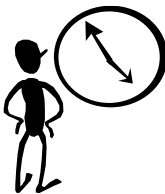


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.

Every other Sunday night:

Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

No Condemnation

By Ken Green

Text: Romans 8:1-4

The major theme the apostle is dealing with continues to be the results of justification by faith. This thesis was taken up in Romans 5:1, "*Therefore having been justified by faith, we have...*"

The closing verses of chapters 5, 6, and 7 serve to underscore the direction of the argument: "*...as sin reigned in death even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord... the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord... I thank God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!*"

Romans 8 concludes this section with the bold proclamation that there is no condemnation for one who is justified by faith. The point logically follows, for condemnation is the opposite of justification. H.A.W. Meyer says this chapter describes: "the happy condition of a man in Christ." Fredrick Godet observes that it begins with "no condemnation" and ends with "no separation."

Between these thoughts, there is "no defeat" (C.A. Fox). In my opinion, we reach the highest pinnacle of God's revelation in this eighth chapter of Romans. While such evaluations are quite subjective, I view Romans 8 as one of the greatest chapters in the Bible. It is with a deep feeling of inadequacy that I attempt to scratch out my feeble comments on this magnificent text.

Those in Christ Jesus

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

The "*therefore*" directs us back to all that has been argued thus far. That there is "*no condemnation,*" but rather

justification for the Christian is not a new thought in the epistle. It is the major thrust (Romans 1:16, 17; 3:21, 24; 5:1, 6-8 14; 7:6). The point is not that he may not again be condemned. The condition that is set forth would imply that one may be so condemned if he fails to continue the spiritual course. The assurance is addressed to “*those who are in Christ Jesus.*”

It is not to the morally good, or the religious, or the pretender. It is to those who abide in this relationship. Some therein may be weak; some may be strong. Some are wise; others are unwise. Some are mature; others are immature. Regardless, as we abide in Christ (which necessarily implies growth and progress) we are forgiven, declared righteous, and there is no condemnation.

Horatio G. Spafford, in his great hymn of spiritual comfort in the midst of deep grief, proclaimed: “My sin — oh the bliss of this glorious thought. My sin, not in part, but the whole: has been nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Oh my soul!”

A further condition is given in the KJV of “*walking not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*” The phrase is said by many to be a gloss (of doubtful authority) and is not given in most translations. But the textual legitimacy of the same statement is not questioned in Romans 8:4, so we shall reserve our comments on it until we reach that passage.

Why No Condemnation?

Why does Paul say there is no condemnation for such a one? Is it because he has perfectly kept God's Law? Is it because he is for some reason not obligated to keep God's law? No. It is: “*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death*” (Romans 8:2). The “*for*” has the sense of “because.” The reason there is “*no condemnation*” is that the Lord has freed us from that law that condemns. One law has made us free from another law. The law that makes free is “*the law of the Spirit of life.*” It is the law of the Spirit for the Spirit has revealed it. It is the law of life for through it the Spirit imparts life (John 6:63; II Corinthians 3:6; Romans 8:11). “The law of the Spirit of life is the forceful and effective operation of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of God's children” (William Hendriksen). This is accomplished through the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16; 6:18).

The phrase “*in Christ Jesus*” likely modifies that which follows: “*has made me free,*” rather than what precedes. The law is from Christ; the freedom is in Him through His atoning sacrifice and redemption. This law of the Spirit, then, has made me free from another law: the law of sin and death.

The law is that sin produces death. The death sin brings is spiritual death. This is the death from which we may be delivered; not physical death. The Spirit produces life; sin produces death (Romans 6:23). The law of sin and death produces condemnation,

and this is what we are delivered from.

As McGarvey expressed it: “Laws which cannot be obeyed result in sin, and sin ends in death.” (Those who wish to quibble over the word “cannot” may take that up with McGarvey. The fact is that none did perfectly obey the law; furthermore, none do perfectly obey law.)

How Is It that There Is No Condemnation?

“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh...” (Romans 8:3).

Here we see the ineffectiveness of the law. No matter how often we read the law, gaze into the law, meditate upon the law, or even memorize the law, it is not able to bring about lasting change. There is just something the law is powerless to do. The Law of Moses (or any law) is unable to deliver a sinful man from condemnation, or from the law of sin and death. Why could the law not do this? Was the law faulty? No.

The impotence of the law was because of the weakness of the flesh. It was because of man's weakness that the law was without power in this regard. This being the case, if mankind is to be saved, some other means of deliverance was necessary. The means was the sending by God of His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Such was the form in which He came.

We are told that Christ came *“in the likeness of sinful flesh”* and made an offering for sin that condemned sin in the flesh. Why? — and here is the major insight of this section — *“so that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit”* (Romans 8:4).

The phrase, *“in the likeness of sinful flesh”*, has caused some to conclude that Christ actually came in “sinful flesh.” The thrust of this statement is Christ’s offering for sin. Paul teaches that Christ’s flesh was both real and sinless. Paul does not mean that Christ was sinful (compare Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-15). The flesh is called sinful “because the desires, appetites, and passions of the flesh so often lead to sin” (R. A. Whiteside). John Stott comments: “Not 'in sinful flesh,' because the flesh of Jesus was sinless. Nor 'in the likeness of flesh,' because the flesh of Jesus was real. But 'in the likeness of sinful flesh,' because the flesh of Jesus was both sinless and real.”

The object for which He came was *“on account of sin,”* or *“in order to deal with sin”* (William Hendriksen). This He did by dying for sinners and satisfying the demands of justice. When He did this, *“He condemned sin in the flesh,”* or *“in His flesh He condemned sin.”*

In what way did He do this? By His life and by His death. By living the sinless life, He showed that the fault was not with the law but with man. His sinless life stands as a condemnation to us. Through His sacrificial death, we see sin in its true colors. If one wants to see the full measure of sin, let him look to the cross.

The Greater Progress of the Gospel

By Doy Moyer

One of the highlights of Paul's attitude is that he was always more concerned for the spread of the gospel than for his own personal agenda or safety. He was willing to die for the Lord if it meant that the gospel would be proclaimed and more would be saved. He expresses this attitude in his Philippian letter, which he wrote from prison:

"Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear" (Philippians 1:12-14).

His circumstances were not ideal from an earthly perspective. Many would find reasons to complain about this situation. Yet Paul looked at it with a sense of hope, not because he liked the circumstances for his own comfort, but because he knew something bigger was at work. He knew that his imprisonment worked out *"for the greater progress of the gospel."* People knew of his imprisonment, and this could have caused Christians to pause or be afraid to say anything lest they end up in the same circumstance. Paul says that the opposite happened, *"that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear."*

Because Paul was courageous in the face of persecution, others became emboldened to be courageous, too, and this resulted in the further spread of the gospel. This is not the first time we have seen this with Christians. Earlier, when Paul himself (Saul) was persecuting God's people and putting them in prison, the Christians were scattered abroad because of it. What was the result? *"Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word" (Acts 8:4).* Because of the persecution, there was greater progress of the gospel.

Perhaps all of this seems counterintuitive. Those who initiated the persecutions would have thought it would curtail the spread of the gospel, but they always underestimated the level of commitment among Christians. Instead of being too afraid to talk, they were emboldened to speak up and teach others the truth. We see the same attitude among the apostles early on. When Peter and John were told they were not to speak in the name of Jesus, they said, *"Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20).* When the apostles were told to stop preaching, they responded, *"We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:19).* Peter would later write, *"Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose..." (1 Peter 4:1).* There was an expectation of opposition and they were pre-

pared to use that opposition for the greater progress of the gospel. Shall we do any less today?

Paul was so invested in the spread of the gospel that he would rejoice in the preaching of Christ even if it came from those with bad motives: *“Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice”* (Philippians 1:15-18).

What matters here is that Christ is preached. If someone did not like Paul and preached out of selfishness, as long as Christ was preached, Paul would rejoice. This speaks volumes about his own motivation. He was willing to suffer and be maligned. He trusted God and knew the truth would prevail. Today, no matter what others say or do to us, what matters is that Christ is proclaimed. If our circumstances are not what we would wish, what matters is that Christ is being preached. We may just consider that our circumstances could actually open doors for the gospel that, before this, were closed. We may then consider that our circumstances are resulting in greater progress of the gospel. If that is so, then we need to submit to the circumstances in order to let the gospel take precedence.

Paul then shows this remarkable attitude: *“Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death”* (Philippians 1:18-20). Paul would be delivered, even if that meant through death.

Let us pray that Christ will be exalted in us, whether by life or by death.

In a speech at the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention in 1787, Benjamin Franklin said, "I have lived sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God governs in the affairs of men. If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings, that 'except the Lord build a house they labor in vain that build it.'"

