

Romans 8:1-4 - Part 1

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[0:00] Please take your copy of God's Word and join me in Romans chapter 8.! Our text for today is Romans chapter 8 verses 1 through 4.

! Romans would be the gem that enhanced that ring.

And Romans 8 would be the brilliant splendor that emanated from that ring. This is perhaps my favorite chapter in the Bible.

In fact, when I suggested that we study Romans as a church to your elders, I had this chapter in mind. So the rest of it is of great value.

The entirety of the book is good for us. But oh, chapter 8. I have been long awaiting getting to this text.

[1:08] So let's not delay as we have planned to look at the first four verses today. Before I read it, let me remind you, beloved. This is God's Word to us.

It was written for His glory and our good. And so we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.

In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

[2:10] Our text this morning begins with, There is therefore now. So let's briefly think about what he means by this opening phrase.

He certainly means something that he's going to say in the text, but I also think he's generally referencing back to the entire letter up to this point. So let's draw a straight line through his argument to get our bearing for today.

You may remember back in Romans chapter 1, verse 16 and 17, Paul's thesis statement for the entirety of his letter.

There he says, For I am not ashamed of the gospel, or hear it in the positive, I am proud of the good news of Christ, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

For in it, the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.

[3:19] And we have been driving the point that we are saved, we are declared righteous, justified before God by grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone.

And I have been contending to you that this is not a thing that should be assumed in our day, but it's a thing that should be held onto and held tightly onto and contended for.

He then begins to set up the great problem of sin in the world. We'll pick up in chapter 2, verse 12 and 13. There he says, For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, Gentiles.

And all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law, Israelites. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

But then he goes on to talk about in chapter 3 how none is righteous. No, not one. So if it's the doers of the law who will be justified, then we have a great problem.

[4:31] We cannot be justified by our doing of the law because we have already failed in our keeping of the law. So chapter 5 and verse 1, there he says, Therefore, since we have been justified by, not our works, but by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Justified by grace through faith in Christ. And then chapter 6 and verse 6, there he writes, We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

And we've been working out all that this means through the rest of chapter 6 and through chapter 7. But I think not only is Paul generally referencing back to the entire letter, but he is also certainly specifically referencing the end of chapter 7.

So read with me from verse 23 to the end. There he says, he's stated that he's been set free from the power of sin, but here he says, I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

There's this struggle still in this life with his old self. He's got new desires and yet he seems to be at competition within. In verse 24 he breaks out and says, Wretched man that I am, who would deliver me from this body of death?

[6:16] And the answer is that question, Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And that's where we pick up. Sometimes our chapter breaks are very helpful to us in our Bibles.

And sometimes they are not. This is one of the cases I wish that there was not a chapter break here. Because it goes right into this, There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

No condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The Greek word here rendered condemnation relates to the sentencing of a crime, but focuses not on the verdict, but on the penalty the verdict demands.

Its emphasis is not on the declaration of guilt, but on the price that must be paid for the crime of rebellion against our God. Paul tells us that for those who are in Christ Jesus, there is no longer any condemnation.

There's no longer a price that must be paid for it was paid for us. However, the implication is that for those who are not in Christ Jesus, there is condemnation.

[7:48] And we must take some time to consider this. If we're to rightly appreciate what it means for there to be no condemnation, what does it mean for there to be condemnation?

Paul has told us previously in the letter what sin has purchased for us if we are not in Christ Jesus. Chapter 6 and verse 23, For the wages of sin is death.

Death, not just temporal, which we will all experience, but eternal death awaits all who are not in Christ Jesus. death forever.

We get some perhaps hint of what that may look like, although it's a horror I don't want to imagine. Jesus says in Luke chapter 13, verse 27 and 28, I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil. In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. When you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves cast out.

[9:08] So at very least, it's a place of great sorrow and concern. Death forever. Do not be mistaken this morning.

The most important thing about you, the most important thing, we have so many things we tend to want to define ourselves by, but the most important thing about you is whether or not you are in Christ Jesus.

At the end of all things, nothing else will matter. The American pastor, Jonathan Edwards, once preached a sermon called Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.

He preached it in 1741, which is in the midst of the Great Awakening, and it was an exposition of Deuteronomy chapter 32 and verse 35.

I want to read to you just a short excerpt from this sermon. I'm going to do my best to read it well, but history tells us that he read this standing at the back of this room.

[10:15] He wasn't facing anybody. Nobody was looking at him, and he read it extremely flat. And yet people were begging him to stop reading

because of the conviction they were feeling.

But I'll try to read it better for your benefit. He said this, There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God.

There is hell's wide, gaping mouth open, and you have nothing to stand upon, nor anything to take hold of. There is nothing between you and hell but the air.

It is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up. You probably are not sensible of this. You find you are kept out of hell, but you do not see the hand of God in it, but look at other things, at the good state of your bodily constitution, your care of your own life, and the means you use for your own preservation.

But indeed, these things are nothing. If God should withdraw his hand, they would avail no more to keep you from falling than the thin air to hold up a person that is suspended in it.

[11:28] Your wickedness makes you, as it were, heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell. And if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf and your healthy constitution and your own care and prudence and best contrivance and all your righteousness would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock.

Were it not for the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you one moment, for you are a burden to it. The creation groans with you.

The creature is made subject to the bondage of your corruption. The sun does not willingly shine upon you to give you light to serve sin and Satan. The earth does not willingly yield her increase to satisfy your lusts, nor is it willingly a stage for your wickedness to be acted upon.

The air does not willingly serve you for breath to maintain the flame of life in your vitals while you spend your life in the service of God's enemies. God's creatures are good and were made for men to serve God with and do not willingly subserve to any other purpose and groan when they are abused to purposes so directly contrary to their nature and end.

And the world would spew you out were it not for the sovereign hand of him who has subjected it in hope. There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm and big with thunder.

[13:10] And were it not for the restraining hand of God, it would immediately burst forth upon you. You don't hear preaching like that much anymore.

If you are not in Christ Jesus, condemnation awaits you. Death forevermore. flee to Christ, that you would be saved.

Believe that he paid the penalty for your sin on the cross. He bore your condemnation and that he perfectly kept the law on your behalf.

Find yourself in Christ Jesus by grace alone, through faith alone, in him alone. condemnation.

Because, oh, in Christ Jesus, there is no longer any condemnation.

Some of you may have been asked to read in school an excerpt like the one I read from Edward's famous sermon to show how terrible American Puritanism was. I was asked to do this in a college English class.

[14:20] There is a reason you were not assigned the entirety of the text. I made a pretty grand point of this in my English class in college.

Later in that same sermon, Edward says, And now, you have an extraordinary opportunity. A day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open and stands in calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners.

A day wherein many are flocking to him and pressing into the kingdom of God. Many are daily coming from the east, west, north, and south. Many that were very lately in the same miserable condition that you are in are now in a happy state with their hearts filled with love to him who has loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

Beloved, in Christ Jesus, there is no longer any condemnation. Because of the completed work of Jesus Christ, the sentence that we fully deserved has been commuted.

We have passed from death to life, from enemies to friends. We were once estranged, but now we belong.

[15:51] Hear me carefully this morning. This declaration of Paul's, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, does not depend on you.

It does not serve at the whim of your emotions. It depends entirely on God, so it is sure.

I hope that you can rest in that. God accomplishes all that he sets out to and all of his promises are kept. Our salvation finds its confidence in him.

But I know that you sometimes have a hard time believing this. I sometimes have a hard time believing this.

You are in good company, as am I. Listen to Paul once again, Romans 7, 23-25. I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

[17:04] Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death? What does he say next? In verse 25, does he say that he must deliver himself?

Does he say that perhaps tomorrow he will perform better and feel better? No. What does he say? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

God does the saving and the keeping. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus regardless of how you might feel about it.

Some of you may have noticed I brought my copy of Pilgrim's Progress with me today. So I'll read a bit more to you from it. The driving point I'm making here is that the experience is common that we might feel at times this strain.

how can it be true of me that there's no condemnation for me? Look at the way I willingly sin once again. Beloved, if you're in Christ there is no condemnation for you.

[18:24] This is much of the Christian experience. This book is called The Pilgrim's Progress. And the main character in the book is not named Pilgrim.

His name is Christian. John Bunyan meant for this to be understood as the typical experience of the Christian life.

Maybe we don't get every bit and piece of it, but we pick up much of this across our life. I find myself in it more and more the longer I follow Jesus.

So the short little bit I want to read to you, Christian has met a companion named Faithful. And Faithful is recounting the story of how he arrived at this spot on the journey along with Christian.

And just before he has headed up a hill called Difficulty, he was tempted by Adam I. I should mention if you're unfamiliar with this, it's an allegory. He's tempted by Adam I.

[19:26] to go with him to the town of Deceit. And Faithful considers this for a time. And so he begins up the hill difficulty feeling the guilt of being tempted by Adam I, tempted by his flesh to go to this town of Deceit and to fill himself with the desires of this life.

So he's headed up the hill difficulty and he says, now when I had climbed about halfway up, I looked behind and saw someone coming after me swift as the wind.

Soon he overtook me just about the place where the arbor stands. That is the place, said Christian, where I sat down to rest, fell asleep, and lost my scroll. Christian lost the assurance of his faith by napping.

Dear brother, hear me out, Faithful urged. So as soon as the man overtook me, without saying a word, he struck me and knocked me down unconscious. When I came to, I asked him why he had thus assaulted me.

He said that it was because of my secret inclination to follow Adam the first, and with that he struck me with another deadly blow on the chest and beat me down backward, and I lay at his feet as if I were dead.

[20:47] So when I came to, I cried to him for mercy, but he said, I do not know how to show mercy, and with that knocked me down again.

Now this figure is Moses beating him down with the law. Why? Because he had an inclination to Adam the first, and the law comes to bear witness of that transgression.

But here he finds himself on the hill difficult, unable to get up, and maybe you find yourself in the shoes of faithful this morning. Listen to what Bunyan writes next.

He would have beaten me to death, except one came by and told him to stop. Christian asked, who was it that told him to stop?

Faithful went on, I did not recognize him at first, but as he went by, I saw the wounds in his hands and in his side. Then I concluded that he was our Lord.

[21:55] So I continued up the hill. The Lord Jesus Christ came by and said, stop. He said, mine of faithful, and the law stopped beating him down.

Do you sometimes still feel the weight of a burden that has already been loosed from your back? Our Lord did not place that weight upon your shoulders.

You did. You stopped believing that there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 11, verse 28 and 29, find some solace there where he says, come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. Love still bids you welcome, dear Christian.

Jesus calls to you in your failure, come to me. He is unendingly gracious and merciful to those who belong to him.

[23:22] Your standing with him was accomplished by him. You are his and he will not cast you out. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Not there is therefore now no condemnation for those who feel like there is therefore now no condemnation. Charles Spurgeon once said, this is the quotation on the back of your bulletin, my hope that I am saved does not lie in the fact that I preach or that I do this or that.

All my hope lies in this, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. I am a sinner. I trust him. Then he came to save me and I am saved.

In Romans chapter 12 and verse 2, Paul tells us that we are to be transformed by the renewal of our minds.

Beloved, by the renewal of our minds, not our emotions. I think we live in a day, perhaps, more than any other day, although I've never lived in the others, that emotions lead the charge.

[24:47] We are such a people batted around by the way we feel. Perhaps because it's difficult to know what the truth is as we walk in such a confused world.

We have an absolute word. a clear text that tells us what the truth is as it concerns the most important things.

Do not let your feelings lead the charge and try to get the truth to catch up to your feelings. Rather, let your feelings catch up to the truth. We're to be transformed by the renewal of our minds.

So repeat it until you believe it. There's therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. There's therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

No condemnation, no condemnation, no condemnation. We've been set free from it. Stop carrying it around like a burden on your back when the burden has been taken.

[25:58] You didn't do it. Praise God, you can't undo it. the Lord has done it for the glory of his grace to be expressed to us.

What an incredible thing. And we walk around beating ourselves down as if we've not been set free from the condemnation that comes with sin. I want to ask and answer two questions about verse one that find their answers in verses two through four.

But as I look at the time, yeah, I want to ask and answer them at length next week. When you make the preaching schedule, you get a little bit of liberty to do this.

But let's consider them briefly before I close. Maybe good just to set our minds on no condemnation. Let me ask them and answer them briefly.

Number one, how is there therefore now no condemnation? Paul has been making this argument to us across the entirety of the letter, but he sums it up for us in verses two and three.

[27:15] Because if you are in Christ Jesus, you have been justified. This word is so important. Justification is a legal declaration that your sins have been forgiven and that you have perfectly kept the law.

The Mosaic Covenant requires this of us. If we're to be God's people, we have to be perfect law keepers. And we haven't. We have failed at this. We deserve the punishment of our sin. That debt has to be canceled. But not just that, we also have to be perfect law keepers. And so we get both from Christ. It's the doctrine of double imputation.

We'll talk about it at length. next week. Our sin taken by Him, given to Him, and His righteousness given to us.

So briefly see that in verses 2 and 3. The law of the spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. [28:22] We could not keep the law in our sinful flesh flesh. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.

Whose flesh? In Christ's flesh on our behalf. So you see, Jesus' perfect law keeping and His taking of our condemnation there in the text.

Christ's Christ's But also we should ask, why have you been set free in Christ Jesus? So that we might be sanctified.

Another important term. Sanctification is the growing process of becoming holy. When we're declared righteous, this is an eternal state in which we stand.

It's a positional thing, but then we are in this life sanctified. Bit by bit, one degree of glory to another, Paul says. We grow in holiness.

[29:25] Justification necessarily leads to sanctification, and much of the rest of this chapter is about that. How do we do that? Well, we live life by the Spirit. We're empowered by Him to keep God's law.

Always starting with the fact that we're no longer condemned in Christ, we're now set free to be obedient by the power. of the Spirit. Two wonderful things.

We will take up both of these questions and we'll answer them in depth next week as we continue to study together. So, we just skipped four pages of notes.

We bring you back to verse one. I hope it just resonates around inside of you this morning.

Christian brothers and sisters, almost all of the counseling I do is found in verse one.

We come at it from many other places. There's practical applications to be done, but oh, if we would just believe that there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

[30:36] Let's pray together.