

## Living Guilt Free

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

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March 5, 2023

Text: Romans 8:1-13

Purpose: Paul declares that there is no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus. We all operate under the Law of Sin and Death. But we need to decide to walk in the Law of the Spirit instead, thereby fulfilling the Law of Righteousness. To do that we need to set our “mind” on the things of God, set our “walk” according to the ways of God, and “depend upon the Spirit of Christ” that dwells in us and guides us in righteous living. Thereby we can live and not die.

While on a road trip, an elderly couple stopped at a roadside restaurant for lunch. After finishing their meal, they left the restaurant and resumed their trip. When leaving, the elderly woman unknowingly left her glasses on the table and she didn't miss them until they had been driving about twenty minutes.



By then, to add to the aggravation, they had to travel quite a distance before they could find a place to turn around, in order to return to the restaurant to retrieve her glasses.

All the way back, the elderly husband became the classic grouchy old man. He fussed and complained and scolded his wife relentlessly during the entire return drive. The more

he chided her, the more agitated he became. He just wouldn't let up one minute.

To her relief, they finally arrived at the restaurant. As the woman got out of the car and hurried inside to retrieve her glasses, her husband yelled to her, "While you're in there, you might as well get my hat and the credit card."<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

We all have seen the commercials on television about being free from certain things in life – debt free (credit counseling businesses), worry free (self-improvement seminars), and even dust free (air purification systems). Today there are endless commercials on television about updating your Medicare coverage.



When we go through the various food sections in the grocery store we see labels telling us that their product is “fat free” or “sugar free.” Weight Watchers has a system of eating that if you follow the numbering system correctly, you can be assured of being free of excess weight over an extended period of time.



When it comes to desserts, we want to indulge in our favorite flavor or taste, but we surely don't want to feel guilty about eating it. So, if we simply buy their product, we can rest assured our eating will be guilt free.

But what about the other areas of our lives? How can we live in such a manner that we are not plagued by guilt? It is my understanding that doctors are prescribing medicines at

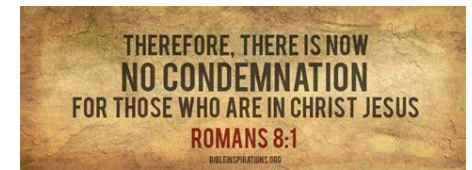
unprecedented levels for anxiety and depression. Some of these medicines are definitely needed to address psychological and physiological changes in our bodies. But others are feeling the pangs of guilt because of their sin.



But some people are on medication because they have made choices in their lives which have resulted in a tremendous burden of guilt. The shadow of guilt and condemnation is so pervasive in some people's lives, that the only way to cope with it is to mask it with prescription medicine, illegal drugs, alcohol, or illicit relationships. Yet these only provide temporary relief instead of guilt free living.

## Our Text – No Condemnation

In the opening verses of Romans chapter eight, Paul shouts at the top of his lungs, “*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.*”



To me that is news worth shouting about! Those of us that are in Christ are no longer condemned. Paul in the previous chapters illustrated clearly that we are guilty. All of us are guilty and deserve punishment. But the opening verse of chapter eight tells me I am not condemned because I am in Christ. Halleluiah!

I do not like the feeling in life when I know I am guilty and punishment is coming. I remember several times growing up knowing that I had done wrong and punishment was on its way.

A person in my previous church shared with me a story about a young boy that was squirming in church one Sunday morning. The mother told the boy several times to be still and stop acting so ugly. But as most young boys do, (and I can clearly identify with this young boy since this happened to me), they simply kept on until their mama or daddy has reached their limit. The mother picked the little boy up and marched him out the back doors of the church. As the little boy got to the back of the church, he yelled out “pray for me, pray for me!”



He knew he had done wrong and punishment was coming!

Don't we dread that feeling of impending punishment? All of us long to live our lives in such a manner that we are guilt free. But there are several laws at work within us that prevent us from being totally free. For a few moments this morning, I want to talk with you about the “Law of Sin and Death,” the “Law of the Spirit of Life,” and the “Law of Fulfilled Righteousness.”

### Three Spiritual Laws<sup>2</sup>

These three spiritual laws are at work in our lives whether we realize they are or not. The first one is the Law of Sin and Death.



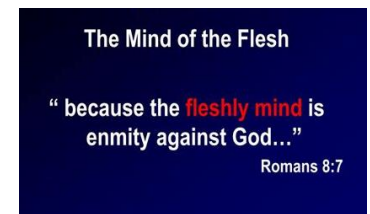
## I. The Law of Sin and Death (v. 1-8)

In verse 2 we read, “*For the law of Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*”

To help us understand this law of sin and death better, we need to revisit the idea Paul concluded chapter seven with. He said, “*with the flesh, I serve the law of sin.*” Our sin originates in our fleshly desires. Godet<sup>3</sup> defines it as “the inclination to seek self-satisfaction in everything.” F. F. Bruce<sup>4</sup> weighs in with “sinful propensity for Adam.” The flesh is an attitude or inclination operating in complete rejection of the divine will of God for us. It requires us to choose self-sacrificial submission instead of surrendering to the will of the flesh. It is in the flesh that the law of sin and death moves and has its being.

As you read chapter eight, you see that the law is said to be “*weak through the flesh.*” (v. 3); and those who live “*according to the flesh*” set their minds on the “*things of the flesh.*” The result of a fleshly focused life is death. (v. 5-6)

The fleshly mind is “*enmity against God*” and “*is not subject to the law of God nor can it be.*” (v. 7) Paul goes on to say that those that abide in fulfilling the lust of the flesh “*cannot please God.*” (v. 8)



Paul's cry was for deliverance from the discouraging tendency he had discovered in himself. That tendency was to live according to flesh even though he was justified.

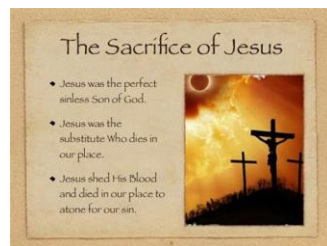
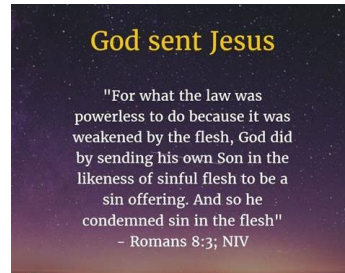
Paul outlines the stages in which God deals with sinful human nature, the flesh in which the law of sin and death operate. **First**, God gave us the law to prove to us that humanity was condemned by its very nature. Man was not able to keep the law, and the law would not provide a way of salvation for man. Instead the law pointed out our original nature before God – sinful.

**Second**, Paul tells us in verse three that “*God sent His Own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh for sin.*” This was a direct rebuttal of the false teaching of Docetism. They taught that Jesus only seemed to be human.

Docetism taught that Jesus was not actually flesh and blood like we are. They thought that the flesh itself was sinful and since it was, Jesus who was pure and holy, could not have come in the flesh.

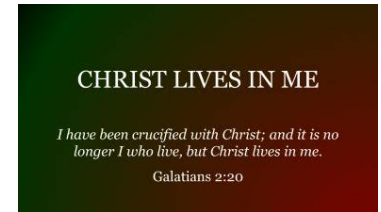
Paul tells us that Jesus came in the form of human flesh but was without sin. Jesus never sinned even though he came in the “*likeness of sinful flesh.*” Some people today say that since Jesus was a man, He must have sinned. If Jesus ever sinned, then His death on the cross was in vain. We needed a spotless, sinless sacrifice in order to atone for our sins.

The **third** point was that Christ came “*for sin.*” The purpose for which Christ came to earth was to be sin for us. After living about 33 years on this earth, Jesus offered Himself voluntarily on the cross as a “*sin offering*” as noted in Psalm 40:6 for us. His death totally and fully denounced sin once and for all.



All that call upon the name of Jesus Christ, will be saved. All that trust in His atoning work at Calvary as their offering to God will be saved. There is no other name under heaven whereby we must be saved.

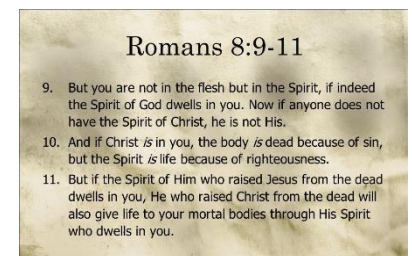
This brings us to the **fourth** point. That those that are “*in Christ*” have identified with Him in His condemnation of sin in the flesh and have taken the first step to living free of the dominion of the law of sin and death in their lives.



Some individuals live out their lives by blaming their situation on heredity or dismiss their sin by saying, “I am only human.” But we need to intelligently take our stand in Christ and cry out for deliverance from the “*law of sin and death*” and instead, operate out of the “*law of the Spirit of life.*” When they deliberately turn to God in Christ, they are set free. We can joyfully claim “*There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*”

## II. The Law of the Spirit of Life (v. 9-11)

In the prior chapters, Paul briefly mentioned the Holy Spirit that is available to believers to overcome this sinful tendency in our flesh. In verse 9 Paul reminds us that “*we are not in the flesh, but in the spirit.*” When you ask Jesus to be your Lord and Savior, He sends the Holy Spirit to reside in you.



In verses 9-12 we see three different phrases related to this Spirit that resides in the believer - “*The Spirit of God,*” “*The Spirit of Christ,*” and “*The Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead.*” These refer to the Triune God that is at work in every believer.



At one point in Jesus’ ministry, He told the disciples that the day was coming when He would need to leave this earth. But in His place, He would send a comforter. This comforter was an identical copy of Jesus Himself. This Holy Spirit would reside in the heart of everyone that believes. When Jesus was here on earth, He was limited as to where He could be at any one time. But once the Holy Spirit came, He is able to be with every believer – no matter where they are. He can be with everyone, all the time now.

Some may have thought that the Spirit of Christ is only reserved for the “super-saints.” Instead, Paul says in verse 9b that “*Anyone that does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*” The Spirit is for ALL who call upon the name of Christ. We are preserved by the indwelling of the Spirit.

This same Spirit was there in creation “*hovering over the face of the waters.*” (Genesis 1:2) This same Spirit was there indwelling Christ as he confronted Satan in the wilderness for 40 days. This is the same Spirit that rose Jesus Christ from the grave three days after His crucifixion. And it is the same one that will keep us. The Spirit of Christ has canceled the power that the law of sin and death has over us. But we must choose to walk in the Spirit instead of the flesh.

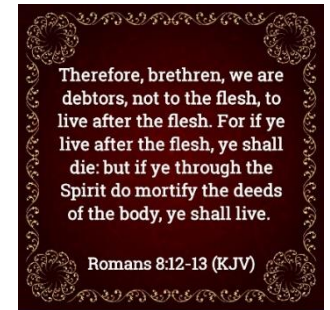
Just as sin abounds in our life, so does the grace of God. If we stop at the first seven chapters of Romans, we can be discouraged at the over whelming sense of our sinfulness. If we understand our sinfulness properly, then we can only stand amazed at the grace of God offered through Christ Jesus. That is why chapter eight is so important for believers. We are no longer condemned!

### III. The Law of Fulfilled Righteousness (v. 12, 13)

These two laws are at work in our lives - the “*law of sin and death*” and the “*law of the Spirit of life.*” This struggle is the one that Christians, if they were honest, contend with almost on a daily basis. The question is, “How do we operate our life in the spirit instead of the flesh?”

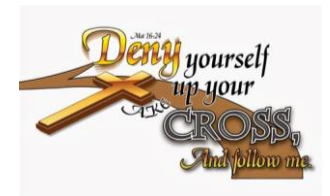
Paul tells us that in verse 12-13.

*“Therefore brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if you through the Spirit put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”*



There are three positive steps we can take to accomplish our goal of righteous living.

**First**, the believer must “mind” the things of the spirit rather than the things of the flesh. You must intentionally focus on the things of God instead of what your flesh is screaming at you to do. When we stop praying, stop reading our bible, stop attending regular worship, we drift



into the things of the world. We do not intend to ignore God, but it becomes less important over time and before we know it, we are so far from shore that we live our lives according to the flesh instead of the Spirit of Christ. We need to “mind” the things of the Spirit.

**Secondly**, we need to choose to “walk” according to the Spirit rather than according to the flesh. Where do we go every day? Are the places we go Godly? What activities are we giving our time to? Are we giving our time to useless, fruitless ventures? Are the people we associate with leading us towards Godly things or are they leading us away from God? Our “walk” in this life is only one time through. We do not get to go back in time and straighten out a mistaken path we may have taken. We need to be mindful of who we associate with, where we go and what we do.

**Thirdly**, we need to intentionally identify the areas of our fleshly walk, and with the power of the Holy Spirit residing in us, “*put to death the deeds of the body.*” The hardest thing in life is to do this. If we try to do it in our own strength, we will fail. That is why Paul instructs us to depend upon the Spirit to accomplish this deed.

We need to listen to that still small voice within us that tell us we are heading in the wrong direction. The more we listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit, the more He will direct our lives. The more we ignore that voice telling us “no” the louder the flesh speaks and that still small voice is drowned out.



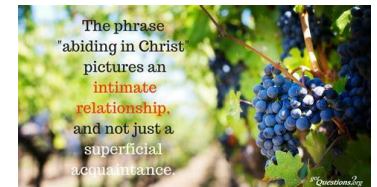
## An Illustration

Paul is telling us that these three laws work together in harmony. The law of sin and death are at work in our lives like the law of gravity keeps us pulled towards the earth. But if we were to get into a plane, the law of aerodynamics would overcome the law of gravity. The law of the Spirit works in much the same way. As long as we abide in the plane, we are able to overcome the law of gravity. Just as we can soar over the earth in a plane, we can soar over the law of sin and death.

But if during our plane ride we were to open the door we would fall out immediately. We must remain in the plane if we are to operate in the law of aerodynamics. Likewise, we must remain in Christ or we will succumb to the law of sin and death.

As we abide in Christ, we are able to maintain our liberation from the law of sin and death. We must decide with our mind to attend to the things of God. We need to pay attention to our daily walk. And we must make a decision to intentionally abide in Christ. In doing this we fulfill the law of righteousness – not in our strength, but in the strength of the One that abides in us. We are justified and no longer condemned because we are in Christ.

The way to do that is to Trust the One that is offering us freedom from the power of sin and is giving us life in His Son, Jesus Christ. Along with trusting is obeying. We show our trust by obeying what He has taught. God has



provided light for our path, and strength for the journey,  
through His Holy Word. Amen.

## **LET US PRAY**

### **Notes:**

<sup>1</sup>Mikey's Funnies, A Lunch Funny, 2/20/2023

<sup>2</sup>The Communicator's Commentary – Romans by D. Stuart Briscoe, pages 151-162.

<sup>3</sup>Godet, *Commentary on Romans*, page 283.

<sup>4</sup>Bruce, *Romans* page 43.