

Lesson 20 -- Romans a Study of Life, Hope, and Grace.

Paul’s Letter to the Roman Church

Week 20 Freedom from Condemnation Romans 8:1-4

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NOTES:

Memory Verse: Romans 8:1 “ ***Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***”

The eighth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans

Romans 8 is a chapter of the New Testament that deals with the Christian's spiritual life, the security of those who are in Christ, the privilege of adoption, the hope of glory, and the love of God. It was written by Paul the Apostle in the mid-50s AD, with the help of a secretary named Tertius.

Because of the complexity, controversy, and content of this chapter, it necessarily breaks down into four Sections:

1. **Freedom from judgment** (Romans 8:1-4): Those who are in Christ Jesus are not condemned by God, because they have been set free from the law of sin and death by the Spirit of life. God sent his Son as a sin offering to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law in us, who walk according to the Spirit
2. **Freedom from defeat** (Romans 8:5-17): Those who live according to the Spirit have their minds set on the things of the Spirit, which bring life and peace. The Spirit dwells in us and gives us the power to put to death the deeds of the body. The Spirit also testifies that we are children of God and heirs with Christ, who share in his sufferings and glory.
3. **Freedom from discouragement** (Romans 8:18-30): Those who suffer for Christ have a hope that surpasses the present troubles. The whole creation groans and waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. We also groan inwardly as we wait for our adoption as sons and the redemption of our bodies. The Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us according to God's will. God works all things together for good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose. God foreknew us, predestined us, called us, justified us, and glorified us.
4. **Freedom from fear** (Romans 8:31-39): Those who are loved by God have nothing to fear, because God is for us and not against us. He did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. He will also graciously give us all things. No one can bring any charge or condemnation against us, because Christ died for us, rose for us, intercedes for us, and loves us. Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord².

We will look at each facet of freedom for the Christian tonight and the next three weeks.

Pitfalls of theology

This Chapter of the Book of Romans has led many down the path of fallacy and supposition. It is very important that we acknowledge, understand, and either reject or embrace the many ideas or schools of thought spawned by the Eighth chapter of Romans. Each of these deviations from the simple faith in Jesus for our salvation and how we perceive our relationship with God is noted in ITALICS and BOXED. Most of these theologies are named after the strongest supporter or leader.

Section One of Chapter 8. Freedom from Judgement

Romans 8:1-4

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the Law could not

do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

The only sin that you can defeat in daily life and replace with righteousness is a sin forgiven for Christ's sake. I know there are natural ways to overcome bad habits that aren't based on Christ at all. But when those changes occur in life without forgiveness from Christ, the result is not God's view of you as righteous, but only a fleshly self-righteousness – which in God's eyes is not righteous at all. So I say it again and carefully: the only sin that you can defeat in daily life and replace with righteousness is a sin forgiven for Christ's sake.

Romans 8:1 Freedom always comes as a price is paid.

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

There is, therefore, now

Without a doubt this is a transitional phrase that supposes a coming conclusion. This is connected with the closing verses of Romans 7. Paul writing through Tertius was stating the Law could not affect deliverance from sin, but that such deliverance was to be traced to the gospel alone; Romans 7:23-25.

It must be noted that this idea of condemnation or judgment was directly associated with the law. Further, this same condemnation exists now and forever more if there was no intervention of the Gospel. We are all under the law, Jew or Gentile, and are held to that standard, if Jesus was not born, lived his life, taught, captured, bled, died, and resurrected. To this new standard accepted by my faith and provided to me by God's grace I am lost.

*There is a school of thought that would say this verse is about the changing of the Covenant The Old Covenant as compared to the New Covenant. In theology, this view is called: **Dispensationalism**. History is divided into multiple ages, in which God acts differently to His creation. At its heart is the distinction between Israel and the church. What this distinction means for dispensationalists is that there are two peoples of God. Israel is one of these and consists of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The church is the other, and it consists of all those and only those (whether Jew or Gentile) who are saved between the Day of Pentecost and the rapture.*

What makes a saint?

A saint as defined is a person acknowledged as holy or virtuous.

A saint is made up of very real stuff. The stuff of conflict and struggle, of failure and defeat, of repentance and renewal. Quite different from the Childrens Church answer of, "a saint is a dead Christian." God's saints are men and women seasoned by many of life's deepest and most tragic human experiences. Saintliness comes from a purifying fire from within and from without.

It is a fire that burns as much as a candle burns and puts forth its light. It consumes itself to reveal. A saint is Christ in you.

Quite different from the picture Paul paints of himself in Romans 7:13-25.

No condemnation –

This does not mean that sin in believers is not to be condemned. Without repentance and a contrite attitude, there is accountability to the Christian. Sin is still a sin.

- 1) The gospel does not pronounce condemnation like the Law. Its function is to pardon; the function of the law is to condemn. The law does not provide for deliverance and always condemns. The object of the Gospel is freedom from condemnation and to set the soul at liberty.
- 2) The law demands a final condemnation. The Gospel always provides a solution to sin. The function, design, and tendency of the gospel are to free from the condemning sentence of the law. The Gospel frees the lost and ruined people from a most fearful and terrible condemnation.
- 3) For the Christian, as explained and exemplified in the previous 5 chapters, has been freed from the results of his past. There is no condemnation carried over after justification.
- 4) This is not a blanket immunity from any further sin by the Christian. This “There is, therefore, now” is a reference to the act of justification and does not include any future free will decisions.

Which are in Christ Jesus

There are two kinds of people in this world

- It is not as the Jews would see it as Jews and Gentiles
- It is not as a Roman would see it as a citizen or barbarian
- It is not like the intellectual Greek seeing those who enlightened and those who are not.
- It is not like the skeptics who sees it a those in the know and those who are just not understanding.

For me the two distinct parts of humanity is those who walk and those who don't.

One group carnal the other holy.

One group fleshly and the other spiritual.

Those who are in Christ and

While it may well be a curiosity that God can and does accept into Himself the life of the Christian, it is used many times in the Gospel and it speaks of a vital, close and intimate union.

Please note: *Philippians 1:1; Philippians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 16:7-11.*

What are two requirements for freedom of condemnation as included in Romans 8:1?

1) _____

2) _____

Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

In verse 2 we don't see justification, it is the next step. It may well be a long journey to being all that God wants of you but we have to get along in our path. Once we have been justified we now have to go on to something more. As the writer of the book of Hebrews said, “Without holiness, no man shall see the lord.” Verse 1 is a declaration of no condemnation. Verse 2 is a description of practical

transformation. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death." Let's make three observations about this verse before we face the all-important connection about its relationship to verse 1.

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

The only sin we can defeat is a forgiven sin."

Forgiveness for our sins through faith in Christ must precede and then empower our battle against sin in our lives. We can not clean up our act or become what God wants (WWJW) before acknowledgment and acceptance of what did Jesus do. (WDJD). God's declaration that we are forgiven and righteous in Christ must precede and enable our transformation into loving, sacrificial, Christ-exalting people. Divine declaration must precede the human transformation. Justification must precede and uphold sanctification. Being right with God must precede doing right for God.

This may seem like a very fine distinction. Or just a timing issue? Or even High Brow Theology. But to both Jesus and Paul it is extremely important. Freedom from sin, "The willful breaking or transgression of the known will or want of God for me" has to come at a price. Sin must be paid for.

If in the middle of the night in a terrible rain storm, someone out of the dark jumps in front of your car, are you breaking the "Thou shall not Kill" law? You need an authority to make that decision. You are brought to court in handcuffs. Your life hangs in the balance. A guilty verdict will mean death, and a not-guilty verdict will mean freedom and life.

Now the presiding judge says to you: I have two options: (1) I can acquit you right now, decisively and irrevocably, and release you so that you can go and live a free and joyful and loving life that shows you really are not a rebellious, crime-loving lawbreaker, though you have been. Or (2) I can postpone the trial and the verdict for several years and assign you a parole officer to watch you all that time, and let you go out and prove yourself to the court by your life, and then have the trial after that, and base the verdict on whether your behavior was satisfactory or not."

The difference between the two options is striking. In one case you are free from condemnation and with gladness live a life that shows the wisdom and mercy of your Judge. In the other case you have the trial always hanging over your head, and the basis of that future verdict will be your own behavior and whether you have measured up. The difference is here in Romans eight.

So here is the issue in our text: What is the connection between Romans 8:1 and Romans 8:2? In Romans 8:1 we have a precious statement of justification: "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." When we are united to Christ by faith in him, at the very beginning of our Christian life, our condemnation is past. The verdict is rendered: Not guilty; righteous for Christ's sake. All sins are forgiven. All guilt was removed. All punishment averted. Because of Christ.

DISPENSATIONALISM: *Dispensationalism is a theological framework of interpreting the Bible which maintains that history is divided into multiple ages or "dispensations" in which God acts with his chosen people in different ways. From Romans 8:1 a dispensationalist would see this as a line between the past of the old covenant MOSES and a new covenant by Jesus. Dispensationalists use a literal interpretation of the Bible and believe that divine revelation unfolds throughout the Bible. The questions that must be asked are: Does God change? Or Does God treat people differently because of when they were born?*

Perseverance of Salvation: *A belief that once a person is truly in Christ there is no judgment for any subsequent sin. God's grace covers it all, past present and future. Once you are saved you are always saved.*

Verse 2 - For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus

The law of the Spirit is not referring to the Mosaic law as kept by the Jews of Rome but conversely, it is the spirit of the law of the Gospel. (Wesley)

Has set you free from the law of sin and death

From a number of sources, there are statements that the law as used here is completely separated from Mosaic law, by insisting elimination of law from Christianity and making it a system of "faith alone." Further, these same sources take from this to mean a Christian can no longer break the law but is always held sinless. Nevertheless, Paul here used exactly the same word that previously was applied to the Mosaic institution. What it does give is proof that there are indeed rules, regulations, commandments, and ordinances connected with faith "in Christ" that are in the fullest sense of that word, "the law of God." The new system of Christianity is here called "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"; and, although a law of liberty, deliverance, and freedom from bondage, the requirements of it may not be ignored, but must be observed.

Legalism: *Directly from this portion of scripture, it would be easy to say there is now a new system of laws. This opens the door to **Christian legalism**. A legalist is one who obeys the rules and regulations of Christianity, at least to some extent, and then falls into the error of supposing that he has thereby merited salvation, and as a result of such error develops an attitude of self-righteousness similar to that of the ancient Pharisees. Today legalism is any Christian denomination or theology that stretches to anyone that desires to go beyond simple belief. The practical use of the term "legalist" today is as an epithet hurled at persons who reject the heresy of salvation by "faith only." One could easily lay the title of legalist upon the writer of the book of James because he taught that without works faith is dead.*

What are the two requirements of liberation from the death that comes through the law?

1) _____.

2) _____.

Verse 3

For what the Law could not do, weak as it is through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.

For what the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh – The law is weak. It was feeble and inefficacious. It could not accomplish what it was originally designed. While perfectly conceived and given by God, the actions and attitudes of man made it sick and without strength. The law of Moses could not make people perfect, due to the weakness of people themselves in being unable to live

according to its tenets. Other limitations in that ancient divine law included: no provision for the impartation of God's Spirit to help people, no method of absolute forgiveness, and the method of forgiveness had to be repeated again and again each year. The law could not extend justification to people except upon the premise of perfect obedience, and the weakness of all flesh prevented such a thing from ever occurring.

antinomianism, (Ancient Greek: ἀντί [anti] "against" and νόμος [nomos] "law") is any view which rejects laws or legalism and argues against moral, religious or social norms (Latin: mores), or is at least considered to do so. The term has both religious and secular meanings.

In some Christian belief systems, an **antinomian** is one who takes the principle of salvation by faith and divine grace to the point of asserting that the saved are not bound to follow the moral law contained in the Ten Commandments. **Antinomians** believe that faith alone guarantees eternal security in heaven, regardless of one's actions.

The distinction between **antinomian** and other Christian views on moral law is that **antinomians** believe that obedience to the law is motivated by an internal principle flowing from belief rather than from any external compulsion. **Antinomianism** has been considered to teach that believers have a "license to sin" and that future sins don't require repentance. Johann Agricola, to whom **Antinomianism** was first attributed, stated "If you sin, be happy, it should have no consequence."

In your own words, why is the law weak? _____

Verse 3 God did: sending his own Son -

For what the Law could not do, weak as it is through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.

The answer to the inadequacy of the Law was overcome by Jesus. He came into the world to achieve perfection as a man and upon man's behalf. He came to fulfill the whole will of God, to obey God's every word of the commandment, and to "fulfill all righteousness." Christ's faith was perfect; his obedience was perfect; his love of the Father was perfect; he was totally perfect. In Christ, therefore, is the righteousness which alone can save people; and, as to the manner of this righteousness being made available for the salvation of sinners.

Through the flesh - In consequence of the strength of sin, of the evil and corrupt desires of the unrenewed heart. The fault was not in the Law, which was good Romans 7:12, but it was owing to the strength of the natural passions and the sinfulness of the unrenewed heart; see Romans 7:7-11, where this influence is fully explained.

God, sending his own Son - God sent or having accomplished this sending. It is done. No more sacrifices of animals, no more working out your salvation. It is over. The time of effort in our flesh to appease God has been circumvented, once and for all.

In the likeness of sinful flesh – This is not a wink at those who would say Jesus was not flesh but simply a likeness of flesh. He was truly man and truly God. He was a human nature in appearance only; but it was human nature without any of its corruptions.

Why did Jesus have to come in the flesh? _____

For an offering for Sin – The human life of Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice on account of sin. The flesh being the seat and origin of transgression, the atoning sacrifice was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, that thus he might meet sin, as it were, on its own ground, and destroy it. Jesus’s offering was because:

- 1) He died as an act of condemnation of it. If sin had been approved by God he would not have made an atonement to secure its destruction. The depth and intensity of the woes of Christ on its account show the degree of abhorrence with which it is regarded by God.
- 2) The word “condemn” may be used in the sense of destroying, overcoming, or subduing; 2 Peter 2:6, “And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow.” In this sense the sacrifice of Christ has not only condemned sin as being evil, but has weakened its power and destroyed its influence, and will finally annihilate its existence in all who are saved by that death.

He condemned sin in the flesh - By the sacrifice of Christ, God indeed showed hatred of sin, and secured its final overthrow. God passed a judicial sentence on sin in the life and person of Christ. Sin being condemned in the human nature of Christ, cannot be condemned and punished in the persons of those represented by him. They must be justified.

Docetism: Jesus, his historical and bodily existence, and above all the human form of Jesus, was mere semblance without any true reality. Broadly it is taken as the belief that Jesus only seemed to be human, and that his human form was an illusion. The line of logic is (1) all flesh is evil, (2) Jesus could not condemn sin in the flesh if he was fleshly himself. (3) Jesus was not really fleshly. **Docetism** was an early Christological heresy which taught that Christ only appeared to be human

Beginning of Gnosticism: The **Gnostics** combined dispensationalism and Docetism. Gnostics considered material existence flawed or evil much like the Docetism, and the existence of two Gods, one for the Old Testament as a mean spirited God, and one for the New Testament one that was hidden and known only by learning and intellect.

But went further and held the principal element of salvation to be direct knowledge of the hidden divinity, attained via mystical or esoteric insight. They emphasized personal spiritual knowledge (gnosis) above the proto-orthodox teachings, traditions, and authority of religious institutions. Many Gnostic texts deal not in concepts of sin and repentance but with illusion and enlightenment.

Why does God hate sin? Why can't God just love so much that He simply overlook our weaknesses?

Verse 4

In order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit

4a In order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us

There is consistency to the whole portion of scripture. It starts with justification, i.e. those who are in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation. The second verse gives the why, the freedom from the Law as a system of works. Third verse to the sacrifice of Christ as the reason. The fourth verse gives us the reason for our well-deserved condemnation.

4b who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit

The law demands satisfaction, and here Paul states plainly that the Law is not eliminated but is fulfilled in us. The injured, God, by our weak flesh, is satisfied. The penalty must be given out. And Jesus is the answer to that justice.

It is justice according to the Spirit that God is both just and merciful.

Conclusion

There is little evidence that we can change our lives enough to please God before we are justified. The order must be (pardon) first, and sanctification (power) second. It is crucial for our lives.

Notice the connecting link between Romans 8:1 which speaks of no condemnation, and Romans 8:2 which speaks of Spirit-empowered liberation. The verses are connected by the word "for" or "because." "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus **because** the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death." Now there are two possible meanings for that word "**because**": It can mean that practical sanctification and liberation from sin is the basis for my justification. Most of the deviations to what we could well call orthodoxy, try to find an excuse for sin, in relationship to Jesus, sin in relationship to time, sin in special knowledge, God's response to our sin, or even perfection of life without grace. All are saying there has to be something in ourselves that has the power to do something about sin. We can work harder, we can study more, we can depend on a new dispensation, we can be depend upon keeping the law perfectly, or simply ignore sin. The idea that I must defeat my sin in the power of my own Spirit first in order to be justified is simply heresy. Practical sanctification and liberation from sin is the *evidence* of my justification. So I am justified (forgiven, pardoned) first, and then give evidence of this reality by living it out in practice.

We use the word "for" or "because" in both these ways. We say, "I'm really hungry because my stomach is growling." And we say, "I'm really hungry because I didn't have any breakfast." The growling stomach is evidence that I am hungry, not the basis or cause of my hunger. But not having breakfast is the basis and cause of my hunger. We use the word "for" or "because" in both senses. And so do the Biblical writers.

Now which is the meaning here in Romans 8:2? Is the Spirit's victory over my sin the prior cause and basis of being free from condemnation? Or is it the evidence that I already have been freed from condemnation?

I am arguing that the "for" or "because" of verse 2 means evidence, not basis and cause. Justification (verse 1) is the foundation for transformation (verse 2) not the other way around.

Our scripture before us is telling us The Spirit is now enabling us to serve God in a new, free, and joyful way. This is the result of being released from the condemnation of the law. Last week I stated as plainly as I could, "You can not get to Chapter 8 without passing slowly and carefully through Chapter 7."

Romans 8:1 is the cause and foundation of our liberation by the Spirit in Romans 8:2. And Paul refers to this liberating work of the Spirit in our lives as the evidence that we really are without condemnation. "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because (look!) the Spirit is at work in them to give them victories over sin!"

The Difference This Makes

1. It's the difference between fighting fearfully to get justified and fighting confidently because we are justified.
2. It's the difference between your heavenly court-trial being behind you with an irrevocable verdict of not guilty, and your trial being in front of you with the verdict up in the air depending on your performance.
3. It's the difference between the freedom of confidence and the bondage of fear.
4. It's the difference between giving Christ the double glory of both being our righteousness as well as working righteousness in us, and giving him only the single glory of helping us become our own righteousness.

Again I bring to mind the cause of the writing of Romans found in the first chapter, "For I am not ashamed of the the gospel, for it is the power for salvation, to the Jew first and then to the Greek." This is Gospel-confirming, freedom-preserving, conscience-cleansing, Christ-exalting truth that the devil wants very much for you not to understand or enjoy. So renounce him and all his ways, and lay hold on your freedom which is freedom indeed. And fight your sin like a victor, not a victim.

Adapted or consulted from Albert Barnes, F.F. Bruce, William Baxter Godbey, Barton Johnson, Joseph Benson, Adam Clarke, James Burton Coffman, John Wesley, Windell Gann, and John Piper.