

Endorsements for  
*How the Gospel Brings Us All the Way Home*

“While Christians may believe that the gospel merely begins our Christian lives, Derek Thomas shows us convincingly that the gospel is the beginning, middle, and end of our lives—indeed, that it is status-shaping, holiness-motivating, and glory-providing. Moving through the grand biblical themes of Romans 8 that shape our understanding of who and whose we are, believers will see that our union with Jesus determines everything about us. Would that my church members might marinate in these truths and so emerge gospel-soaked and gospel-encouraged.”

—DR. SEAN MICHAEL LUCAS

Senior minister, First Presbyterian Church, Hattiesburg, Mississippi

Author, *What Is Grace?*

“In *How the Gospel Brings Us All the Way Home*, Derek Thomas skillfully expounds Romans 8, a passage that has become my favorite chapter of the Bible. Thomas dives deep into doctrinal truth and beckons us not only to believe these truths intellectually, but to experience the beauty of our personal salvation against the backdrop of the final restoration of all things.”

—TREVIN WAX

Editor, GospelEPIC, LifeWay Christian Resources

Author, *Counterfeit Gospels* and *Holy Subversion*

“If asked, ‘Which chapter of the Bible would you take with you to a desert island?’ I suspect many believers would answer, ‘Romans 8.’ In a glorious section of God’s Word, Paul sets before us the trials and the triumphs, the pains and the gains, the indicatives and the imperatives of living life as a child of God—saved by Christ, led by the Spirit, and cared for by a heavenly Father. Now, if a commentary on Romans 8 were permitted on the desert island, I would, without hesitation, recommend this wonderful exposition by Derek Thomas. Like the chapter it illumines so clearly, it is a literary treasure and a spiritual feast.”

—DR. IAIN D. CAMPBELL

Pastor, Free Church of Scotland in Point, Isle of Lewis, Scotland

Author, *The Seven Wonders of the World:*

*The Gospel in the Storyline of the Bible*

“The best books are those that instruct the mind, engage the imagination, and ignite the heart with love for God. Dr. Derek Thomas’ *How the Gospel Brings Us All the Way Home* does all three. With theological care, textual precision, and a pastor’s heart, Dr. Thomas holds Paul’s glorious meditation in Romans 8 to our eyes and helps us remember again just how great is the salvation Jesus won for His people. If you want a better understanding of the Bible, a deeper appreciation for the gospel, and a spur to worship Jesus Christ our Savior, this book is a great place to start.”

—GREG GILBERT

Senior pastor, Third Avenue Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky

Author, *What Is the Gospel?*

# HOW THE **GOSPEL** BRINGS US ALL THE WAY HOME

**DEREK W. H. THOMAS**



*Reformation Trust*  
P U B L I S H I N G

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To  
*Paul Stephenson*  
✧  
*Don Breazeale*

In loss,  
they make Romans 8  
incarnational

*“No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!”*

From the hymn  
“And Can It Be That I Should Gain”  
by Charles Wesley (1738)

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## Foreword

There is an expression, “Horses for courses.” It means that not everyone does everything equally well all of the time. For example, I have heard top-level professional golfers talk about the tournament courses they prefer because “they seem to suit my eye.”

In the same way, if you are to purchase an entire book devoted to one chapter of the Bible, and that chapter is Romans 8, voted by acclamation to be among the greatest of all—profound in theology, soaring in eloquence, thrilling in impact—you don’t want “just anybody” to be the author.

What, then, do you want? Probably someone with the ability to grasp the flow of Paul’s logic; someone who is able to handle each text in its context; someone with a keen theological mind and a knowledge of the human heart; someone with long spiritual experience and the insight of years of studying Scripture and observing the Lord’s ways; and someone who has music in his soul, who knows that the gospel sings, and who can reach both the low notes and the high ones.

If that is what you want in the author of a book on Romans 8, you have come to the right place—Derek Thomas is the author for you and *How the Gospel Brings Us All the Way Home* is the

book for you. In these pages, Dr. Thomas brings all of the above characteristics to bear in a rich and wonderfully accessible exposition of this magnificent chapter of Scripture. In these pages, to transform some words of John Milton, “The hungry sheep look up and will be fed.”

Derek Thomas is well known among Christians in the English-speaking world for three things. He is first and foremost an outstanding preacher; he is a learned and much-loved seminary professor; and he is the author of numerous books, many written for the “ordinary Christian,” while others have been of special value to seminary students and scholars. The many aspects of his ministry, taken together, underline his sense that all of the gospel is for all of the people of God.

Among the best representatives of the Reformed theological tradition, of whom Derek Thomas is one, these three ministries—preacher, professor, author—are really one calling expressed in three ways—the fruit of an ongoing pursuit of, growth in, and sharing of the knowledge of God. When this knowledge is expressed in what our forefathers used to call a “feeling manner”—with pathos, spiritual affection, a passion for Christ, and a love for the people of God—the result is preaching, teaching, and writing that informs the mind, reaches the affections, bows the will in submission, and transforms the whole of life. Herein lies Dr. Thomas’s special grace-gift, and the most obvious characteristic of this book.

It might be suspected that a foreword marked by such enthusiasm could be written only by a personal friend. I happily plead “guilty” to the charge of friendship with Derek Thomas, but that

## FOREWORD

only adds to the pleasure any Christian will find in reading these pages. Over the thirty-five years we have known each other, I have often thought of the privilege it is to be able to count him as a friend, wise counselor, and fellow servant of Christ and His people. It is one of the very special blessings of belonging to the Christian brotherhood that one can admire the abilities of another without being consumed by jealousy because we all realize with Paul that we have nothing except what we have received from the Lord—so that we can rejoice in His gifts to others and not only to ourselves.

As you open these pages, you will find that Derek Thomas also becomes your good friend and trusted guide as he leads you through the glorious message of Romans 8, taking you from the joy and peace of “no condemnation” in the chapter’s first verse to the assurance of “no separation” in the last verse. I count it an honor to commend these pages. But it is not in this page, but in the ones that follow, and in the way the gospel brings us all the way home, that you will find this book’s best commendation, and the only one it really needs.

Now, as my parents sometimes would say to me as I left their presence when a teenager, “Just go, and enjoy yourself!”

—*Sinclair B. Ferguson*  
First Presbyterian Church  
Columbia, South Carolina  
January 2011



## *Preface*

The contents of these pages began as a series of sermons I preached at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Mississippi, during the summer of 2009. My friend (and boss), J. Ligon Duncan III, was granted a well-earned and (as was later evident) well-used sabbatical, and in his place I was asked to preach a series of Sunday morning sermons. I decided to preach a series covering the eighth chapter of Romans, a series I titled *The Best Chapter in the Bible*—a title remarkably similar, I later discovered, to one used by Dr. James Montgomery Boice of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup> Many of those who heard my sermons at the time commented on the profit they received, and some urged that I commit the series to book form.

Here it is—almost, for as every preacher knows, what “works” in a sermon does not always read as well, and the reverse is also true, perhaps more so. Consequently, even though the original sermons can be heard via the church’s website,<sup>2</sup> there are aspects of this book that did not get preached.

No chapter of Scripture reaches the same sustained levels or covers the same ground as Romans 8. It is a description of the Christian life from death to life, from justification to glorification,

from trial and suffering to the peace and tranquility of the new heaven and new earth. It contains exhortations to persevere as well as reassurances of God's preservation of His people. And no chapter has been cited more than this one in expounding the application of redemption in the life of an individual (the *ordo salutis*). In short, Romans 8 gives us a picture of salvation in its completeness. For this reason, I have titled this little book *How the Gospel Brings Us All the Way Home*.

Gratitude is the appropriate gospel response to grace received, and I am one to whom much grace has been shown in terms of my calling and vocation. I am especially grateful that, in addition to teaching systematic theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, I also serve as the minister of teaching at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson. The joy of serving alongside fellow ministers of the gospel in this historical church is incalculable, and the generosity of the church's senior minister is second to none. I am especially grateful for the warmth with which these sermons were received by the members and friends of First Presbyterian Church.

My life would be immeasurably poorer without the love and friendship of my wife, Rosemary. Although she owes me for her devotion to baseball, I owe her far more, and the hours spent in writing another book have meant baseball in one room and Romans 8 in another. I recall with great fondness the times when, struggling with Paul's phrase here and nuance there, I heard Rosemary shout at the TV when her beloved Atlanta Braves weren't playing according to her high standards. I do not share her love of baseball, but I love it that she loves it so. Her friendship over the past thirty-four years is an immense blessing.

## PREFACE

I send this volume forth with the prayer that it might do the souls of those who read it much good. In particular, my longing is that these pages might rekindle a love for the gospel of Jesus Christ in our hearts. Truly, Jesus is the only hope we have and He is all we need.

—*Derek W. H. Thomas*

First Presbyterian Church/RTS

Jackson, Mississippi

Easter 2010

## ROMANS 8:1-4

“There is therefore now no condemnation  
for those who are in Christ Jesus.  
For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free  
in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.  
For God has done what the law,  
weakened by the flesh, could not do.  
By sending his own Son in the likeness  
of sinful flesh and for sin,  
he condemned sin in the flesh,  
in order that the righteous requirement  
of the law might be fulfilled in us,  
who walk not according to the flesh but  
according to the Spirit.”

# GRACE AND GRATITUDE

*(Romans 8:1–4)*

“Guilty!” I can still hear that word as I close my eyes. It was 1975 in Oxford, England. I was passing by the city courthouse, where a murder trial was reaching its conclusion. The details were gruesome and the daily papers had carried detailed accounts of each day’s court proceedings. I am not sure what made me attend the final day, but I did. I watched with fascination as the judge placed a black shawl on his head just before he pronounced the final verdict: “Guilty.” A roar of approval erupted in the courthouse. The defendant was found guilty of murder and condemned to a life sentence with no possibility of parole.

Just as that man was found guilty in the judge’s eyes, we are all guilty in God’s sight: “None is righteous, no, not one . . . all

have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:10, 23). Not a single human being is righteous by nature. No amount of Christian or gospel influence makes people righteous. All people are totally depraved—their motives, words, deeds, and thoughts are affected by their identity as sinners. The natural inclination of the heart, will, emotions, conscience, and physical body is in an opposite direction to holiness. As J. C. Ryle said: “Sin . . . pervades and runs through every part of our moral constitution and every faculty of our minds. The understanding, the affections, the reasoning powers, the will, are all more or less infected.”<sup>3</sup>

However, we are more than guilty; we are also condemned. God justly pronounces a death sentence upon us.

Unfair? No, our “condemnation is just” (Rom. 3:8). We inherit (through our identity with Adam) a sinful nature (cf. Rom. 5:16, 18). We sin because we *are* sinners. Apart from the gospel, our guilt condemns us forever.

## **Freedom from Condemnation, Sin, and Death**

However, the eighth chapter of Romans begins with the best news imaginable: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). Charles Wesley celebrates this truth in his hymn “And Can It Be That I Should Gain”:

No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, and all in him, is mine!

Alive in him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness divine,  
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ, my own.<sup>4</sup>

“No condemnation now I dread”—that is what Paul is saying at the beginning of Romans 8. There is a way from condemnation to “no condemnation.”

Similarly, Paul declares that Christians have been set free; they are emancipated: “For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2).

Christians have been set free from “the law.” Paul is thinking of the law as a negative, imprisoning feature in our lives—and he is saying this after some fairly positive statements about the law in chapter 7:

- » “What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin” (Rom. 7:7).
- » “I agree with the law, that it is good” (Rom. 7:16).
- » “For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being” (Rom. 7:22).

In these verses, the apostle seems to be thinking about very positive ways in which the law functions in a believer’s life. But in Romans 8:2, he is thinking of a different way in which the law functions—as a law of sin and death.

### ***The need for perfect obedience***

There are only two ways of salvation: by the law or by grace. If salvation is to happen by the law, perfect obedience is necessary. There can be no blemishes or shortcomings, for the law will never show mercy. It knows nothing of grace or forgiveness. It demands perfection, because whoever transgresses in one tiny detail transgresses the whole of God's law: "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it" (James 2:10). Getting to heaven through obedience to the law requires perfection. Merely doing your best will prove insufficient; good intentions are not enough. It is vitally important to grasp exactly how much the law demands if we think we are going to be in a right relationship with God through law-keeping. Simply put, "By works of the law no one will be justified" (Gal. 2:16).

For a brief season in his life, Jerome (ca. AD 347–420), the translator of the Bible into Latin (the Vulgate), decided to become a hermit, an ascetic. He went out into the desert, living among wild animals and scorpions. He became emaciated because of his extreme methods of fasting, trying to live by the standards of God's law as he understood it. He tells us in a biographical narrative that even as he was trying to conform himself to the standards of God's law, he found that his mind—even in the midst of a desert, while his body was wasting away—was filled with thoughts of the young girls who had surrounded him in Rome.<sup>5</sup> The law could not help him. In fact, the law exacerbated his sin. The law condemned Jerome. It was a law of sin and death.

### ***Freedom through the Spirit***

The law cannot bring life. Law-keeping is powerless to save. But the law of *the Spirit of life* can set us free. The Holy Spirit operates in such a way that He is able to set us free. In this opening section of Romans 8, Paul is saying, “Here is the gospel: the law of the Spirit of life says, “There is a way for you to be free.”

After twenty-seven years in prison, Nelson Mandela walked from his South African cell to freedom. He had spent ten thousand days in prison. “As I finally walked through those gates,” he wrote, “I felt—even at the age of seventy-one,—that my life was beginning anew.”<sup>6</sup> That is what Paul is saying in this verse. The Spirit of life sets believers free.

The law cannot put us in a right standing with God. It knows how to do only one thing: condemn us. It is relentless and unforgiving in this task. It is not because the law itself is sinful or desires our condemnation. The law says, “Do this and live,” but we cannot. The problem lies in us, not in the law. The law is good but we are sinful. In other words, the law is “weakened by the flesh” (Rom. 8:3). It is not the law that is at fault. The problem lies in our inability to do what the law demands.

Roy Horn was part of the long-running two-man show “Siegfried & Roy” in Las Vegas. As part of the show, Horn performed with trained tigers. One day, Horn gave one of his tigers a command. The tiger refused to do it, so the ringmaster tapped him on the nose. Within seconds, the tiger grabbed Horn by the neck and dragged him around the ring. For several weeks afterward, Horn hovered between life and death.<sup>7</sup> This story reflects our

relationship to the law: we think we are in control, but we are not. We are in bondage to the law.

## **The Way from Condemnation to Freedom**

How, then, does Paul arrive at his conclusion that believers have moved from condemnation to “no condemnation,” from sin and death to freedom? In other words, how can I be set free? How is it possible to find myself in a state of no condemnation? How can I tread the path of life rather than a path of death? These are among the most important questions we can ever ask ourselves.

The answer lies *outside* of our performance: “For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3).

Notice two facets of this important truth. First, the initiative in our salvation comes from outside us: God (the Father) sent His Son. Our salvation is “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). It is dependent on God’s sovereign intervention and plan.

Second, our salvation depends entirely on what the Son did for us. Our salvation is dependent on Christ *alone*. It is not a cooperative venture, but one in which His accomplishments alone merit our salvation.

### ***Christ in the likeness of human flesh***

The way in which Paul phrases the coming of Jesus Christ into the world deserves some close attention. His language is precise.

Jesus Christ came “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” Note what Paul does not (and cannot) say:

- » He does *not* say that Christ came “in sinful flesh.” Such a statement would call into question Jesus’ sinlessness.
- » He does *not* say that Christ came “in the likeness of flesh.” Such a statement would question the reality of Jesus’ incarnation, making Jesus to be an apparition or ghost-like figure (a view that some evidently did hold; see 1 John 4:2–3).

Jesus came as close to us as is possible, yet without sinning. He came enfleshed in sinless human nature to redeem us from our sin. He never sinned, but He was reckoned a sinner. By an act of substitution, He took *our* place. He came as the Lamb of God to offer Himself as a sacrifice for sin.

There was no other good enough  
To pay the price of sin  
He only could unlock the gates of heaven  
And let us in.<sup>8</sup>

The title of Anselm of Canterbury’s great work *Cur Deus Homo?* asked a fundamental question: why was it necessary for God to become man? Anselm answered the question by insisting that in order to represent God to us, Jesus had to be true God, and in order to represent us to God, He had to be true

man. If we are to be saved from the consequences of our sin, the second person of the Trinity had to become incarnate and take our place. When Boso, a dim-witted character in Anselm's work, failed to understand why redemption required such an extravagant act, he was told: *Nondum considerasti, quanti ponderis sit peccatum* ("You have not yet considered what a heavy weight sin is").<sup>9</sup>

### ***Believers found "in Christ"***

However, Christ's work of redemption is not an impersonal act. Sinners must place their trust in Him and in what He accomplished for them.

When Paul writes, "There is *therefore* no condemnation" (v. 1, emphasis added) his "therefore" points to a conclusion based on something he has previously written. Take Romans 5:16, for example: "For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification." Here, condemnation is contrasted with justification—a judicial declaration of righteousness. Two verses later, Paul writes, "as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life" (Rom. 5:18). Again, condemnation is contrasted with justification.

When he comes to Romans 8, Paul appears to be picking up this theme again, putting it in the negative: in Christ, there is no condemnation. But he could have said it in the positive: in Christ, there is justification.

Our status in relation to Christ makes all the difference. Outside of union with Christ, we are guilty and condemned. But "in

Christ,” we are declared not guilty (justified). Outside of Christ, there is only death (Rom. 5:12, 14, 17, 21); in union with Christ, there is “justification and life” (Rom. 5:18, 21).

This statement from Paul reminds us of something John Calvin wrote in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*:

We must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us.<sup>10</sup>

To know this condition of “no condemnation,” Christ must “become ours and . . . dwell within us.”

So we *can* move from “no condemnation” to “life.” How? Paul’s answer is characteristically precise and formulaic: we need to be “in Christ.” All that Christ accomplished for us on the cross needs to be internalized. We must be brought into a living and personal relationship with Jesus.

### ***The basis of the relationship***

Given the universal, pervasive sinfulness of human beings, how can anyone ever be in a right relationship with God? More particularly, how can a human being ever be in a right relationship with a *holy* God? More particularly still, how is it possible for a just God to justify a sinner? That is one of the greatest questions we can ever ask.

To those with light views of sin, the justification of human beings may seem relatively simple to achieve. God is all-powerful, they conclude, and, after all, it is God's business to forgive.

Such trivializing of the issue signals the paucity of our understanding of who God is and what sin has done to our relationship with Him. God, Scripture declares, "will by no means clear the guilty" (Ex. 34:7; Nah. 1:3). The holiness of God requires that justice be done in clearing the guilty, something that cannot be accomplished merely by an act of God's will.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the greatest issue of all time is the answer to the question that is before us: how is it possible for those who are guilty to be declared "not guilty"?

We come to Jesus Christ by faith, renouncing any confidence in our own ability to do anything worthy of God's salvation. Rather, we trust *only* in Jesus' sinless life, substitutionary death, and resurrection on our behalf. Every day, we must preach the gospel to ourselves and remind ourselves:

Nothing in my hands I bring  
Simply to thy cross I cling.<sup>12</sup>

### ***The problem of ongoing sin***

Being "in Christ" does not stop a person from sinning. Paul alluded to the problem of ongoing sin in the life of a believer in the previous chapter: "I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing" (Rom. 7:19).<sup>13</sup>

Every Christian experiences the struggle of ongoing, remain-

ing sin. Even in our very best efforts, we are conscious of the power of sin. The things we do are not done with the best of motives. The idol of self-adoration lurks behind everything we say and do, blemishing the deeds.

Worse than that, there are times when we fall headlong into sin. The power of temptation proves too great and our spiritual defenses too feeble, and we capitulate. Not a day, not an hour, not a minute or second passes without sin manifesting its ugly, unwelcome head. Even in the midst of worship, we find our minds wandering and our hearts engaged in something (or someone) else. Our greatest sins occur in church.

Every Christian echoes Paul's lament and question: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24). Listen to the frustration in Romans 7:

- » "I do not understand my own actions" (7:15).
- » "I do what I do not want" (7:16).
- » "I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out" (7:18).
- » "I do not do the good I want" (7:19).
- » "When I want to do right, evil lies close at hand" (7:21).
- » "I see in my members another law waging war" (7:23).
- » "Who will deliver me?" (7:24).

At every turn, our present reach exceeds our grasp. I will one thing, achieve another. "When will I ever be free from this corpse of sin?" Paul asks. Do you ask this question?

### ***No new condemnation***

The answer to the question, in part, is—*in heaven*. But Paul is seeking in Romans 8 to address another concern: Does the presence of sin in my life mean that I am not a Christian? Can I be in a right relationship with God (justified and adopted) and still sin as I do?

It is at this point that I so easily revert to a wrong way of thinking. I believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. I am saved from the penalty of sin. There is no condemnation. But then I sin again and I begin to think: “I must be condemned again. I need to try a little harder.” So I go to church, read my Bible, sing more enthusiastically, and engage in spiritual thoughts about Jesus. Then I assume that I have slipped back into a state of “no condemnation” again. But tomorrow I sin again, and I slip back into a state of “condemnation.” The cycle repeats itself over and over.

This performance mentality is all too common. Our status (“no condemnation”), our justification, our assurance of being “in Christ” is utterly dependent on our continuing (good) performance. I look to Christ for my justification, but I look to myself for my continued acceptance. It could not be more significant therefore that Paul—on the heels of the exasperation of Romans 7:14–25—utters the clearest word of assurance: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). The issue is not, “Have I done enough good to outweigh my lack of performance?” On that account, I could never reach a state of assurance. Rather, the focus of our thinking must be, “Am I ‘in Christ?’”

Even as mature Christians, we need to remind ourselves continually of the basis of our acceptance—it is entirely because of what Christ has done *for* us. Thus, faith in Christ is not a one-time event; we must live by faith each day.

## **The Response to Freedom from Condemnation**

There can be only one proper response to grace: a life of grateful holiness. Christ's atoning death was "in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4).

There are two ways of understanding these words. One way is to view them as a statement of what our Lord achieved on the cross: He fulfilled what the law required by offering up a perfect obedience (the active obedience of Christ) and by meeting the law's retribution for our sin by His death (the passive obedience of Christ). He fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law for us in His life and death.

More likely, however, Paul is stating (what he will elaborate on later in this chapter) that Christians, whose sins are forgiven, now live in holy, obedient gratitude for the grace they have received. Grateful law-keeping is the saved sinner's response to received grace.<sup>14</sup> The rest of our lives are a way of saying, "Thank you."

Of course, salvation by grace rather than our performance can be seen as a license to sin (antinomianism). Paul's response in Romans is something like this: if we are not tempted to think

like that, we have not understood the gospel. The apostle anticipates our objection at the beginning of chapter 6: “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?” (Rom. 6:1).

Grace *must* raise the temptation to think we can sin as we please; if it does not, we have not understood the true extent of grace. However, at no time can we yield to the temptation to think this way (note Paul’s answer to his question in 6:1 — “by no means”), because Christians are called to a life of holiness—holiness motivated by gratitude for all that God has done for them in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The key to subduing the downward drag of sin in our lives is to know the impulse of gratitude that follows the experience of forgiveness and reconciliation. Law-keeping out of love is the true path of holiness.

For everyone “in Christ,” there is no condemnation. What a beautiful statement that is. Repeat it to yourself: “I have placed my trust entirely in Jesus Christ and what He has accomplished for me in His life, death, and resurrection. I am *in* Jesus Christ, and there is no condemnation.” What a sweet thing that is, what a glorious thing.

A million questions arise, not the least of which is this: “How can God possibly love me so much?” But the truth of the matter is greater still: the blood of Jesus Christ has atoned for our past sins, present sins, and even future sins. Whatever sin you may commit tomorrow, there is no condemnation if you are in Jesus Christ. They are blotted out.

Paul will have more to say about holiness, but it is important

## GRACE AND GRATITUDE

to see its foundation: received grace in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which declares sinners “Not guilty.”

Grace—the grace that *is* Jesus—is breathtaking.

Do *you* agree?