* I can receive what I was promised.

Illustration

- A grandfather sends a package to his granddaughter and says, “Do not open until your birthday.”
 - Every day the little girl says, “Now? Can I open it now?”
 - “No, not now. Only on your birthday.”
 - When it comes then she says, “Finally, now!”
 - The “now” that comes after waiting.
2. The other connotation for “now” is the now that comes *before* you thought it would.

Illustration

- That same grandfather writes to his son and sends him a \$10,000 check and says, “Son, you know that someday you will inherit my estate. But I know that now is when your needs are great, so I am sending you this in advance.”
- Here the “now” is not “*finally now*,” but, “*already now*.”

Application

- “There is now no condemnation.” Is it “finally now” or “already now.”
- Both of these meanings for “now” are in Romans 8:1
- We can see them both in Romans 8.

Romans 8:3

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh

- B.** Therefore, *finally*, now, there is no condemnation.
1. Now that everything has been done that has to be done to absorb the wrath of God.
 2. Now, *finally*, there is no condemnation.
- C.** But what about *already now*?
1. Paul looks to the future.
 2. He considers the fact that the final judgment is yet to come.
 3. And on the way to it, there are many days when our adversary, the devil, will try to deceive us and blind us and accuse us and swallow us up in feelings of guilt.
 4. So Paul writes about “already now” of no condemnation:

Romans 8:33-34

³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ **Who then is the one who condemns? No one.** Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

You don't have to wait for the final inheritance to know what your portion will be.

The verdict of the last judgment was given in AD 33: Not guilty! No condemnation.

Finally now and Already *now*.

This is the heart of Christianity. This is the gift of God.

Jesus sets me free from condemnation

III. Jesus offers this freedom to everyone.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

A. Who is this gift for?

1. This gift is for those "In Christ Jesus"
2. How do I get the condemnation lifted off of me?

B. This freedom for those IN CHRIST

C. Not everyone can say, "There is now no condemnation over my life."

Only those "who are in Christ Jesus."

1. Some are in him and some are not.
2. Paul assumes this everywhere in his writings.
3. There are those "in Christ" and there are those "outside."
4. Paul is not a universalist.
5. He says explicitly in Romans 9:3, with grief, that there are those who are "accursed, *separated* from Christ."
6. The opposite of the precious phrase "in Christ" is the terrible phrased "separated from Christ"
7. Where are you? In Christ? Or separated from Christ?

D. The *second* point is this: only by being in Christ does Christ's condemnation become your condemnation.

1. If you want to be able to say now and at the last judgment, “There is no condemnation for me, because Jesus endured it for me,” then you must be “in Jesus.”
 2. If you are in him, what happened to him, happened to you.
 3. If you are “separated from him,” you have no warrant for saying that what happened to him happened to you.
- E. If you say, “Ah, but he died for the whole world. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”
1. Yes, indeed. And what that means is that there is infinite room in Jesus.
 2. Christ is not a small hotel.
 3. There is room for everyone.
 4. And everyone is invited and commanded,

Matthew 11:28

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Revelation 22:17

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

John 6:37

All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

- F. But what if you don’t come?
1. What if you don’t believe?
 2. What if you don’t receive the free gift?

John 3:36

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.

- The wrath of God — the condemnation of God is taken away in Christ. Not outside Christ.

Question

So where are you? In Christ? Or outside Christ?

Free from condemnation? Or under condemnation?

You don’t have to stay under condemnation. There is room in Christ.

There is always room in Christ.

And Christ's word to every sinner is, "Come! Trust me! Enter! I will be your life, your righteousness, your pardon, because I have been your condemnation."

Romans 8:2

because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

1. All this is possible because of Jesus.
 2. The crucified resurrected Son of God.
- A. The *law* here then is the principle on which the Holy Spirit works, a principle that operates in power.
1. *Spirit* here is surely the Holy Spirit, who is characterized as *the Spirit of life*, that is, the life-giving Spirit.
 2. The presence of the Spirit is the distinguishing mark of the Christian, and this presence means the defeat of the power of sin.
 3. The life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, ruling as a law within the heart.
 4. Paul is saying that when the Holy Spirit comes into a person that person is liberated from bondage to evil and finds a new power within, a power that causes the defeat of sin and leads the liberated person into ways of goodness and love.
- B. The term law in verse 2 does not refer primarily to any written code, but mainly to authority or power.
1. The law of the Spirit is the authority and power of the Spirit; the law of sin is the authority and power of sin.
 2. We can see more clearly what Paul means if we look back at

Romans 7:21-25

²¹ So I find that this law is at work: when I want to do what is good, what is evil is the only choice I have. ²² My inner being delights in the law of God. ²³ But I see a different law at work in my body—a law that fights against the law which my mind approves of. It makes me a prisoner to the law of sin which is at work in my body. ²⁴ What an unhappy man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who does this through our Lord Jesus Christ! (GNT)

- C. We can see from this section that the "law of sin" is the power and authority that sin has in Paul's body, rather than any written law.

1. He continues with a holy rebellion against his own remaining sinful tendencies.
2. It seems to me that the "law of sin and death" in verse 2 of chapter 8 is the power and authority of sin which rules in a life where God does not have the upper hand but where flesh is dominant.
3. Flesh is the old nature which refuses to rely on God and delight in his ways.
4. And verse 13, you recall, says, "if you live according to the flesh you will die."
5. That is why the "law of sin" is called in verse 2 the "law of sin and death."
6. The person whose flesh dominates his life is ruled by the law of sin and will die.
7. There will be condemnation for those who walk according to their old nature ruled by the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:3-4

³For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Because of Jesus I am free forever.

D. Unpack

1. Consistently Paul sees "the flesh" not as evil, but as weak—so weak, he is saying here, that the law could not bring about salvation.
2. The fault is not in the law, but in the flesh.
3. Previously he praised the law as good (7:12), and the same view underlies this passage.
4. God did by sending his own Son
 - a. Paul proceeds to inform his readers that God condemned sin, and did so by sending his own Son.

Own is important, pointing as it does to the close relationship between the Father and the Son.

5. It was no remote messenger that God sent, but the Son who stood in a unique relationship to him.
6. As Hunter says, he is "the Son by nature, as we are sons by grace."
In the likeness of sinful flesh
7. "Not 'in sinful flesh', because the flesh of Jesus was sinless. Nor 'in the likeness of flesh', because the flesh of Jesus was real.

8. But ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh’, because the flesh of Jesus was both sinless and real.”
 9. We must bear in mind that Paul is not giving us a full explanation of his understanding of the incarnation; he is talking about the way Christ saved us in his death.
3. Reformed theologians have stressed that justification and sanctification are not to be separated, and it seems that this is what Paul is saying here. In the full sense only Christ has fulfilled all the law’s requirements, but when we are in him we in our measure begin to live the kind of life that God would have us live. Notice that Paul does not say “we fulfil the law’s righteous requirement”, but that “the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us”, surely pointing to the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer.
 4. The fulfilment in question is *in us*, not in all people, and this is further defined as “who walk, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” Paul finds the metaphor of walking congenial as a way of bringing out the steady if unspectacular progress that characterizes the Christian way (cf. 6:4; 1 Cor. 7:17; 2 Cor. 5:7, etc.). The believer does not walk “according to the flesh”. There is, of course, a sense in which he is “in the flesh” (cf. 2 Cor. 10:3), and Paul can go so far as to speak of “Christ, according to the flesh” (9:5). But to live with our horizons bounded by the requirements of this fleshly life is quite another thing, and it is this that Paul has in mind here. The person outside Christ sees nothing beyond the here and now and, however altruistic he may be, in the end is wrapped up in the things he wants or on which he has set his seal of approval.
 5. who do not live according to the flesh
 6. but according to the Spirit.
 7. Not so the Christian. The believer walks *according to the Spirit*. Some take this to mean “the principle of holiness in the regenerate” (Shedd; so Chrysostom, Bengel; cf. Lenski, “As flesh is the old nature, so spirit is the new”). But all such views flounder on the fact that through this whole chapter runs the thought that believers are not left to live the Christian life in their own strength. The Holy Spirit dwells in them and enables them to live on a standard they could never attain left to themselves. It is this life, lived in accordance with all that the Holy Spirit means, of which Paul writes

Shedd William G. T. Shedd: *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids, 1980 repr. of 1879 edn.)

Bengel John Albert Bengel: *Gnomon of the New Testament*, II (Edinburgh, 1873)

Lenski R. C. H. Lenski: *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis, n.d.)