

Romans 8, which we can title “**Life Filled and Empowered by the Holy Spirit,**” begins (8:1) and ends (8:38,39) with two of the most precious and comforting promises in all of Scripture – and the truth in between is really encouraging, too!

The main theme of Paul’s letter to the Romans is the Gospel: we are right before God (justified) in this life and in eternity by faith in Christ’s saving work alone. To be justified by faith alone is to be under “*no condemnation.*” At the end of this chapter, Paul asks the questions, “*Who will bring a charge against God’s elect?*” and “*Who is the one who condemns?*” (8:33,34). Because of Christ, the answer is a loud and forever “NOBODY.”

## Set Free from the Death Sentence (8:1,2)

### No Condemnation (8:1)

8:1 *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

- The words “*therefore*” and “*now*” set up a contrast with what came before. Prior to conversion (7:14-25), Paul desired to obey God’s Law (“*I myself with my mind am serving the Law of God*”), but because of his sin nature could only live in violation of that Law (“*with my flesh [I am serving] the Law of sin*”).
- The words “*therefore*” and “*now*” describe a change from that condition described in 7:14-25. That change is “*for those who are in Christ Jesus.*” What does it mean to be “*in Christ Jesus*”?
  - In chapter 3, Paul spoke of “*the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe*” (3:22), “*the redemption which is in Christ Jesus*” (3:24), and that God is “*the Justifier of the one who has faith*

*in Jesus*” (3:26).<sup>1</sup> Being “*in Christ Jesus*” means continually trusting in Him alone for a right standing before God in this life and the next.

- In chapter 6, Paul reminded us that our baptism is a picture of our faith-union with Christ (vss. 3-11). He ends the chapter by reminding us that “*the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (vs. 23).
- Chapter 8 comforts us with the reality that nothing “*will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”
- Chapter 12 tells us that our faith-union with Christ doesn’t just unite us to God, but with each other: “*...we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another*” (vs. 5). This reality (faith-union with Christ is union with each other) shows up even in Paul’s personal greetings at the close of this letter (16:2,3,7-13).
- **When Paul speaks to those “*in Christ Jesus,*” he is speaking to those who live now and forever trusting only in Jesus Christ for their right standing before God, and show this faith by a baptized life together with other believers.**

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<sup>1</sup> Like so many occurrences of the verb “believe” in the New Testament, it is a present active participle in the original Greek. 3:22, therefore, should be understood as saying, “the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for **all those who are believing.**” 3:26 should be read as “**the one who is having faith** in Jesus.” There is no such thing as past-tense saving faith in Jesus Christ. Those who are truly saved keep on believing in Him alone for salvation.

- Speaking to these “*in Christ*,” Paul gives this precious promise: “*Therefore there is now no condemnation...*”
  - How were we condemned before? We were condemned by being born sons and daughters of Adam and Eve: “*...judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation...through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men*” (5:16,18).
  - We are born in this world condemned in Adam, and condemned by our living out the sin nature we inherited from Adam. When we are united to Christ by faith, we die with Him to the death-penalty and enslavement to sin, and are raised with Him to a new life finally free to serve God. Those free from the curse of the Law in Christ are now free to obey its commands in Christ.

## The New Covenant (8:2)

### The Law of the Spirit of Life (8:2a)

8:2a *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus...*

- All those who are “*in Christ Jesus*” by faith receive the Holy Spirit. For those filled with the Holy Spirit, the Law of God is a way of life. We fulfill the Old Testament promises:  
**READ Deuteronomy 30:6,8; Jeremiah 31:10-12,33; Ezekiel 36:28-28.**
- The Holy Spirit is “*the Spirit of the living beings*” (Ezekiel 1:21), “*rivers of living water*” (John 7:37-39), “*the Spirit of life*” (Romans 8:2), “*the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead*” (Romans 8:11), “*the Spirit of the living God*” (2 Corinthians 3:3), “*the seal of the living God*” (Revelation 7:2), and “*the breath of life from God*” (Revelation 11:11). He is the “*breath of life*” that made a pile of dust into “*a living*

*being*” (Genesis 2:7), and, by the preaching of the Word, “*came into* [a dead people], *and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army*” (Ezekiel 37:10). Of the resurrected Jesus it is said that “*the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit*” (1 Corinthians 15:45). We will read that “*if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the flesh, you will live*” (Romans 8:13). “*The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost*” (Revelation 22:17). **The Holy Spirit is eternal life!**

- God’s Law is a way of life to those who obey it (Leviticus 18:5), but no one can keep the Law apart from the forgiveness from the Law’s penalty which comes by faith in Christ and the empowering of the Holy Spirit Who is given to those that trust Christ alone.

### Free from the Death Penalty in the Law (8:2b)

8:2b...*has set you free from the law of sin and of death.*

- The religious person outside of Christ cannot help but serve “*the law of sin*” (7:25). In Christ, however, we are “*free from the law of sin*” (8:2).
- As chapter 7 taught us, the Law is nothing but death to those outside of Christ. They can love God’s Law and purpose to obey it, but cannot do so and are under the penalty for violating it: death. In fact, God’s Law will continually be a trigger to a lost person’s sin nature to violate that Law!
- We are free of this in Christ. “...the Mosaic law is in the realm either of the Holy Spirit or of the powers of sin and death. If the law is appropriated in the realm of the Spirit and by

faith, then one is liberated from using the Mosaic law in such a way that it leads to sin and death.”<sup>2</sup>

## What God Has Done (8:3,4)

### The Weakness of the Law (8:3a)

8:3a *For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh...*

- In 7:5-13, Paul taught us this deadly equation:

$$\text{God's Law} + \text{our sin} = \begin{matrix} \text{TEMPTATION} \\ \text{SIN} \\ \text{DEATH} \end{matrix}$$

- All the Law did before salvation was show us our sinfulness, highlight our inability to save ourselves, and convict us of our need of God's only Savior.

### The Father Works for Us (8:3b)

8:3b... *God did...*

- “God” should be understood as the divine Person Who is the Father, since He sends “His own Son” (see also 1:7; 15:6).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 400.

<sup>3</sup> “In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, Who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on Him” (1689 Baptist Confession, 2.3).

- Everybody is born in the world lost, enslaved to sin, under the penalty of death for the violation of God's Law. Nobody can save themselves. “But with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26// Mark 10:27// Luke 18:27).

### Sending His Son As One of Us (8:3c)

8:3c... *sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh...*

- 84 days until Christmas (I do this just to hear you guys groan!)
  - Paul began this letter by saying that Jesus “was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh” (1:3) and will say that “Christ according to the flesh” came from Paul's “kinsmen according to the flesh,” ethnic Israel (9:3-5).
  - He will, probably quoting an early Christian hymn, say that Jesus “was revealed in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16).
  - The apostle will tell the Philippians that Jesus was “made in the likeness of men” and was “found in appearance as a man” (2:7,8).
- The Holy Spirit, according to the eternal plan of the Father, added a real human nature to the eternal and full divine nature of the Son in the womb of the virgin Mary.<sup>4</sup>

“There is one and only one living and true God...the eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being” (Baptist Faith & Message 2000, II).

<sup>4</sup> When false teaching about Christ began spreading over the Roman Empire like wildfire, Athanasius (A.D. 296-373) fought back, contending “earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 3). His teaching was distilled down into a confession by his students. Baptist preacher Hercules Collins (1646-1702) thought it important enough that he included it at the end of his

### **Sending His Son As a Sacrifice (8:3d)**

8:3d...and as an offering for sin...

- Why did the Father send “His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh”? So that He could be “an offering for sin.” The Son was sent by the Father in resemblance to you, and was the final and absolutely sufficient sacrifice to pay the penalty for all of your sin nature and all of your sin.

### **Sending His Son to Condemn Sin in Him (8:3e)**

8:3e...He condemned sin in the flesh...

- Why did the Father send “His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh”? To “condemn sin in the flesh.”
- Human nature had to pay the penalty (death) for fallen human nature’s violation of God’s Law. A human could not pay the price for others if he was paying for his own sin. We needed a Savior Who had a human nature which was sinless to

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book on the basics of Christianity. So here, Athanasius passed down to us through our spiritual forefather Hercules Collins: “...it is necessary to everlasting life, that we also rightly believe the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man, God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the world, and man of the substance of His mother born in the world; perfect God, perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting; equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, inferior to the Father as touching His manhood; Who although He be God and man, yet is not two, but one Christ; one, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but **by taking of the manhood unto God**; one altogether not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ...”

be able to pay for our sin in our place. This is why God the Son took on a real human nature, “tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Paul will say elsewhere that the Father “made Him Who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). As the apostle John said, “He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin” (1 John 3:5). The apostle Peter confessed of Christ that He “committed no sin,” yet “bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (1 Peter 2:22,24).

### **We Are Now Free to Obey (8:4)**

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

- At the end of chapter 3, Paul asked, “do we then nullify the Law through faith?” He answered, “on the contrary, we establish the Law” (3:31).<sup>5</sup>
- With the death penalty for our violation of the Law taken away by Christ on the cross, we are filled with the Holy Spirit, Who writes God’s Law on our hearts and empowers us to obey it for the glory of God. This is real life.
- We were created to obey God. Sin enslaved us so that we could not fulfill the purpose for which we were created. Christ set us free from that enslavement, and the Spirit made us truly alive in Christ so that we can now fulfill our purpose: we are finally free to obey our loving and glorious Father.

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<sup>5</sup> Compare with Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 5:17-20.