

Romans 8:1-9

No Condemnation

Has there been a time when a condemning thought ran through your mind, a thought that condemned your person? (If you are human, your answer should be “yes!”) Did you believe the thought? Did it cause you to feel discouraged and inadequate? If so, great news is on the horizon! Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection occurred that we might, along with many other things, realize that:

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

Thus, any thought that condemns your person is invalid and can be totally disregarded.

That Satan condemns the believer, the believer’s person, while the Holy Spirit condemns only the behavior of the believer when necessary, is crucial to comprehend. For instance, suppose I should tell a lie. On the heels of that lie, the power of sin will probably generate the thought, “I am nothing but a worthless liar” (note the first person pronoun “I”). And, moreover, it will do so in a voice, including accent and dialect, that sounds just like mine. It will condemn me, my person. The Holy Spirit, however, will say, “I hate lying, but you remain the apple of my eye.” A great difference exists between these two concepts. Romans 8:1 is wonderful ammunition against the power of sin’s schemes.

Unlike the King James and the New King James, we find that the New American Standard, the New International, the Phillips Translation, the Ryrie Study Bible, along with other versions, do not include the phrase “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:1 KJV)

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

Neither is this phrase found in the most ancient manuscripts accessible today. As a result, the more recent versions omit it, which is perfectly proper. Hence, the idea that condemnation awaits the New Testament believer who walks after the flesh (and sins) is ill founded. No believer is ever condemned by God, even in the midst of his worst state of disobedience. Yes, the behavior of the disobedient child of God is condemned by the Holy Spirit, but the believer is never condemned. Otherwise, the believer would be condemned by God each time sin is committed!

Because “*There is...now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 8:1), we have the freedom to deal with our acts of sin at the point of disobedience. No more putting them off. No more excuses. The Father is waiting for us to repent and confess so fellowship can be restored, not so He might forgive us—for we are already

forgiven. Many church saints put off confessing their sin because they wrongly believe that condemnation awaits them.

No condemnation awaits New Testament believers because they “*are in Christ Jesus.*” In fact, they are “*sealed in*” Christ (“*in Him*”) by means of “*the Holy Spirit*” (Ephesians 1:13). They are also in the Father (John 14:20):

“In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. (John 14:20)

How could anyone who has been “*sealed in*” God’s holy Son receive the Father’s condemnation? Impossible! Thus, “*in Christ*” and “*in Him*” are some of the most important words in all of Scripture. When you have “*spare*” time on your hands, encourage yourself by recording every instance in the New Testament where “*in Christ*” and “*in Him*” are employed. Also record what we have received through having been placed “*in Him.*” (For instance, 2Corinthians 5:17 states that we were made “*a new creature*” the instant we were sealed “*in Christ*”—after repenting and exercising faith while depraved.) For starters, read Romans 3:24, 6:23, 8:39, 1Corinthians 1:2, 4, 5, 2Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 1:3 and 2:6.

Because “*no condemnation*” (Romans 8:1) awaits the New Testament believer, no church saint will be present at the “*great white throne*” judgment of Revelation 20:11-15 (a subject addressed previously but meriting consideration here). In fact, no believer from throughout the ages will face that horrific sentencing. Only those who reject Christ’s free offer of salvation will be present, after which they are “*thrown into the lake of fire*” (Revelation 20:14-15). (How can anyone read these passages and believe in universal salvation—that all mankind will be saved?) Neither will any church saint face the sheep and goat judgment of Matthew 25:31-46, for the “*goats*” will be those Gentiles who refuse to support the Jews during the Tribulation—the church having been taken to heaven prior to the Tribulation. Church saints will face the judgment seat of Christ for the purpose of receiving rewards for deeds done in faith (1Corinthians 3:10-15), but no condemnation is associated with that judgment.

Set Free through Christ Jesus

Paul makes an extremely liberating statement in verse 2:

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

The word “*law*” means “*principle*” rather than Mosaic Law. Consequently, “*the [principle] of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the [principle, or power] of sin and of death.*” Certainly, those who walk by God’s “*Spirit*” are guaranteed deliverance from the principle (or power) of “*sin*” and its accompanying “*death.*” After all, they are “*in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 8:2), and Christ is in them (Galatians 2:20), Who is greater than anything “*the world*” can send their way (1John 4:4):

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. (1John 4:4)

Romans 8:3 makes an intriguing declaration:

“For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did; sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,” (Romans 8:3)

Paul clearly teaches that “*the Law*” cannot save a person from God’s condemnation—while the cross and Christ’s subsequent resurrection can. God sent His Son “*as an offering for sin*,” an event that removed our sin nature and forgave our sins once we exercised repentance and faith while depraved. This offering also released us from our enslavement to the power of sin. Thus, God “*condemned sin in the flesh*”—that is, the power of “*sin*” which dwells in the New Testament believer’s body (“*flesh*”—v.3). This truth fits perfectly with our previous observations.

The Power of God’s Spirit

“*The Law is holy*” (Romans 7:12) and cannot be kept through one’s own power, discipline, or strength. An amazing transformation occurs when we exercise repentance and faith and the Holy Spirit invades our spirit to make us new. Paul writes:

in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:4)

The Spirit of God, when released to control our lives, will empower us to walk a path consistent with the moral standard of the Law—without once requiring us to submit to the Law. (The New Testament believer has been released from the Law and lives under grace—Romans 6:14). God, in turn, receives all the credit and glory; we in the process learn the true meaning of life.

Walking According to the Flesh Versus the Spirit

Two phrases from Romans 8:4 are absolutely necessary to understand. The first phrase is “*walk according to the flesh*.” The second is “*walk...according to the Spirit*.” Both phrases refer to a particular state of a New Testament believer (these phrases are displayed graphically in Diagrams 7 and 8 in the Reference Section). The latter phrase refers to those times when we (as New Testament believers) allow the Spirit of God to positively energize the mind—which grants us the wisdom to properly operate the will (Diagram 8). To “*walk according to the flesh*,” on the other hand, points to those times when we (as New Testament believers) allow the power of sin to energize an ungodly habit pattern etched in the brain (Diagram 7). Yes, our habits are stored in the brain (and **the brain is a piece of flesh**—thus the phrase, “*walk according to the flesh*”). We must remember that all of our ungodly habits were not removed when we experienced new birth (salvation). We must remember as well that new ungodly habits are formed when

we walk in disobedience (“*according to the flesh*”). The great news is that our ungodly habit patterns decrease in size and intensity as we walk “*according to the Spirit*.” Their complete removal, on the other hand, will not occur until physical death.

Paul continues to discuss these two phrases (“*according to the flesh*” and “*according to the Spirit*”) in Romans 8:5:

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.
(Romans 8:5)

Stated differently, a New Testament believer walks “*according to the flesh*” when he sets his mind on sin’s lie sent into the mind through an ungodly habit pattern etched in the brain (the brain being a piece of “*flesh*”), then accepts the lie as truth and responds accordingly (refer to Diagram 7 in the Reference Section). When this process occurs, the new man commits an act of sin. Paul also states that we walk “*according to the Spirit*” when we set our minds on “*the things of the Spirit*” (refer to Diagram 8 in the Reference Section). In this case, the believer (the new man) is walking in obedience. Sounds pretty simple, doesn’t it? It may sound simple, but as you well know, it can certainly be difficult in practice.

According to Romans 8:6, to set the mind “*on the flesh*” is “*death*” for the New Testament believer:

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, (Romans 8:6)

To live in a compromised state is “*death*” (a place of misery and unrest) for the saint of God, but “*the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace*” (Romans 8:6). Paul then puts the icing on the cake in Romans 8:7:

“because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law [principle] of God, for it is not even able to do so.”
(Romans 8:7)

Yes, a New Testament believer who sets his mind “*on the flesh*” will sometimes behave much like an unbeliever, but in most cases will repent and confess his sin. If not, he will be extremely miserable, as was David in the midst of his disobedience (read Psalm 51). How can a cat enjoy wallowing in a mud hole? Impossible!

Paul next addresses what it means to be “*in the flesh*” versus “*in the Spirit*” (Romans 8:8-9), for a person who is “*in the flesh cannot please God*”:

and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:8)

Thus, to be “*in the flesh*” is to be lost—which is totally different from walking “*according to the flesh*” (Romans 8:4, 5, 12, 13), which occurs when a New Testament believer is deceived by sin’s lie and disobeys. However, we are “*in the Spirit*” and saved *if...the Spirit of God dwells in* us (Romans 8:9):

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. (Romans 8:9).

“Those who are in the flesh” (v.8) do not “belong” to God because they are void of the “Spirit of Christ” (v.9). Only those who repent and believe while depraved can receive the “Spirit” and begin to “please God” (v.8) on an ongoing basis.