

# No Condemnation

Romans 8:1-11

Jesus died on the cross, paid for our sins, and rose from the dead. This work securing our salvation was *finished*, but in order to for us to experience it, it must be applied to us personally. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the church at Pentecost to bring the grace and life of Christ to us now, and the result is no condemnation.

## What the Law Couldn't Do

Those who are in Christ Jesus, walking in the Spirit, have no condemnation (v1). Paul says this is “therefore now” the case because Jesus made us free from the law of sin and death (v2). Sin is the transgression of the law. Gentiles are under condemnation for worshipping things other than God and breaking His commandments (1:18-32), and Jews for failing to keep the law and hypocritically judging others who break it (2:1-29). The law is no help to the condemned (the whole human race) because it was “weak in the flesh” (v3). Someone who has a bad attitude in an introductory course doesn't respond well when told he is already failing and the real work hasn't even begun. Not until Paul hears “You shall not covet” does he really go on a sinning spree (Rom. 7:7-12). God's perfect law of love provokes the flesh to greater sin and therefore could not be our means of salvation. It's not the law's fault, but ours. So God sent Jesus “in the likeness of sinful flesh”, suffering all the effects of sin in a fallen body, to condemn sin in the flesh. How does Jesus' faithfulness condemn sin in the flesh? He bore the burden of fallen humanity without being complicit in it. He bore our griefs carried our sorrows and when He hung on the cross the just wrath of God, the penalty for the sin of all of His people, was placed upon Him (Is. 53:4-6). Jesus underwent the verdict and punishment of condemnation so that you would hear “No condemnation!”

## Two Minds

Justification is the judicial declaration that a person is righteous. Sanctification is the progressive work of Holy Spirit conforming us to the image of Christ. We are holy objectively in Jesus, and we grow in holiness as we work our salvation with fear and trembling. Justification and sanctification must be distinguished and kept together: “As Christ cannot be divided, so also these two blessings which we receive together in him are also inseparable” (Calvin, Inst. III, xi, 6). Verse four weds them: Jesus “condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” He died for and justified us so that we would fulfill the law, be sanctified, by the Spirit. There are two ways to live: either according to the flesh or according to the Spirit, and this is driven from where your mind is set (v5). You can work a job to make as much money as possible, get the respect you “deserve”, and provide yourself with all the pleasures you can reach. Or you can work a job because God has called you to it, you're eager to be fruitful, to tithe to the Lord and be generous to others, to provide for your family, and to leave an inheritance to your children's children (Prov. 13:22).

NOTES:

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Same job, same person, completely different motivation, and over time that motivation, where the mind is set, makes all the difference. The carnal mind is death because it is separated from God (v6). God is the source of all life, and so to wall Him off from your life is to abide in death even if your physical death has not yet come. The carnal mind is not open to change. It is enmity against God and cannot please Him (vv7-8). Conversely, to be spiritually minded is life and peace. To have your purpose, motivation, plans, delight and joy centered on the Spirit results in joy that won't give out and an abiding peace that passes understanding and transcends circumstances. These are deeply counterintuitive to us. The more you focus on and serve yourself—my needs, my wants, my just desserts, the ways I've been wronged and cheated—the more you crumble as a person. The more you love God and strive to serve Him, the more abundant and blessed your own life is. This is how Jesus loved His enemies, trained the disciples, healed the sick, comforted the broken, bore the unfathomable justice on the cross for all of our sins, and burst out of the tomb three days later. The disciples exhibited this life as they preached the gospel in courage and strength, giving everything including their own lives for God and His kingdom. People could tell they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

## Inexorable Life

Christians will sometimes talk about what amounts to different installments of the Holy Spirit, as if our software gets upgraded. If the Spirit of God dwells in you, you are in the Spirit completely, and to lack the Spirit of Christ is to not be His at all (v9). The body (of sin) is dead; the Spirit is life (in you) because of righteousness (v10). Eternal life with the Spirit is yours right now if you have faith at all in Christ. Is this not exactly what Jesus said He would give us (Jn. 10:10)? Our eyes grow so dim and we give so much credit to the flesh that we forget who we are and who we are becoming. The Holy Spirit indwells us so that we will fulfill the righteous requirements of the law—so that we will love God with everything and love our neighbor as ourselves. This means practical and joyful obedience, imaginative and diligent creativity, constant and generous sacrifice, and confidence that the Father will give resurrection life to our mortal bodies (v11). The Spirit of life declares “No condemnation!” and bears fruit in our lives demonstrating His verdict.