

Salvation And Sin (Part 4)
Text: Romans 8:1-39
Series: Book of Romans [#11]
Lyle L. Wahl
January 17, 2010

Introduction

As the apostle Paul wrote “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”, he began what many consider one of the most grand chapters in all the Bible. In this chapter, Romans 8, he completes the section on salvation and sin which he began in chapter 6. But it also is a summation of much of what he has written from the start of the letter.

The theme of Romans is the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. We all stand guilty and helpless in our sin, but God provides salvation by His grace through faith in Jesus Christ. I want us to see and rejoice in God’s grand message through Paul in this chapter. In saving us by His grace through faith God has given us a new freedom from sin and death. He has given us a new nature. And He has given us a new responsibility.

God Has Given Us A New Freedom From Sin And Death.

We begin with the new freedom from sin and death. The chapter, again, opens with, “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”

God gave us this freedom by sending Jesus Christ, His Son. Verse 3.

“For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.”

Paul reminds us of this truth that is so familiar that we might skip over it. Yes, it is so familiar to most of us that we may no longer pause in wonder and worship, we may no longer explore God’s love and commitment to us, explore Christ’s sacrifice for us. So familiar. So amazing. And absolutely essential to our freedom from sin and death. God the Son came as one of us, truly human, “in the likeness of [our] sinful flesh” so as one of us He could represent us. But He came and lived without sin because He is holy God. So He was qualified to die for us to pay the penalty for our sin, “the just for the unjust so that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18).

Then God gave us this new freedom from sin and death by the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, as verse 2 tells us. This expression might sound a bit unusual to us. First, the word *law* as used here has the idea of a principle, or power that belongs to the Holy Spirit. The New Living Translation renders the phrase, “the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.” It is the Holy Spirit who brings life to us and frees us from the condemnation and bondage of sin and death.

Paul points to the Holy Spirit's role in salvation in other places as well. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 he tells us

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

Earlier in that letter he wrote “... [but] you were washed, [but] you were sanctified, [but] you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” (6:11)

As well, God has given us this new freedom from sin and death by fulfilling the requirements of the Law in us. Pick it up at the end of verse 3.

“... He [Christ] condemned sin in the flesh, 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.” (3b-4)

The Law is God's holy, righteous and good standard, a standard which we cannot meet. Verse 3 clearly tells us the fulfillment of it in us is not something we have done or might do. It is God's work by His grace. Paul refers primarily to our justification here—our being declared righteous because of and in Jesus Christ.

We have new freedom from sin and death by God sending Jesus Christ, by the law of the Spirit of life, and by God's fulfilling the requirement of the Law in us.

God Has Given Us A New Nature.

Then, in saving us By His grace through faith God has also given us a new nature. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says that “... if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” This section in Romans summarizes some of what it means to be a new creature, to have a new nature.

First, Paul tells us in verse 1 that now “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Think back to the first chapters of this letter.

- Paul demonstrated that the pagan Gentiles were guilty of sin and so, condemned.
- So also the respectable moralists were guilty and condemned.
- And, yes, the privileged Jews also were guilty and condemned.

They all, we “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”, and “the wages of sin is death” (3:23; 6:23).

When Jesus told His followers to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation”, He also said “whoever does not believe will be *condemned*” (Mark 16:16, ESV). The words condemn and condemnation mean more than being found guilty. They also, and perhaps more so, refer to the punishment or doom that comes from, that follows the guilty verdict. We could state the phrase in verse 1, “there is no punishment, or doom, for those who are in Christ Jesus.”¹

The *bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* created the Doomsday Clock in 1947 to picture the danger of nuclear annihilation. They originally set the clock at seven minutes to midnight, or doomsday. It was adjusted a number of times and then in 2007 they added climate change to their factors, and set the clock at five minutes to midnight. Last week they changed it again, to six minutes to the hour.²

In the last 60 plus years the feeling of impending doom from a nuclear holocaust has declined. Some still are concerned and even fearful, but far fewer people fear the impending doom of judgment and everlasting punishment they will experience if they die in their sin. But, Paul tells us, believers have nothing to fear! There is *no* condemnation for us because we are new creations in Christ.

Secondly, because of our new nature now we are according to, in and alive to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has a ministry to all people—both those who know Christ as Savior and those who do not. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit “will convict the world [that is, those who do not believe] concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8). But the Holy Spirit has a special and unique relationship and ministry with believers.

Paul tells us in verse 5 that believers are those “who are according to the [Holy] Spirit.” Then, in verse 9, that believers are “in the [Holy] Spirit,” and that, in verse 10, our “spirit is alive” to God. In other places Paul informs us that the Holy Spirit dwells in us, and that our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 1:14; 1 Corinthians 6:19).

Yes, now we are according to, in and alive to the Holy Spirit. All that He does in and for us as God’s people is because we are new creations in Christ, we have a new nature.

Next, now we are led by the Holy Spirit. Drop down to verse 14. “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” Paul uses a similar expression in Galatians 5:18, “...if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.”

Paul is describing a reality for every believer, not one which is experienced only by believers who have a certain knowledge or experience. The Holy Spirit now leads us although we, at least at times, may not be very good at following. One writer tells us,

“In spiritual things we are as little children, who, on account of their weakness, have need to be led by the hand that they may not fall.”

He also wrote,

“We are naturally so indisposed to go to Jesus Christ, that it is necessary that God by His Spirit, draws us to Him...”³

What more could we ask? In all the complicated things of our lives and world, in all the distractions, in all the temptations from without and with, how good it is to have the Holy Spirit as the One who is always with, the One who always leads us. We can pray with the Psalmist and sing with the hymn writer, “Lead me Lord, lead me in Your righteousness...” When we pray in this way, we are not asking God to do something He is not already doing,

because He constantly leads us. Our prayer then, is to seek and actively submit to, to rely on the Holy Spirit's leading.

Moving on, in our new nature now we are the sons, the children of God. Paul makes this point three times in verses 14-16.

- "... all who are led by the Spirit of God, these are *sons* of God" (14).
- "... you have received a spirit of adoption as *sons* by which we cry out 'Abba! Father!'" (15).
- And, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are *children* of God" (16).

The apostle John wrote,

"as many as received Him [Christ], to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." (John 1:12)

And again,

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are."

(1 John 3:1)

Every believer now is a member of God's family. God is our Father—the one and only perfect, loving, all-wise, all-powerful Father.

A fifth feature of our new nature is that now the Holy Spirit affirms that we are God's children. Verse 16, again, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God." When life is terrible, when God seems distant, when our weaknesses and sins seem to be so great and powerful, it is not unusual to wonder, "Am I really a child of God?" In the good and bad times, in all situations in life, the Holy Spirit keeps on affirming that we are God's children. As one man writes, "The Holy Spirit is not only instrumental in *making* us God's children; he also makes us *aware* that we are God's children."⁴

Then also we now are heirs of God and fellow heirs of Christ. Look at verse 17.

"... 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."

Titus 3:7 tells us that being justified by God's grace we have been "made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

While we know this inheritance includes being with God forever and ruling with Christ, there is much about it we do not and cannot know here on earth. It certainly speaks of our special relationship with God and sharing in the blessings that Christ gives because of His death and resurrection for us.

One of the best descriptions, to my mind, is from the apostle Peter.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1:3-5)

The next feature of our new nature is that we will be glorified with Christ. That’s what verse 17 tells us. It also is the final link in the chain of verses 29-30—God forenew, predestined, called, justified and He *glorified* every believer. Our glorification with Christ refers to sharing in the perfect splendor and radiance of Christ particularly, I think, in terms of our salvation being fully complete in heaven:

- when we will no longer have any sin or temptations,
- when we will also enjoy everlasting bodies that will not limit us, will not age, wear out, get sick and die.

As Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth, drawing from Isaiah,

“Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Closely connected to this is that now we have a new perspective on suffering. Look at verse 18. Paul tells us, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

In case you thought I skipped over part of verse 17, here is where it fits in. Paul said, “...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.” Just as Christ suffered, so also all believers experience suffering in this world because we belong to Him. The “if” in Paul’s statement assumes the condition and could be translated “since” or “because.” The specific type and degree of suffering will vary, but everyone who is a true believer will experience suffering because of their faith. Jesus has told us “A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20). And so the apostle Peter wrote that we should not be surprised when people persecute us because of Christ (1 Peter 4:12-13).

Then also now we have the Holy Spirit and Christ interceding for us. Go to verse 26.

“... the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the

hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” (26-27)

Now look at verse 34 where Paul writes. “... Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”

Again I ask, what more could we ask? We know our weaknesses, at least many of them. We know we cannot see all the dangers and opportunities, we don't see all of our own heart as we should. But God sees it all perfectly, and He does not leave us on our own.

We will not see, let alone understand, even a small portion of this intercession while we are here on earth. But what comfort, what joy and what confidence it gives to know that Christ and the Holy Spirit intercede for us! For you! For me!

Finally, because of being new creations in Christ, now we have a certain, joyful security. Drop down to verse 28.

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 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.”
(28-30)

At the start, please note that when Paul says that God causes all things to work together for good to believers, He is not speaking in a general way, and certainly not in terms of what we might think is good, such as good health, long life, plenty of friends, prosperity. That is not what Paul is saying. As we look at our own lives, and those of other believers we also know this is not what Paul is saying.

Verse 28 introduces the next two verses. Those two verses tell us that the *good* is, as Paul states at the end of verse 30, being glorified with Christ. We have a certain, joyful security that God who foreknew, predestined, called, and justified us will also glorify us, will bring us safely into His presence. As Jesus said,

“I give eternal life to them [those who are His sheep, who belong to Him], and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.” (John 10:27-28).

Our salvation in the council of God before time began, being experienced here in time, and throughout eternity is all by God's sovereign choice and action. As well, remember that what God starts He completes. As Paul told the church in Philippi, “For I am confident of this very

thing, that He [God] who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (1:6).

As Paul reflects on this great truth, he bursts into a shout of praise.

- “If God is for us, who is against us?” (31). “Who can prevail, who has the power to defeat us?” The answer, of course, is “No one!”
- “Who can bring a charge against us to condemn us?” Again, the answer is, “No one!”
- “Who or what can separate us from Christ and His love?” “No one! Nothing!”

Christ not only frees us from being victims, He makes us victors, He makes us conquerors.

God Has Given Us A New Responsibility.

In saving us by His grace through faith God has given us a new freedom from sin and death. He has given us a new nature, and He also has given us a new responsibility. Paul begins the practical application part of this letter in chapter 12, but here he gives us a small taste of what lies ahead.

One aspect of our new responsibility is the obligation to live by the Spirit. Go back up to verse 12.

“So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” (12-13)

He is drawing a contrast between those who have been recreated in Christ and those who have not.

As believers we are not under obligation to the *flesh*, the sin still resident within us, as people who have not been saved are. Rather, we are under obligation to live by the Spirit by His direction and power. Part of the Holy Spirit’s work in believers is to enable us to put to death the deeds that arise from the sin within us. We have an active role in this. Notice that Paul says, “*you* are putting to death” these things. Paul is not talking about gaining or retaining salvation, but the responsibility we now have and can fulfill through the Holy Spirit who is within us. We see a sharp contrast between the deeds of the sinful flesh and the fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5. None of us will reach perfection here on earth, but there is no room, absolutely no room for complacency about this in a true believer.

As well, we now have the responsibility to wait eagerly with hope for the redemption of our body. Look down to verse 23.

“And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not

hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.” (23-25)

Every believer should be looking forward to, anticipating, even sitting on the edge of our seats as we wait for Christ to return for us. Don't be distracted. Don't allow blinders to slip on so we only see the present, be it the problems and struggles or the plans and successes we have.

The result of truly focusing on heaven's values and purposes, including our future with Christ in our everlasting bodies, will move us from that anticipation to action. Action to being faithful to the end, to walk in the good works which Christ has prepared for us. Action to witness to those who do not believe so they too can experience life with God and this certain hope.

Conclusion.

In saving us by His grace through faith God has given us a new freedom from sin and death, a new nature, and a new responsibility.

You undoubtedly know that the Olympic torch passed through Edmonton on Wednesday. Large crowds of all ages gathered. Perhaps you were in one of those crowds. People of all ages, from newborns to seniors. People in the celebration said,

- “It's awesome!”
- “It's a once-in-a-life-time experience!”
- “It's overwhelming!”
- “It's something I never will forget!”

When was the last time you celebrated what Christ has done for you with that kind of spirit? When was the last time you were in a group of Christians with that kind of joy because God had saved them by His grace? Don't misunderstand me—I am not talking about trying to live on a constant emotional high. I am talking about a deep, constant, vocal joy and praise to God, I am talking about joining with Paul in a shout of praise to God for all He has done for us.

As you reflect on the truths we have seen in this grand chapter of Romans this morning, thank God for all He has done for you, and for every believer. Determine to live in that thankful and joyful spirit every day, regardless of the circumstances that come your way. Determine to share the good news of Christ so others will come to know Him and join in the chorus of praise to God.

-
- ¹ Walter Bauer, trans. William F. Arndt & F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, p. 413.
- ² “‘Doomsday Clock’ moves one minute away from midnight.” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. 14 January 2010. Accessed 15 January 2010. <<http://www.thebulletin.org/content/media-center/announcements/2010/01/14/doomsday-clock-moves-one-minute-away-midnight>>
- ³ Robert Haldane. *Exposition Of The Epistle To The Romans*. Edinburgh: William Oliphant and Company, 1874, p.351.
- ⁴ Douglas J. Moo. *The Epistle To The Romans*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996, p. 503.

© 2010 Lyle L. Wahl

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®,
Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995
by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from
The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles,
a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.
Used by permission. All rights reserved.