



Romans 8:1-4, Part 2

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.

Many of you probably heard the shocking new policy adopted by World Vision.¹ This past Monday, World Vision adopted a policy to hire employees who were in same sex, legal marriages. World Vision U.S. president Richard Stearns explained the reasoning behind the policy change. "Changing the employee conduct policy to allow someone in a same-sex marriage who is a professed believer in Jesus Christ to work for us makes our policy more consistent with our practice on other divisive issues," he said. "It also allows us to treat all of our employees the same way: abstinence outside of marriage, and fidelity within marriage."²

The evangelical world was taken by surprise by this new policy. World Vision take sin about one billion dollars in annual donations, so they are a massive evangelical charity. Thankfully, they listened to the outpouring of feedback and two days later they reversed their decision.³

How often do you feel this sense of condemnation?

- ALWAYS
- SOMETIMES
- RARELY
- NEVER

Just as there is no room whatsoever for waffling on this issue, neither is there room for debate when it comes to condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. It doesn't matter if you ever feel like you are condemned. It doesn't matter if you cannot check the never box in the question to the left. Your feelings don't matter but what matters is the truth. *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

How you feel does not change the truth but it does change how you respond to the truth. If you carry a sense of condemnation with you, it will affect how you live. We left off last week on point five of our outline, but first, let me review the first four.

1. Who is not condemned?

All of "those who are in Christ Jesus" are not condemned. All believers are free from condemnation.

2. When are we not condemned?

Now. We were freed from all condemnation at the point of our conversion. It began then, continues now and will last for all eternity.

3. Why are we free from condemnation?

We are free because the Spirit of life set us free.

4. How are we free from condemnation?

The Father sent his Son, the Son received our condemnation so we could be free of it.

5. What does freedom from condemnation look like?

1. God is not a divine parole officer.

A person is assigned a parole officer as a way of monitoring you, either after prison, or as a way to stay out of prison. The court system grants you parole as a way to see if you will tow the line. If you follow the rules and work the system, you will stay out of jail. You must check in with your PO at regular intervals and if you do one little thing wrong, one violation of the rules and it's back to prison for you.

For some of you, this is the kind of relationship you have with the Lord. You walk around in fear that God will lower the boom at any moment and haul you off to "prison." You never feel like you can ever do enough to please the Lord.



A while back I used the illustration of the whack-a-mole game. Last summer when we were out East, we found this whack-a-mole game on the boardwalk of Rehoboth Beach. Karen made me stop and play the game. You have to notice several things about this photo. First, I am beating Ethan, the younger and sprier of the two of us. Notice how I am demonstrating the proper technique for playing whack-a-mole. Feet spread apart a little more than shoulder width, knees bent slightly. Just pure concentration and total determination. Now here's the thing. I can't really teach you how to succeed at whack-a-mole because for

me, it is pure instinct. When I play this game, I become one with the mallet. :) I went on to get a perfect score and won a stuffed animal.

Do you serve a whack-a-mole God who is waiting to knock you on the head every time you do something wrong? Is your God like a divine parole officer who is waiting for you to mess up so he can throw the book at you? If so, even to a small degree, then you have failed to grasp the full significance of Romans 8:1. *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

But if God does not condemn us when we sin, why do we need to worry about our sin at all? If every sin I will ever commit is already forgiven before I commit the sin, then what do I have to worry about? Do you see how you can easily fall into the opposite error here? On the one hand, some Christians walk around with a low level of condemnation, always feeling like they never measure up to God's standards. But on the other side are those who have very little concern for God's standards. They embrace an attitude that says, "Well, God will forgive me no matter what I do."

So how do we maintain a balance between wanting to please God, but not feeling a sense of condemnation when we fail to please him? If there truly is a total absence of condemnation, then what does happen when I sin? One response is Godly discipline. However...

2. Godly discipline is not condemnation.

Hebrews 12 very clearly explains discipline that comes from our heavenly Father.

In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5

And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have

had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:4-11)

Discipline is for our benefit. Careless fathers either refuse or are too lazy to discipline their children. Harsh fathers apply a controlling, borderline abusive kind of discipline to their children. But in contrast to both extremes, our Father applies the perfect amount and type of discipline to us when we sin. But how do we know when we are being disciplined? First of all, God has built all manner of natural consequences into his creation, has he not? If you abuse alcohol or drugs, there will be consequences for your body. If you cheat on your wife, there will be severe relational consequences.

So there are endless natural consequences for our sin, but beyond that, God never announces when he is disciplining us, so how do we know if something we are experiencing is Godly discipline or just some random event that happens to everyone? For example, if you are sick, is that Godly discipline? If you lose your job or have a financial setback, is that Godly discipline? If you are having relational issues with someone at work or someone in your family, are those examples of Fatherly discipline being meted out to us? Unless God audibly announces that any or all of these things are his application of divine discipline in your life, we can't know for sure. But we do know a few things.

- Discipline is painful and unpleasant--11

Therefore, each time something unpleasant enters your life, we should at least question whether or not God is trying to get our attention. Is the difficult thing you are experiencing a form of Godly discipline? It could be. Always leave that option on the table.

- All discipline flows out of love--6

Therefore when hard things come your way, never think that God is condemning you. This is your perfect Father applying the perfect discipline in your life. Pain is not the same thing as punishment. We've got to get rid of the notion of God as divine parole officer.

- All discipline is meant to yield holiness and fruits of righteousness--10,11

Discipline with no purpose would simply be punishment and condemnation. Godly discipline always has a purpose.

Listen to this..ex. woman who is ripped off by auto mechanic

If a \$20,000 car cost \$2000 to fix we can endure it much better than if the mechanic did \$2000 of unnecessary repairs. We can endure a lot in life when we know there is a purpose but if we think that our pain and difficulties are all random and meaningless, they are much harder to endure. All discipline has fine-tuned purpose--to produce in us the fruits of holiness and righteousness.

- Discipline is only fruitful for those who have been trained by it.

It's unfortunate that we turn God's loving and purposeful discipline into meaningless pain because we refuse to be trained by it. Don't waste your pain. It is Loving, Purposeful and Fruitful.

3. If there is no condemnation, then why do we need to confess our sins?

1 John 1.9 is familiar to most Christians. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Tell me this--is this verse for the believer or the unbeliever? Let me ask it another way. Are we righteous or unrighteous? The believer has been justified and declared righteous so we are no longer unrighteous. Right? So how can we be cleansed of unrighteousness?

This has led Bible teacher Bob George to some interesting conclusions.

Today, there are people who believe that Christians must confess their sins in order to be forgiven. They believe that it is possible for us to be “in and out” of fellowship with God and that we must “keep short accounts” (or stay “fessed up”). The Bible doesn’t teach that we are “in and out” of fellowship with God. A person who is saved is in fellowship with God – eternally. If we believe we must continually confess our sins in order to be loved and forgiven by God, we are actually mocking God and telling Him that Christ’s work on our behalf was not sufficient. The damage caused by this belief is extensive. There are many who are in bondage to this “law” that was created and perpetuated by man.⁴

So if you confess your sins, you are in bondage to a manmade law. What do you think of this view? At first it sounds heretical and really strange but I think this man is wrestling with something very important. He is wrestling with this promise of no condemnation. He is wrestling with the fact that even before we commit a sin, it is completely forgiven. Our sins, past, present and future, are cast as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). Unless you believe that we move in and out of actual salvation--which I hope that you do not--then your sins are fully forgiven. Are they partially forgiven? No. Are they forgiven and then not, and then forgiven again? No. A Christian, by definition, is forgiven. They are fully forgiven. So if our sins are fully forgiven and there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, then why do we need to confess our sins? You can start to realize why this man came to the conclusions that he did--that confession is a sort of heresy.

Let's start by figuring out what happens when we sin, specifically what happens in our relationship with God. The Holy Spirit can be grieved (Eph. 4:30) and quenched (1 Thes. 4:19). How does God's grief effect our relationship with him at that point? Does she love us any less? Is he full of anger? If he is not angry with us and he cannot possibly love us any less than, then what is different? The difference is that he is grieved. Our sins cause grief to God. But understand this--as with all emotions ascribed to God, unlike you and me, his emotions are pure and perfect.

For example, there would be some Christians who would be grieved that we have drums and electric guitars in a worship service. Do we need to apologize to them for causing them grief? Absolutely not. Now if we took an electric guitar into their church and played it, when we knew that such a thing went against their conscience, then we actually would have caused them grief. So the grief that we experience is sometimes misplaced or just plain wrong. Not only that, but it is also often mixed with other emotions that might be sinful. If one of my children came home drunk one night, I would be grieved. But do you think that would be my only emotion? No way.

I would also be angry. Angry that they disobeyed. Angry that they embarrassed me. I would have all kinds of self-centered emotions swirling about with my grief.

This is not the case with God. When God is grieved by our sin, it is pure grief. He hurts--not just *because* of us--but he hurts *for* us. Yes, our sin was the cause of his grief, but he hurts for us. God knows that every time we sin we experience less of him. What is the greatest gift that God could ever give us? Himself. When we choose sin, at that moment, we are not fully experiencing the blessing of his presence. Bob George claims that we never move in and out of fellowship with God. If he means that we don't lose our status and sons and daughters of the king, then he is right. That can never happen. Our fellowship with God cannot change but our experience of him does change.



Take Niagara Falls for example. How many have seen Niagara Falls? I have been there twice in my life and there's nothing like walking up the edge of the wall on the Canadian side. I could not find a picture that does it justice but this is as close as I could find. You can't quite touch the water but it is amazing how close you can get. You stand there and watch almost a million gallons of water move past you

every second. It is loud, a little bit wet and awe inspiring. You can't really experience Niagara Falls unless you get this close. When you stand on the edge, you are fully experiencing Niagara Falls.

Now if I turn around and walk into the visitor center and gift shop, am I still at Niagara Falls? Officially, I am still very much at Niagara Falls but my experience of the Falls has changed considerably. I think this is a little bit like it is with our relationship with the Lord. I am still "in Christ," but I am not fully experiencing the blessings of being "in Christ."

There is a distinction between what is usually called positional truth verses experiential truth. When we sin, positionally speaking, nothing changes and cannot change. God the Father will never cease to be my Father. This is real truth that cannot change. God will never condemn us, hate us or in no way will our relationship change. But experientially, things can and do change.

For example, I told you a few weeks back that Christians are saints. A saint means a "holy one." We are made holy and if we were not holy, we could not be in God's presence. Even though we were made holy, we are still growing in practical, experiential holiness, right? We are not where we should be want to be and hopefully will be down the road. Positionally we are holy but experientially we are growing in holiness. This is true of several related truths.

POSITIONALLY we are...	EXPERIENTIALLY we are...
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Made holy	Growing in holiness
One flesh with our spouse	Working toward oneness
Unified as a body of Christ	Working toward unity

Think about Peter's experience with Jesus in John 13.

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, 4 rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." 8 Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you."

Peter did not need to be bathed all over but he did need his feet to be washed. Jesus declared him to be "clean" as opposed to Judas who was not clean. The feet washing can be a type of practical cleansing. Or we could say that positionally, Peter was clean but experientially, he still needed his feet to be washed.

POSITIONALLY we are...	EXPERIENTIALLY we are...
Made holy	Growing in holiness
One flesh with our spouse	Working toward oneness
Unified as a body of Christ	Working toward unity
Bathed, washed	Need our feet to be washed

I think this is the very distinction that Bob George fails to make. He doesn't want believers to be continually discouraged. He doesn't want any Christian having a view of God as an angry, whack-a-mole kind of God who threatens to disown us at a moment's notice. But he does take it too far in saying that we therefore never again need to confess our sins. We don't, as George said, "continually confess our sins in order to be loved and forgiven by God." But we do need to continually confess our sins in order to fully experience our full relationship with God.

If you knew that you truly grieved another person and that it was definitely your fault, what would you do? The other person is not just being over sensitive--you actually grieved them. What would you do? You would confess your wrongdoing and apologize, right? Should we not do at least as much in our relationship with the Lord? Our sin grieves the one who bought us with his blood.

So what then do we do with 1 John 1:9? *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* It is obviously a verse that applies to unbelievers. Unless they confess their sins, God will not forgive their unrighteousness. But does this also apply to believers? Turn it on its head. As a believer, if you sin and don't confess, will God refuse to forgive you? No, that's impossible. The very most this could mean for the believer is that our confession is a type of foot washing. We are clean but we need our feet to be washed.

And all of this is true because we are "in Christ."

In your bulletin I have included 35 verses related to our being "in Christ." I cannot convince you of this truth in a sermon or two so I am asking you to do a little homework assignment this week. For the next seven days, each day take five of these verses and truly meditate on them for a few minutes. Let the Holy spirit speak to your heart and mind until after 7 days, it finally begins to sink in.

Rich Maurer
March 30, 2014

"In Christ"

Romans 3:24 -and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Romans 6:11-So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6:23-For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:1-There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:2-For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:39-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 12:5-so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1 Corinthians 1:30-And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

1 Corinthians 3:1 -But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:22-For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

2 Corinthians 1:21-And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us,

2 Corinthians 5:17-Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Galatians 2:4-Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—

Galatians 2:16-yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

Galatians 3:14-so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Galatians 3:26-for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

Galatians 3:28-There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 5:6-For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

Ephesians 1:3-Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

Ephesians 1:20-that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

Ephesians 2:6-and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

Ephesians 2:7-so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:10-For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:13-But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Ephesians 3:6-This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Philippians 3:14-I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:7-And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:19-And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 1:28-Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

2 Timothy 1:9-who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,

2 Timothy 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

Hebrews 3:14-For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

1 Peter 3:16-having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

1 Peter 5:10-And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

¹ I really appreciate how author and pastor, Kevin DeYoung, responded to this new policy.

"Stearns would have us believe that homosexuality is just another one of these issues, no different from determining whether the water in baptism can be measured by liters or milliliters. But the analogy does not work. Unlike the differences concerning the mode of baptism, there is no long historical record of the church debating whether men can marry men. In fact, there is no record of the church debating anything of the sort until the last forty or fifty years. And more to the point, there is nothing in the Bible to suggest that getting the mode of baptism wrong puts your eternal soul in jeopardy, when there are plenty of verses to suggest that living in unrepentant sexual sin will do just that" (Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Jude 5-7).

<http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/>

² <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/march-web-only/world-vision-why-hiring-gay-christians-same-sex-marriage.html>

³ <http://apprising.org/2014/03/26/world-vision-reverses-decision-to-hire-gay-christians-in-same-sex-marriages/>

⁴ <http://bobgeorge.net/1-john-1-9/>