

**Romans 8:1-11**

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 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, 4 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. 5 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. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 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. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

*9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*

*12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

I have only appeared before a judge once in my life. I was told what day and time to appear in the courtroom. This was a courtroom in Akron, Ohio, so it was a big place. I was only twenty years old, so I was still wet behind the ears and a little nervous. I entered the wood paneled room, sat down with dozens of other strangers and waited for my name to be called. Don't worry, it was

just traffic court. But I had had a serious accident. Akron is a very hilly town and one icy morning I slid completely out of control down a hill went tearing through a stop sign and slammed into the side of another car. His car was totaled and mine was very close to being totaled, but thankfully there were no injuries. This was in the dinosaur age before cell phones so I honestly don't remember how I called home for someone to pick me up. The accident was clearly my fault so I was concerned about the repair costs as well as the inevitable skyrocketing car insurance premiums. Car insurance companies do not look favorably on 20 year old males who have car accidents.

Finally my name was called and the judge briefly read over my report. Considering my clean traffic record and given the fact that that particular morning there had been an ice storm and countless other accidents, the judge declared me not guilty. I still had to pay the court costs, but I was glad to pay that small fee and get out of there.

Was I innocent? Practically speaking, no, I wasn't it. I went through a stop sign and totaled another car. He wasn't at fault, I was, which why I was nervous about the judge's verdict. I was guilty yet I was declared not guilty. How do you think I felt? Do you think I still felt guilty after the judge declared me to be innocent? No way. I felt this great burden lifted off of me. It's not like I had just avoided the death penalty or anything like that, but I did feel the release of a debt. You could say that I left there free of condemnation.

The first verse of Romans chapter eight stands as one of the greatest promises in all of Scripture. *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* But the practical question is, why do we so often not feel this way? Why do we carry a load of guilt on our shoulders when we are absolutely free of any condemnation?

This verse is especially significant given what preceded it. You will recall that chapter seven is a case study in daily struggle. *For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing* (Rom. 7:19). It can be discouraging to live like this and feel like we are spinning our wheels all the time. But then the first verse of chapter eight resounds with this superb promise: *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Do you really believe this promise? That's probably not a good question to answer with a YES or NO. Let me ask it a different way. How often do you feel a sense of condemnation? Now notice that I did not ask if you ever feel Godly sorrow leading to repentance. When we do commit a sin, we should feel a sense of Godly sorrow which will lead us to repent of that sin. This is the way the Holy Spirit works in our lives. We often call this type of feeling "guilt" but I much prefer the description of "Godly sorrow leading to repentance. So how often do you feel a sense of condemnation? Condemnation feels like a heavy guilt that doesn't seem to go away. It might be a lingering feeling you have most of the time or a stronger feeling that comes and goes. But you know what it is. It's condemnation.

How often do you feel this sense of condemnation?

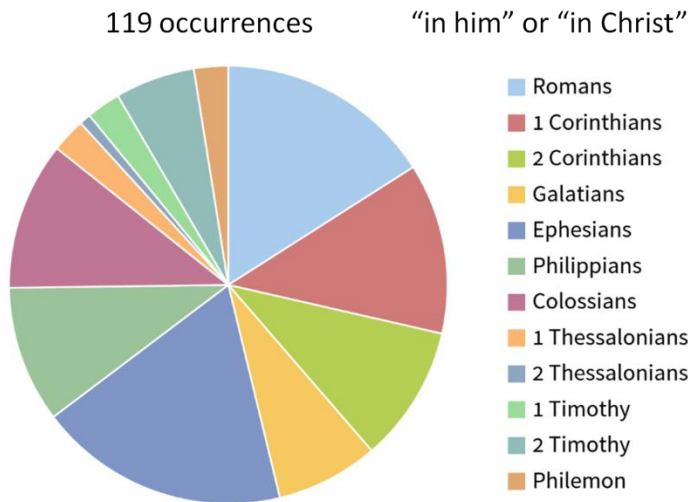
- ALWAYS
- SOMETIMES
- RARELY
- NEVER

to check the box marked "never."

So let me ask the question yet another way. How often do you feel this sense of condemnation: Always, sometimes, rarely or never? Unless you can confidently answer "never" to this question, then you have less than complete understanding of this verse. We have to ask ourselves, what part of NO condemnation do we not understand? Why do we not get the fact that NOW there is no condemnation. My plan is to ask five simple questions about these truths so that by the time we are done, from this point forward, you will be able

### 1. Who is not condemned?

verse one clearly identifies those who are free from condemnation. *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* That simple phrase, "in Christ," is a key



theological phrase for Paul. He used it 86 times in all of his letters. When you include the similar phrase "in him," the total usage rises to 199 occurrences.

We see the same phrase in verse two. *For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free **in Christ Jesus** from the law of sin and death.* To be "in Christ" is a statement of position and security. Such a person is actually IN Christ. Bought with the blood of Christ. This is similar to Romans 7:4 where we are told that we belong to Christ. We see

it again later in this chapter. *nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God **in Christ Jesus our Lord*** (Romans 8:39). It is at once a statement of ownership, of intimacy and belonging. Believers are eternally safe and secure "in Christ." And it is precisely this position "in Christ" which grants us the blessing of no condemnation. This answers the who question. *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

### 2. When are we not condemned?

This question is toddler easy. *There is therefore **now** no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* We are so prone to think of eternal life as something that begins after we die that we tend to miss the present blessings. There will be no condemnation for all eternity but for the believer, the absence of condemnation begins now. Condemnation was permanently lifted at the moment of your conversion. Therefore, if you feel ever feel a sense of condemnation, this is not from God. So then, where does it come from?

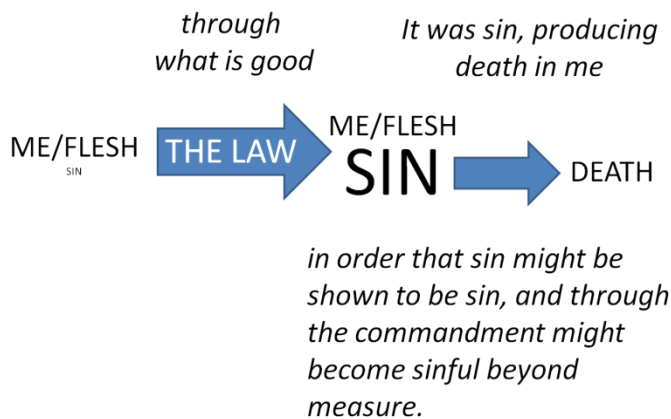
Satan is condemned and he will use our former state of condemnation to accuse us. Every time we sin he whispers to us, "See, you did it again. You'll never be good enough. You should feel ashamed of yourself." Romans 8:33-34 states, *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? God will not--cannot condemn the believer but the devil does. Condemnation is the Devil's domain and he will run you into the ground unless you claim this promise and stand your ground. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* Emphasize the truth that it is happening right now. This is not just a future promise but also a present reality. Remind yourself that you are in Christ Jesus. But if you need even more encouragement, let's seek to understand why this is a rock solid truth.

### 3. Why are we free from condemnation?

We already answered the who question. All of those who are in Christ Jesus are free from condemnation. So the simple answer to the why question is the same as the who question--because I am in Christ Jesus. But Paul gave us a much more complete answer than that in verse two. *For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*

What is the "law of sin and death?" Up until this point, Paul has used "the law" to refer to the Mosaic law. For example, Romans 3:21 says *But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.* The law there is clearly the law of Moses. Since we can't be righteous by obeying the law of Moses, we needed another kind of righteousness--a righteousness that came through faith in Christ, for all who believe.

But the law of sin and death is not the Mosaic law. Paul could not call the Law of Moses "sin and death" because in chapter seven he refers to it as "holy, righteous and good." Remember this



diagram? The law, or the commandment, made the sin become sinful beyond measure, but it was sin itself that brought death. The law of Moses is not the law of sin and death. The law of sin and death is the reality that the law aroused my sin which brought death. So the word "law" here is kind of like the a principle. You could say "the principle of sin and death." In the same way, the "law of the Spirit of life" is not the law of Moses but the principle of the Spirit of

life. This leads to our next point.

### 4. How are we free from condemnation?

Here's a theological question for you? Which member of the trinity is most involved in securing our salvation--the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit? The correct answer is "yes." All three members of the Godhead play a vital role in our salvation. The Spirit in the phrase "the Spirit of life" is much more than just an impersonal principle. The Spirit is the Holy Spirit. And in two



verses we see the unique role of each member of the Trinity in the work of salvation. *For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.* There's the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit tends to be the forgotten member of the trinity, especially when it comes to salvation. The word Spirit appears 21 times in Romans 8. 60% of the 35 times it is used in all of Romans occur in chapter 8. Are you aware of all that the Spirit does in salvation? The Holy Spirit:

- Illumines the truth--1 Cor. 2:14

*The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*

Without the Spirit's work of illumination, no one could ever understand the gospel.

- Convicts of sin--John 16:8

*And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: Likewise, men will never repent unless the Spirit brings conviction of sin and true repentance (2 Tim. 2:25-26).*

- Regenerates the believing sinner--Titus 3:4-5

*But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:4-5)*

When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about being born again, he was referring to the Spirit's work of regeneration.

So that's the vital role of the Spirit in this work of salvation. But what about the Father? We are told this in verse three. *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.* Do you see what the Father did? The Father did the sending. The Father did what the law could not do by sending his Son. In an amazing display of humility and right relationships, the Son always obeys the Father. This is somewhat of a mystery, isn't it? How can the Son be fully equal to the Father and yet obey his every command and desire? They are fully equal in their divine essence but they have these different roles to fulfill. The Father really is a Father to the Son. The Bible would never use these titles unless they were true. The Son obeys the Father and the Spirit completes the role of the Son,

Furthermore, the Father condemned sin in the flesh. The "he" in verse three is the Father. Here's a big part of the answer to the "how" question? How are we free from condemnation? We are free from condemnation because the Father "condemned sin in the flesh." But the question of the day is, whose flesh? Is this our flesh? Chapter seven was all about the flesh that dwells within us, that afflicts us and tempts us until our dying day. In the Bible, the flesh is almost always talking about our flesh. But does that make sense here? The Father condemned sin in our flesh? That would mean that we stand condemned. This is not our flesh but rather the flesh of Jesus.

Look at verse three again. *By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.* The Son came "in the likeness of sinful flesh." We know that Jesus was born without sin. That is confirmed several places in Scripture, but Paul said that Jesus came

"in the likeness of sinful flesh." Paul is kind of walking a fine line here. We have sinful flesh and Jesus became flesh in his incarnation but he was not born as sinful flesh. This is why Paul wrote that he was sent *in the likeness of sinful flesh*.

The second chapter of Philippians helps us here.

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2:5-8).*

Jesus was "born in the likeness of man" and was "found in human form." So when Paul wrote that Jesus was sent "in the likeness of sinful flesh" he was making sure we understand that Jesus was fully human. He came without sin but became sin on the cross. Did you notice that three word phrase in verse three? *By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.* Jesus came "for sin" which literally means *on behalf of sin* or *instead of sin*.

2 Cor. 5:21 is as clear a description as we have. *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* God made Jesus to be sin. The Father sent the Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin. Also:

Gal. 3:13: *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.*

Galatians 4:4-5: *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law.*

Rom 3.23-25: *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.*

God did not merely condemn sin, he condemned the sin in his Son. This is why there is "now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." We are not condemned because Jesus was condemned. This is exactly what the prophet Isaiah predicted 700 hundred years before Jesus was born.

*For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground;  
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.  
3 He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;  
and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.  
4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.  
5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.  
6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isa. 53.2-6)*

Linger on that last phrase: and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. God did not merely condemn sin, he condemned the sin in his Son. Our lack of condemnation was earned through the stripes, piercing and crushing of the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **5. What does freedom from condemnation look like?**

John Piper has said, "The only sin we can defeat is a forgiven sin." But this is not generally how we operate. We tend to think of our sin as something that deserves some good old-fashioned condemnation. We sin and expect condemnation, so we confess and it goes away. We live in this ongoing cycle of condemnation never fully realizing that we are actually free of it forever.

This is why justification must always precede sanctification. Justification declares me innocent and righteous. Justification renders me free of all condemnation. Sanctification then is the growth in ongoing holiness. But if we do not live out our freedom from condemnation, if we do not feel fully forgiven for the sin we just committed, we cannot defeat that sin. So this afternoon or tomorrow when another sin overtakes you, put this into practice. Claim the promise that your sin is already forgiven, that you are free of condemnation in Jesus Christ. See if that does not change the way you live your life.

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March 23, 2014