

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study through the Epistle to the Romans – Part 19

I. Exposition of Chapter Eight.

A. Life in the Spirit contrasted with Life in the flesh. (Several writers point out that Romans 8 begins with no condemnation, ends with no separation and in between there is no defeat!!)

1. Verse 1 - No condemnation!

a. “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...” – Dr. Robert Utley states the following about the word “condemnation”:

“This means ‘punishment following a judicial sentence.’ It is the legal, forensic opposite of justification. It is a rare term in Paul’s writings (cf. 5:16, 18) and nowhere else in the NT.¹”

b. This simple declaration of no condemnation comes to those who are “...in Christ Jesus.” Since the Father does not condemn Jesus, neither can He condemn those who are in Him.

c. **Adam brought condemnation to humanity, Christ frees humanity from that condemnation.** (cf. 5:16,18 and John 3:17).

d. “...who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” - These words are not found in the earliest ancient manuscripts of the Book of Romans and they do not agree with the flow of Paul’s context here. They were probably added by a copyist who either made a mistake or thought he could “help” Paul by bringing in these words from **verse 4**.

e. Even though those who are in Christ should not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, this is not how we receive “**no condemnation.**” Our position in Jesus is the reason we’ve been freed from condemnation. We don’t receive “**no condemnation**” because we don’t deserve condemnation; we **do** deserve condemnation. We receive “**no condemnation**” because Jesus bore the condemnation we deserved, and our identity is now found in Him. As He is condemned no more, neither are we.

2. Verse 2 – Recognizing the Power of the Spirit. (Note: Verse 1 tells us we are free from the guilt of sin. Verse 2 tells us we are free from the power of sin!)

a. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” –

1) **The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus** – The Holy Spirit is “**The Spirit of Life,**” and the “**law**” is the “**rule**” or “**authority**” that He has over those who belong to Jesus Christ.

2) A law is a rule of conduct, or how things function or work.

“The subject here is no longer Christ’s work for us, but the Spirit’s work within us. Without the Spirit within as a law of life, there would be nothing but condemnation: for the new creature has no power within himself apart from the blessed Spirit,—as against a life of perpetual bondage to the flesh,—‘the end of which things is death’ (6.21).”²

3) When we accepted Christ as Lord, the Holy Spirit came to dwell on the inside of us. **I Corinthians 3:16; 6:19-20; II Corinthians 6:14-18; II Timothy 1:14.** The indwelling of the Holy Spirit empowers us to bear fruit - **Galatians 5:22-23.**

4) “...free from the law of the sin and death.” – Even though a Christian sins, Paul has made it very clear that he does not *have* to sin. We’ve been freed from sin’s dominion. Death also has no more lasting power over the believer. (**I Corinthians 15:20-23; 50-57; Hebrews 2:14-15**).

“The law of sin is like the law of gravity; it pulls us down. But the law of the Spirit is like the law of aerodynamics; it overcomes the law of sin, lifts us up, and enables us to ‘fly’ victoriously over the flesh.”³

3. Verse 3 – “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh...”

a. What CAN the Law do?

1) The law can give us a knowledge of sin – **3:20; 7:7.**

2) The law can condemn.

¹Robert James Utley, *The Gospel according to Paul: Romans*, vol. Volume 5, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1998), Ro 8:1.

²William R. Newell, *Romans: Verse by Verse* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1936), 288.

³Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Romans*, (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2013)

b. What the Law CANNOT do:

- 1) The law cannot justify us (or, make us righteous) – **Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16.**
- 2) The law cannot give us life – **Galatians 3:21.**
- 3) The law cannot make us perfect – **Hebrews 7:19.**

c. The law did not provide the power to keep it, and so was “...**weak through the flesh.** It can give us the standard, but it cannot give us the power to live pleasing to God.

d. “For what the law could not do...God did...”

1) “...**by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh...**”

a) The fact that the Son was sent by the Father speaks of the pre-existence of Christ. Jesus said repeatedly that He came from God **Matthew 10:40; John 4:34; 16:28; 17:5, 8.**

b) Jesus came in the “**likeness of sinful flesh**” – Notice it states “**likeness**”. This word means; “**resemblance**” or “**shape**”. Jesus’ flesh was NOT sinful but, nevertheless, He took upon Himself a human body. **II Corinthians 5:21; I Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 10:5-10; I Peter 2:22; I John 3:5.** (See also **Philippians 2:7-8; Romans 10:8-15.**)

2) “...**on account of sin...**” – or, “**as a sin offering.**”

3) “...**He condemned sin in the flesh.**” – The word “**condemned**” here means; “**to pronounce sentence against**”; “**punishment**” and “**to adjudge guilty.**” Sin was condemned in the flesh of Jesus as He bore the condemnation we deserved. Since we are in Christ, we have already had that condemnation come and pass us over.

“For God has done what the Law could not do, [its power] being weakened by the flesh [the entire nature of man without the Holy Spirit]. Sending His own Son in the guise of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, [God] condemned sin in the flesh [subdued, overcame, deprived it of its power over all who accept that sacrifice],”
Romans 8:3 – Amplified Bible

4. **Verse 4** – “**That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us...**” - Because Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law, and because we are in Christ, we fulfill the law. The law is fulfilled in us in regard to obedience, because we’ve had Christ’s righteousness imputed to us. The law is fulfilled in us in regard to punishment, because any punishment demanded by the law was poured out upon Jesus. (**Matthew 5:17**).

a. Paul does not say that *we* fulfill the righteous requirement of the law. He carefully says that the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us. It isn’t fulfilled by us, but in us.

b. “...**in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**” – Positionally in Christ we have fulfilled the law but there is still the need to live this out which can only occur as we “**walk according...to the Spirit.**” This same concept is expressed in **Galatians 5:16-25**. We’re not made righteous by living it out but we’re empowered to live it out because He’s made us righteous in Christ.

5. Verses 5 - 8 – Where do you set your Mind?

a. There are at least two different views pertaining to **verses 5-8**. Some argue that Paul is contrasting the unbeliever who lives according to the flesh with the believer who lives according to the Spirit. Others believe that he is contrasting a carnal believer with a spiritual believer.

b. At this point, our approach will be that these verses don’t have to be an “either/or” but there is certainly application for both.