

# The Believer's Joy and Security

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## Summer School

*January 18-21, 2010*

### Session 1: No condemnation (Romans 8: 1-8)

David Seccombe says that *“Romans 8 is the greatest summary statement of Christian spirituality ever penned. Beginning with our justification by the death of Christ, it takes us on through the experience of receiving the Holy Spirit, to the heart of our new relationship as children of the heavenly Father. From this vantage point Paul looks to the ultimate future of the world and to eternity, and then describes how God protects his people through suffering and trials until he lands them safely on the shores of the new world.”* (p 128 *Dust to Destiny*).

I'm very excited about this opportunity of taking you in some depth into this central chapter of Paul's most influential letter.

Written around 57 AD from Corinth to a church founded by Jewish converts returning after the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10 33 AD) by the apostle Paul

- To introduce Phoebe (16:2)
- To introduce himself and his theology to a church he hadn't met so that they could support and encourage him (and his team) preparing a new missionary journey/strategy further west into Spain after taking the collection to Jerusalem (15:23-25)

This letter has been instrumental in great movements by God

- *Augustine* in 386 AD Romans 13: 11-14
- *Martin Luther* November 1515 Romans 1.17 *“the righteousness of God”*
- *John Wesley* 24 May 1738 – Luther's preface to Romans
- *Karl Barth* August 1913 – Switzerland. His joyful sense of discovery *“Romerbrief fell like a bombshell on the theologians playground”*
- *Paul Middleton* 1980s delivered from heroin by reading Romans

*Romans 8. Where does it fit?*

*All about the gospel.*

Romans 1:1 The gospel of God which is about rescuing us from God's wrath (1:18) which is God's settled attitude toward sin and sinner that captivates this converted Pharisee, who once was committed to legalistic righteousness (ie: by our efforts) but now to the gospel (1.16 – 17) So he establishes in chapters 1-3 that all are sinners, hopelessly lost and totally incapable of achieving salvation. (cf 3:23, 6:23) This applies to pagans (1:18-32), moralists (2: 1-16), and Jews (2:17-20)

He then sets forth Christ as the righteous one who by His death demonstrates

- (a) God's righteousness and justice
- (b) God's mercy and love and grace

These can only become ours by faith. (3:27 - 5:21 but especially 5:1)

At this point Paul deals with an objection. (6:1-2) This is not cheap grace OR easy believism OR "Vampire Christianity" (Dallas Willard and AW Tozer) but evokes a *response of obedience*, and an *obligation to live under Jesus' rule* (6:11) which is possible because of God's grace and Spirit.

Paul wonderfully lets us into his own struggle in chapter 7 where he agonizes over the pull of sin (7:21 -26)

This realism

- On the one hand of Paul's struggle with sin
- And on the other hand God's grace in the gospel opens up, or indeed blossoms in Romans 8 where Paul's chief concern is that God's children know how to live for Him.

Forgiven but

- Still within a world frustrated by sin
- Still knowing that death is the ultimate statistic

### *Romans 8:1-8*

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.*

Paul's realism is neither pessimism (it's hopeless; this sin of mine) nor optimism (I'm perfect, no troubles...) but *REAL*. He is a wretched man even as a Christian (cf Is 64:6, Mk 7:20, 1Tim 1:15, 1 John 1:8-9, Lk 18:13). But that is not all he is, (8:1) for he is in Christ Jesus.

The *therefore* is vital.

Chapter 7 may be true but in 8:1-2 "the apostle steps back and surveys the whole Christian landscape" (Men Made New 79) which is focussed on God.

- in contrast to us (and our efforts which are characterised by our sinful nature) God did (8:3) by Christ's coming
- whose Spirit dwells within us (8:9)
- who has made us His beloved sons (8:16)

- who is lovingly in total control and working all things for our good (8:28) to grow us like Jesus (8:29)
- who is for us – loving us through all things and for all time (8:38-39)

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Are you concerned about the pull of sin? Paul so clearly is (7:24a) that he cries out (7:24b) and he knows the answer (7:25a) Yes! It is all focussed on Jesus.

*Let's get this clear:* as Christians we are never more than 'sinners saved by God's grace', always reliant upon Jesus (1Timothy 1:15, John Newton is a great sinner, Jesus Christ is a great Saviour). This means that Romans 7:25b, "...So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin."...

- is true
  - this is the direction he wants to go (aspirational)
  - he's feeding his mind upon God's word
- is sadly true
  - sin still exercises dominion often enough that he can use the word slave. His sinful nature is still strong but God's spirit will help him win by keeping him realistic (ie: he keeps on fighting by relying upon the Holy Spirit and he keeps looking to Christ)

*Therefore:*

- because of Christ
- because there is no good in me, no power in me, I rely totally upon God; upon Jesus' work on the cross and Holy Spirit's work in me.

*No condemnation*

- flip side of Romans 5:1
- it is put this way since Satan's great work and strategy is to firstly accuse Christians of our sin (which is true) then secondly, condemn us (which is untrue). **But** it is of no avail unless we believe him, whereas the reality of God's word says "there is now **no condemnation** for those **who are in** Christ Jesus"

**NB:**

- all of grace (could not be true if we depend upon our works)
- Only for those in Christ Jesus
- Even our sin (rightly handled – mourned 7:24, repented of, trusting in Christ) serves to magnify Christ
- Condemnation (rightly ours 5:16, 5:18) but justification is ours by grace 5:1
- No condemnation – not even a little bit! So with Charles Wesley we can confidently sing:

No condemnation now I dread;  
 Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!  
 Alive in Him, my living Head,  
 And clothed in righteousness divine,  
 Bold I approach the eternal throne,  
 And claim the crown, through Christ my own.    C Wesley 1738

*How did this happen?*

**Verses 2-4**

- a. v2 Being in Christ makes all the difference. No longer does my sin condemn me to death (2b)
- b. Rather by driving me to Christ I have life 2(a)
- c. I have freedom
  - (i) through Christ to be forgiven (8:1)
  - (ii) through the Spirit to break sin's power (8:8)
  - (iii) through the Spirit to call God dear Father 8:15

**Verses 3-4** For Jesus, having been mercifully sent by God, did two things I need but could never do:

- I. Jesus unlike Adam (and you and me) perfectly kept God's law. God did (3b) on our behalf. (4a) He has been obedient on our behalf – He is righteous  
He could do this as a human being because He never sinned. He had no sinful nature, but was fully tempted (Heb 4: 14-16). He confirmed His obedience daily (Heb 5:8)
- II. Jesus was a sin offering (3) on our behalf. So the just requirement of the law – here met by Him (2Cor 5:21, 1Peter 3:18, Romans 3:25) which means that if we are in Christ – the requirements of the law of God were “fully met in us” ie: Jesus representative obedience, Jesus atonement for sins.

**NB** 8:1 is for those *in* Christ Jesus, and whose trust is seen (8:4b) eg: by a changed direction, a new allegiance, a renewed mind-set, measured not by perfection but direction.

*“There is a total difference between surviving sin and reigning sin, the regenerate in conflict with sin and the unregenerate complacent to sin. It is one thing for sin to live in us; it is another for us to live in sin”* John Murray)

**Verses 5-8** As a result the believer can get on with their life with confidence, not in ourselves but in God, who has been so gracious to us. Knowing that there is *no condemnation*, far from causing us to be complacent or arrogant about our sin, causes us to cooperate with and do all we can do to live by and be controlled by the Holy Spirit (5b, 6) It is all a matter of our MINDSET (v5, v6, v7) We note:

- The struggle of Chapter 7 is normal. It's to be expected. Therefore, don't be thrown by it.
- Two ways
  - of thinking – ours OR the Spirit's (v5) A new bias is established in us at conversion
  - of living – for death OR life and peace (v6) (death includes living eg: selfishness rather than service and greed rather than generosity v6b)

Matthew 8:22: Let the dead bury their own dead

Ephesians 2:1 Dead in your transgressions

James 2: 17, 26 Christians can be dead.

- Attitudes: 7a Hostility to God with tragic consequences. 7b Sinful mind is opposed to God. 7c Unable to submit to God (dead) cf the awful passage, Romans 1: 24 – 32. NB v32

But the believer has the Spirit (teaching of NT; Acts 2:38, Ephesians 1:14, Romans 8: 9ff) and our responsibility and obligation to God's mercy in Christ is to do all we can to be controlled by God's Spirit. *How?*

**Verse 5** Mind set

- includes reading the scriptures (2 Peter 2:21, Ephesians 6: 17) which remind us of the Bible's origin and great gift to believers
- includes prayer
  - o 8:16 Father
  - o 8:26-27 in need [all the Spirit's work]
- Includes church. Ephesians 2:22, 4:30, 5:18 where we put our minds to building others up.

**Verse 6** Consequences are real and written all over the Bible eg: Psalm 1, Matthew 7: 13-14 and here.

- Do we really want death?
- Do we really believe living for self brings either life OR peace?
- We must be realistic and if we do not have eyes to see and believe scripture. We must ask "have we quenched or are we grieving the Holy Spirit?"

*...“by concentrating day and night on your feelings, potentials, needs, wants and desires, and by learning to assert them more freely, you do not become a freer, more spontaneous, more creative self; you become a narrower, more self-centred, more isolated one. You do not grow, you shrink.”*  
Prof. Daniel Yankelovich.

- *“Christian you may have the Holy Spirit, but does the Holy Spirit have you?”* Michael Cassidy  
Cf 6: 11-14 active cooperation and obedience is required.

**Verse 7** Practice makes permanent and overcomes by reversing (a) hostility and (b) our ability. Make no bones about it; this hostility is real to God (who made, sustains and sends His Son)

**Verse 8** The warning lest...

- We want to try ourselves
- We want to fool ourselves by thinking we can find joy by compromise rather than obedience.

The reality is that outside of Christ and devoid of the Spirit we are dead (wrong)

- The heart is dead
- The motivation is self (even when we do right we think God will be pleased)

Only a rescuing, gracious God can change us

*The Gospel meets men where they are at the lowest level of need, and it deals with them as those who are lost because they are guilty. Then it shows them how the Son of God seeks to take them by the hand and lift them up out of the mire and mud. He will do for them what they could never do for themselves, and will plant their feet on a rock which can never be shaken. He will bury their sins in the depth of the sea, and when they are buried by the hand of God they will never be washed up on the shore. (ML Loane '77)*

Education only makes more clever sinners. Health only makes prouder, more self reliant sinners. Law only shows us up and either condemns us or makes us proud and self righteous. But the gospel of God's grace can "*humble us without humiliating us and exalt us without flattering us*" (Ravi Zacharias)

In this gospel we glory and to this God we respond.

Understanding the gospel where

- We HAVE BEEN saved from sin's PENALTY (justification)
- We ARE BEING saved from sin's POWER (sanctification)
- We WILL BE saved from sin's PRESENCE (glorification)

*We gladly embrace Christ's salvation **and** His life giving rule.*

Two hymns serve to highlight what we have seen:

The first reminding us of 8:1 "No condemnation":

My name is graven on His hands,  
My name is written on His heart;  
I know that while in heaven He stands  
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempt me to despair,  
And tells me of the sin within,  
Upward I look, and see Him there,  
Who made and end of all my sin.  
(Charitie L Bancroft 1863 Anglican Hymn Book - 518)

The second of our joyful, responsive, obligation 8:6

Lord, for ourselves;  
in living power remake us –  
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,  
past put behind us, for the future take us:  
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.  
(Timothy Dudley-Smith Mission Praise 428)

Peter Brain. January 2010.