

• *Being in Christ – its blessings and benefits*

No condemnation to those in Christ –

• *Simple and unconditional*

• *Both fact and experience*

• *Romans 8: A new life in the Spirit*

• *No condemnation because we have been released from the law – the law of sin and death*

• *Our being ‘in Christ Jesus’ sets us free from the fact of condemnation*

• *The Holy Spirit is given to us to release us even from the feeling of bondage*

The law fulfilled indirectly

Back in Romans 5:1 Paul said, ‘Therefore having been justified by faith we have . . .’, and from that point he began to tell us what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. First there are some immediate blessings^{□1} and a new position in the Lord Jesus Christ^{□2}. Because of this new position we are free from the rule of sin^{□3} and free from the Mosaic law^{□4}. Now he moves to a fifth result – or group of results – that arise from our being clothed with the righteousness of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. The basic point of the chapter is put forward in the first verse. ¹*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.* Some translations add some extra words ‘who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit’. These words are not in the best manuscripts. Some early scribes wrongly copied them into verse 1 from verse 4. But verse 1 is simple and unconditional.

‘Condemnation’ refers to condemnation as a fact and it also means the experience of being condemned. It includes the idea that there is no doom, no torture, no experience of being guilty, no penal servitude.

Next Paul says ‘For . . .’, and goes on to argue his point in a number of small paragraphs. We have been released from the law^{□1}, we possess the Spirit^{□2}, sufferings will outweigh glory^{□3}, the Spirit helps us in weakness^{□4} and God has a determined purpose to bring us to glory^{□5}. Then Paul argues out our security further, answering all possible difficulties^{□6} and coming to a great conclusion (‘For I am persuaded . . . Nothing is able to separate us from the love of God . . .’).

The first reason why there is no condemnation for us comes in verses 2 to 4. We cannot be condemned because we have been released from the law. ²*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you [singular] free from the law of sin and of death.* ‘The law of sin and of death’ refers to the law of God. He has just said^{□1} that the law provokes sin and works death in us. Now he calls God’s law ‘the law of sin and of death’. It is the law of God that is in his mind, and verses 3 and 4 continue to deal with the Mosaic law. For the Christian there is ‘no condemnation’ because he has been altogether released from the Mosaic law.

‘The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ refers to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit sets us free from the **experience** of being ruled by sin and condemnation through the law. It is our being ‘in Christ Jesus’ that sets us free from the **fact** of condemnation by the law of God, or by any other law. When we believe in Jesus we become ‘in Christ’. Because we are ‘in Christ’ we are justified. The Mosaic law can no longer condemn us and can no longer rouse sin in us because we are released from it. Then the powerful working of the Holy Spirit is given to us to release us even from the feeling of bondage.

Paul proceeds to speak of what the law could not do, and what God has done. ³*For God did something the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, God condemned sin in the flesh . . .* Then he goes on to speak of the way God’s law gets fulfilled indirectly^{□1}.

□1 5:1-11
□2 5:12-21
□3 6:1-23
□4 7:1-25

□1 8:2-4
□2 8:5-17
□3 8:18-25
□4 8:26-27
□5 8:28-30
□6 8:31-37

□1 in 7:7-25

□1 8:4

1. *The law of Moses cannot bring any kind of deliverance from sin*

• *Nothing wrong with the law, but our flesh, our sinfulness, makes it quite impossible for the law to help us*

2. *God has condemned sin in the flesh*

• *Instead of condemning us, God condemned sin*

3. *The law has to be stripped of its power in order that it might get fulfilled*

• *The promise of the Holy Spirit will lead us beyond anything known in the law of God given through Moses*

1. It was impossible for the law of Moses to bring any kind of deliverance from sin or release into the kingdom of grace. The Mosaic law could not justify, could not declare us right with God. It could not regenerate, that is, give us any kind of spiritual life. It could not sanctify. It actually stirs up sin in any unbelieving person and makes his condition as a sinner worse than ever. The law cannot give assurance of salvation, cannot release us from doubts. It cannot give us fellowship with God and instead sets up a barrier between us and God. The law never leads us into bold praying. We cannot draw near with full confidence to God if we are being intimidated by the law. The law cannot give us any kind of joy or boldness in witness. It deprives us of the very joy we need to witness to others. It will never draw us closer to other Christians. It will never work in us faith or hope or optimism. Rather it will bring us into despair. It cannot give us ease before God, cannot give us liberty. There is nothing wrong with the law, but our flesh, our sinfulness, makes it quite impossible for the law to help us.

2. God has condemned sin in the flesh. Sin is being pictured as a mighty king. There was once a time when sin ruled over us and had authority over us. Sin had such power we could not break free from its power. Sin brought bondage and guilt and slavery into our lives. Maybe we struggled by means of some kind of law to break away, but we were not able to do so. But God in the person of Jesus, coming 'in the flesh', coming in a genuine human nature to live and to die, has 'condemned sin'. Instead of condemning us and banishing us from his kingdom, God condemned sin and banished it from ruling over us. He sent Jesus 'in the likeness of sinful flesh'. Jesus had our nature in every respect except its sinfulness. On the cross Jesus was dying 'for sin'.

3. Next Paul tells us that when the law has been stripped of its power, this is 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*. There is something surprising in this. The law has to be stripped of its power in order that it might get fulfilled! When we try to fulfil God's law directly, we totally fail and are led into a taste of the experience of Romans 7:7–25. But when we firmly and resolutely and daringly believe in our release from the Mosaic law we end up fulfilling it after all.

It is the Holy Spirit who is the open-secret of godliness. Romans 7:6 talks about the 'newness of the Spirit'. The Christian life is an entirely new life of the Holy Spirit. The experience of the Holy Spirit is 'promised' to us. He is often called the 'promised Holy Spirit'¹. The promise of the Holy Spirit will lead us beyond anything known in the law of God given through Moses. Follow the Holy Spirit; then you will fulfil the law.

¹ Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:33; Galatians 3:14; Ephesians 1:13



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