

NO CONDEMNATION! Pt. 1
ROMANS 8:1-4

Several years ago, author Brett McKay wrote on his popular blog site, “The Art of Manliness,” that he learned the skill of picking locks. After learning the basic principles and being given the tools, he picked his first lock in two minutes.

He says this about his new skill:

Some of you might be thinking, “Brett, why should I learn how to pick a lock if I don’t plan on breaking into people’s homes?”

Great question.

There are a few good reasons why law-abiding citizens should learn how to pick a lock:

Lock picking opens your eyes to the “illusion of security.” We all lock our doors to keep our loved ones safe at night and to secure our possessions during the day. After I picked my first lock within two minutes of learning how to do it, I realized that locks don’t really do much except provide the *illusion* of security. Locks make us *feel* safe, but if someone really wanted to get in your house, they could easily pick the lock on your front door. If they didn’t know how to do that, they could find another way in. You can’t just rely on a lock to keep you and your family safe. You need to utilize other tools and tactics and create multiple layers of security. [<http://www.artofmanliness.com/2014/11/19/how-to-pick-a-lock-pin-tumbler-locks/>]

It seems to me that many believers might feel the same way about their spiritual condition before God — that the security of their salvation is merely an illusion and not a reality. They know that God says they are safe if they trust in Christ as their Savior, but they act as if they really are unsafe and that God really is still angry with them and their sin and that He’s just waiting for them to slip so that He can vindictively pour out His anger against them.

The chapter that we are examining in Romans deals with that very issue. It has rightly been noted that Romans 8 is about the work of the Spirit, since Paul references Him 19x in the chapter. However, Paul also refers to the Son of God, Jesus Christ, 13x by name in the chapter, and God the Father 16x by name in the chapter (and to both many more times by the pronoun, “He”). So this chapter does emphasize the work of the Spirit more than other chapters in this book, but it is also about the work of the entire Godhead. And it is specifically the work of the Godhead in sanctifying the believer. And as the chapter speaks to the work of the Trinity in the believer, its theme is exposed as being security and assurance for the believer. This chapter is so well loved because it teaches the security a believer has in Christ and how he can live confidently and assuredly in that security.

Consider these verses that speak about the believer’s assurance (and this list is not all of them!):

- **Rom. 8:1** Therefore *there is now no condemnation* for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- **Rom. 8:2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus *has set you free* from the law of sin and of death.

- **Rom. 8:10** *If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit **is alive** because of righteousness.*
- **Rom. 8:11** *But 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.*
- **Rom. 8:14** *For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these **are sons** of God.*
- **Rom. 8:15** *For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but **you have received a spirit of adoption** as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"*
- **Rom. 8:16** *The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that **we are children of God**,*
- **Rom. 8:17** *and if children, **heirs also**, heirs of God **and fellow heirs with Christ**, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.*
- **Rom. 8:29-30** *For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; **and these whom He justified, He also glorified.***
- **Rom. 8:31** *What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who is against us?***
- **Rom. 8:32** *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, **how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?***
- **Rom. 8:33** ***Who will bring a charge against God's elect?** God is the one who justifies;*
- **Rom. 8:34** ***who is the one who condemns?** Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.*
- **Rom. 8:35** ***Who will separate us from the love of Christ?** Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

So the believer *can* have assurance that he is secure. He can experience the peace that comes from knowing that God has saved him and is keeping him and that if he is in Christ he can never be out of Christ. And the assurance begins in the first four verses with Paul's explanation that —

CHRIST REMOVES EVERY ASPECT OF CONDEMNATION FOR THE BELIEVER IN HIM.

These four verses tell us four truths about our position in Christ that make us hopeful for living sanctified, God-honoring lives. These are four truths about our position in Christ that bolster our assurance.

- 1. There is NO Condemnation (v. 1)**
- 2. There is NO Condemnation Because of CHRIST (v. 2)**
- 3. There is NO Condemnation Because Christ Condemned SIN (v. 3)**
- 4. Because There is NO Condemnation, There is SANCTIFICATION (v. 4)**

1. There is **No** Condemnation (v. 1)

- The *reality* of no condemnation:
 - ✓ When Paul says **therefore**, he is building on an idea that he began in chapters 2 and 3.
 - ✓ In chapter two, God condemns (2:5-6), and everyone's own conscience condemns him (2:14-15).
 - ✓ In chapter three, there was much condemnation (3:10-18), which culminates in 3:19-20.
 - ✓ But chapter four provides the hope of justification, and Paul summarizes that hope in 5:1 — because of justification we have peace with God. And having peace with God, we have been removed from Adam and placed in Christ and sin and death no longer reign, but Christ and grace are our sovereign rulers (5:18-21).
 - ✓ Then Paul reminds us of our position in Christ (6:3-7) — we are enslaved to Him and not to sin. And we are enslaved to Christ and freed from the Law and enabled to bear fruit for Christ (7:4-6).
 - ✓ And Paul says what has changed is that **now** there is no condemnation. That is, previously there had been condemnation, but now our circumstance is radically altered.
 - It is good to remember that at one time we were guilty before God. We may or may not have felt guilty (it is possible to kill the conscience so feelings of guilt are removed). But the reality is that we were fully culpable and guilty (as chs. 1-3 demonstrated).
 - Now the world doesn't like to admit that we are guilty:
 - ... The popular advisor, Ann Landers, has said, "One of the most painful, self-mutilating, time- and energy-consuming exercises in the human experience is guilt....Guilt is a pollutant and we don't need any more of it in the world."
 - ... Wayne Dyer has called guilt, "a futile waste of time...Guilt is the most useless of all behaviors. It is by far the greatest waste of emotional energy. Guilt zones must be exterminated, spray-cleaned, and sterilized forever."
 - ... A *NY Times* writer said, "A friend of mine made a resolution once: No more guilty pleasures. I assumed at first that he meant he would no longer indulge in, you know, the usual cultural indulgences: those movies, books, TV shows, albums, *et cetera*, that are unabashedly enjoyable...but that also confer a patina of guilt to the self-conscious cultural consumer even as he's enjoying them....But I was wrong. My friend didn't mean that at all. What he meant was simpler and, I have since realized, more radical....He'd still enjoy all those cultural indulgences, he said. He would just no longer classify them as indulgences. In other words, no more guilty pleasures for him meant: All of the pleasure. None of the guilt."

... Now the world attempts to dismiss guilt, but the problem is, guilt still remains. In a journal article entitled, "The Strange Persistence of Guilt," the author says, "Those of us living in the developed countries of the West find ourselves in the tightening grip of a paradox, one whose shape and character have so far largely eluded our understanding. It is the strange persistence of guilt as a psychological force in modern life. If anything, the word persistence understates the matter. Guilt has not merely lingered. It has grown, even metastasized, into an ever more powerful and pervasive element in the life of the contemporary West, even as the rich language formerly used to define it has withered and faded from discourse, and the means of containing its effects, let alone obtaining relief from it, have become ever more elusive." He points to the work of Nietzsche who proclaimed the death of God as being a hope for the end of guilt. And then Freud (who called guilt, "the most important problem in the development of civilization") attempted to remove the moral component of guilt by calling it a subjective emotion.

... Both Nietzsche and Freud failed. And guilt remains. Why? Why does guilt still remain in the consciences of so many? Because they *are* guilty. They have rejected God and willfully sinned against Him and their consciences. They may attempt to remove the sense of guilt but there is no ignoring the reality: all men are guilty before God, worthy of condemnation.

- But if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, there is now no condemnation. It has ceased to exist; the wrath of God has been entirely and eternally removed from against you. And if this verse is not enough, consider **Heb. 10:16-17** — "THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM," *He then says*, "AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE."
- There is the believer's security — wrath and judgment from God are removed by God because of the work of God on the cross. God died on the cross so that we could be saved both to God (in fellowship) and from God (and His wrath).
- This is why the statement by Luther (on your outline is so helpful) — Satan still stands making accusations to God against us (**Rev. 12:10**), but all those accusations are futile and the accuser has been overcome and overwhelmed.

✓ It is also worth remembering exactly is removed. So consider...

- The *meaning* of **no condemnation**:

- ✓ What is the condemnation that the believer no longer faces? The word **condemnation** refers to the pronouncement of guilt and the carrying out of the judgment against that guilt. So our sin renders us guilty and God carries out His wrath against that sin and guilt. So, as we have suggested already, Paul means that there is no judgment of God against us because of our sin — the wages of sin is death (**6:23**), but those wages were paid by Christ for us so there is no more death for us.

- ✓ But **condemnation** also refers to the penalty that the condemned man receives — the consequence that comes against him because of his guilt. That penalty (of death) is now also removed. Everything related to sin is removed from against the believer — the judgment of guilt against our sin, the penalty because of our sin, and the power of sin. Now we can bear fruit for Christ (7:4; Eph. 2:10); now we are controlled by Him and live for Him (2 Cor. 5:14-16).
- ✓ **No condemnation** means *both* the penalty *and* the power of sin are removed from us.
- The *recipients* of no condemnation:
 - ✓ The only ones who receive the gift of no condemnation are those who are **in Christ Jesus**. This is not a universal promise. It is an exclusive promise for those united to Christ (6:3ff).
 - ✓ Already Paul is pointing to the believer's assurance: if you are a believer in Christ, you must consider the implication of this reality. While we still are concerned about our wrestling against sin in this life, we are even more consumed with and overwhelmed by His acceptance of us. We are unchangeably adopted by Him (vv. 16-17).
 - ✓ But if you are not a believer in Christ, you must also consider this reality — you are still under God's condemnation. His wrath against you has not ended. He has no saving love for you. You will never escape God's judgment on your own. Your only hope is to trust in Christ alone — believe that when He died on the cross, He absorbed God's infinite wrath against you and frees you from the penalty of your sin, and believe that He alone is worth following and obeying. You cannot save yourself. But God can save you because of Jesus Christ; and if you believe He will, He will.
- So the believer's great hope (confidence) is that the condemnation from God against him is removed. But how is that possible? Does God just forget about His anger or overlook the sinner's sin? No —

2. There is **No** Condemnation Because of **CHRIST** (v. 2)

- What the removal of condemnation did
 - ✓ It **has set you free**. The freedom Paul has in mind is a freedom from enslavement. It's the same word he used in 6:18, 22 and Gal. 5:1. And it's the same word Jesus used in Jn. 8:32, 36.
 - And notice that Paul says it is something that *has* happened. It's a completed act of God for us. We have been granted emancipation from slavery to sin. The irrevocable document liberating us has been sealed with the name and blood of Christ.
 - The reason that there is no condemnation that can overtake us is that we have been set free. And being set free, we can never again be placed into bondage and condemnation.
 - This doesn't mean the believer won't sin (ch. 7 and Gal. 5 make it clear we will!), but it does mean that sin is not the master but Christ *is* the new master.

✓ It set us free *in Christ*.

- There is some question about what this phrase “in Christ” modifies. It might modify “the law of the Spirit of life” (NASB), or it might equally modify “has set you free” (NASB footnote). That is, the freedom is by Christ or in the realm of Christ. Both are legitimate and possible.
- I was pondering this while in the dentist’s chair (Romans is a good distraction from what’s going on with your teeth!) and I realized there is a parallel in v. 1 — “there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus” — and v. 2, “there is freedom in Christ Jesus.” It seems that Paul is saying the lack of condemnation that those who are in Christ have is because of the freedom that was accomplished by Christ. We are not only unified with Christ, but our union with Christ has broken our former bonds with sin and set us free. As Jesus said, we are free indeed!

✓ It set us free *from sin and death*.

- The word “law” is not a reference to the Mosaic Law, obviously. It probably has the sense of “principle” or “authority” as it did in v. 21. It’s the same thing as “the law of sin” in 7:23, 25. This is a law that is different from the Law of God and opposed to the Law of God. When Paul calls sin and death a “law” he means there is a part of sin that is compelling to the human being. The flesh “dictates” action. The flesh doesn’t just entice us to sin; the flesh pushes us to sin and manipulates us to sin. It *is* a controlling principle.
- And the believer in Christ has been set free from that controlling power. As one commentator says, “The last word is not with sin or with death. While believers are not sinless, they have real liberation in Christ Jesus.” [Morris]
- Now the question is, how can one be “free from the law of sin and death” (8:2) and also “under sin” (7:14) and not doing the good he desires (7:18-19)? Is this a contradiction?
 - ... No, this is a real picture of how we really live. It’s no photoshopped image. It’s a real portrait of all the beauty and harshness of our lives.
 - ... These verses address the reality that the believer still wrestles with the illegal squatter called flesh living in his life. He still will at times blatantly sin. He will still find most, if not all, of his most godly actions tainted in some way by impure motives and longings. There is a persistent reality of sin. Cf. 1 Jn. 1:8, 10; 1 Tim. 1:15; Gal. 5:1, 13, 17. There is no day of my life when I can say, “I didn’t need the blood of Christ to pay for any sin today,” or “I didn’t need the indwelling power of the Spirit of Christ to fill me and direct me away from sin today.” Every single day I am dependent on Christ. And my sin reminds me of that. (And so in a sense, sin works to my advantage when it makes me consciously dependent on Christ for my transformation.)
 - ... But there is also the reality that I am being transformed and I am being changed and I am able to please God with my actions and motives. Cf. 1 Tim. 1:16; Acts 13:22. Galatians 5:22-24 is not a tantalizing mirage that will never be attained. This *is* what the Spirit produces in us and it is what we see in each other increasingly.

- ... And whatever our struggle is, it is completely different from the unbeliever trying not to sin. The only thing the unbeliever has to fight against sin is the power of the flesh. And that flesh will sometimes enable him to be presentable and moral. But the Lord sees past the outward appearances and examines the heart. And even though the unbeliever may think himself acceptable to God, God will always judge his efforts as infinitely deficient. He will be found completely lacking. And even if he does good — teaches his children civility and disciplines them graciously and contributes to worthy causes and serves on the PTA and never curses and is faithful to his wife and helps every elderly lady across the street with patience and never honks his horn in anger, he is still not righteous. Why? Because he has attempted to do those things on his own and rejected God. In essence, he has worshipped himself and said that God is irrelevant and unnecessary. And that makes him a God-hater and worthy of God's wrath and full of nothing but rotteness. **Matthew 23:23-33** describes not only the Pharisees of Jesus' day, but all those who attempt morality without depending on Christ.
- ... So Romans 8:2 is *not* a contradiction of Romans 7:14. Instead it is the complete picture of the Christian. It excludes the possibility of someone being righteous without Christ, but it also makes possible one who has not yet been made righteous to be declared right with God.
- ... Do you remember your art history class and the painting, "The Scream" by Edvard Munch? The curators of his works said this about that painting:

"Munch's **The Scream** is an icon of modern art, the Mona Lisa for our time. As DaVinci evoked a Renaissance ideal of serenity and self-control, Munch defined how we see our own age — wracked with anxiety and uncertainty....Essentially **The Scream** is autobiographical, an expressionistic construction based on Munch's actual experience of a scream piercing through nature while on a walk, after his two companions, seen in the background, had left him....Here...in depicting his own morbid experience, he has let go, and allowed the foreground figure to become distorted by the subjectivized flow of nature; the scream could be interpreted as expressing the agony of the obliteration of human personality by this unifying force."

[<https://www.edvardmunch.org/the-scream.jsp>]

- ... If Munch was in one of our counseling rooms, one thing we would say is, "you aren't thinking on the truth; life is not that bleak. Yes, without Christ there is no hope, but with Christ there can be much hopefulness..."
- ... Now imagine Munch's painting next to a winter scene painted by Thomas Kinkaid — you know the paintings that are in all the Christian bookstores — the idyllic scenes with brilliant spots of light. In his paintings, there is always food on the table, no mud in the snow, and beautifully manicured yards and homes. Life is perfect. And if he were in one of our counseling rooms, we'd say, "Thomas, even for a Christian, life isn't that perfect and ideal. It gets messy. There is freedom in Christ, but there is still a battle with sin..."

... Paul has struck the appropriate balance in his perspective of the Christian life. Perhaps his painting might be like Washington Crossing the Delaware — there is winter and harshness and cold and opposition, but there is still the certainty of victory and a powerful leader. The believer will still battle the flesh every day, but in the battle there is always the provision of victory — there is no condemnation, because we have been set free!

... Ray Ortlund, Jr. is helpful as he thinks about this:

“If you are in Christ, then all that he can do for a defeated failure is now yours. You are not going to hell any more! This brief life is all the hell you will ever know. You will never again hear God’s holy law thundering its curses against you. The atoning work of Christ on your behalf is complete, and you cannot add anything to enhance his triumph (John 19:30)....Our holy Lord exchanged places with us sinners. He put us in his place of approval, he put himself in our place of condemnation, and God accepts that exchange. Your only part is to open your heart and receive the finished cross-work of Christ. When you do, you are justified before God. You are not just brought up from minus to zero, to a position of neutrality. You are declared positively righteous in God’s assessment of you, as righteous as Jesus himself. And that is why you are released from condemnation and enter into peace with God (Rom. 5:1).” [*Supernatural Living...*]

- *How we were removed from condemnation*
 - ✓ The Spirit’s law was introduced — it was ***the law of the Spirit of life*** that set us free.
 - Just as “the law of sin and death” is not a reference to the Mosaic Law, this law of the Spirit is not the Mosaic Law either. It is best to understand it also as a principle, or a force, or authority. It is the compulsion and authoritative working of the Spirit that produces freedom in us. Likely Paul has something very similar in mind as he did in 7:6 — as believers in Christ, we don’t live under the authority of the Law of Moses, but we live under the authority of the Spirit. The Spirit constrains and compels us and produces life in us.
 - Think about how the Spirit of God comes to live within us and produces His work & fruit in us —
 - ... He saves us through the renewal of regeneration (**Tt. 3:5**)
 - ... He is the agent of our sanctification (**1 Pt. 1:2**)
 - ... He changes our hearts (**Ezk. 36:26**) giving us hearts of flesh, with God’s Law written on them internally, so that now we have an inward power and compulsion to obey.
 - ... He produces His fruit in us, empowering us to fight against the flesh (**Gal. 5:22-24; Rom. 8:13**)
 - ... He gives us gifts that enable us to serve God in particular ways (**Rom. 12:3:ff**)
 - ... Don’t think you don’t need the Spirit to be justified or sanctified. But do recognize that when you have the Spirit of God, you have everything you need to be sanctified.
 - What is particularly interesting here is that Paul now introduces us to the Spirit of God and the Spirit is a major theme in this chapter. Prior to this chapter, Paul uses the word “Spirit” only 5x and after this chapter he only uses “Spirit” 9x. But in this chapter he uses it 21x (19x of HS). This chapter is not about what the believer must do to sanctify himself; it is about what the Spirit of God does to sanctify us and keep us in Christ, assuring us of our salvation.

- ✓ The Spirit gave us life — he is ***the Spirit of life***. He is the Spirit who contains life (life is in Him and life originates in Him). And He is the Spirit who gives life.
 - The Spirit was part of the divine creative act (**Gen. 1:1-2**).
 - And He is the power behind the spiritual creation of the new man (**Jn. 3:8; 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6**).
 - All that He is and all that He does is in contrast to the death that comes from being in Adam and under the law and under sin. The Law only condemns; sin always and only brings death. Sin is never life-giving; it is always life-taking.
 - But the Spirit counteracts everything that sin is. The Spirit always comes with life; the one who is in the Spirit is never condemned and never dead and always alive and living.
- ✓ Someone has offered a concise summary of Paul's teaching on the three different laws: "Moses' law has right but not might; sin's law has might, but no right; the law of the Spirit has both right and might." The one who is in Christ has the Spirit and has the work of His might and right!

3. There is NO Condemnation Because Christ Condemned SIN (v. 3)

4. Because There is NO Condemnation, There is SANCTIFICATION (v. 4)

CONCLUSION: We have thought this morning about the guilt of mankind before God. John Stott was right when he said, "We may try to wash our hands of responsibility like Pilate, but our attempt will be futile, as futile as his. For there is blood on our hands."

There is blood on our hands until Christ shed His blood on the cross. And His sinless blood has washed away the guilt of our bloodied hands and left us with no condemnation. And because there is no condemnation there is assurance that we are His and we remain His. This is the work of our Savior.

BENEDICTION: **Romans 8:37-39**

First Service — Be sure to take advantage of the hospitality area. Find some physical refreshment and even more look for an opportunity to give spiritual refreshment: get to know someone you don't know; give a word of encouragement to someone who needs help and hope; pray with anyone who has a need.