

Message #27

Romans 8:1-4

In the course of many of our lives, we have seen some bizarre and shocking courtroom decisions. One writer said these are such shocking decisions because they permit one to escape justice:

- 1) There was the trial of O. J. Simpson in 1994 for the murder of Ron Goldman and Nicole Brown Simpson and the verdict was not guilty.
- 2) There was the trial of Michael Jackson for abuse charges in 2005 - the verdict was not guilty.
- 3) There was the trial of Robert Blake in which his wife was found dead in 2001 - not guilty.

Now here is one even more shocking than these stories. We are wretched sinners. We are sinners because of Adam. We are sinners because of our own choices. We are sinners by the O.T. law. We are sinners by the practice of our own flesh.

This is the way it really is. This is truth. These are the facts. We are guilty. So how is it possible for us to go into the court of God and have Almighty, Holy God say “Not Guilty” “No Condemnation?” How is it possible for us to go into the court of God and walk out a free person?

The answer is Jesus Christ. God in His amazing grace used His Holy Spirit to connect us to His Son, Jesus Christ. What we see here is this:

WE WILL NOT EVER RECEIVE THE CONDEMNATION OF GOD BECAUSE THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS SO IDENTIFIED US WITH JESUS CHRIST THAT WE ARE FOREVER SET FREE FROM THE LAW, SIN, AND ETERNAL DEATH.

God will not ever condemn one who is united by the Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ. Romans 8 is a chapter that magnifies the work of the Holy Spirit in our justification and salvation. It magnifies the work of the Holy Spirit in our “no condemnation.”

The Holy Spirit is mentioned 19 times: 8:2, 4, 5, 5, 6, 9, 9, 9, 10, 11, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 26, 26, 27.

This third member of the Trinity is more important to our relationship with God than most know.

Now before we tackle these verses, we think it is important to discuss a critical matter pertaining to the Greek manuscripts pertaining to this text.

If you are reading an NASV, NIV, NET, NLT, you read in **verse 1**, “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

If you are reading a KJV - “in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”

Frankly, this needs to be addressed because quite honestly the motive behind adding the “walk” clause is due to an attempt to take away from the pure grace Paul taught.

The earliest and the oldest and the best Greek manuscripts read “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (in manuscripts from 4th century) plus citations from the 3rd century.

Later some of the scribes decided to add two clauses from **verse 4**. They added them in stages. Stage 1 added “in Christ Jesus who do not walk according the flesh” (manuscript from 7th century).

Stage 2 added “but walk according to the Spirit” (manuscript from 9th century).

Now in the early days of Christianity, after a letter had been written and sent to a congregation, that letter was copied and circulated to all Christians. They were hand copied. By the second century a critical place where these letters were being copied was Alexandria, Egypt; Antioch; Constantinople (Istanbul, Turkey), Carthage and Rome.

In the 1500’s a guy by the name of Erasmus, a Catholic Theologian, took the Latin Bible and three manuscripts and made a copy of Romans in Greek. In his copy, he added the two additional phrases. The manuscript was from the 11th century.

Those phrases are not in the earliest copied Greek manuscripts and the best Greek manuscripts. Some scribe added them. I agree with the NET Bible scholars who say these two clauses were added to “insulate Paul’s gospel from the charges that it was characterized too much by grace” (NET Bible, *Romans*, p. 2217).

What God wants His people to know is that they will never ever be condemned in His legal court because the Holy Spirit has linked the believer in Jesus Christ to Jesus Christ and all He accomplished on their behalf.

Those who are “in Christ Jesus” cannot ever receive the condemnation of God because of this fact. Condemnation is impossible for one who has been united to Jesus Christ. This does not say we cannot receive judgment, but condemnation.

The word “condemnation” (katakrima) is a strong legal term. It carries with it the idea that we are standing before a judge and receive a guilty verdict and the penalty sentence for the verdict (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 234-235).

This is a very serious courtroom setting.

Verse 1 sets the stage for this critical fact:

- 1) The word “therefore” connects back to the fact that we are wretched condemned sinners with a flesh that fails the law of God.
- 2) The word “now” is now at present time.
- 3) The negative “no” (ouden) is a strong negation meaning there is not ever the possibility of condemnation (*Ibid.*, pp. 327-328).
- 4) The no condemnation is for the ones who are “in Christ Jesus.” So any person who is “in Christ Jesus” loses the possibility of ever being condemned.

This is such an important theological point to grasp. The “no condemnation” status is not found in our past memories, or our conscience, or in our flesh or in the O.T. law. **The “no condemnation” status is found totally, only and completely in Jesus Christ.** He is the only One who can deliver from condemnation.

Jesus spoke about this in John 14:20 when He said, “In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and **you in Me**, and I in you.”

It is the Holy Spirit who connects us to Jesus Christ and positionally puts us into Him. Just as Paul wrote, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” I Cor. 12:13

At this very moment that we believe on Jesus Christ, there are major things that occur that are wrought by the Holy Spirit:

- 1) We are regenerated by the Holy Spirit. John 3:5
- 1) We are baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit. I Cor. 12:13
- 2) We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. John 7:37-39; 14:17
- 3) We are sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption. Eph. 1:13-14

The Holy Spirit so vitally connects the believer to Jesus Christ that there is no possibility of any condemnation of God.

We may observe that there are two conjunctions that begin **verse 2** and **verse 3**. They both are the conjunction “for” (gar). **These two conjunctions give us two reasons why there cannot be any condemnation for one in Christ Jesus:**

REASON #1 – There cannot ever be any condemnation meted out against a believer because of the work of God the Spirit. **8:2**

Now the point of this verse is that the Holy Spirit positionally undid for us what the O.T. law did to us.

Now the O.T. law was the standard of God that showed every person that he/she was spiritually dead, sinful and deserved condemnation.

What the Spirit of God did was set us free from the O.T. law and its condemnatory charges. The pronoun “you” is singular. So it is the individual believer in Jesus Christ who has been set free from the O.T. law. If one is not a believer in Jesus Christ, the O.T. Law will be that which will condemn them.

That verb “has set you free” is aorist. **What that means is at one point of time, at one moment of time the Holy Spirit completely freed one from the O.T. law with all of its charges, obligations and punishments.** That moment occurred when the individual believed on Jesus Christ and received the Holy Spirit.

Those people who want to live their lives trying to keep a few O.T. legal law codes and traditions are missing the freedom and liberty that they have. It is no wonder they end up rigid legalists who rarely smile or enjoy life.

Now carefully observe what is said here. God does not say once you are “in Christ Jesus” and once you have “been set free from the law and death penalty” that you will not sin again. **What this text says is when this happens there is no possibility of condemnation.**

REASON #2 – There cannot ever be any condemnation meted out against a believer because of the work of God the Son. **8:3-4**

The O.T. law of God can do many things:

- 1) It can show us how holy God is - Romans 7:12
- 2) It can show us how sinful we are - Romans 3:20
- 3) It can show us how guilty we are - Romans 3:19
- 4) It can show us how condemned we are - Romans 4:15

But the one thing the Law cannot ever do is make us righteous in the sight of God.

Paul really makes that point in Galatians 2:16 -

“Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.”

No sinner will ever be judicially declared righteous by God by their attempt at keeping the O.T. law. This is not because the law is bad; this is because we are sinful.

The law is God’s perfect, holy standard and we cannot keep a perfect, holy standard because we are not perfect. Therefore, none of us can ever be made righteous by keeping the O.T. law.

This is exactly what Paul means here in **Romans 8:3** when he says that “the law....weak as it was through the flesh.”

Sinful men and women cannot keep the Holy Law of God because they are sinful and fleshly.

So what God did in amazing grace was to devise a way for us to escape condemnation for our law violations.

Verse 3 says God sent His own Son to resolve this law violation and law condemnation dilemma. There are five specific realities Paul develops that we better grasp because this is what “God did.”

We are partly in the flesh and partly in the Spirit, but we are wholly in Christ.

(Reality #1) - God sent His own Son. 8:3a

The Greek literally reads, “the God sent the of Himself Son.” Every person had better come to terms with the identity of Jesus Christ. God the Father “sent” His Son, Jesus Christ.

The verb “sent” is aorist, meaning this is a one point of time moment when He sent Him. The verb “sent” (pempw) means that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ here for a purpose (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 353).

(Reality #2) - God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. 8:3b

Jesus Christ was not some Spirit-being emanation. He was really here as a human with a real flesh.

(Reality #3) - God sent His own Son as an offering for sin. 8:3c

He was not sinful, so He could be an offering for sin.

(Reality #4) - God sent His own Son to be condemned in His flesh. 8:3d

He would take the condemnation sentence that we deserve.

(Reality #5) - God sent His Son to fulfill all law requirements in us. 8:3e

Now how in the world do we fulfill the Law requirements in us? The Holy Spirit lives in us and therefore we receive the full righteousness of God.

Now **verse 4** breaks humanity down into two categories:

(Category #1) - Those who live life in their own flesh.

These are the lost people. These people are people who will be condemned.

These are people who live life before God in sin. They are dead spiritually and heading to condemnation.

(Category #2) - Those who live life who have the Spirit.

These are the saved people who will never be condemned.

These are people who live life before God with God’s Spirit in them. They walk in righteousness and meet the standard of righteousness and they will not ever be condemned.

Which category are you?