

Romans 8:1-11 (ESV)

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

³ 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, ⁴ 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.

⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Romans 8:1-4 (ESV)

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

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Allow me to summarize those four verses into one sentence. **What you have tried to do, can't be done on your own.**

What is Paul talking about here? **Justification.** How can a sinful human being stand before the only true God who is absolutely holy and not be condemned?

- You can seek to justify yourself by your own merit. You have sought to be a good person.
- You can seek to justify yourself by the testimony of others. There are people who love you and will speak very highly of you.
- You can seek to justify yourself by the sincerity of your beliefs. You go to church and believe the essentials of the faith.

The apostle Paul could identify with all of that, but he couldn't justify himself before God on his own. Neither can you, neither could I.

The God of the Bible is holy, that makes Him worthy of our worship. Whatever He does is righteous and just. He is also gracious and merciful. Whatever we receive from Him is an act of grace.

What you and I try to do every day, whether consciously or unconsciously, is to justify ourselves before the Creator of the universe.

I've been given this gift of life for a reason. One day I will stand before my Creator to give an account for how I have lived this life. There will be a day of judgment.

Whether consciously or unconsciously, even those who claim not to believe in God, think about of this day of reckoning. There is a deeply embedded awareness that one day all of us will give an account for how we have lived.

The believer and non-believer alike woke up this morning to begin a new day of life.

Why is that significant? What difference does it make whether you are alive or not? How do you explain the purpose of your existence?

In our circles, we ask the question, "What is the chief end of man?" Man's chief end, (or primary purpose) is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

In other words, we exist to honor the One who created us.

The unbeliever who says that they don't believe in a creator will seek to do the same thing but in a different way.

They will seek to win the approval of their parents, their peers, the people in their lives that make life meaningful.

They will seek to justify their existence by gaining the acceptance of others. Then if there is a day of reckoning, there will be no condemnation.

The words "no condemnation" means different things to different people. For some, it might be the respect of the people who matter most to them.

For others, it might mean that you've won the admiration of a significant number of people who think that you're really special.

For the Christian, "no condemnation" means that you stand before the living God justified because of your union with Christ.

Even though you are a sinner, you are reconciled with God. You have fulfilled the purpose for your existence; which is to glorify God.

Even though you have fallen short of God's glory, you are seen by the Father to be just as righteous as the LORD JESUS Christ himself.

That may sound a bit presumptuous. If you are the least bit self-aware, you would know that there are many aspects of your lives that you're not proud of.

There are things that you'd be ashamed of if they were made known to others. To say that we are just as righteous as JESUS doesn't seem quite right.

But that's what no condemnation means to the believer. Because of our union with Christ, our guilt before God is removed, and the righteousness of Christ is credited to us.

We can stand before God unashamed with nothing to hide or nothing to be self-conscious about.

What does “no condemnation” mean to you? There are a lot of misconceptions out there. For some, ‘no condemnation’ means:

- I’m getting a pass, just like a police officer who gives you a warning instead of a ticket. (I’m getting off easy)
- Maybe I’m not as bad as I thought. (finally somebody understands)
- Maybe I’m better than most. (somebody is going to be judged for this messed up world, I’m glad it’s not me)
- Now I can live the anyway I want to without feeling guilty. (I can continue in sin so that grace may abound)

For the unbeliever, there is now no condemnation because they don’t answer to anybody but themselves. The atheist says that there is no god, so to thine own self be true.

The agnostic says that it’s impossible to know if there is a god or not, so don’t worry about it.

The legalist will point to the Law and say “follow the rules, and things will be okay”.

The moralist will say “if you do your best, then surely the LORD will understand.”

If you are a Christian, “no condemnation” means that the perfect obedience of JESUS Christ fulfilled the Law on your behalf.

- The debt of your sin has been paid for.
- You will one day stand before the living God with a robe of righteousness.

In the eyes of men, you are no better, or no worse than anyone else. You may not meet the expectations of everybody, but in Christ, you have no reason to be ashamed. There is no condemnation.

Your flaws, weaknesses and shortcomings take nothing away from your standing with God. Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ JESUS.

You don't have to prove yourself to anybody, and that's a liberating thing. The law of the Spirit of life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

God is your judge, and He has judged your sin through the only mediator between God and man.

The hymn writer put it this way,

Jesus! what a Friend for sinners
Jesus! Lover of my soul
Friends may fail me, foes assail me
He, my Savior, makes me whole

Jesus! what a Strength in weakness
Let me hide myself in Him
Tempted, tried, and sometimes failing
He, my Strength, my victory wins

Jesus! what a Help in sorrow
While the billows over me roll
Even when my heart is breaking
He, my Comfort, helps my soul

May each of you know the fullness of that good news in the Gospel; that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ JESUS our LORD.

In verses 5-8 the mind of the flesh is contrasted with the mind of the Spirit.

Romans 8:5-8 (ESV)

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

The mind of the flesh is

- Focused exclusively on that which is temporal

- Lives to satisfy the cravings of the flesh
- Has no desire to submit to God's law

This is different from the wretched man of Romans 7 who desired to please God, but found that in himself he just couldn't do it. The unregenerate mind of the flesh is hostile to the God of the Bible.

Now the question is, "Can a true Christian fall into this kind of mindset?" The short answer is "not permanently."

Christians do have an old nature. We can backslide, we can grieve the Holy Spirit, neglect the means of grace, and make a shipwreck of our faith.

If that describes anyone here, you know how miserable it is to be out of fellowship with God.

- You can run from God, but you can't hide from him.
- You can cling to certain sins and refuse to let go.
- You can hold on to resentments and grievances which build up walls.
- You can allow those walls can stifle your relationship with God and with others.
- Your heart can become brittle and callused.

But sooner or later, you will wonder what happen to the joy of your salvation. You will take no pleasure in going your own way. You will grieve over the way you have harden your heart.

The hounds of heaven will pursue you relentlessly, because he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion, not because you're so good, but because He is faithful.

If you are a believer, you can never take a cavalier attitude toward any sin in your life. The sinful mind is not neutral toward God, it's hostile.

Your heart may be cold, your spirit might be wounded, your outlook might be dark, but greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.

If you are a believer and you feel overwhelmed by your lot in life, know that you have not been forsaken by God. JESUS said, "In this world you will have trouble, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world."

If you are out of fellowship with God, it is my prayer that the anguish of your soul will be so intense, that you respond to the grace of God in repentance and faith.

Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

For those of you who have never trusted JESUS Christ as Savior and LORD, know that there's nothing you can do on your own to please God.

Romans 8:7-8 (ESV)

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Becoming a Christian isn't about cleaning up your act so that the LORD will find you worthy of eternal life. Saving faith is acknowledging that you are lost and in need of a Savior.

When you come to that point, the Gospel becomes the best news that you could ever hear.

What the law or your best efforts could not do, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to condemn sin.

JESUS took the punishment that we deserve. In the book of Galatians Paul put it this way:

Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

When you become a believer, the Holy Spirit gives you a new heart; a new nature. Your desires, your affections, your hope is placed on things above where Christ is.

You begin to set your mind on things that go beyond this life only. You aspire to draw near to God, to have His Word in your heart, and to worship Him in Spirit and truth.

The Spirit of life desires to do things to please God, not to earn his favor, but in response to it.

- You begin to see that the things of this world are good, but limited.
- The praise of men is nice, but nothing like the favor of God.
- Material possessions are appreciated, but they don't increase your value as a child of God.
- Success is good, but not the ultimate good.
- Pleasure is enjoyed, but there are higher things to aspire for.

Romans 8:9-11 (ESV)

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Let me give three characteristics of the mind of the Spirit.

1. Christ honoring (whether eat, drink etc. grieved and miserable when not)
2. Peace seeking (vs. 6 "the mind of the Spirit is life and peace" reconciliation, the end of hostility)
3. Eternally inclined

Romans 8:11 (ESV)

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

The mind of the Spirit is focused upon the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Without that resurrection, we of all people are to be most pitied.

But because JESUS was raised from the dead, our lives have eternal significance. And so we live not just for the moment, but for eternity.

The praise of men, the pleasures of the flesh, as sweet as they may be at the time, are nothing compared to the words all believers long to one day hear,

“Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter now into the joy of thy master.”

I close with contrasting illustrations. I read a very sad article about a well-respected minister from Scotland who died about a month ago.

I had known about his death, but not the circumstances behind it. In short, he had lived a double life. He was a magnificent expositor of the Word, but he was not faithful to all of his vows.

The stain on his earthly legacy and the pain that his family must going through besides the grief of his death can't be measured.

I can only imagine the inner turmoil that this gifted man of God went through in his final days. The mind of the flesh is sin and death, but the mind of the Spirit is:

1. Christ honoring
2. Peace seeking
3. Eternally inclined

Also this past week I attended the funeral service of a high school classmate who died suddenly and un-expectantly. The service was held at the beautiful Kirk of the Hill Presbyterian Church in Bloomfield Hills.

It was a wonderful service, but the best part was to hear how my friend Kevin was ready for his date with destiny.

Kevin excelled in everything that he did. He was a very successful businessman, but that's not what he lived for. His motto which was prominently placed on his desk at work went something like this:

I live for the glory of JESUS Christ. My job pays the bills.” That's the mind of the Spirit.

Charles Wesley

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night.
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray:
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light!
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

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.

Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God,
shouldst die for me?