

## No Condemnation

Romans 8:1-4

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*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.<sup>3</sup> 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,<sup>4</sup> 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. – Romans 8:1-4, ESV*

What is the best news you could ever hear? That you won the lottery? Most people who win the lottery end up spending their winnings very quickly and experiencing lots of conflict with family and friends in the process. That Donald Trump wrote you into his will as his sole heir of his real estate empire? Would you really want all of that responsibility and hassle and stress?

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is Good News – Gospel means “good news” and here in Romans 8, which we’ll be hearing from over the next ten weeks, we have the good news of the Gospel laid out for us in compelling, stirring and practical language. In this fallen and sin-scarred world as we live with the realities of our own hearts and minds- which are as fallen and broken as the world around us- the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not just any good news, it is the very best news we could ever hear.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the news that the Holy and Absolutely Perfect God of the Universe, the One who created us and all things and who dwells in the unapproachable light of the majestic splendor of his holiness, has chosen to have mercy on us in His Son, Jesus Christ. He has set His love upon us, has sent His Son for us, has rescued us from our own rebellion against Him and the consequences we deserve and has instead cleared all charges against us, has brought us into His family as His adopted and dearly loved children and has secured our future with Him against all obstacles, challenges and enemies.

These 39 verses of Romans 8 are the perfect place for us to spend our first series of messages together because here Paul acknowledges the challenges, frustrations, accusations, disappointments, trials and tribulations, enemies and oppositions we face as Christians in this world and answers everything with the all-surpassing, never-failing, overcoming power of the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This wonderful chapter has been called by some “The Greatest Chapter in the Bible.” A pastor and author named Derek Thomas preached 11 messages on Romans 8 in the summer of 2009 and he called his sermon series, “The Greatest Chapter in the Bible.” Later, he wrote a book on this chapter and called it, *How the Gospel Brings Us All the Way Home*.

When he started his sermon series, he explained that he considered Romans 8 to be the greatest chapter in the Bible according to the “ten minutes before dying” test. If he knew he was ten minutes away from dying and could hear one chapter from the Bible, he would want to hear Romans 8. I agree. I also think his book title explains well why he called this “the greatest chapter in the Bible,” because here Paul shows us clearly how the Gospel brings us all the way home, overcoming everything we may face along the way.

I’d like to do something unusual as we begin this series together. I’d like to read the entire chapter of Romans 8. Normally, I wouldn’t read such a long passage of Scripture, but I think we would all benefit from hearing this together as we begin. It takes just under 6 minutes to read, so if you have a Bible or want to grab a Bible, we’ll look together at Romans 8 as I read –

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.<sup>3</sup> 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,<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.<sup>6</sup> For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.<sup>7</sup> For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.<sup>8</sup> Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.<sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.<sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.<sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus<sup>12</sup> from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*

<sup>12</sup> So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons<sup>11</sup> of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope<sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?<sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

<sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup> And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. <sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things?<sup>32</sup> If God is for us, who can be<sup>11</sup> against us?<sup>33</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?<sup>34</sup> Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?<sup>35</sup> It is God who justifies. <sup>36</sup> Who is to condemn?<sup>37</sup> Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. <sup>38</sup> Who shall

*separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?<sup>86</sup> As it is written,*

*“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

*<sup>87</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>88</sup>For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>89</sup>nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

So here is a chapter that begins with the good news that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus and ends with the good news that there is no separation from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. From “no condemnation” to “no separation,” this is indeed the best news we could ever hear.

Let’s dig into the first four verses briefly together. . .

## I. No Condemnation

Why would someone who is “in Christ Jesus” need assurance that there is no condemnation for them? Simply put, because believers in Jesus still sin. Christians are not some super-spiritual, super-human class of people who have overcome all sin and moral failure and who live on some super-sanctified level of perfection or near perfection. In many ways, the moral struggles of a believer are more intense and more agonizing than that of unbelievers. Christians know God and love God and desire strongly to live for God and not according to the sinful desires of our fallen human nature.

Paul knew this struggle. The good news of Romans 8:1 follows the intense struggle Paul expressed in Romans 7:

*For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. <sup>14</sup>For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. <sup>15</sup>Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. <sup>16</sup>So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. <sup>17</sup>For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. <sup>18</sup>For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on*

*doing. "Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.*

*"So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand." For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, "but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.- Romans 7:14-25*

Notice the intense pressures that pull Paul in opposite directions:

- I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.
- I delight in the law of God in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

It's no wonder that he cries out in frustrated agony: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

Now, if we keep in mind that Paul's original letter had no chapter divisions, then the beginning of chapter 8 follows right after Paul's agonizing cry. When he says "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" he then explains "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

This is immensely encouraging and helpful. All Christians have felt and can identify with Paul's deep and intense struggle. All Christians have the desire to do what is right and also delight in the law of God in our inner beings, but we also experience the frustration of continually doing what we know is wrong and of leaving undone those right things we know we should be doing instead. This is a compelling and familiar portrait to every believer.

As we struggle with sin, as we fail again and again to live the kind of life we desire to live and to obey God the way we know we should obey, we hear the resonating good news from Paul, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

No condemnation means that we have already been declared not guilty. Jesus has already paid for all of our sins with His precious blood. We have been justified- declared righteous in the sight of God- by faith in Christ and on the basis of His perfect righteousness and His death in our place for our sins on the cross.

No condemnation means that we now have no judgment to fear. God still disciplines us as dearly loved children. His discipline is not pleasant to us at the time, but it is the loving discipline of a forgiving, merciful and gracious heavenly Father who loves us and will never disown, reject, abandon, forsake or condemn us.

## II. For Those who Are in Christ Jesus

But we need to note at this point that this promise of “no condemnation” is not for everyone. It is only “for those who are in Christ Jesus.” As the Apostle Peter said in Acts 4:12, “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Salvation and all it entails - forgiveness, justification, redemption, adoption, eternal life - is found in Jesus Christ alone and so it is only those who are in Christ Jesus by faith who receive salvation and the benefits and blessings of God that it brings.

This is one of the most central themes in the Apostle Paul’s writing and especially in Romans and Ephesians. In this larger section of Romans, chapters 5-8, Paul ends every chapter, every major section of His letter, with this idea:

**Romans 5:21 - “. . . so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

**Romans 6:23 - “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

**Romans 7:24-25 - “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup>Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”**

This larger section of Romans, chapters 5-8, opens with a similar thought as the beginning of Chapter 8. Listen to **Romans 5:1 - “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

We have been justified (no condemnation) by faith. Faith in whom?<sup>9</sup> In Jesus Christ. The result is now that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. We have been delivered from this body of death and the wages of sin - what we earn from our sin - through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is why we believe and teach that you just believe in Jesus Christ in order to be saved, in order to be forgiven, in order to be redeemed, in order to be brought into God's family forever. No one else has accomplished what is needed to save us. No one else lived a perfect, sinless life of complete and full obedience for us. No one else took our sins upon Himself and offered His perfect righteousness to us in exchange.

Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:5: **“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”**

Jesus is utterly unique in His person - He alone is the God-man, fully God and fully man and thus uniquely qualified to be the mediator. Jesus is utterly unique in His work - He alone is the redeemer, the perfectly holy sin-bearer, the resurrected life-giver, the eternally reigning King of kings and Lord of lords.

### **III. Freed from the Law By a New Law**

But exactly how do we who are in Christ Jesus receive the blessing of “no condemnation.” We are freed from the law of sin and death by a new law, the law of the Spirit and of life. This is where it's very important and helpful for us to pay close attention to the linking words of causation that Paul uses. It helps us understand the chain of cause-and-effect and better grasp the work of salvation:

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

How is it that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus? It is FOR or BECAUSE -

<sup>2</sup> ***For** the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*

How is it that the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death? It is FOR or BECAUSE -

<sup>3</sup> ***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,*

What did sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin and thus condemning sin in the flesh accomplish? Why did God do it? He did it SO THAT or *'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. - Romans 8:1-4, ESV*

In our flesh – that is, in our fallen and sinful human nature – an absolute law is at work, the law of sin and death. Sin reigns in our mortal members and the wages we earn from our sin is death. Sin brings death because the moral law stands against us, condemning us. We know that the law is holy and just and good. We know God's righteous standards are right and true. We have no excuse. We know we've done wrong. So, according to the law of sin and death, we stand condemned and hopeless.

We need a new law to set us free from the law that condemns us. This new law Paul calls "the law of the Spirit of life." In other words, just as surely as sin brings death, the Holy Spirit brings life. But how can God justly send His Holy Spirit to give us eternal life when we've sinned and we deserve death?

God can send the Holy Spirit and give us eternal life by the Spirit because He first sent His Son, who came to take care of sin, to put sin to death by being condemned in our place. Once our sin was condemned in the flesh of the Son of God, the Holy Spirit then applied the fulfilling of the Law that Jesus accomplished to us, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, "*who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*" – that is, who are not striving to make ourselves righteous by keeping the law, which we cannot do because of the weakness of our flesh, but who instead live in the power of the Holy Spirit, who has freed us from the law of sin and death by uniting us to Christ through faith and giving us eternal life in the life of Jesus Christ.

I hope you see the glory of this wonderful good news and I hope you see more clearly than ever your absolute need for the Holy Spirit to apply the life and righteousness of Jesus to you.

If you are not in Christ Jesus or you're not sure if you are in Christ Jesus, I hope you will turn from self-reliance, self-righteousness and your sin and its disastrous consequences and turn to Christ, trusting Him to save you and to be your righteousness, your forgiveness, your eternal life, your "no condemnation."

If you are a believer, I hope you will see again how utterly dependent we are on the Holy Spirit to apply the righteousness of Jesus to us. I hope you see again how vain and empty are our attempts at self-righteousness. I'm not saying - and Paul is not saying - that we should not strive after obedience and righteousness, but all of our obedience flows only from the obedience of Christ applied to us by the Holy Spirit. All of our righteousness is only the righteousness of Jesus Christ, applied to us by the Holy Spirit.

We all need Jesus. And in Jesus, everyone who trusts in Him and belongs to Him can rest in the wonderful good news of "no condemnation" - not today or tomorrow or ever. Praise God from whom all these blessings flow!