Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Free from Judgment, Part 1
Scripture: Romans 8:3
Code: 45-54

Let's open our Bibles to Romans chapter 8 tonight. We have come to a great, great chapter, a marvelous chapter, thrilling chapter. And we're going to be scaling the heights as we celebrate the great truths of this wonderful, wonderful portion of God's precious Word. For tonight we want to begin to look at the chapter, and I want to read the first four verses of Romans 8, and then we'll begin to discuss them together.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death; for what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

Now let's back up a little from this passage and see if we can't get a running start and then see how its truths strike our minds. The Scripture says that everyone born into the world really falls into one category. If you use the terminology of the apostle Paul in Ephesians chapter 2 we would all be called "children of wrath." What he means by that is that we are objects of God's wrath. We are born under that particular curse. And we have inherited, by inheriting human life, a miserable condition, a damning condition, a condemning condition.

And if we were just to sort out some of the elements of our miserable condition because we've been born into a fallen race, we might come up with these. First of all, we're miserable because we are overpowered by sin. We are overpowered by sin. "For all have sinned," it says in chapter 3, verse 23, "and come short of the glory of God." None of us escapes. We are all burdened with the terrible burden of sinfulness. And there's no getting rid of it on our own. It is a defiling disease that cripples every person, degrades every individual, disquiets every soul, steals peace and joy from the heart and replaces them with trouble and pain. It plants into every human life a killing principle that ultimately brings about a kind of corruption that no man can cure. And so we're miserable because we're under the power of sin.

Secondly, we could look at our misery in terms of the fact that we are also under the power of Satan. Jesus said to those who confronted Him in unbelief, "You are of your father the devil." And John in 1 John essentially says the same thing in the third chapter, "Those who continue to commit sin are of the devil." In Ephesians again, chapter 2, it says we are under the control of the one who is the prince of the power of the air. So we're not only dominated by the sin corrupting principle in our own humanness, but we're dominated by an outside evil force, Satan, and along with him come all the hosts of hell. And so he and his host dominate the mind, the understanding and the will and no wonder Jesus said, "His lusts will you do."

And as a result of this there's a third element of our misery and it is this: That we are all our life long subject to the miseries that come from fallenness. Because sin overpowers us and because Satan overpowers us, we live in a fallen condition subject to the miseries of life. And that's why Murphy's Law exists; if things can get worse, they will get worse and they do. That's not Murphy's Law, that's Paul the apostle to Timothy, "Evil men shall grow worse and worse."

In Romans 8 verse 20 it says, "For the creation," that's the whole of creation, "was made subject to vanity." We have become subject to vanity, to emptiness, to bitterness, to sorrow, to pain. Job put it this way in chapter 5 verse 7, "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward." There's no peace. We face the inevitable reality of disease and death. We have a difficult time making relationships work. We are in bondage to so many miseries in life because of the overpowering presence of sin and Satan.

And then there's a fourth way in which we could sort of isolate our misery and that is that we are heirs of God's judgment. We are heirs of God's judgment. One of the most haunting verses in all of the Bible is in Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 27 and it says, "There remains nothing but a fearful looking for fiery indignation." There remains nothing for man but to look forward to fiery wrath from God. And we will inherit all the curses of God. A sinner who eats and drinks and makes merry does so as if he were at Damocles' banquet with a sword over his neck hanging by a thread which at any moment could break. There is a curse on the sinner's name. There is a curse on the sinner's soul, his possessions, his place. And every sweet thing in life turns to bitter when we realize that we are inevitably fixed to meet a rendezvous with a God of judgment.

And then finally, flowing through the misery of man we would sum it up by saying, not only is man miserable in his condition because he's overpowered by sin, overpowered by Satan, because he is subject to all the miseries of life, because he is an heir of God's judgment, but finally because he has to look forward to hell and damnation forever. And Revelation 20 verse 14 calls it the second death, the lake of fire, judgment without mercy, pain without compassion. It is a punishment of sense that it

is... That means there is pain there. It is a punishment of loss. That means it is the absence of God.

Now that is where a sinner stands. That is where every individual born into the world stands. A child of wrath under the condemnation of a holy God and brought into all the miseries of life because of that very reality. He has within him no resource to change that. There's nothing he can do by way of reformation, by way of religion to alter that inevitable reality. He can do nothing to keep the sword from falling and severing his head from his body, as it were.

Now it is in the darkness of that description of man that we approach chapter 8 verse 1. And the news we hear here is marvelous. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." In the midst of the darkness of sin, in the midst of the inevitability of judgment, that is a comforting word. That is a thrilling promise from God that fills the heart with hope. And any thinking mind and any hoping soul should run eagerly to receive such a provision as is offered in chapter 8 verse 1. In fact, some say this is the most hopeful verse in all the Bible. And they may well be right.

Let's search out the realities of what we see in these first four verses. And I want to take you through a simple outline. To begin with: The reality. The reality. And the reality in verse 1 is this, no condemnation. That is the reality with which Paul begins this great chapter. And that is good news, frankly, because the Bible is a very condemning book. The Word of God is literally filled with threats against the sinner. I had thought about kind of going through the Scripture and just giving you some of them, but as I got started in the book of Genesis there were so many of them I really couldn't deal with all of them. And we could have spent night after night just going through the texts that condemn men, that condemn sinful men. The Bible is a very condemning book. And it condemns without mercy and without compassion all those who know not God, all those who obey not God, all those who do not love the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And rather than go through all of those things that the Bible says, just a reminder of two that would suffice.

Back in chapter 5 of Romans verse 12, "Wherefore as by one man sin entered the world and death by sin and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned." Verse 16, "And not as it was by one that sins so is the gift, for the judgment was by one to condemnation." Verse 18, "As by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." The Bible is a very condemning book.

In 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, I'll read you one other passage. Verse 5, "This is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you also suffer, seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you. And to you who are troubled, rest with us when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with

His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

Now that's just two out of myriads of condemning passages. The reality of man's situation is that he is under condemnation. And the Bible tells us that, not only is he under condemnation, but his condemnation is just. At the end of verse 8 in Romans 3 it says, "Whose condemnation is just." It is right to condemn because man is a sinner. He is universally and wholly depraved, says Romans 3:9 to 18. And the law of God comes along and even the law of God, as we've been learning in this marvelous epistle, even the law of God cannot change that. The law of God is holy, just and good, it said back in chapter 7. You remember that in verse 12. But even though the law of God is holy, just and good, the law could not alter man's condemnation. In other words, God could give the best rules for behavior, the best standards for living, the best principles for righteousness and with all of that laid down very clearly in His revelation, it still couldn't change the fact that man was damned and doomed and condemned and nothing could alter that. In fact, all the law did was show man how condemned he was and show him how just his condemnation was. It couldn't do a thing to help him. It only excited his evil desire, as we learned in chapter 7 verses 5 and 8. It only intensified the sin that was in him.

And let me add something else. Even the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world couldn't change that condemnation. That's right. Even when Jesus came into the world, His coming alone could not change the condemnation of man. God gave the Old Testament law, laid it all out, it still couldn't do anything for man because he couldn't keep it. Jesus came into the world and with all the good that He brought and all the things that He taught and all the principles of life that He gave, that coming of Jesus Himself could not alter man's condemned condition.

Listen to John chapter 3 verse 19. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world," and that light is Jesus Christ in this context, "and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved." When Jesus came into the world as the light of God and He said He was the light of the world, He was not able by His coming into the world to bring men out of a condemned condition. All He did was cause them to want to plunge deeper into their condemnation. So men are condemned. They are justly condemned because of their sin, their inability to keep God's law, whether it came through the Old Testament writers or from the lips of Jesus Himself. Men are condemned.

But God did not desire that. And in John 3 again we read in verse 17, "For God sent not His Son into the world to (What?) condemn the world but that the world through Him might be (What?) saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned but He that believeth not is condemned already because He hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." God sent Jesus into the world not to condemn the world but to save the world. And He provided in Christ a way of escape. But it wasn't in the teaching of Christ. It wasn't in the good life of Christ. It was in the what? The death of Christ. In the death of Christ. And Paul in chapter 5 has made clear the marvelous results of the death of Christ. In chapter 6 he's done the same thing. And now he says, in effect, there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ.

Let's talk about the word "condemnation" for a moment. It's a very interesting word, *katakrima*. It's used only in Romans. It's a very special word. There are other words similar to it. But this particular word focuses not so much on the sentencing of a criminal, it focuses on the paying of a penalty after the sentencing. It focuses on the punishment. It focuses on the penal bondage, if you will. It focuses on the imprisonment. It focuses on the execution, not so much on the verdict. It isn't a condemnation as in a court when a judge says you're condemned to this sentence, it is the condemnation in the sense of the actual paying of the penalty, the prison, the bondage, the execution. And so what Paul is saying is that there is no penalty to be paid. There is no penal bondage to be borne. There is no execution to take place. There is no prison to be put into because the believer's penalty has already been paid. And by the way, when it says "no condemnation," it isn't just the simple Greek word for "no," it is a strong negative, *oudane*, no, no, not a bit of condemnation, not the slightest tinge of condemnation. And it is in my mind a marvelous illustration in Matthew 18 with Jesus, and you remember the servant, and we studied it some weeks ago, who came and it was brought to light that he owed Jesus an unpayable debt. And he fell down and worshiped Him and he cried out and begged for mercy really in one sense, and in another sense he said, "Be patient with me and I'll pay you all." And the Bible says the Lord loosed him from the debt and forgave him.

In other words, he never had to pay. All that debt, an unpayable debt, an astronomical sum and he just loosed him from the debt and said you never have to pay any of it. Well that's the meaning of *katakrima* here. You're free from bondage. You're free from any enslavement. You're free from any need to pay for anything you've done wrong. That's an incredible truth. This, my dear friends, is the heart and soul of the Christian gospel. The most wonderful message the Christian has is the message to the sinner: You are condemned but in Christ there is no, not a bit of condemnation, not a bit, not the slightest bit, for you've been forgiven and loosed from any obligation to pay anything.

It's essentially what it says in Hebrews 10:14 when it says, "For by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified." You see, the work of Christ was so complete that He perfected us forever. There's not a whit of condemnation against us, for all our sin is covered. He offered one sacrifice for sin forever and it had eternal results and there will never be condemnation, no not a whit of condemnation, never, ever, ever, for the act of Jesus Christ on the cross was an act of perfection, of divine perfection. And when the accomplishment of His act on the cross becomes the reality in my life, there will never, ever, ever, be any condemnation. And to say there will be is to strike a blow at the perfection of the sacrifice of Christ.

No, in Christ there is no condemnation. What a great thought. I love the way Paul puts it in Colossians 1:12. Just listen. He thanks God who hath made us — I love this word — fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the glorious light of the eternal heaven. You see, He made us fit, He made us fit. What do you mean? He fitted us for eternity in the act of salvation. And we were made fit forever to dwell with God. There will never be any who are then unfit. We have been made fit in Christ. And His is a perfect work and never, ever, ever, under any circumstances will we be condemned for we are in Christ perfected forever. What a great thought.

The believer can sin, yes. But when the believer sins he is not condemned, for when we sin He is faithful and just to what? Forgive us and keep on cleansing us from all sin. That's the rendering of 1 John 1:9. And John follows it up by saying, "My little children, I write unto you that you sin not but if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the covering for our sins." 1 John 2:1 and 2. What a great thought.

So, verse 1 is monumental. By the way there's a second half of the verse in the Authorized version that is not in the better manuscripts. The older manuscripts leave it out. And what probably happened was the scribe somewhere along the line who put it in picked it up at the end of verse 4 with his eye, maybe because of the way the columns were arranged and kind of got it into verse 1. But it isn't that we're ignoring it, it comes where it belongs, in verse 4. The older manuscripts don't have it. Whenever you see an older manuscript without something and a later one with it, it's a pretty good thought that it got added in the process. And that's normally the case. And we'll pick that up then at the end of verse 4 and not worry about it now.

So the reality is that there's no condemnation. Charles Hodge, the great theologian, simplifies the whole idea of verse 1 in saying this: "How marvelous to be placed beyond the reach of condemnation." And that's how it is in Christ.

And may I suggest this to you? That this triggers the whole chapter? This concept in verse 1 is the key to the whole chapter. The whole thing flows out of this no condemnation concept. And in fact that's the way it ends. Look at the end of chapter 8 verse 31. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" In other words, if He gave us His Son to save us, will He not give us anything else we need to sustain that life? "Who is going to lay a charge to God's elect? Shall God that justifies?"

In other words, if God, the highest court in the universe, says you're just, what court is going to hold us guilty? Verse 34, "Who is he that condemneth? Shall Christ that died, yea rather that has risen again at the right hand of God who makes intercession for us?" Now if God isn't going to condemn us and Christ isn't going to condemn us then we are therefore now under no condemnation. Never, ever, because there is no higher court than that.

And then he comes to the great climax and says, "What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us, for I am persuaded (and here are all the courts below God and Christ) that neither death nor life nor angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth nor any other creation shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." That's the culmination to what began in verse 1. Now let's go back to verse 1.

So the chapter begins with no condemnation and ends with glorification, that nothing shall ever be able to separate us from the love of Christ. And verse 30 says that if we were predestinated and called and justified, we'll be glorified, and there will never be a violation of that in the life of anyone who is truly justified. Nobody gets justified and then out. There's never condemnation.

So you can see again now that we're sort of piling up more and more results of justification. I think the flow of chapter 8 is still talking about justification up to this point. And you remember that we saw, for example in chapter 5, the first result of justification was peace with God. And chapter 6, the second result was union with Christ. And chapter 7, the third result was freedom from the law and from sin. And then in chapter 7 we saw also that fruit was a result of justification and service in newness of spirit was a result of justification. And now we find another one, security in the sense that there's no condemnation, never, ever, ever. And then the final result of justification is ultimate glorification. And

so Paul is just amassing an incredible list of the realities that belong to justification. So the reality: no condemnation.

Now let's look at the second point, the reason. And we've already hinted at it but let's see it as Paul opens up the thought to us. The reason: The reason is justification. The reality: no condemnation. The reason: justification.

Back up to verse 1. We have to start there. It begins with the word "therefore." Therefore. Now this indicates that the great truths of this chapter are drawn as inferences from something that's come before. And what is the basic principle lying behind the "therefore?" Therefore because of what?

Well without going through a long list of options, let me just tell you what I think the "therefore" is there for. It ties us in to the main conclusion of the entire — Are you ready for this? — first seven chapters. I think it turns a corner from the whole flow of Paul's epistle. For example, you go back to chapter 1 with me for a moment, and let's follow along. Chapter 1 verse 16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek, for in it is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. As it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" That's the gospel.

Look at chapter 3 verse 21. "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets." Verse 24: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Chapter 5 verse 1: "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Verse 8, "But God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, much more than being now justified by His blood we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

And the end of chapter 5 starting with verse 15, and flowing all the way to the end talks about the same thing, justification, justification, made right with God. Chapter 6 verse 14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you're not under the law but under grace." Chapter 7 verse 6, "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead in which we were held, that we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of letter."

In other words, from chapters 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, the emphasis is that we are made right with God, that we are justified, that we are saved, that we are redeemed by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now as a result of that sweeping reality of justification by faith, which is the theme of the whole first seven

chapters, the chord that weaves its way through all of them I believe, as a result of that the apostle's setting forth Christ's debt-removing, unselfish, substitutionary sacrifice on behalf of men. As a result of that we are therefore under no condemnation. It is because of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross that the law can never condemn us.

You can't really just tie it in with the end of verse 25. "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin," therefore there is no condemnation? Why? If we're still having trouble with sin there ought to be condemnation. The connection has to be with the sweeping reality of justification by faith.

Now this does not mean there's no connection with chapter 7. Oh there is a connection. Believe me there's a connection. And I think you'll see it, if not right now soon, soon if we get to it. If not, come back in two weeks and we'll get to it. The reason we're not condemned, beloved, is not because of anything we do. It isn't because we're winning the battle over sin that we're not condemned. It is because of what He has done, right? It's a given reality.

Who are the ones who aren't condemned? Oh you say it's the super saints. Yeah, yeah, it's the ones that really grit the teeth and grunt and groan and make it. It's the ones who don't slide down the ladder too far. Who are the ones that really hang in there and never, never, never lose their salvation and are never, never condemned? Well it's the ones who really self-discipline. It's the really good Christians.

Well let's see who it is, verse 1. "There's no condemnation to them who are (What?) in Christ Jesus." Who are they? Have you ever met a Christian who wasn't in Christ Jesus? Wouldn't be a Christian; this is all of us, folks. A very comforting testimony here, very comforting. And you know Paul shifts his pronouns. It's been I, I, me, me, I, I, me, me, all through chapter 7 and now all of a sudden it's "them". And he uses us in the first four verses.

Now the reason he used the I and the me in chapter 7 I think is very interesting. He used the I and the me in chapter 7 because he was trying to say that a Christian is not exempt from sin. And to help enforce the point that no Christian is exempt from sin he made himself the illustration. And a lot of Christians would be sitting there saying, "Oh my, you mean to tell me the great apostle Paul, the Christian of all Christians, the super Christian himself, isn't exempt from sin? That's comforting." And so he uses the I and the me in his testimony about the fact that Christians are not exempt from sin because that's going to help us common folks to know that even the best of us is not exempt from the struggle.

But now as he gets into chapter 8 he switches to the plural because he wants to assure even the commonest saint that he also, along with the greatest saint, is secure in Christ, you see. And there's a marvelous security for all of us, not just the best of us. So the holiest are humbled in the conflict with sin in chapter 7. And the commonest are exalted in the deliverance from condemnation in chapter 8. Great truth.

But the key to everything, the key to everything is there in verse 1: "In Christ Jesus." You have to be in Christ Jesus or you're going to be judged. You say, "Well what does that mean?" Do you remember chapter 6 verse 3? "Know ye not that as many of us as were immersed into Jesus Christ were immersed into His death. Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection." What a great thought.

When you came to Christ you were placed in Christ. You died with Him and you rose with Him, you were in Christ. That phrase "in Christ" is all over the Pauline epistles. "If any man be in Christ he is (What?) a new creation," 2 Corinthians 5 says. "In Christ." In Christ. It means that you don't just believe about Christ but that there is a vital life union in which your sin is placed on Him and His righteousness is placed on you. Intimacy in Christ. No religion in the world identifies itself in that way. As I said earlier in our series, nobody says, I'm in Buddha, or I'm in Confucius, or I'm in Sin-Min-Moon. Nobody says that. Nobody says I'm in Mohammed. Nobody says that I'm entered into an intimate, indivisible, relationship with Mary Baker Eddy Patterson Glover Fry. Nobody says that because nobody is. But a Christian is in Christ, and we've seen that in tremendous, tremendous truth.

Let me see if I can help you understand what that means. It's a mystery. It's a mystery. But let me give you a little insight. Three ways that we're in Christ. Three ways. This is just to help you with your perception. The first way, we're in Christ spiritually. We're in Christ spiritually. First Corinthians 15:22 says, "As in Adam all (What?) die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." So there's some kind of a spiritual solidarity. We're in Christ in a spiritual solidarity, in a spiritual union.

Second way, and I'll try to illustrate these in a minute, but the second way we're in Christ vitally, let's use that term, vitally. And by that we would draw our attention to 1 Corinthians 12:27, where it says, "You are the body of Christ." We are in Him in a spiritual sense. We are in Him in a vital, living sense for we've all been made to partake of the same what? Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12:13, same life principle, the life of God and the soul of man by the indwelling of the living Spirit.

And thirdly, we are in Christ relationally. That's what John meant when he said, "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ the righteous." So there is a sense in which we are in Christ spiritually. That is, there's a solidarity of identification. We are in Christ vitally. That is, His life pulses through us spiritually and makes us live unto God. And then we are in Christ relationally. There's a sense of communion and fellowship and intimacy and love. There's a bond of friendship there.

And one way you could perhaps see them all illustrated is this. As I looked in my own family tree back to my forefathers there's a sense in which I am linked to them spiritually. There's a certain solidarity that I have by family name. And a lot of people are into that, tracing roots back. When you were born into this world you were solidly linked with the family of Adam, were you not? And therein was your fallenness. And when you became a Christian you entered into the solidarity of the very life of Christ, you belong to the family of God. You're linked eternally to the Savior in the family of God, just as you look back to those who were your ancestors and you see a certain flow, a certain life flow that comes down.

And then secondly, I'm also linked to them vitally. That is, I live because they passed life onto me. There is a family solidarity and there's a living life principle in me. And thirdly, I am one with them, those of them who are still alive, relationally in a love bond, in a fellowship, in a communion. And so when the Bible says we're in Christ, and I've just touched the surface, it is a sweeping rich concept that we are solidly joined to the family of God, that we have pulsing within our souls the very life of God, and that we have a relationship with Him that celebrates communion, fellowship and intimacy on a very personal level.

And so, we can say with the apostle Paul that when I became a Christian it was like this. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but (What?) Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." And that is the most truth-packed conversion verse in the New Testament because it says we are linked with Christ. Martin Luther said this: "It is impossible for a man to be a Christian without having Christ. And if he has Christ he has at the same time all that is in Christ. What gives peace to the conscience is that by faith our sins are no more ours but Christ's, upon whom God hath laid them all. And that on the other hand, all Christ's righteousness is ours to whom God hath given it. Christ lays His hand on us and we are healed. He casts His mantle on us and we are clothed, for he is the glorious blessed Savior forever." End quote.

Now this wonderful relationship was symbolized in the Old Testament in a way that will help you in your understanding a little further, I think. You remember reading about the garments of the high priests? They had all kinds of things they had to wear and special things. One of the things that's always been very curious to me, and I'm sure to you if you've ever seen it depicted in a picture of any kind, is that around his neck on a chain was a little box. And on that box was a series of twelve stones. And on each of those stones was carved the name of what? One of the tribes of Israel.

Now I don't know if you ever really thought about what that means, but I'll tell you what it means. This is what it symbolized. When the high priest went into the Holy of Holies and stood before God, he brought with him on his very breast the symbol of all the people of Israel, didn't he? So when he faced God he faced God embracing right at his heart the people of God. That's a rich symbolism. And so it is with the great high priest of our confession, the Lord Jesus Christ, who when He, now seated at the right hand of God and appearing in the presence of God, faces God face to face He carries in His own breast all of His people, not on stones, but as one with Him. Great truth.

And this, I believe, is the answer to the prayer of our Lord in John 17. The Father gave Him His answer. He prayed, “That they all may be one as Thou Father art in Me and I in Thee that they may be one in us. I in them, Thou in Me that they may be made perfect in one.” God answered that prayer.

I'm not just one who believes in Christ. I'm not just one who has met Christ. I am one who is what? In Christ. And my sin was passed to Him and His righteousness was passed to me.

Again I go back to Martin Luther. "Faith," he said, "unites the soul with Christ as a spouse with her husband. Everything which Christ has becomes the property of the believing soul. Everything which the soul has becomes the property of Christ. Christ possesses all blessings and eternal life. They are thenceforth the property of the soul. The soul has all its iniquities and sins. They become thenceforth the property of Christ. It is then that a blessed exchange commences. Christ, who is both God and man, Christ who has never sinned and whose holiness is perfect, Christ the Almighty, the eternal taking to Himself by His nuptial ring of faith all the sins of the believer, those sins are then lost and abolished in Him, for no sin dwells before His infinite righteousness. And thus by faith the believer's soul is delivered from sins and clothed with the eternal righteousness of her bridegroom, Christ." Is that not a glorious picture? And so it is to those who are in Christ.

But we ask the question, how is it that we can experience this no condemnation? That's verse 2: "For (or because) the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us, (or made me), free from the law

of sin and death." Paul goes back to his own personal testimony here. And he says here's the reason there's no condemnation: “Because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” “Therefore” is a very important transition. We are not under condemnation because we've been made free from the law. Now if you went into court and they said you've committed a crime, you're to be condemned. And then for whatever reason you became free from the law, the law couldn't do anything to you. And so it is with sinners. Listen, beloved, the reason there is condemnation is because you have broken what? God's law. But if you have been made free from that law, therefore there can be what? No condemnation. Very simple.

You say, "What is this law?" Well he calls it the law of sin and death. It's the law of sin that leads to death, that's what it is, the principle of sin. It's the same idea as chapter 7 verse 21, a law that when I would do good evil is present with me. It's the indwelling principle of sin. It's the indwelling power of sin. And sin is seen as a law because it puts out its commands and it demands obedience and it demands submission. But we've been made free from that. Free from the law of sin that leads to death.

You say, "How did we get free from that?" "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made us free." What is that? Well there's another principle here. It's the principle of the Spirit, and I think that should be a capital S, just as it is in the text, the Spirit of life that comes in Christ Jesus. And I believe it's a reference to the Holy Spirit. Notice verse 6, "For to be carnally minded is death but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." And you follow it down to verse 9, "You're not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." And then in verse 11, "The Spirit of Him," that is, the Holy Spirit, “who raised up Jesus from the dead.” So I think he's introducing us now to the Spirit. You find again in verse 4, "Who walked not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

So we're introduced here to the Spirit. And He is called the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Great, great title. This is the Holy Spirit and He is the Spirit of life, He is the life giver and the life sustainer, the living Spirit.

When Jesus talked to Nicodemus He said, "You must be born of the water and the Spirit." It is the Spirit who gives life. It is the Spirit who energizes the new birth. And I think that's exactly what you have in view here. The Holy Spirit is designated as the Spirit of life because He is the one who brings about conversion. He is the one who carries off the transaction. We are begotten of the Spirit. We are born of the Spirit. The power He exercises in a person's life brings life out of death. It brings the Spirit of life where there was the law of sin and death.

Certainly the human spirit can't be in view here because the human spirit can't give life, can it? Not at all. So the law of the Spirit of life is the Holy Spirit power that works in the soul through the gospel message of justification by grace through faith. And as it works in the soul with faith it frees the soul from the law of sin and death.

Look at verse 11, "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus," that's the Spirit of life, "from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also give life to your mortal body by His Spirit that dwells in you." He is the life-giving Spirit.

Now listen carefully. This is a great contrast, beloved, to chapter 7, really great. I mean, chapter 7 was a very depressing chapter. Paul says, things I want to do I don't do, things I don't want to do I do, O how I love Thy law, O how I delight in the inward man and the things that You have said. O God, this is my heart desire but I see another problem in myself. I see in my flesh sin and it wars against the law of my mind and I struggle and I fight. “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And then he says, I know some day I'll be delivered but until that some glory day when I leave this body, with my mind I serve the law of God and with my flesh the law of sin. And it's so debilitating and so depressing and the struggle, it's so intense. And the Christian can be so discouraged there. And then all of a sudden he comes into chapter 8 and he realizes that the truth of the matter is that you've been made free from the law of sin. You've been made free from the law of death because the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has given you a new life through the gospel.

You say, "Is this contradiction?" No, it's just the truth. It's the true picture of the person I really am. On the one hand I am a slave, on the one hand I am a prisoner, on the one hand as long as I'm in the flesh and in my humanness, sin has control over me so I can't live a sinless life as I would want. But on the other hand, I am a free person from the law of sin and death and I can do what is right, if not all the time, some of the time. And that's a first. And Satan can try as he will, and the flesh can try as it will, they cannot overcome the Spirit of life. And though there will be sin in my life it will never overcome the life that is there, it will never cause it to die because it is the Spirit of life and the Spirit remains to do His life-giving work.

I'm free from the ultimate disaster that sin and death can bring. I believe in chapter 7 verse 24 where Paul says, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" that he's thinking there about the power of sin. He's saying, oh how am I going to get power over sin? Who is going to deliver me? And He says, I know it will happen when I see the Lord, He'll do it then. But until then I just have to fight it. But I don't think he's talking about the power of sin in a primary sense in

verse 2. I think he's talking about the guilt of sin and the penalty of sin. I've not yet been delivered from the power of sin, but believe me, my friend, I have been delivered from the guilt of sin. And I have been delivered from the penalty of sin, amen? And that's basic. And that's what he's saying. Because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ has delivered me from the penalty and the guilt of sin, I'm free. Now all I have to do is carry on the battle against the power of sin. But I'll never pay the penalty. Why? Because all my sins are put on Christ and He paid it, right? And if you tell me I've got to pay the penalty, then you're telling Christ He didn't do the work right and it wasn't sufficient. But the Bible says He perfected forever them that are sanctified.

So on the one hand I say, o wretched man that I am, I wish I had victory over the power of sin. And on the other hand, I say, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ has made me free from the law of sin and death." I have a struggle here but I'll never lose in the end because I'm not under condemnation. Great truth. Great truth.

I'm going to close with this. This is a parable somebody put together that I think illustrates very well the work of Christ in our behalf. There was a guard and the guard had an interesting job. He worked on the river. And his job was to raise and lower a drawbridge that spanned the large river.

One day he decided to take his son. His son was fascinated by what his father did and wanted to spend a day with him, so he did that. The job of raising and lowering the bridge didn't seem to be too significant. But there was one time each day when it became very significant because at four o'clock the bridge had to be raised to let a ferry through and at 4:15 it had it be lowered because there was a passenger train rattling through the countryside at top speed.

On this fateful day the guard let his son wander out of the guardhouse and venture down to get a better look at the ferry boat and he got a little too close to areas he shouldn't and he fell. And he fell and his foot got caught in the gears. And the father looked from out of the guardhouse and realized that he had to put the bridge down because the train was coming with all of its cars and all of its passengers. But if he put the bridge down he would kill his son. On the other hand, he could run down and rescue his son and the train would plunge into the river and everyone would be drowned.

At that point he was shocked back into reality because the train whistle could be heard in the distance. He had two choices. He owed his son a lot, he was his son. He owed the passengers nothing, he didn't even know them. And if he was to lower the bridge at the expense of his own son, it would be purely an act of love and mercy. But once he decided to do that he would have to give up

his own son, which he did.

And you understand the parable, don't you? You see, God didn't have to love us, He owed us nothing. But at the expense of His own Son He purchased for us the righteousness that allows us to celebrate the meaning of Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no (What?) condemnation." How grateful we are. What compassion on God's part.

Let's bow in prayer. Father, we have again been brought to the realization of Your great mercy as we have seen the truth of this marvelous passage. And, Lord, we've been here before; this is not new to us. There's a freshness about it because it's a chapter we haven't studied together. And, Lord, the tendency in our hearts is just to hear it as another message of the gospel and walk right back into the chaos of our little world and leave You alone with small thoughts. Deliver us from such indifference, such pettiness, such callousness and fill our hearts with thanksgiving. And may we somehow grasp what it means not to be condemned and not because of anything we have done but because of Christ. Fill our hearts with love for Him and devotion to do His will.

Father, I want to express my thanks for the perfect work of Christ, not only in my life but in the life of all Your people everywhere. And I want to thank You for these Your people, precious people, for their wonderful supportiveness, for their love for Your Word. Thank You, Father, for how You've moved in their life to cause them to be faithful, to share in this fellowship with us tonight and as they do each Lord's day evening. Bless them, Father, for that commitment, enrich their life and bring from them all the fruitfulness that You would desire for Your glory. As we go into this week, Father, make us eager to speak a word about Christ who died but is alive and ever lives to make continual intercession for His people, that no sin would ever be held against their account for there is no condemnation. Thank You for that, that hopeful thought that even when we struggle with sin we will not be condemned, for Christ has paid the penalty.

And, o Father, we wait for the day when we can leave this world and know the redemption of our body and the glorification that awaits the sons of God. We pray that You'll bring now to the prayer room, the counseling room all those whose hearts are drawn to You, those who need someone to pray with or talk with. And do Your work in all of our lives that we may be more like Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

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