



## “No Condemnation”<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:1-8

Dreams are weird things, aren't they? I've had some dreams that I've awoken from, and I've been disappointed because I wanted the dream to last. Maybe I was in the Caribbean and enjoying time with family or maybe I was out on the greatest date with my wife. Then I awake and I genuinely wish that when I close my eyes, the dream will return. But that never happens (unfortunately). Then there are other dreams that I'm so glad I've awoken from. When I was a child, I remember a specific nightmare I had of a swamp monster chasing me everywhere. All my family was watching me. My grandma was encouraging me to run. But I was the only one panicking! Then, right before I woke up, on the bottom of my mental screen, I read the words, "To be continued. . . ." Talk about scary! But boy was I ready to wake up! By the way, a year later, I had the swamp monster dream! It came back! I was ready to wake up from that one, too. That's a dream you don't want.

But then there are even worse dreams. Have you ever had a dream where you've done something that's either been illegal or tremendously sinful? In those dreams, I begin to panic. I think to myself, "What am I going to do? I'm never going to get out of this one." As I'm entering back into real life, there's this sense that the dream was real. Panic, guilt, shame, condemnation can even overwhelm you. Then your mind tells you that it was all just a really bad dream. Then you ask yourself, "Was that really a dream? Am I sure?" And once my mind is convinced it was a really bad dream, I take a great sigh of relief. There is no condemnation! It wasn't even real.

Now, I want you to think about God. I want you to imagine God's judgment. That's real. You see, in this life, people try to hide their sinfulness and make themselves look better. But do you remember what Paul said in Romans 2? "God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus."<sup>2</sup> The Bible tells us that God will judge every intention of the heart. And so, God tells us that someday, all our hidden thoughts and desires will come out in a future judgment. And it's not a judgment where the judge is a mere human. The Judge is God himself – the Creator who owns all and has created us.

A man by the name of Francis Schaeffer once put it this way. Imagine that in your life, you have a recording of all your desires, thoughts and dreams. Now, imagine that day when God takes that recording and plays it in front of you. The lusts, the dreams, the desires, the treason against God, the hatred for other people are all revealed. And, in that day, all your sinfulness comes up in judgment against you. If you can feel condemned because of a fake dream, then remember those feelings of condemnation are the difference between a scratch and a deadly blow. To be condemned by God means eternal separation from God in Hell. And in that judgment, the Bible says that every mouth will be stopped. They have nothing to say to change their destiny.

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<sup>1</sup> This manuscript is still in the rough draft phase. I recommend you utilize these notes in conjunction to the sermon to gain greater insight and clarity.

<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ro 2:16.

This is eternal condemnation. But Paul, in the book of Romans has spoken of how God has made a way so that people can be free from God's condemnation. It's not merely that God wakes us from a dream and says, "Those sins weren't real." It's not simply that we sinned, asked for forgiveness and then promise to never do it again (and then God's going to forgive). Instead, God can give us a forgiveness that's not based on us whatsoever. God can declare us righteous because of Jesus and therefore we are not condemned now or ever in the future! Think about this, Christian. If you know you deserved God's wrath and then you have Jesus, ponder the beauty of that statement. You are not condemned!

Paul has taken a long time to defend the beauty of this message. And now, as we move into chapter 8, he's going to move forward to show how this declaration of "no condemnation" leads to greater freedom and obedience. So, before I say anything else, turn in your Bibles to Romans 8, and we will read verses 1-8 together after I pray for us (pray for the Gerths and Harvest West Olive).

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*8 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>3</sup>*

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Remember when these words show up in the book of Romans. Verse 8 comes right after Paul's statement of a Christian's battle and failing against sin. He speaks of this true self that delights in God's Law, but then there's this flesh that lusts for sin. So Paul cries out in agreement with the Law, "Wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this body of death?" Yes, if he were judged by the Law, he'd agree with it. He is wretched. But he calls out and asks, "Who will deliver me?" He is not judged by the Law. Instead, he trusts God delivers me. And God delivers him through Jesus' mediation! Because Paul is connected with Christ, he does not have to fear God's condemnation. Instead, he looks forward to greater and greater deliverance from this body of death.

Now, in chapter 8, Paul fleshes this out. What does it look like to experience the deliverance from the flesh that God promises? In verse 1, Paul says "Therefore." This word "Therefore" has to be noted. ALWAYS ask why the word "therefore" exists in a text. This word "therefore" could be coming right off of the previous segment in chapter 7 or it could be going all the way back to Romans 3. Remember that in Romans 3, Paul said that God is just and the justifier? Then he projects all the arguments against that. Paul's been making arguments for this through chapters 4-7! Now, in chapter 8, Paul's saying, "Now we can move on!"

But before we do, I need to make one important qualification. If you haven't learned this already, Paul can be confusing – especially with his words. We find that in his words, sometimes he'll use one word in

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<sup>3</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ro 8:1–8.

two or three different ways. We are going to see this in this text today. For example, when Paul uses the word “Law,” he could be referring to the Mosaic Law. Or, he could be referring to a “principle.” So, in verse 2, he talks about the “law of the Spirit” and the “law of sin.” That probably is referring to the principle of sin and principle of the Spirit. But then in verse 3, Paul says that God has done what the Law, weakened by the flesh, couldn’t do. That word “law” is probably referencing the Mosaic Law. But thankfully context clues help us! Just keep this in mind, though. Words have meanings, but words can have various meanings depending on the context. The same goes for Paul’s usage of the word “Flesh.” Verse 3 says the law was weakened by the flesh. That probably references back to the ideas in chapter 7. The flesh refers to the center for our sinfulness. But then in the end of verse 3, Paul talks about Jesus being in the likeness of sinful flesh – which is talking about Jesus coming in a human body, and then he condemned sin in the flesh. But then in verse 4, Paul says we walk not according to the flesh. Clearly, he’s not saying we live without bodies! He’s going back to the other idea of flesh. We walk not according to the center for sinfulness.

Keep this in mind as we move forward. There’s at least one other words used in two different ways, but I’ll get to that in a little bit. With all of this backdrop, though, I think the big idea Paul is getting at now in this segment is that **our justification and sanctification are inseparable**. For some, these words might be confusing. But the word “justification” means that God forgives and declares righteous, like a Judge, those who trust in Jesus. This is apart from any of our works. All, and only, because of what Jesus has done, can we be forgiven and given God’s righteousness as a gift. That’s justification. Sanctification oftentimes refers to growing in obedience to the Lord.

Paul says that if you’re justified, you will be sanctified. And if you’re sanctified, well then, you’ve been justified! Remember, “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” Paul is saying that he doesn’t just want a God who will forgive him every time he sins. He cries out to the God who actually takes away sin! And so, here, Paul shows us how God does this. **God takes away sin’s power by justifying people in Christ and sanctifying people by the Spirit.**

With this understanding, let’s see how Paul communicates this. In verse 1, Paul says:

### 1. There is no condemnation in Christ!

Now, there is no condemnation. The word “now” is referring to the time period after Jesus’ death and resurrection. In the Mosaic time period, they were looking forward to the Messiah. But *now* Jesus has come, died, rose again. And all those who are connected to Jesus have *no condemnation*.

When I say connected to Christ, I mean what Paul was talking about in Romans 4-5. Through trusting in Jesus, it’s as if we are *in Christ*. We are no longer *in Adam*. Adam and his sinfulness doesn’t define us. Adam is not our representative. Through turning from sin and trusting Jesus, we have been transferred to a new representative. Because we are in Christ, there is therefore now no condemnation.

This verse describes one aspect of *justification*: no condemnation. But that needs to be defined. And I hope you don’t hit the snooze button in your mind right now because this is absolutely, joyously amazing. To be not condemned means that no charge can be leveled against you. You are free from any debt or penalty! Do you hear this? If you are in Christ, no charges can be legitimately brought against you anymore!

The reason I say “anymore,” is because the verse doesn’t just say “You are not condemned right now.” If it said that, that would mean right now, you’re not condemned, but who knows about this coming week or next year or in 20 years from now. You just know you’re not condemned right now. That’s *not* what the verse says. The verse says “There is therefore now no condemnation in Christ Jesus.” “No condemnation” means there’s no condemnation that can be given as long as you are in Christ Jesus, Christian!

And, how long is a Christian *in* Christ Jesus? Well, Jesus himself said in John 10 that no one can pluck you out of his hands. And Jesus teaches us that he gives eternal life. How *long* is Jesus our Savior? For eternity! Therefore, there is *no condemnation* for all believers *forever!* Do you grasp this? Now, go back to my illustration at the beginning of the message. After having those horrific dreams, I’ve actually rejoiced through the day that the dream wasn’t real. I’ve felt freedom that I’m not condemned from something that is fake! Now again, ponder the reality that you’re not condemned of things that you really did commit! I deserve condemnation. There are things that I’ve done in real life that have caused me to shutter when I think of them. And yet, by God’s grace through Christ, I can say, “I’m not condemned! Praise God, I’m not condemned! And I never will be!” Can you rejoice with me?

Praise God for our justification. We’re not condemned. Then Paul goes into verse 2, and we see that we’re not condemned because

## 2. God sanctifies people by the Spirit (v 2).

Verse 2 says, “<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>4</sup> There is no condemnation in Christ, “For the Law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.” This verse caused a bit of confusion in me this past week. There’s no condemnation because the Spirit has set me free? If you read on, the context of having the Spirit in me means that the Spirit has set us free to live for God. This is glorious, but I got confused with the word “For” in verse 2.

Now, some of you might be thinking, “Really, the word ‘for’ is confusing you?” But, every word matters in the Bible. It’s all spoken by our good and holy God. They matter! And I was confused. So, when I was reading this, I was asking, “Am I not condemned because I am going to obey by the Spirit?” Or, to put another way, **am I not condemned because I’m going to follow God?** Is this how justification works? Does God declare us righteous on the basis of any of our actions for God – even actions that the Spirit works in us? NO! Ephesians 2 says our justification is apart from our works! Paul’s been stating this over and over in Romans as well. So, what does the word “for” mean here?

I read a manuscript of a former pastor this past week that I thought was basic and helpful. The word “for” can refer to the foundational reason or it can refer to the evidence. Example, I could be sitting with you and out-of-the-blue my stomach growls. Then I say, “I’m obviously hungry *for* my stomach growled.” Is my growling stomach the evidence of hunger or the basis of hunger? It’s the evidence of hunger. But, I could have chosen to not eat for 10 days and then say “I’m hungry *for* I haven’t eaten for 10 days.” Is the not eating the basis for my hunger? Yes. The word “for” can refer to the foundational reason or the manifestation of.

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<sup>4</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ro 8:2.

And in verse 2, the word “for” refers to the results or manifestation of verse 1. There is no condemnation. And then Paul says, “Look at what God has given to you!” The fact that you have the Spirit of life means you have been justified. Or, as I said earlier. You’re being sanctified; therefore, you have been justified. And because you have been justified, you’re being sanctified.

But, specifically, Paul says that “the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.”<sup>5</sup>

The word law here probably means “principle” or “power.” The principle and power of the Spirit of life. In chapter 7 and verse 6, Paul says that we serve God not in the old way of the written code, but in the new way of the Spirit. In the Old Testament book of Joel, and chapter 2, Joel prophesies that God will pour out his Spirit. Acts 2 states that God has fulfilled that prophecy. And Paul here, in Romans 8 is saying that God has given the Spirit to all who trust Jesus. And this Spirit of life is in contrast to mere commands. After all, commands can’t motivate you to change. We’ve learned that in the last couple weeks. The Law cannot change the heart. But the Spirit does mold and shape and motivate our heart.

God has given us not more commands. Instead, He’s given us the Spirit of life to breathe life into us. As a result, we can obey. This is phenomenal to me. God, who owes humanity nothing. God, who is infinitely holy and perfect. God, who is all-powerful and all-wise, decides to come to us, change our hearts and privilege us by giving us a relationship with him – a relationship that changes us from the inside-out. This is the Spirit of life. And this is different than the principle and power of sin and death. Sin uses the Law to highlight our sin and then we give into greater sin.

So, even though as Christians we still battle against sin and we can fail, Paul shows us here in Romans 8 that Romans 7 is not the only reality. And, as Paul says in Romans 6, we are no longer slaves to sin and God has promised that we will grow in sanctification, leading to eternal life. How do we know this will happen? Well, right here Paul says God has given you the Spirit!

By two amazing gifts of God, we are guaranteed that our body of death will not control us! First, we are not condemned in Christ! No condemnation. We are free. Second, we have been given the Holy Spirit! If we have Jesus and we have the Spirit, God the Father will not turn us away! God, the Triune God, has given all of himself to and for us! Will God ever fail in his purposes with you? No! Your salvation is ultimately dependent on him. God has taken away sin’s power because he’s justified you in Christ and sanctifies you by the Spirit! Right here, we could end the sermon, but I’m not going to because Paul actually restates this with a little bit of modified verbiage. So, if you’re taking notes, point 3 is almost identical to point 1:

### **3. God declares righteous through Jesus’ sacrifice (v. 3).**

Read verse 3 with me again: <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>6</sup>

Who will deliver from the body of death. Hold on. Some people will say “Jesus,” and that’s not incorrect per se, but Paul’s emphasis in chapter 7 and 8 is God through Jesus. Maybe you are like how I used to view God. I used to think of God the Father as mad at me, and Jesus appeased the Father. So, Jesus was

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<sup>5</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ro 8:2.

<sup>6</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ro 8:3.

a good older brother, but the Father wasn't my Savior. Jesus was. That's not how the Bible communicates. The Bible communicates that God, through Jesus, pursued us in love and saved us from his own just punishment. And so, here in verse 3, God has done what the Law could not do. The Law was weakened by the flesh. Meaning, we're born sinners and even as Christians today, we still have sinfulness. We can't merely will to do better and then be fine. The Law cannot save us. The Law points out God's perfect standard and then highlights our sinfulness and failings. Our flesh does nothing for the Law. So God himself had a grand plan to rescue us. Before time began, God willed to send his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. That means that Jesus looked just like all other descendants of Adam. And yet, Jesus came in the flesh for sin and condemned sin in the flesh. What does it mean he came "for" sin.

Well, think of a situation where you have two enemies and one enemy sends a note to the other, saying, "I'm coming *for you!*" What does that mean? They're coming to war against them. They're coming for an attack. That's why Jesus came in the flesh. The only way to conquer sin was to take on human flesh, to become like us. The terminology echoes somewhat of the Old Testament sacrifices. Jesus is *the* sacrifice of all sacrifices. Amazingly, Jesus became *the* sacrifice for sin! He didn't have to leave the glories of Heaven to come to this sin-cursed world. Yet, he did willingly – to defeat sin.

And then we're told he condemned sin in the flesh. This is thrilling. While Jesus became sin on the cross, that was precisely what was needed to defeat sin. You would think in becoming sin then Jesus would be condemned. But in Jesus on the cross, the sins of sinners were placed on him (even though he was sinless). And then God condemned sin in Jesus! Jesus was the substitute for sinners. What a glorious reality. And honestly, only God could do this. We can't take our punishment for ourselves. We're not the Judge and Creator. But God can do this! He is the Judge and Creator!

Then, in condemning sin, he slays the power of sin. So Paul goes on in verse four to talk about the righteous requirement being fulfilled in us. There's more to that phrase, but it's interesting Paul moves into talking about righteousness. Listen, Christian. This is another aspect of justification. In condemning sin, you're not only *not* condemned. But you are also declared righteous. It's as if you are now perfectly righteous. You walk into the courtroom of Heaven not only hearing the Holy Judge say "no condemnation." But you also hear the judge say "Righteous!" This is our acceptance with God forever!

But there's more. Paul moves on in verse 4 and shows us that we're not simply declared righteous. We are empowered to live righteously.

#### **4. God ordained for us to walk in the Spirit (v. 4).**

Verse 4 talks about our sanctification again. So, if you mark in your Bibles, next to verse 1 write, "Justification." Write next to verse 2, "Sanctification." Write next to verse 3, "Justification." Then next to verse 4, "Sanctification."

Read verse 4 with me again: <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>7</sup>

Verse 4 starts with "in order that." Don't miss that phrase! In order that refers to God's intentions. This is his plan. God justified you. God declared you righteous not so that you can wallow in sinfulness and be bound to sin. God declared you righteous with no condemnation so that the righteous requirement of

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<sup>7</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ro 8:4.

the law might be fulfilled in us! God intended from eternity past to grow you in obedience. But not an obedience that is a mere rote obedience to a list of rules. It's obedience based in a forgiving gracious relationship with God himself. You walk in the Spirit. That means you walk in dependence on the Spirit. We'll talk more in weeks to come what that means, but at this point focus on the relational aspect of obedience.

This ought to compel us all the more. Apart from God's salvation, it's like we're simply disobeying rules. But having been given salvation, disobedience is more grave. We're going against the God who loves us and saved us. When you know his love, you want to honor. We can understand this in human relationships, right? With loving parents, you want to do right by them. When you having a loving spouse, you are motivated to love. How much more with the loving God. He's freed us to live in loving obedience.

And, by the way, this is God's plan. Ephesians 2 says that he ordained that we would walk in obedience. If God plans for something, will it happen? Therefore, people who say that you can be justified and not be sanctified are denying the Scriptures call. God ordained for justification and sanctification to go hand-in-hand because God planned to destroy sin's power and control in people's lives!

Now, if it is true that God takes away sin's power by justifying people in Christ and sanctifying people by the Spirit, then what should our lives look like practically? In verses 5-8, Paul tells us the results by giving us a contrast. And he states here that you're either in the flesh or in the Spirit. If you're in the Spirit, you're in Christ! If you're in the flesh, you're in sin.

Look at verses 5-8 with me again:<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>8</sup>

Five times, the word "set" is states in these four verses. Paul declares that what your mind is set on declares what you live for. Your mind is either set on the flesh or it's set on the Spirit. But what does this word "set" mean? Well, when I was a child, I enjoyed playing with compasses. I'd get one, go outside and then I'd test it to see if it'd always go back to north. Now, those compasses are *set* to north. So, I'd move around and then I'd see the needle bobble some. But it'd align back to north. Sometimes I'd shake the compass, but sure enough, it'd go back to north because it was *set* on north.

This is the idea of *set*. It's not that you can't get shaken. It's not that there isn't any jostling in our lives. Remember Romans 7? However, whether you're being jostled in life or experiencing the joys of life, a Christian's true north is set on the things of the Spirit. Now, the things of the Spirit include the Word of God. The things of the Spirit include who the Spirit points to: God's glory in Jesus. The things of the Spirit are glorifying God and enjoying him forever. And then, loving others because of Christ. In chapter 8, the things of the Spirit include knowing your acceptance, knowing your relationship with God and crying out to him, "Abba!" The Spirit makes us aware of our weaknesses and instead of us recoiling, we rejoice and cry out to our Abba!

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<sup>8</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ro 8:5-8.

But a person who lives according to the flesh, sets their mind on the things of the flesh. They think they have control. Instead of viewing God as their complete Savior, on whom they must completely depend, they view God as their co-pilot or sidekick to help when it gets real tough. To be set on the flesh is to self-justify. To be set on the flesh means you don't live by faith in God. You don't live in dependence on him. Therefore, you're not really submitting to God's Law. And, because you're not depending on God, you cannot submit to God's Law.

Let me ask you, what are you set on? Because what your mind is set on reveals who your ruler is. Now, some here could say, "But I'm not a bad person. I do fine things!" I came across this illustration this past week. You can have a man in a rebel army dress the right way, take care of his troop, know all the right things in warfare. But he's still in the rebel army, and he cannot expect the ruler of the other nation to congratulate him on his good behavior when he's a rebel (see *Keller*, pp. 20-21).

If your mind is set on the flesh. If you love and trust and live for and seek your identity and destiny in the things around you, the end is death. Paul says *you cannot* submit to God's Law. What you need is a radical transformation by God's grace. I pray that he opens your eyes and that your mind would be set free so that it's set on the Spirit!

And, if your mind is set on the Spirit, I praise God. **God has taken away sin's power by justifying in Christ and sanctifying by the Spirit.** Now, if your mind is set on the Spirit, then, as Paul says in Colossians, set your mind on things above. That means, grow in focusing your mind intently. Act in ways consistent with who you are. You are *not condemned*. And, you have been given the Spirit. And, you are loved by God the Father! With our Triune God, we can continue in this life. Even in the midst of a groaning flesh that dogs us, we can endure. And, as Paul will get to by the end of this chapter, we live today awaiting the day when we see God face-to-face.

Ventura, these are glorious thoughts to think even about this new addition. **As we move into the new auditorium to praise God in song and then write out prayers, realize that even this building is a confession that Jesus is not merely building brick and mortar buildings. He's building HIS church, God's children. God has stripped sin of its authority, promising to grow us and sanctify us – because he has justified us. Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. May we, by the power of the Spirit, live in these realities individually and also corporate as a church *until he comes!***

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