

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Romans: God's Power for Salvation

TITLE: No Condemnation, Part 2

SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:1-4

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The book of Romans is a masterfully written exposition of the gospel of God. Without a doubt, it is the foundation of authentic Christianity and the most articulate, systematic understanding of our faith found in the Bible. Countless lives have been changed by the truth found in this ancient letter, and it continues to change lives today. Interestingly enough, Romans was written to Christians. So, while the good news found in Romans can certainly bring people to faith in Jesus, the actual focus is on how the gospel helps Christians think rightly about God, life, faith, and Christian community. If you want to grow to know God more personal and intimate way, this letter is for you!

In all of his writings, but especially in Romans, the Apostle Paul uses dozens of metaphors to describe the relationship between God and humanity. He talks about reconciliation, a new exodus, and a new creation. He's getting ready to talk about adoption in Romans 8. He has employed the powerful pictures like sacrifice, redemption, baptism, and even marriage. But the dominant metaphor that Paul uses is the legal courtroom metaphor. This outweighs them all in Romans.

Paul is constantly borrowing forensic language to depict what God is doing to bring about justice and peace in the world. He talks about how we all stand before God like a guilty defendant in a court of law with our hands over our mouths. But because of Jesus, the declaration "not guilty" can be made over us who come to God in faith. And once this declaration is made, then what? What happens next? What should we look like, act like, walk like, and talk like when we leave this proverbial courtroom?

Yes, we still often feel a sense of guilt or shame, like a burden we can't shake free from. But in the middle of his technical courtroom language, Paul says the Holy Spirit has come to free us from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2). So, apparently, it's the Spirit that causes us to rightly respond to the verdict of "no condemnation."

In further explaining this, Paul says that God did what the law couldn't do. God condemned sin "in the flesh" of Jesus (Romans 8:3). Because Jesus was truly human yet lived a sinless life, Jesus' death is the place of ironic victory where God triumphed over Sin as a power. And God did this so that the law that previously had mastered people could now be "fulfilled" in people who walk according to the Spirit. Meaning, the faithful and flourishing people that the law had in mind are now being shaped to be so by the Spirit. Or to phrase it like an old hymn:

*To run and work the law commands
But gives me neither feet nor hands
But better news the gospel brings
It bids me fly and gives me wings*

The point is, the gospel of Jesus in the power of the Spirit enables the kind of life that God desires for his people. The Spirit is the breath in our lungs and the wind under our wings, leading us to live faithfully in God's world that he is making new. And Paul's word for this relationship that we now have with the Spirit is "walk."

"Walking" in Paul's writings is not an arbitrary allegory for the Christian life. It's about intimacy and closeness and relationship with God. And Paul gets this from a number of Old Testament saints who walked with God (Enoch, Noah, Abraham, David, etc). But walking is not merely about familiarity of relationship, but also about conduct within that relationship. And further still, it's conduct that flows *from* the relationship and not *in order to* earn it. This is Paul's idea of walking in the Spirit. And it's this idea that should make us rightly respond to the reality that we are "not guilty" because of Jesus. This kind of walking in the Spirit changes what we look like, act like, walk like, and talk like.

So, how should we then walk out of the courtroom and into the world with the ruling of "no condemnation" behind us? We should do so in the power and presence of the Spirit. If you are a Christian, the Spirit is busy at work in your heart, rearranging things, cleaning things, getting rid of old stuff, equipping and empowering, renovating, remaking, and reshaping you so that the conduct and content of your life are completely different and more wildly reflective of Jesus.

For Discussion —

1. What two fruits of the Spirit are least present in my life and why? (see Galatians 5:22-23)
2. What stands in my way from being open to the Spirit's guidance and work in my life?
3. In what ways should I, in the power of the Spirit, be more grateful, humble, and confident because of what Jesus has done for me?
4. What stood out to you the most from this message?
5. Has there ever been a time that you have felt guilty or condemned in some way and the Spirit has refreshed you through the gospel? How did he do that?
6. Considering all of Romans 8, what two or three ideas about the Holy Spirit are most interesting to you? Why?