

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

Free from Judgment, Part 3

Scripture: Romans 8:3-4

Code: 45-56

We're going to look at the Word of God tonight, Romans chapter 8 in our ongoing study of Paul's great epistle to the Romans. And we return to the rich text of chapter 8 verses 1 through 4. And I guess there's something in me that wants to stay here and never leave because it's such a marvelous, marvelous passage. Let me read it to you again as a setting for 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 we've divided the passage into four parts. And we've been working our way through those parts for a couple of weeks now. First of all there is the reality, the great reality of no condemnation in verse 1. And we've been looking at that great reality, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," and the truth as we have noted is simply that, to those who are in Christ, joined to Him by saving faith, there is no condemnation. That is they will never be judged, they will never be punished ultimately for their sin for the punishment for their sin has been borne by Christ and they in Him have paid the price and risen to walk in newness of life. So by being in Jesus Christ we are exempt from just and final judgment on sin.

Now let me remind you that though we will never be ultimately judged for sin, we will be chastened for it. There is a refining process as we've been saying, there is a sense in which the Lord chastens us, Hebrews 12 says, to bring us to maturity to do His perfect work in us. But that's the only thing that we will know in terms of chastening for sin for the ultimate final penalty for our sin has already been paid by Jesus Christ. And because we are in Him as Romans 6 said we have died that death and risen to newness of life. And even though we have the presence of sin in our flesh, as Romans 7 has said, and even though the Lord may chasten us for the sins we commit, we will never be recipients of the final judgment on sin that results in eternal condemnation, for Christ has paid that penalty. O what a glorious truth. That's the reality of these four verses.

Now the reason that follows the reality is given in verse 2. Here is the reason that is true, the reason there's no condemnation, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." And we said that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus refers to the gospel,

the gospel which is energized to us by the Holy Spirit, brings us to life in Christ Jesus and therefore we are set free from the power, the authority, the dominion and the sovereign mastery of sin which leads to death. We have been freed from it by the law that is really the gospel that comes to us through the Holy Spirit.

And I would just remind you that the gospel is a law. By law the Apostle means something that is binding on us, something that makes demands of us, something that has inherent in it commands with consequences for misbehavior and rejection. And the gospel is a law. It is the command, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved...and he that believeth not is...what?...condemned," John 3 says. So there is a law in the gospel. And it is a law just as much as any other law God gave. You believe it, you will be blessed. And you fail to obey it and you will be condemned. And we have received the law and the law of the gospel here is called "the law of the Spirit," the Spirit who gives life in Christ Jesus in the message of salvation.

And so we have no condemnation, that's the reality. The reason for it, because we have been set free from the punishment of sin and death by life given to us in Christ through the gospel brought to bear upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit. How did that happen? The route comes in verse 3. The reality leads to the reason and to the route. What route...what way did God do this? Well no condemnation came through justification and justification came through substitution. And so the key word of verse 3 is substitution. "And 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 talking about substitution. That's the route God used to bring about justification in order that He might grant us no condemnation...substitution, Christ took our place.

Now notice just very briefly this verse again because we sort of camped on it last time and I don't want to beg the issue, but it says "what the law could not do." Now the law could convict of sin, couldn't it? Chapter 7, when the law came along sin revived and I died. The law shows me how sinful I am. The law can convict of sin. The law can reveal sin. The law can stir up sin. Wherever you have a prohibition, you have a potential for stirring up sin. The law came along and said "don't do this and don't do that and don't do this and don't do that" and when we looked at our lives and saw we did all those things, the law then stirred up our awareness of sin. So the law can stir up sin and condemn the sinner.

But he says here in verse 3, "What the law could not do..." and what the law could not do is given at the end of the verse, it could not condemn sin. It can condemn the sinner but it can't condemn sin. It can devastate the sinner but it can't eliminate the problem, you understand? The law can only reveal sin, it can't destroy it. And what we need ultimately is that sin should be destroyed, right? And that is the promise of God that in the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, the death blow against sin was given. And Christ condemned or doomed to destruction sin and the law could not do that.

Even the religious ritual of the Old Testament, the religious ceremony couldn't do that. In the book of Hebrews it says in a couple of places this in effect, in Hebrews 9 verse 9 it says that the things in the tabernacle and the gifts and sacrifices could not make him that did the service perfect. You see, even the sacrifices couldn't ultimately remove sin. They couldn't do it. They could only symbolize the one and only person who could. In chapter 10 and verse 1 of Hebrews, very important statement made in 10:1, "For the law...and skip the little parenthetical statement...the law...jump down about three lines...can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make those who come to it perfect." The law could never make us perfect. The law could never eliminate our sin. All it can do is point up the sin and therefore in pointing up the sin it shows us that we have the need of what? Of a Savior. But the law can't do anything to destroy sin. It can only point it out.

Look at verse 4 of chapter 10, "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should remove sins." In other words, it can't be done by the law. The law makes requirements on us, right? We're talking about God's divine law, God's standards of morality, the moral law. It makes requirements of us. It says don't lie, don't cheat, don't steal, don't bear false witness, don't commit adultery, don't commit fornication, don't take any other gods to yourself beside the true God, and on and on and on. There are many ethical and moral laws that God has given that reveal His unchanging nature. And the law makes requirements of corrupt flesh. And we saw that in Romans 7 the Christian really has a battle with that because on the one hand he says the law of God is holy, just and good, and on the other hand he says but I see another law in my members and that's the law of sin and it battles against the law of God. And he cries out about his own wretchedness.

So the law makes requirements on corrupt flesh that can't deliver. Oh we can by God's grace in part, but not in whole. So that no matter how good God's law is and no matter how wonderful His ceremonies might be, they cannot get rid of sin ultimately. And so what happens is that the law becomes to us a manifestor of our sin which is to drive us to the Savior who alone can bring judgment on sin. And that's what this verse is saying, look at it again, the beginning, "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...and if I may add it did...and what did He do?...He condemned sin, and that the law could not do." And therefore we go right back to what we've been learning in the book of Romans that no man shall be justified by the deeds of the law because the law cannot eliminate sin...very important. But God condemned sin. And it means not only that He pronounced a sentence on it, it means that He consigned it to doom and destruction. And it was in the death of Jesus Christ that sin was ultimately defeated because, you see, sin gathered up all its power, threw it at Christ and lost. When He burst out of the grave three days later, sin could not hold its prey, could it? And it showed..it was shown that it was defeated. And so God through Christ condemned the sin that condemned us. And all of us who are in Jesus Christ become beneficiaries of the judgment of sin on the cross of Christ which has released us from the penalty of sin, it has released us from the power of sin, and someday will release us from the presence of sin. What a wonderful thought.

And so we conclude that at Calvary a fatal blow was struck against sin and that's what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 15 when he says, "O death, where is thy sting? O death, where is thy victory?" The sting of death is sin, the strength of sin is the law, "But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through...whom?...our Lord Jesus Christ." Great thought.

How did God do this? Look back at verse 3, let's pick it up where we left off last time. How did He do this? Look what it says. "He condemned sin...the end of the verse...in the flesh." He did it in the flesh. He didn't do it from heaven. He did it from earth. He didn't do it as God, He did it as man. He did it in the flesh, that is in the body, in the human nature, in the flesh of Jesus Christ. When Jesus went to the cross God put all of the sentence of sin upon Him and He was executed for all the sins of all the people who will ever walk on the face of the earth. And He bore all the weight of God's judgment on sin. And He defeated it. Sin came at Him with everything that hell could throw and sin lost. And so it was in the flesh, that is in the humanness of the Savior that sin was defeated in His death on the cross.

In John 6:51 I call your attention to a marvelous verse, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven, if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever...listen to this...and the bread that I will give is My flesh which I will give for the life of the world." You see, God condemned sin in the flesh of Jesus Christ who gave His flesh, His humanness, His body on the cross. That's why when we come to the Lord's table we take the bread, isn't it? And we remember that He gave His flesh for us. And so sin was destroyed at the cross. A fatal blow was struck. O God is giving sin yet a time to run its course but the sentence is already in motion and the doom and destruction will come at the Second Coming of the Savior when He gathers together all those that are evil and casts them out of His presence forever and death and hell and all the rest are cast into the lake of fire forever and sin will be eternally eliminated from God's holy presence. But the doom of sin is spelled on the cross of Jesus Christ.

So for those who know Jesus Christ, sin is condemned. Boy, that's such good news...that ultimately we're going to know victory over sin. And this life we live is so brief anyway that we're going to be able to spend eternity without any bother from sin because it's been condemned.

I just want to draw you to a passage in the Old Testament that we cannot ignore, it's Isaiah 53. It speaks of the beauty and majesty and wonder of the incarnate Christ taking upon Himself our sin. In Isaiah 53 and verse 4, it says, "That He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted...and then this marvelous, marvelous verse...He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement for our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way. And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the

slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment and who shall declare His generation for He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of My people was He stricken."

Verse 11, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many...here it is...for He shall bear their iniquities." Now that's the Old Testament look at what Christ did on the cross. He took our place, condemned sin in His flesh on behalf of our unable...of our enable flesh.

In John 1 where Jesus shows up where John the Baptist is, you remember that great statement verse 29 where John says, "Behold the Lamb of God who...what?...taketh away the sins of the world." On the cross He condemned sin. Visited it with a divine penalty.

Now look back at the verse again, verse 3, there are several statements in this verse that are so profound we could spend weeks discussing the profundity but I just want to give you just the general understanding and we'll go on to verse 4. "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son..." That phrase "sending His own Son" is the essence and the heart of the gospel because it says to us that Jesus Christ is not merely a man. He is God's own Son, sent from God. And this is repeated throughout the gospels as Jesus is introduced to us. In John chapter 1, for example, in that great testimony to the identity of Christ, it says in verse 14, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory and it was the same glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." When we saw Him we recognized that His glory was the same glory as that possessed by God.

And then verse 18, "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath revealed Him." In other words, if you want to see what God is like, look at Christ. And later on Jesus said to the disciples in John 14, "Have I been so long with you and you do not know Me? If you've seen Me you've seen...whom?...the Father."

And over and over in the epistles you have a statement made many, many times, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." And what that statement is saying over and over is that God and Christ are of the same essence. It is not talking about a phileofather and son relationship in the sense that it emphasizes companionship, but rather in the sense that it emphasizes essence, the same nature, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And you remember when Jesus said, "My Father works and I work," in John, they took up stones to stone Him because He was making Himself...what?...equal with God. And that great statement, "God sending His own Son" is to say this, beloved, that Jesus Christ proceeds from the Father, is in the bosom of the Father, declares the Father, reveals the Father, because He's one with the Father...in essence.

There's a second great statement in verse 3, "And when He sent His own Son," and this is a very masterful statement by the Holy Spirit, "He sent Him in the likeness of sinful flesh." That is a very astute statement. If it had said this, "He sent Him in the likeness of flesh," it would have been heresy because Jesus wasn't in the likeness of flesh, He was flesh. But here it says He was in homoioima, the likeness of sinful flesh. If it had said He's in the likeness of flesh, we would have said, "Well, He's something different, sort of like flesh." And if He had said, "He sent His own Son in sinful flesh," we would have said, "Well then He was a sinner like us," so He had to guard the statement and so in the marvelous omniscience of the Spirit He uses what we call hapax legomena(?), a statement never used anywhere else in the Bible, He was in the likeness of sinful flesh, He was fully fleshed but only like flesh in the sense that He wasn't sinful. Similar but not exact is what it means. And the Holy Spirit is very very precise that we not think Jesus to be sinful.

Hebrews 7:26 describes Him as a high priest who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners...holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners. He came in flesh but only in similarity to sinful flesh cause He knew no sin. The wondrous accuracy of the Word of God.

So Paul beautifully guards the sinlessness of Christ. He shows that when the Father sent the Son into the world He sent Him in a manner that brought Him into the closest possible relationship to sinful humanity and yet short of Him becoming sinful Himself. He was never a sinner but isn't it interesting how close He got? He was counted as a sinner, wasn't He? And on the cross He actually became sin for us who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Great truth. Hebrews 9:28 says "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many...to bear the sins of many."

There's a final phrase in the verse that needs our attention. God sending His own Son, that is the one who was one with Himself, of the same essence and nature, in the likeness of sinful flesh, that is fully flesh but only like sinful flesh, and who though unlike sinful flesh ultimately became the bearer of all the sins of all sinful flesh. "And He sent Him for sin." Now if you ever want to know why Christ came, just underline those two words...that's why He came...for sin. He didn't come to be a good example, didn't come to show us what love was all about...although He did both of those. He came for sin. He came...now mark it...in Jewish terms, Old Testament terms, as a sin offering, didn't He? And you remember when He talked about His death He said, "For this cause came I into the world." John 12, He outlined all of that. He came to die. He came for sin, for the purpose of dealing with sin, for the purpose of being the sin offering.

You know what would have happened if Jesus hadn't died? If He would have come into the world and just taught us and told us God's rules, showed us how much God loved us and given us an example of the way to live, you know what He would have been? He would have been another thing just like the law, all He would have done was condemn us again. Because if He had come into the world and just lived a perfect life, all we do is look at Him, look at us and see how imperfect we are.

And it wouldn't do us anymore good than the law did. We'd be stuck in the same thing. We would be needing a redeemer who was not around. So it was not enough for Jesus to come and you cannot approach Him with any patronizing foolishness about Him being a good example because we had a whole bunch of that in the law and it didn't do a thing for us...but damn our souls to hell. And when Christ came He wasn't about to reiterate the same condemning force of the law, He came and showed us the perfect standard and then He died on the cross to make provision for our inability to meet that standard. So He came for sin...for sin...not just to be another condemner but to be one who freed us from condemnation.

It's a glorious work the Son did, isn't it? God sent the Son to do that. William Haldain(?) the great commentator of many years ago said, "The Father assumes the place of judge against His own Son in order to become the Father of those who were His enemies. The Father condemns the Son of His love that He may absolve the children of His wrath," end quote.

So you see in the death of Christ love and justice as He is punished for us and in the process punishes sin. Great truth.

There's another thought here and I want you to just think it through with me. There is so much theology here and I don't want to turn this into a seminary class. But Romans is a lot like this, you know, you've learned by now. I mean, it isn't just hearts and flowers, folks, you've got to screw down your brain a little bit with this book. But it's rich.

I want to just add another thought. Jesus also demonstrated to us perfect humanity...perfect humanity. He defeated Satan every time he came. He defeated temptation every time it came. Every trial, every temptation that sin brought at Him, Jesus Christ defeated. And He denied therefore sin's right to have any place in the normal human life of a truly restored regenerated child of God. He showed us that sin has no dominion over us by demonstrating that. Sin's mastery over human flesh was broken when it encountered Jesus Christ and it was defeated. You see, every human being that had ever lived had been assaulted by sin and every time they lost, every one of them. There's been only one human being on the face of this earth who ever lived who was assaulted by sin and never fell...and that was Jesus Christ. Sin met Him and tried Him and was utterly defeated. Therefore sin was compelled to yield its supremacy in the flesh to the victor and Christ therefore became the sovereign over sin.

You say, "What does that mean?" That just means that you in Christ can experience the same power with which He defeated sin in His life to defeat sin in your own life. The law couldn't do that. The law cannot enable a man to overcome sin, the indwelling Christ can. It's a great thought. And so I say to you as a Christian, if you sin you have no excuse.

You say, "But I'm weak." I know, and you're going to do it. But it's still not necessary because the victory is available in Jesus Christ. You say, "Well that's kind of a tough tension because on the one hand I'm Romans 7, I can't help it because it's my flesh and my humanness." And that's true generally. But the specific sins are because you yield. And at those points the strength of Christ is available to you, He promises that. For the Bible says, "Greater is He that is you than He that is in the world."

And so we are grateful that we not only have the death of Christ but we have the life of Christ in its perfection being lived through us. And I think that might be what's behind the marvelous truth of Romans 5:10 that if we have been saved by His death, we shall be being kept saved by His life. There is a great victory over sin in His death and there's a continuous victory over sin because He ever lives to intercede for us and empower us for that victory.

So the reality of the passage is no condemnation. The reason, justification. The route, substitution. Now finally, the result...verse 4, and the result is sanctification. The result, and there are four great theological words...condemnation, justification, substitution and sanctification. Look at verse 4. "That...that's in order that...with the result that...to the end that...with the goal that...for the purpose that...the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." This is so good. All week I've asked the Lord to help to say what I feel about this marvelous verse.

What is verse 4 talking about? Well the first statement is enough to just knock you over. "In order that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," you see the very thing we couldn't do now in Christ...what?...we can do. This is all about sanctification, that means holiness.

Now what does he mean, the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us? Not justifying righteousness, not talking about when we were justified, when the righteousness of Christ was given to us in our salvation. No. He's not talking about saving righteousness, gospel righteousness, redemptive righteousness. He's talking about the righteousness of the...what?...the law. And what is that? The right things in God's moral law. Now that Christ lives in me and now that I am in Christ and I have available His power and His Holy Spirit in whom I walk, it is possible now that the moral standards of God's law can be fulfilled in me. You see that? It's great.

You see, it goes all the way back to God's basic desire, God wants to produce His righteous law in you and He can't do it until you get saved. So you can't do it by just giving you the law, all the law does is damn you. You have to have a Savior who gives you His righteousness, pays the penalty for your sin, puts in you His Spirit and then comes the capacity to fulfill God's law. That's why apart from salvation and apart from Christ, even the good things we try to do, says Isaiah, are filthy rags because they're done apart from any capacity for righteousness.

Now it's very important, people, to notice verse 4. Cause you say, "Well I'm not condemned anymore...I have...I'm in Christ, no condemnation, I'm justified. Christ has taken my place and now I'm free because of salvation to do whatever I want." No, no, no. You weren't saved to do whatever you want, you were saved so that God could put in you His Spirit and to enable you to do what? Fulfill the law. You see, the law doesn't change. You say, "Well I'm sure glad I'm not under law." Yes you are. You're under law. You say, "I'm under grace." That's right, you're under both, just like everybody else who has ever lived.

You say, "Well isn't the Old Testament all law?" Hardly, because if it was nobody was saved. And if you remember correctly the Bible says Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness, that Noah was justified by grace. Now everybody's under law and grace but you have you to be saved by grace in order to keep God's law, you understand that? So it works kind of this way, law damns you, grace saves you so you can keep the law. And now that you've been redeemed you haven't been redeemed to do wrong, you've been redeemed for the first time in your life to do right. You weren't saved so you could do wrong and not worry about it, you were saved for the first time in your life so you could do right. That's what it's saying.

It bothers me that people come along and say, "Well I'm under grace so what's the difference?" You don't understand the purpose. It says right in verse 4, "The reason that Christ did what He did was that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." Paul has in mind that God wants to reproduce in you His holy standard. You know, this is a welcome message for the person coming out of Romans 7, I think. Cause in Romans 7, you know, you're saying to yourself...the law is holy, just and good and how I delight in the law and I long to do the law...and you feel like David, remember, in Psalm 119, you cry out...O how I love Thy law, O Thy statutes, O Thy ordinances, O Thy testimonies, O Thy commandments...he goes on ad infinitum in that thing for 176 verses, saying the same thing in every verse. But all through that he has this sort of underlying deal...but I'm really unable to do it all, Lord...and it's so sad. And you come to Romans 7, you hear the same deal. You know, I look at my life and I love Your law and I want to do Your law but I just find this other law warring against the law of my mind and it's the law of sin in my flesh and I just don't seem to be able to do it, O wretched man that I am. And then comes this wonderful verse in 8:1 which says, "Well even in spite of that there's no condemnation, Christ has paid the ultimate penalty and because He has in Christ He's given you the ability by the power of the Holy Spirit to produce the good law in you."

So don't stay in the wretchedness of chapter 7, get over to the glory of chapter 8 verse 4 and realize that in the power of the Spirit of God you can see God's law fulfilled not perfectly, not perfectly because you still have the flesh, but enough to give you a sense of joy, right? And you know what the joy in my life is? And I think it ought to be the joy in the life of every believer. It isn't that I've reached perfection by any stretch of the imagination, as you well know. It's not that I have reached perfection. But it is that I see in my life the decreasing frequency of sin and the increasing frequency of

righteousness. And that is a cause for rejoicing. That is a cause for rejoicing.

I was in Washington D.C. and a man from Baltimore came up to me and he said, he grabbed my hand, he shook my hand, he wanted me to autograph his Bible. And I said, "As long as you understand I didn't write it, I'll do that," you know. So I autographed his...but people back there are big on autographing Bibles. And I enjoyed doing that, it was all right...to write my name and a little message and a verse, and just a reminder to pray for me. And he said, "You know," he said, he hugged his Bible, you know, and he said, "O I love the Word of God and I listen to the tapes and I listen to the radio program," and he said, "I just study," and he said, "I'm growing but..." he said, "O," he said, "would you pray for me?" He said, "My name is Dale," and he said, "O," he said, "I just sin too much." He said, "What am I going to do about it?"

And I kind of smiled and I said, "Just grow and just yield a little at a time to the Spirit of God. You aren't what you ought to be?" "No." "You aren't what you used to be?" "No." I said, "You're in progress." And that's right. But we can have the law of God fulfilled in us. Don't you ever think for a minute that we were saved to be free to do anything we want. That isn't the idea at all.

Now look at the rest of verse 4 for a minute. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." May I suggest to you that that is not a command? That is not a call to walk in the Spirit, that is a statement of fact. It can be no other thing in the context of this verse nor in the grammar that it's indicated. It is not calling us to walk in the Spirit. It says we do. Those of us who have been redeemed are those who have entered into the sphere of the Spirit of God.

By the way, he goes on to make that abundantly clear from verse 5 through 13. But in verse 9 particularly, "But ye are not in the flesh but in the...what?...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." What he says there, if you don't have the Holy Spirit you're not a Christian, right? So if you're a Christian you have what? The Holy Spirit. So what he's saying is you're not in the flesh but you're in the Spirit if you have the Holy Spirit. So if you have the Holy Spirit you're in the Spirit, and if you're in the Spirit guess where you're walking? You're walking in the Spirit. It's a statement of fact in this context. And it is a fact that as a Christian you walk in the Spirit. Now the word "walk" is the most ancient word used in the Bible for the bent of one's life. It indicates the bent of one's life.

It is used that way in many places, and I'm not going to take the time to go over them all. Luke 1:6 for example says, talking about Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, they were both righteous, walking in all the commandments and ordinance of the Lord blameless. They were walking in the law of God. It was the bent of their life. It was the commitment of their life.

In Ephesians, I'll just give you two more illustrations, 4:17, it says, "This I say therefore and testify in the Lord that you henceforth walk not in the vanity of your mind as the other Gentiles walk." In other words, you're Christians, you don't have a bent the way they're bent...you're different.

In 1 John 1:7, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." There he says Christians walk in the light, and non-Christians walk in the what? In the darkness. We've gone into that in the past.

So walk is the bent of life. Our bent is toward the light, toward the righteousness, toward the ordinances of God, toward the commandments, toward the Holy Spirit, that's all it's saying. And now you can go back to Romans chapter 8. And what he is saying is, "Listen, you who are in Christ can see the law fulfilled in you because the bent of your life is toward the Holy Spirit." Is that right? Sure it is. And if it's not, verse 9 says you're not even a Christian. Very important. The bent of the life of a Christian is toward the Spirit.

Now let me say something. If the bent of your life isn't toward the things of the Spirit, guess what? You're not a Christian. That's what the Bible says.

Now the upshot of all of this is that God has redeemed you, put you in Christ, that is not just forensic, that is not just some articulated fact, that is a reality. You are in Christ not only on the books, but you're in Christ in the sense that Christ is planted in your heart to live in you. And He is in you and you are in Him. And He's there in the presence of His Spirit. And as you live in the Spirit and you have the bent of your life toward the Spirit, you will see the Spirit produce in you the righteousness of God's excellent moral law that is holy, just and good. Now that is a statement of fact in this passage, not open to speculation, nor is it an injunction to do that. It is a statement of fact.

Now let me pursue this for just a moment so that you understand this. When God saved us He saved us unto righteousness. You remember when the Sermon on the Mount was preached by our Lord He said that no one would enter His Kingdom unless He had a righteousness that exceeded the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. The point being this, that righteousness was essential to salvation. And He went on in that sermon, of course, to point out that citizens of the Kingdom are those who hunger and thirst after what? After righteousness. And they mourn over their sin, don't they? Matthew 5:4. And they are willing to suffer for the sake of righteousness, chapter 5 verse 10. In fact, the Lord said in Matthew 5:48, "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect." You see, God has a standard of righteousness. And let me say this very simply, nothing...nothing is nearer to the heart of God than His own moral excellence. And He wants that for His creatures. And He wants it not only for them in the sense of their position or that is the imputed righteousness of Christ that covers them, He wants it for them in terms of their behavior as well. And He wants a people, it says in Ephesians, who are holy and without blame before Him, Ephesians 1:4. Isn't that great? Who are holy and without blame before Him.

You say, "How am I going to be holy and without blame? How is that going to be possible?" Well first of all it's a positional thing, God gives you the holiness of Christ, the righteousness of Christ. And then it's a practical thing. He wants you to live up to that righteousness. I used to say this and I probably haven't said it in a lot of years but the Christian life is becoming what you are. That's what it is, becoming what you are. It's living out in your daily practice what you are in your relationship to God. You've been given positionally the righteousness of Jesus Christ, now you need to act like it. You have the status, you have the standing, it's like if you were made a king. It would be one thing to be crowned, it would be something else to act like one, wouldn't it? It's like we say to your kids...now you're old enough to be a little lady, and it's true, she's a little lady...but we say to them, "Now it's time you started to act like it." Same thing is true in the Christian life.

God not only wants a bride who is positionally able to sort of mirror His perfection, but He wants one who practically can reflect His holy perfection as well. So may I suggest this to you as over against what we hear all over the country today...and I was asked this question so many times this week...God is not offering happiness as the objective of the gospel. Did you get that? God is not offering happiness as the objective of the gospel, He is offering holiness...not happiness. As someone said, "He is not the Jolly Spirit, He is the Holy Spirit." And whoever is pure in heart will be happy. Happy are the pure in heart. But the objective of the gospel is not your happiness, it is your holiness so that you may reflect through all eternity the utter glory and holiness of our infinitely holy God.

Walter Chantry writes in a little book entitled God's Righteous Kingdom these words, "When preachers speak as if God's chief desire is for men to be happy, then multitudes with problems flock to Jesus. Those who have ill health, marital troubles, financial frustration and loneliness look to the Lord for the desires of their hearts. Each conceives of joy as being found in health, peace, prosperity or companionship. But in search of illusive happiness they are not savingly joined to Jesus Christ. Unless men will be holy God is determined that they shall be forever miserable and damned," end quote.

Now if you think he's really got out on a limb, then let's put it in God's own words. "Follow holiness without which no man shall see the Lord," Hebrews 12:14. You see, true salvation comes because a person is compelled by his own sin. To hunger and thirst after righteousness out of the mourning over sin and in the pursuit of righteousness knows he needs a Savior because he cannot keep the excellent moral law of God and he needs somebody to deliver him from his own inabilities.

Back in Romans 1 for a moment...16, "For I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Salvation, you say...salvation...salvation from what? Being saved from what? "For in it is the righteousness of God." Stop right there. In what? In salvation. What is God saving us from? Unrighteousness.

What is He saving us to? Righteousness...righteousness. Salvation is all about righteousness, all about being right with God, all about obeying His right law.

Paul says, I had the Jewish system down pat, Philippians 3, I looked at the whole thing and called it dung...that I may win Christ and be found in Him not having mine own righteousness which is by the law but that which is through the faith of Christ the righteousness which is of God by faith. Listen, saving faith is to produce in you not only positional righteousness but the outworking of a behavioral righteousness.

You want to hear it in Peter's words? First Peter 1:15, "As He who has called you is holy, so be ye holy...here it comes...in all manner of life." That's it. Be ye holy not only in your position before God, but in all your manner of life. We are saved unto righteousness.

Listen, when the sinner leaves the courts of God and has received God's pure justice with a pardon for sin by virtue of Christ's sacrifice, God's not finished with him. He has received a pardon for sin but as he goes out the courtroom door, God hands him the code of life and says, "Now you also have in you the Spirit of God whose power will enable you to fulfill that code." And that's why we read this in Titus 2:11, "For the grace of God that brings salvation...we all understand that, the grace of God brings salvation, what for?...to teach us." Oh, you mean salvation is to teach us? That's right. What's it to teach us? Verse 12, "Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lust we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age." Did you get it? We have been redeemed unto godliness. We have been redeemed unto holiness. We have been redeemed unto righteousness.

And that's why, you see, we have to go beyond just talking about salvation. We have to talk about fulfilling God's holy moral law.

Now I want to take you to a passage that you might have been sort of thinking about already, Galatians chapter 5. Because there is a verse here, and I don't want it to confuse you. Galatians 5:25, and Paul says something here that might confuse you if I don't explain it to you briefly. He says in this, verse 24, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts," that's not a command that's a fact, right? The bent of your life is no longer the affections of the flesh, the lusts of the flesh. The bent of your life is toward Christ. And he says it another way in 25, "If we live in the Spirit," and we do, don't we? Then comes a command, "Let us also walk in the Spirit." And here Paul uses the word "walk" in the practical sense. In Romans he used it in the positional sense. We are those who walk in the Spirit. That's what he said in Romans 8. Now he calls us to walk in the Spirit.

You shouldn't be confused by that. It's two different books, two different chapters, two different emphases. But it does point up something very important. When we're saved we do walk in the

Spirit. But you can't just back off and say, "Well, it's all right, I'll do it automatically." Right? While it is true that we walk in the Spirit, it is also commanded that we walk in the Spirit. And that's part of that wonderful paradox of Christian living that says now that I'm redeemed I will manifest the life of the Spirit, but that doesn't mean we're not told to be filled with the Spirit, does it? Now that I am saved I will do God's law, that doesn't mean we're not commanded to do it, does it? And now that I'm saved I do walk in the Spirit, that doesn't mean we're not commanded to walk in the Spirit. No, you see, all the things we will do we're told to do. Because it is the combination in some mystical way that only God can resolve of His sovereign glorious saving grace and Spirit in us doing it and yet with our own will to do it. And so we were saved to be in the Spirit and we are in the Spirit. We were saved to be bent toward doing the things of the Spirit and we do that. But we need to keep doing that and do it consciously and do it willingly.

So it's as if Romans 8:5 describes every Christian who by the bent of his life walks in the Spirit and Galatians 5:25 takes it from being a fact to being a responsibility. Now let me give you a very important theological truth. Everything that is a fact is also a responsibility. It is a fact that if I'm a Christian I will commune with the living God, right? It's also a responsibility that I have a prayer life, true? It is a fact that if I'm a Christian the Spirit of God will teach me. It is also a responsibility that I read the Word of God so that He has the truth there to teach me. It is a fact that I walk in the Spirit, it is a responsibility for me to do that also. It is a fact that if I'm a Christian the Spirit will produce fruit through me and I am yet given the responsibility to bear much fruit. And that is the incredible paradox of the divine tension between what God does in the life of a believer and what the believer must be willing to do in the power of the Spirit within him. It's a great thought.

So back to Romans 8 and let's wrap up our study of this. He says in verse 4, "The righteousness of the law can now be fulfilled in us because the bent of our life is not after the flesh." The flesh is there, but that's not the focus anymore, the Spirit is. And as we obey the Spirit, we find ourselves fulfilling the law of God.

Now somebody might say, "Well that puts us under bondage, my friend. This puts us under legal bondage." No. Think of it this way. God, I think in the original creation of Adam and Eve, had loving principles which He desired for His creation. You see there were really no barriers in those days and there was a loving relationship, a loving desire going back and forth between God and His creatures. But those loving desires that they shared together through the Fall became commands and they became hard and negative and prohibitive. They became rules and regulations with condemnation built in. But I believe through the gospel they are sort of de-falled, if you will. And they lose their harshness and they lose their negativeness, and they all of a sudden become again the sweet desires of God, sweet to the taste of His child who now walks and talks in the sweet communion something like Adam and God knew before he fell. So it is not bondage. And that's what the Psalmist means when he says, "O how I love Thy law." There's no bitterness to it for the true believer. There's no bondage. It is simply the expression of loving communion between a soul and

God.

So in conclusion, the Christian is not free from commands. He is bound by them. But they are sweet communion and they are a bondage of love. And he is able for the first time to keep them because the bent of his life is toward the Spirit of God who is implanted in him. And that Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and Christ is the one who conquered sin and was never fallen. And therefore in Him is that same strength. And Christ is the one who fulfilled all the law of God and through the believer can do the same.

St. Augustine said it a long time ago, I'm not the first one. He said this, "Grace was given for one reason, that the law might be fulfilled." We weren't saved to happiness, we were saved to...what?...holiness. But may I quote the chapter in my book on Kingdom Living? "Happy are the holy, for they shall see God."

There was a missionary, a pioneer missionary by the name of Ludwig Nomenson(?). He went to the Batak(?) tribesmen. And he was told that he could stay with these tribesmen for two years. And during that time he studied the customs and traditions that ruled the people. And at the end of that time the chief asked him if there was anything in the Christian religion that differed from the traditions of the Batak people. The chief said this, "We too have laws like you that say we must not steal, that say we must not take our neighbor's wife, nor lie." And the missionary wanting to point up the difference thought for a moment and said, "My Master gives the power to keep His laws."

The chief was startled. He said, "Can you teach my people that?" He said, "No...no, I cannot teach your people that but God can give them the power if they ask for it and believe in His Son." That missionary Nomenson was allowed then to stay an extra six months during which time he taught just one thing, the power of God through Christ. At the end of that time the chief said, "Stay and stay permanently, your law is better than ours. Ours tells us what we ought to do," says the biographer, "your God says, `Come, I will walk with you and give you strength to do it.'"

Would you believe there are now 450 thousand Batak Christians who walk in the Spirit and fulfill the law of God? If not in perfection, in ever increasing sanctification. Let's bow in prayer.

We thank You, our Father, that the Word of God has been such sweet music to our ears, rich taste to our tongues. We are so grateful that we are in Christ. Thank You for loving us, thank You for saving us unto holiness that the righteousness that You long for, the moral excellence which is so near to Your heart would not be lost and never able to be fulfilled by Your creatures which were made for that but through Christ and His Spirit we are able to fulfill that good law. Not like we wish, but enough by Your power to give You some of the glory due Your name. No condemnation. Thank You for that. Justification made it possible. Substitution of Jesus Christ made that justification possible that results in our sanctification, are continuing to be further and further set apart from the world unto you. Do

Your law through us and may we love it and love its fulfillment and know the happiness of holiness for Your glory, in Christ's name. Amen.

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