

Free from Judgment, Part 2

Romans 8:3

45-55

Certainly we have much for which to rejoice and nothing should cause us greater joy than the great truth of Romans chapter 8 verses 1 through 4 that we're going to be looking at again tonight. So get a good grip on your Bible and open it up to Romans chapter 8 and look with me at the marvelous opening of this great chapter.

Let me read those first four verses. We started to study them last time; we'll continue in our study tonight. "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 someone has said that if Scripture were a ring and the book of Romans its precious stone, chapter 8 would be the sparkle in the stone. It is a marvelous, marvelous chapter. And so we welcome a look at the dazzling brilliance of this great portion of the Word of God. Now I want us to get right into the passage because we've already basically introduced it, but just a brief reminder and review.

We've commenced our study by taking the first four verses of this great chapter as a unit. And as the chapter unfolds you'll see how it all hangs together. But in this particular unit we are noting four features: the reality, the reason, the route and the result. And those are just hooks to hang your thought on so you can kind of move through the passage.

In our first study we took a look, first of all, at the reality, or the great truth that is articulated in these verses. And that reality is given us in verse 1: "No condemnation." That is the reality that breaks open this monumental section of Scripture. Now as we noted last time, the Bible is a very condemning book. It condemns from the beginning to the end. It begins with a warning and a potential condemnation for the violation of God's law. And it ends with the condemnation of all the human race that have rejected God's truth. And in between there are many, many statements about condemnation.

Now man in general, in his fallen, condition is under the condemnation of God. In John 3:19 it says, "And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." So men live under condemnation. They live under the threat of judgment from God. But that is not the way God wants to leave men. You remember we suggested that John 3:17 speaks so directly to this issue, "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be 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." So the whole of the human race is under condemnation. But God has provided through Jesus Christ an escape from condemnation. And the Bible there says, "He that believeth is not condemned."

Now that leads us to Paul's thought here in chapter 8 verse 1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." That is the great reality of this section, no condemnation. In John 5:24 the Scripture says, "He that heareth My Word and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." Now condemnation again is said to be upon men, but there is a way of escape for the one who believes on Me, said the Lord Jesus Christ. Condemnation is just another word for judgment, another word for punishment. And there is freedom from judgment, promised as we read in John 3, John 4, and here in Romans chapter 8.

Now in order to help us understand what it means to say we have no condemnation, let me just kind of refresh your mind as to what it means that men are condemned by God. A little earlier when Herb was praying, he mentioned Ephesians chapter 2, where the Bible tells us that all men are children of wrath. That's the same as saying they're under condemnation. Mark 16:16 puts it this way, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." First Corinthians 16:22 puts it this way, "If any man love not the Lord, let him be anathema." Literally that means accursed. Galatians chapter 3 and verse 10 says it a different way, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.'" In 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 8 it says, "In flaming fire the Lord will come taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now those are just different ways the Bible speaks about the condemnation of men. They are under the wrath of God. And the wrath of God is indeed a fearful judgment. As you read particularly through Matthew you have very descriptive terms used to help us understand what hell is like, a place of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, a place of darkness, a place that's unending in its torment, where the worm dies not, the fire is never quenched. And so we see that men are condemned to a very fearful judgment which is eternal.

And may I add for your thinking that the judgment that God has to bring upon sinful men who reject Him is a just judgment. It is a just judgment. And I believe there are three reasons why God's condemnation of sinful man is indeed a just condemnation. First of all, it is because man was involved in original sin. In other words we deserve to be condemned because we were a part of the original sin. That's Romans 5 where it says there in verse 17, "By one man's offense death reigned by one." And then verse 18, "Therefore as by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation."

In other words, the Bible says the first reason that condemnation of men is just is because we all sinned in Adam. So original sin then brings upon us the just judgment of God.

And then secondly, God's judgment of us is just because our nature is evil. And back to Ephesians 2:3, it says, "Our manner of life was in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and we were by nature the children of wrath." In other words, by the very essence of our personalities we deserved to be condemned.

And then the third thing that brings a just condemnation, not only original sin and an evil nature but deeds of sin. And in Romans 2:6 it says, "When God brings righteous judgment, He will render to every man according to his deeds. To them that are contentious and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, will come tribulation and anguish," and so forth.

So we have a just judgment because of our sin in Adam, our inherited sinful nature, and the deeds of sin which we have committed. So the whole of the human race then stands condemned by God. There's no way to escape that. We are all under the wrath of God. And that's why it's such good news to arrive in Romans chapter 8 and verse 1 and hear that to those who are in Christ Jesus there is no judgment, there is no condemnation. This is an exemption from condemnation.

Now if you were with us for the study of chapter 7 you will remember that in the previous chapter the apostle Paul is describing what it's like to be a Christian living in a human body, what it's like to be a new creation and still have to deal with sinful humanness, what it's like to be a believer transformed, granted a new righteous being in Christ who still has to deal with what Thomas Manton called "the relics of sin that hang on to us." We find ourselves like Paul in Romans 7 bemoaning the imperfections of our life. There's something in us that longs to do right and longs to be what Christ was and longs for the Word of God and delights in the truth of God and wants to obey and wants to ascend to the very heights of holiness. But there's also something in us that drags us down and that holds us back and that debilitates and limits our realization of that great desire.

And again may I say to you that because of chapter 7, chapter 8 is extremely comforting, because even in the life of a Christian where the consciousness of sin is heightened, where the consciousness of sin is intensified, we still need not fear condemnation because if we're in Christ there is no condemnation. And so, even as we see Paul's testimony in Romans 7 when he came to the Lord and he saw what he really was and he saw the purity of God's law, he saw sin to be more sinful than he ever understood it to be, and he saw himself to be more evil than he ever understood himself to be. But even though as a believer he could see things about himself he never saw before, he still was not under condemnation.

And so, may I suggest to you that the fact that we have no condemnation is not related to some kind of perfection, it is not related to some kind of eradication of sin. It is that we who struggle with that new life in the midst of the old humanness and we see sin to be sin and as heinous as it is we still are those who are under no condemnation. Because, you'll notice again verse 1, there is no condemnation, not to those who are perfect, not to those who never sin, but to those who are what? In Christ Jesus. That's... That's the key. In our natural state we are all under the curse of God's wrath. But Christ came into the world and was made a curse for us. He redeemed us, as Galatians 3:13, from the curse that was against us. In fact, in 2 Corinthians 5:21 it says, "He was made sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." And we still sin. In fact if we say we don't we make God a what? A liar. We still sin, that's 1 John 1:8 to 10. But 1 John 2:1 and 2 says, but even when we sin we have Jesus Christ the advocate who has made covering for our sin.

And you know the familiar hymn, it goes like this: "No condemnation now I dread, all in Christ Jesus now is mine, alive in Him my living head, and clothed in righteousness divine, bold I approach my sovereign's throne and know the life of Christ my own." Being in Christ. What a great truth. What a great truth. It speaks, as we saw last time, of our union with Him. It is a spiritual union, it is a vital

union, and as we said, it is a relational union.

And I wish we had time, but we really don't, in this particular portion. Maybe someday when we study Philippians we'll get into it deeper 'cause that majors on the "in Christ" concept. But we could just go through the Bible and find all the things that are attached to being in Christ. Redemption is in Christ Jesus, the love of God is in Christ Jesus, we are sanctified in Christ Jesus, our liberty is in Christ Jesus, we are in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. We are His workmanship in Christ Jesus. God's eternal purpose is in Christ Jesus. The high calling of God is in Christ Jesus. The riches of glory of our inheritance are in Christ Jesus. And it just goes on and on and on like that. We are not just believers who believe in someone, we are in that person in the fullest and total sense.

And so — now listen carefully — there is therefore now no condemnation to us. We are as secure as Christ is, for we are in Christ and we have no more chance of losing our salvation than Christ does of losing His deity because we're in Him. You see, in Christ man measures up to God's ideal. And so there is nothing for which to hold man responsible that he should lose his redemption because he is granted the righteousness of Christ and all his sin is paid for in the death of Christ.

Now when we say there is no condemnation because we're in Christ and we're as secure as Christ is and in Christ we meet God's divine ideal that is not to say that no condemnation means no correction. It doesn't mean that God isn't going to chasten us, that God isn't going to correct us. It doesn't mean there's no law of sowing and reaping, because there is. It doesn't mean there will be no conflict, because there will be. It doesn't mean there will be no carnality, because we will express things that are fleshly because we still are in the flesh, as we've been learning from Romans 6 and 7. But in spite of all of that, beloved, and this is the marvelous truth, in spite of all of that there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. If you are truly in Christ Jesus you will never know judgment from God, ultimate judgment. Yes, chastening to perfect you, yes consequence for your misbehavior, yes a shaping process, yes trials and tribulations, yes you'll fight with sin in your life and sometimes you'll lose, but never will you have to pay the penalty for your sin. To say that you will is to say that Jesus Christ's payment was inadequate. And you have no more chance of losing your relationship to God than Christ has of escaping the Trinity and becoming unrighteous, impossible, impossible.

You say, "Well if being in Christ is that good, how do you get there?" Well it's very simple. John 1:12 says it this way, "But as many as received Him to them gave He the authority to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His name." How do you have the authority to become an actual son of God, an actual child of God? How do you have the authority or the right or the privilege of coming to know Jesus Christ in a relationship that brings you in Christ? It's a matter of receiving Him by faith as Savior and Lord. It's a matter of accepting Him, and that's all. That's all. And that's the essence of that great verse that we keep repeating again and again in this connection of Romans where Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ." When you receive Him, Galatians 2:20, you're crucified with Him. Nevertheless You live, yet not I, says Paul, but Christ lives in me and the life which I now live I live in the flesh but I live it by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. So he says I'm in Christ by faith. And Christ's life becomes my life even though I'm still in the flesh. It's Christ living His life through me. That's what faith in Christ does.

So the reality then is no condemnation. I'm not going to say anymore because we covered that in detail last time. Let's look secondly at the reason. And this is a marvelous thing. The reason comes in verse 2. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and

death." The word "for" there tells us there is a reason why there's no condemnation. It isn't whimsical. There's a reason for it. There is no condemnation because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed us from condemnation. Now we'd like to know what this law is that freed us from condemnation, I'm sure. So let's look at that. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, that's a great statement. And as I said last time, it's referring to the Holy Spirit. It's the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of life. And indeed He is. John 3: You must be born of water and the Spirit. It is the Spirit who gives life. We find that in Romans 8, several places. We'll look at it as we go along but we'll see that the Spirit is life, it says in verse 10. And in verse 11 it illustrates that the Spirit is the one who will raise from the dead. And in verse 13 it talks about really living by the power of the Spirit. And in verse 15 it talks about how the Spirit gives us life that allows us to call unto God as if He were and is our Father.

So the Spirit is indeed the Spirit of life, the life-giving Spirit. In Titus 3:6 it says that we've been saved, 3:5 says we've been washed by the regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior. It's the Spirit who gives us birth. It's the Spirit who gives us life. And so what it's really saying there is the Holy Spirit has made us alive in Christ Jesus.

Now he calls this, you'll notice, a law. Now it's very interesting that he uses that term and I think he uses it sort of as a literary device to connect up with all of the other uses of that word "law." The law of the Spirit of life: What is that? Well you'll find if you look back in Romans chapter 3, verse 27 that there's also there a law of faith. And if you were to look in Galatians 5:2 you would find the law of Christ. The law of faith, the law of Christ, the law of the Spirit of life, I think all refer to the same thing. They all refer to the saving gospel. And the word "law" really has to do with a principle, the principle of faith, the principle of salvation in Christ, the principle of the Spirit of life in Christ. But I think there's good reason to call it a law. And I'll tell you why. The gospel is really a law and it is a law in this sense: It commands us to obey its truth, doesn't it? The gospel is a law. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. That is a law that demands obedience. The consequence of rejecting the law is to be brought into the court of God for violation of the law of the gospel. And there will be people obviously all across the world condemned to hell because they broke God's law, not just the law written on the mount at Sinai, not just the moral law but the law of the gospel which equally demanded their obedience. And so it is a law. And Christ Jesus is the sovereign Lord to whom men must yield their obedient allegiance. And the Bible calls over and over again to men to submit to the law of the gospel.

And Paul, I'm thinking of, in Acts 17 on Mars Hill where he says that God in the past was tolerant and patient as His revelation unfolded, but now commands all men everywhere to repent. And then he goes on to talk about Jesus Christ. When Jesus comes in the gospel of Jesus Christ there is an inherent command that all men believe. If you go back to Romans chapter 1 verse 5 we read, "By whom (speaking about the Son of God) we have received grace and apostleship (Listen to this.) for obedience to the faith." And he goes on to talk about the fact that this is to come from all the nations.

In other words, the gospel is a law that demands obedience or punishment. It is just as much a law in that sense as the Ten Commandments was, or as the moral law of God is. It says you do this and you will be all right. You don't do it and you will be judged. So indeed it is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ.

In Romans 16 verse 26, just to go from the beginning of Romans to the end, there's an interesting statement in that closing benediction there. It talks about the gospel in verse 25, the preaching of

Jesus Christ, the unfolding of the New Covenant. But now he says, "It is made manifest." It was hidden, it's now made manifest. "And by the scriptures of the prophets according to the commandment of the everlasting God made known to all nations," and here's that phrase again, "for the obedience of faith."

In other words, the gospel is the New Testament law that demands obedience, just as the Old Testament law did. And it is the obedience of putting your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is indeed a law demanding compliance. And we could look at other passages and see the same thing.

So the gospel is a law to be obeyed. Christ is a sovereign Lord who will be judge of all those who reject that law. Just one other passage comes to mind. I wasn't going to take the time, but let me draw you to the eighth chapter of Hebrews for a moment. Hebrews chapter 8, and here we have the writer of Hebrews making reference to the New Covenant which was promised, of course, in the Old Testament, Jeremiah 31. But in verse 8 it says, "Behold the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt because they continued not in My Covenant and I regarded them not, says the Lord. For this is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My laws into their mind and write them in their hearts and I will be to them a God and they shall be to Me a people."

Now God says the New Covenant will be a covenant of what? Of laws put into the heart, not just external on stone, but in the heart. So don't ever think for a moment, very important, and all of that to say this, don't ever think for a moment that because there is no condemnation we are free from any obligation to do anything. The gospel itself is a law that demands obedience. And the New Covenant is a set of laws that God by the gospel plants in the heart. So that obedience is the mark of a believer, not disobedience and not disregard for any law at all.

So I need to say this because some people have used Romans 8:1 and 2 and even beyond down to verse 4 as if it were license to freewheel through life with no thought of responsibility to obey. There is within the gospel binding law planted in the heart. And so we see then that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ, that's the gospel, has come. And because, Paul says, I believed, it has made me free from the law of sin and death. Now sin is a law, too. Did you know that? Does sin make commands? Does it make demands on you? Is sin the sovereign of the unregenerate world? Is sin the god, the leader, the ruler? Is sin calling the shots? You better believe it, and Romans 6 says you, before Christ, were the slaves of sin.

Sin also is a law that demands. Sin is a sovereign that controls and energizes and motivates and commands the world. And the whole world is under the dominion, under the, as it were, the bondage in slavery to the law of sin. Further in verse 2 it says the law of sin leads to death, "The wages of sin (Is what?) is death."

And you know — it's interesting to think about it — but the old covenant — this is just a footnote — the old covenant, the Old Testament covenant, when the New Covenant came, the Old Covenant by itself became a part of the law of sin unto death. Because apart from Jesus Christ the Old Covenant can only lead to death; that's 2 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 7. But if the ministration of death... What is that? It's that which was written and engraved in stones. In other words, he calls the Mosaic law a ministration of death. All it can do is kill apart from the New Covenant in Christ.

So the point of verse 2 is this: Men are under the law of sin and death. Their master is sin. Sin controls everything, leading them to death, eternal death, spiritual death, physical death. But along comes another law, another command, and it is the gospel energized by the Holy Spirit. And when a person believes, he is delivered from the law of sin and death. A very simple point and you see it. And it is because we've been delivered from that that there is no condemnation. The law of sin can convict us. We saw that, didn't we, in chapter 3 and also in chapter 7. The law of sin can provoke sin. It can stir up sin, we saw in Romans 7:5 to 8. The law of sin can bring judgment on us, Romans 6:15. But it can't give us life, it can't make us alive. Only the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus can do that. That's why people who hold on to the old law and the Old Covenant apart from Christ are doomed and damned forever. We're free because of what the gospel does.

Now let me take you to 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 18 and I want to take my time on this because it's so very important. First Peter 1:18: "For as much as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold from your empty manner of life received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ," that's how you were redeemed, "as of a lamb without blemish and without spot who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world but was manifest in these last times for you who by Him do believe in God who raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God seeing, that you have purified (Here it is.) your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." You see, there's the same concept. You obeyed, that signifies law. You obeyed the truth, that's the gospel that came through the Spirit of life. You can't be saved any other way. Glorious, glorious truth.

What is it that men need to do to escape the judgment of God, to escape eternal hell? They need to be made alive. They need to be made free from that law. How do you get free from that law? From the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. How does that happen? By believing a new law. What is that new law? The law of the gospel. And that is what frees us from the curse of the law of sin and death.

Now as I said before, we are free from the law of sin and death. Now in what sense are we free? Please mark it again. It is not to say that we're never going to sin again; that's first of all necessary to note. It does not mean that we're not going to sin anymore. It's not talking about the eradication of sin from us. It also is not saying that we don't need to worry about sin anymore, we don't need to pay any attention to it anymore, we don't need to be concerned about it. It's not saying that either. What it is saying is that ultimately we will never be judged for sin. It doesn't mean we won't sin, we know better than that. But it means sin's ability to condemn us is eliminated. Sin will no longer be able to force us to pay a penalty.

Beloved, this is marvelous news, marvelous. Sin is still there, we know that. We fail God, we disobey. We do things that are ungodly. We say things that are un-Christlike. We know it. We look at ourselves and we see our failings. And we ask, "Well in what sense then am I free from the law of sin and death?" You're free from it in the sense that it will never be able to exact from you a penalty. Why? Because the Spirit of life in Christ has freed you from that because when you were united with Jesus Christ you died His death, you came alive in His resurrection, the penalty for sin has been paid. Great truth.

The reality then: No condemnation. The reason: Justification. Let's come to the third point, the route. How did God bring this off? And the key word here is substitution. The reality is no condemnation. The reason is justification. And the route is substitution. Now this is theological. This is bottom line.

This is definitive of our faith and you need to understand this. Verse 3, "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."

Now that's the truth of substitution; one of the most wonderful scriptures in all of the Bible. Notice again it begins with the word "for," just as verse 2 did, because it flows. Verse 2 is true because verse 3 is true. Verse 1 is true because verse 2 is true. We have no condemnation because we've been freed from it. We've been freed from it because Christ took our place, that's verse 3.

Now notice how it begins. "For what the law could not do..." Now what couldn't the law do? The law could convict us of sin. The law could provoke sin. The law could call us to judgment. But what couldn't it do? It couldn't break sin's power. It couldn't do that. There's no way it could do that. The law was utterly impotent to do that. And again we are drawn to Galatians chapter 3. It says, "For as many as are under the works of the law, or of the works of the law, are under the curse." All the law is going to do is curse you because you're going to have God's law and you're not going to be able to keep it in your sinfulness. And so all it's going to do is pronounce a curse on you, that's all. It will just curse you.

In fact, in Galatians 3:21 he says, "For if there had been a law given which could have given life, then righteousness would have been by the law." But there was never a law given that could give life. And so what the law couldn't do, the law could not break sin's power, couldn't do that. It could just provoke sin.

Back in chapter 7 of Romans, verse 10, you remember that great statement? "And the commandment (That's the law of God.) which really was ordained to life I found to be unto death." All the law did was slay me," verse 11 says, it just killed me. When man was originally created sin had no place. When man fell, the alien power of sin took over. And all the law did was confirm the usurped lordship of sin and it just took all the law-breakers, that's the whole human race, and threw them wholesale under the curse of God. It's as if sin consigns the sinner to a debtor's prison and the law becomes his jailer.

You say, "Well, boy, that's a pretty crummy law." No, not the law's fault, back to verse 3. What the law could not do in that it was weak in itself. Is that what it says? In that it was weak (What?) through the flesh. You see the problem wasn't the law, the problem was the flesh. Another word for flesh here would be corruption. You see, because of our corruption the law couldn't save us, not because the law was bad. You remember again now back to chapter 7, the law is holy, just and good, verse 12. Nothing wrong with the law at all. But God's law couldn't make us righteous, it couldn't save us, it couldn't make us perfect, it couldn't break the power of sin, it couldn't cause us to be out from under the curse, it couldn't do all that. Not because it was anything wrong with it but because we were so corrupt. That's... That's the real issue. Not one thing wrong with God's law. In fact, if you take a peek at verse 4 you're going to find out that God's law is still in vogue and He still wants us to obey it.

Listen to Acts 13:39, this says the same thing. Paul is preaching a similar sermon in fact. And he preaches about Christ in Acts 13 and verse 39 says this, "And by Him (great statement) all that believe are justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." Isn't that good? You've been justified from all things by which you could never be justified through the law of Moses. You cannot be justified by the law of Moses, but only by Christ. So what the law couldn't do, that is break the power of sin and make men right with God, because it was weak not in itself but

through our corruption, that's the beginning of it. God overcame that, the middle of verse 3, by sending His own Son to do what we could never do.

Just as a note. Jesus is a perfect illustration of the perfection of the law. Jesus shows us that it isn't the law that is the problem. Jesus lived His whole life and never sinned, right? Jesus lived His whole life and kept the law of God. Jesus said, "I have come not to destroy the law but to (What?) fulfill it." Jesus in His perfect humanity perfectly kept the law of God. Therefore He needed no Savior. And He shows us how good the law is, for one that has the capacity for perfection can be perfected by the law or is perfectly revealed through the law's perfection. So the problem is not the law, the problem is us. Jesus kept the law. It was holy, just and good. He was holy, just and good. Therefore He is justified in His keeping of the law. But since we can't do that we don't blame the good law that Jesus kept, we blame the evil flesh in which we live.

And you know, it's amazing to say it, folks, but there are still some people today who think they can, they can be perfect, who think they can please God by keeping all the law, many people, by self-effort. Well they need to remember a couple of things. The first thing they ought to remember is James 2:10, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he's guilty of all." Oh, that's... That is so strong. You mean if I keep every single law all the time and just break one once, I'm out? You're out. Boy, that's a tough, tough standard.

And again, another scripture a person who thinks he can perfect himself by keeping the law and being holy in himself ought to note is Matthew chapter 19 verse 16, "And behold, one came to Him and said, Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? And He said unto him, 'Why callest thou Me good, there is none good but one, that's God.'" He was telling him that he had just called Him God in effect. "But if you will enter into life, then keep the commandments." That's right, you keep them. "He said, 'Which ones?' Jesus said, O thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, honor thy father and thy mother, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Just all of those. "And the young man said unto Him, All these things have I kept from my youth up." I've kept all those. "What lack I yet?"

Now here's a guy who kept the whole law. "Jesus said to him, Sell everything you have and give it to the poor." And he went away sorrowful cause he had a lot of stuff. You know what? He kept all those deals and he had a wretched rotten selfish heart, grasping, materialistic, indulgent, and the thought of giving something away to a poor person caused him to turn his back on the Savior and walk away. Did he keep the whole law? Hardly, hardly, for the whole law can be summed up in this, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and your neighbor as yourself." You see, a man is a fool, a woman is a fool who thinks they can please God by keeping all the commandments. It can't be done. You break one, you're out. And if you think you haven't broken one, you're out anyway 'cause you're so proud.

You see, what the law does is the law comes along and the law makes demands on corrupt flesh that corrupt flesh cannot respond to. So if I'm going to be saved I can't be saved by my corrupt flesh. I can only be saved by something beyond me. And that's what you have in verse 3. "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin (Here it comes.) condemned sin in the flesh." Now these phrases here may it seem...may at first it seem to be somewhat contradictory. God had to do what the law couldn't do and the law couldn't condemn sin. I thought the law did condemn sin. It says that God had to do what the law couldn't do, God through Christ condemned sin. Doesn't the law condemn sin? Isn't that what we saw in chapter 7? The law, beginning in verse 7, condemned sin in

the life of Paul? Yes, but we're looking at two different things. The law condemns the sinner, right? Because it shows him his sin. But the law can't ultimately condemn sin. The law can condemn the sinner in the sense of showing him his sin, revealing his sin, arousing his sin, bringing guilt on him, bringing condemnation on the sinner. In that sense the law can, if you want to say it, condemn sin, by making us see sin for what it is and condemns us for being sinful. But the term is used differently here. It is in the sense here of consigning it to destruction, of pronouncing the ultimate sentence. The law can't destroy sin. That's what he's saying. The law can't overpower sin. The law can't take away the authority of sin.

I mean, when Jesus Christ comes into your life, Christ coming into your life condemns sin. That is, He takes its power away. He takes its authority away. It no longer is your master, right? You used to serve sin, now you serve the Savior. That's what we learned in Romans chapter 6, verse 16 and following.

So the law can condemn the sinner but only God in Christ could condemn sin, that is, destroy sin, execute judgment on sin, destroying its power. And that's why we say now as Christians that we're no longer under the power of sin in the sense that it is our master. It no longer is the dictator of our life. All who are in Christ have been delivered from the dominance of sin, from the mastery of sin, from the slavery under sin's control, because Christ has condemned sin. In other words, Christ has set its punishment, brought about its judgment. It's a great, great truth.

And how did God do it? Look at verse 3. We're just going to close in a second. He did it — this is so good — "in the flesh." What does that mean? It means this: That God condemned sin by becoming man. The flesh here is the body, the human nature of Jesus Christ. And Jesus literally in His own death executed sin's power. Tremendous, tremendous truth. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He did what Genesis 3 said He would do, He put a fatal blow on the head of Satan. When He died on the cross He literally took over the power from sin on behalf of His people. That's why the cross is so important to us. It was in the flesh of Christ that He condemned sin. Therefore to those of us who are in Christ, to those of us who are united with Christ, the power of sin is broken, the penalty of sin is paid. And sin is destroyed in the sense that it has any hold on us, that it has any power over us that we must yield to, that it has any claim on us that we must pay a penalty. That's all been broken, all broken.

In John 12, and I'll draw this to a close. In John 12, as the Lord was looking forward to His cross and His death, verse 31, He said this, looking at the cross and putting it in the now tense, He said this, "Now is the judgment of this world." What did He mean in that statement in John 12:31, now is the judgment of this world? He went on in the same verse to say this, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out." In other words, He said, when I go to the cross and I am lifted up on the cross that is the judgment on this evil system. When I am lifted on the cross, that is the judgment on its evil leader, Satan. In other words, in His death He condemned Satan. In His death He condemned sin. He assigned them to doom. Great thought, great thought.

So Jesus in the flesh bore the fury of God's wrath and in so doing assigned sin to final destruction and broke its power over us. Now back up with me. Verse 1, there is therefore now no condemnation why? For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death that would condemn us. How is it that we could have been made free? Well, for what the law couldn't 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."

In other words, it wasn't what we did, it was what God and Christ did for us. Beloved, there is no condemnation. I rejoice in that. I am as secure as Christ is secure in Him and in His righteousness. And all, not because of me, I couldn't do it. The law was good, my flesh was corrupt, and so I couldn't keep the law. But Christ came in an uncorrupted flesh, fulfilled entirely and totally and completely the law of God to show His own holiness. And then condemned sin in His own death and destroyed its power. And that's why Paul says, "Sin has no dominion over you."

You say, "But I still sin." But you don't have to, it isn't your master. That's why it's so stupid to yield to it because its power over you has been broken. And even if you do, bless God, there will never be any what? Condemnation, because Christ has borne all that.

Now that doesn't even begin to get into verse 3. Can you believe that? We haven't even talked about God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin and what that means. Nor have we talked about the tremendous truth of verse 4. But we will next Lord's day. Let's pray together.

I'd like you to just spend a moment in silent prayer before the Lord and say thanks. This is a passage that's hard, in a sense, to preach because it's familiar ground. Not saying anything that people haven't heard, it's a very familiar passage. And I guess in my heart the fear is that we've heard this so much and we know the message of the gospel so well that we become indifferent. And if our hearts are not thrilled and excited and lifted up to anthems of praise then it just shows how commonplace the utterly uncommon can become. And so you who are sinful, along with me, spend a moment thanking God that there's no condemnation, in spite of us and because of Christ.

And I trust that in your heart you're expressing your thanks to God. This is only the beginning, folks, no condemnation. The sequel comes in verse 4. It's not only what God has done for us in the negative, removing judgment, it's what He's done for us in the positive, giving us the ability to fulfill His law. O how marvelous, and we'll see that next time.

Father, I just commit all of us to You and this great truth to our hearts. And I pray that everyone here would know what it is to be out from under judgment because they have obeyed the law of the gospel and been made free, free forever in Christ from the law of sin and death. Not that it's anything they could do but the law that could have made us righteous was weakened by our flesh. But Christ, in the flesh, broke sin's power and gave us that gift of freedom. How thankful we are, how we bless Your name. We ask it in the name of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2017 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).