

Romans 8:1-10 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.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,⁴ in 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.⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.

How to deal with your sinful nature

1. No condemnation in Jesus
2. Walk according to the Spirit

Jim was always so hard on himself. He blamed himself for everything, even things that obviously were not his fault. Jim once told his friend that he felt guilty for not caring for his family as well as he should have, guilty for not spending as much time with his children as he should have, guilty for not being as successful at work as he should have. Jim seemed always to carry a load of guilt, which affected his sense of well-being as well as his personal relationships. (Jacob Preus, Just Words, p. 107)

Jim is not the only one. Have you ever had one of those days that you get so stressed out? You yell at the kids again for no reason. "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." (Romans 7:15) Then there's that woman at the office. You can't stop thinking about her. Even though you are married, you still have those thoughts. "For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature." (Romans 7:18) You keep saying that you can stop anytime, but you have racked up huge credit card debt due to your gambling. "For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." (Romans 7:18)

Dr. Douglas Anderson, a professional counselor, said, "People really want to make real changes in their lives and life styles, but too many people are looking for a magic pill to change them. They want the counselor to be the magic pill or they want advice to be a magic pill or they want the Spirit of Christ to be a magic pill, and these magic pills will solve all their problems. . . we are an impatient culture, wanting to find instant solutions to our problems." But there is no magic pill. Just a struggle. It's a day to day struggle with your sinful nature. So how do you deal with your sinful nature?

The sinful nature is a tyrant. Always demands mastery. It wants to control soul, body, mind and will. The end of the sinful nature is death and hell. It wants to disobey God's law and thus to destroy us. It holds us in slavery so that, as Paul said, we do not do what we want to do.

We can try to be better. We can read the Ten Commandments and see what God wants us to do. Maybe you even pick out that one commandment that you struggle with and resolve not to fall today. But the more you think about it, the more you dwell on it and you fall again. What's the problem? Paul put it this way: *For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh.* The problem is us. We are weak.

The best chef, with the best equipment and the best recipes will still make bad food if the ingredients are bad. If he makes a cake with rotten eggs and wormy flour, it's going to be a bad cake no matter how beautifully he frosts it. No matter how hard we try to paint over our lives, there is a rotten canvass underneath. Not even God's good and holy law can save us. Not that the law is bad. The problem isn't God's law. The problem is us. What a wretched man I am!

The city has building inspectors who enforce the building code. We could think of God as a building inspector, a code-enforcer, not for buildings, but for people. The Lord has a building code for our lives. "We have to always be kind to our fellow people. We can't take a day or a minute off from this. That means we cannot ever say a nasty word to or about someone, because if we do, we don't measure up to God's code and we are in the slate to be condemned. Another thing God's building code says is that we have to love God more than anything else, even more than we love ourselves. And if a person loves God totally, they will never miss church; they will pray to him often; they will always delight in studying his Word. God's standard even states that our thoughts need to be pure; we can't even think about

sins that we'd like to do. . . . We human beings stand condemned before God by the first sin we commit. Sin sneaks into our homes and binds us up and takes away our freedom, our freedom to be able to stand in front of God and expect him to let us go to heaven. . . .

"What St. Paul is saying is God's building code, the law, is good. But all that code can do is show us what is wrong with us. God's law makes it very clear that we deserve hell, but that same law is powerless to show us a solution." (Peter Schmidt at sermoncentral.com)

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. No condemnation. What? No condemnation. How can that be? *Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.* 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.* Jesus shared the same human flesh with us so that by his death he could condemn sin in our flesh. In that very stronghold where it seemed sin could not be defeated, God overpowered sin, condemning it in the flesh through the death of Jesus. In Jesus, no condemnation for us; instead, condemnation for sin.

In a dream, Martin Luther found himself being attacked by Satan. The devil unrolled a long scroll containing a list of Luther's sins and held it before him. On reaching the end of the scroll Luther asked the devil, "Is that all?" "No," came the reply and a second scroll was thrust in front of him. Then, after a second came a third. But now the devil had no more. "You've forgotten something," Luther exclaimed. "Write on each of them, *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*"

Sin is like a nail pounded into a board. You can pull the nail out, but the hole is still there. In Christ, the nail is pulled out. And although the sin is forgiven, we still have to live with the aftermath – and often the memory – of sin. But never do we have to fear the punishment of sin. *There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* No condemnation. No punishment. No fear. No regret. Ever.

We don't have to hunker down and wait for the lightning bolts to strike. Life is good. By God's grace we can let go of regret and live – live the spiritual life that is already begun in us by the Holy Spirit.

No condemnation. Do you believe those words? No condemnation. For each of us struggling with our own temptations: no condemnation. For each of us weighed down with guilt over those many times we have failed: no condemnation. We are not excusing sin. We should hate our sin. We should feel sorry for the sins we commit, but God doesn't want us to crucify ourselves for them. Jesus was already crucified for us. So, if you're still carrying the guilt of some past sin, let it go. Come down from your self-made cross. *There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Isn't that what the son in the parable we heard today experienced? His father ran to him and threw his arms around him before he could say a word. God's arms are open to you. His Son has already paid the price for you. Run to him with faith in the promise: *There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Of course, Satan wants you to question whether you are in Christ. How do you know? Paul outlines the difference for us. *The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.* ⁷*The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.* ⁸*Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.* The sinful man is like an analog TV set. He can receive the things of the spirit no more than an analog TV can receive a digital signal. He just can't.

Even worse, Paul says that the sinful mind is hostile toward God. To the sinful mind, God is the enemy and he hates God. No unbeliever can wake up some day, smell the coffee and say, "From now on I am going to believe in Jesus." Not only do spiritual matters not make sense to them, they hate such things.

The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The sinful mind can't, it won't have anything to do with God. So, if you can say in your heart and mean it, "Jesus Christ is Lord," then the Holy Spirit lives in your heart. You could never say that without the Holy Spirit. "If you really believe that Jesus loved you and died for you and paid for your sins by his death on the cross, then the Holy [Spirit] lives in your heart, because you could never believe this without the Holy [Spirit]."

"You may sometimes wonder whether you really do believe it. But if you want to believe it, if you really want the Lord Jesus to be your Savior, then the Holy [Spirit] surely lives in your heart, because it is God which works in you both to will, to want, and to do God's pleasure, as the Bible says." (Siegbert Becker, *The Word Goes On*, p. 161)

And if the Spirit is in you, then you are in Christ. *There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* May we believe that promise. May we live in that promise. May we rejoice in that promise and sing with Isaiah: Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation." (Isaiah 12:2)