

In the last chapter Paul explained to the Jewish believers in Jesus that they were now freed from the law by identifying in the death of Jesus (7:6). The law and their sin was nailed to the cross. They died with Jesus and now are raised with Him to newness of life. That means they can now be the bride of Christ, led by His heart and not the cold letter of the law (7:4).

He went on to describe the way the law was unable to change his behavior, something those Jewish believers had all experienced before they came to Christ. They recognized the value of the law and agreed with it, but just couldn't live it. Outwardly Paul put on a great show, but inwardly he knew was falling miserably short of what the law demanded (7:8). At the end of the chapter he shared his heart cry that led him to accepting the Messiah, Jesus. *O wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord* (7:24-25a)! He is helping those Jewish believers in Jesus focus on their relationship with Jesus rather than the letter of the law.

Chapter eight is what I believe to be the greatest chapter on victorious Christian living. If you only memorized one chapter outside of the Gospels, I would recommend this one. It begins with a glorious declaration that is one of the first things every young Christian needs to understand. *¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* Since Jesus took the punishment for all my sins upon Himself, I do not have to live under condemnation. My past sins are covered. If God says He has removed them from me, I have no right to bring them back up (Psalm 103:12). To do so implies that what Jesus did for us was insufficient. You don't want to go there! It is as if you told God His plan to redeem you wasn't good enough.

Another name for Satan is "the Accuser of the Brethren" (Revelation 12:10). There is no condemnation for those who are in Jesus. When you sin today, and you will, you should confess it to God and thank Him that Jesus already paid the penalty for those sins as well (1John 1:9). What Satan wants to do is keep you under a cloud of condemnation and tell you that you are just too bad for God to love. That is because he is a liar (John 8:44). Jesus countered Satan's lie with the truth that the one who is forgiven much loves much (Luke 7:47). The more we realize the huge sin debt that Christ has forgiven, the more we love Him out of response to His love. The enemy of your soul hates that, so he tries to get you to think God's grace and forgiveness isn't great enough to cover your sin. Just quote this verse to him and tell him he is a liar. You might remind him that you read the end of the book and you know where he is headed. End of conversation!

Commented [notes1]: Romans 7:6 (ESV)

⁶ But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

Commented [notes2]: Romans 7:4 (ESV)

⁴ Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.

Commented [notes3]: Romans 7:8 (ESV)

⁸ But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead.

Commented [notes4]: Romans 7:24-25a(ESV)

²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

^{25a} Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Commented [notes5]: Psalm 103:12 (ESV)

¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Commented [notes6]: Revelation 12:10 (KJV)

¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

Commented [notes7]: 1 John 1:9 (ESV)

⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Commented [notes8]: John 8:44 (ESV)

⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Commented [notes9]: Luke 7:47 (ESV)

⁴⁷ Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little."

This freedom from condemnation is for those "in Christ Jesus". Paul frequently uses this expression. It means to have identified with Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection. It means to consider your old nature dead and buried. That nature is called "the sinful nature" in NIV and "the flesh" in KJV and ESV. Those in Jesus continually count themselves as dead to that nature and alive to Jesus (6:4). He describes it further in the verses that follow. If you are in Christ Jesus you should reject condemnation.

Commented [notes10]: Romans 6:4 (ESV)
⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Condemnation to those in Jesus comes from Satan. Conviction comes from the Holy Spirit. Condemnation says you are hopeless. Conviction urges us to confess it to God, thank Him for His forgiveness, and by the grace of God not do it again. Condemnation is the scribes and Pharisees saying to stone the adulterous women. Conviction says, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more (John 8:11)."

Commented [notes11]: John 8:11 (ESV)
¹¹ She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

Think of the absurdity of Satan telling you that you are hopeless. Here is the hopeless one who has rejected God telling a child of God, who Jesus has redeemed with the powerful arm of Almighty God (Isaiah 53:1), that you are hopeless. Of course he has things turned around. That is the telltale mark of evil. He always re-labels everything. He calls good evil and evil good. He tells those with a certain and sure hope that they are hopeless (Hebrews 6:19).

Commented [notes12]: Isaiah 53:1 (ESV)
¹ Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

Here is why we are never under condemnation. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. The old law said that the soul that sins must die (Ezekiel 18:4). The law condemned the sinner to death. Brother Saidou told us how, as a Muslim, he read the story of Adam and Eve. He thought to himself, "If they only sinned once and were thrown out of Paradise, what chance do I have?" The law says if you fail in one point then you fail in all (James 2:10)! God's standard is holiness and perfection (1Peter 1:16).

Commented [notes13]: Hebrews 6:19 (ESV)
¹⁹ We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,

This verse is telling us that there is another law, the law of the Spirit of life. If you recall the The Lion, Witch and the Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis, you might remember the girls asking Aslan how he had risen from death. He told them that the witch knew the law of sin and death, but she didn't know the deeper and more ancient law that the soul that has no debt but dies for another's debt will be raised.

Commented [notes14]: Ezekiel 18:4 (ESV)
⁴ Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.

Jesus is the Spirit of life. His law says that all who entrust themselves to Him will have eternal life (John 3:36)! Which law are you under? It is one or the other. God must be just. Either you will pay for your sins or you will accept Jesus paying your debt for you. That is to be set free from the law of sin and its consequence, death.

Commented [notes15]: James 2:10 (ESV)
¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

Commented [notes16]: 1 Peter 1:16 (ESV)
¹⁶ since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

In the Christian world we talk a lot about accepting Christ and His gift of salvation, but we don't speak much of being in Christ. Just as we are told to consider ourselves dead to our old nature, we are also supposed to consider ourselves alive in Christ. We are to

Commented [notes17]: John 3:36 (ESV)
³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

recognize that we are in Him, in life (1Corinthians 15:45)! We are credited with His righteousness (2Corinthians 5:21). Whew! We recognize that all we have is of Him and by Him and through Him. We put Him on and walk in the Spirit (Romans 13:14). We are no longer slaves of sin but have become slaves of righteousness (6:18). We are to remain in Him and He will remain in us. The result is bearing much fruit (John 15:4-5)! That means to become more and more like Jesus in our daily life.

"Then why don't we see that in people that claim to be Christians?" is a very legitimate question that follows from the world. It is because, for the most part, we are not remaining in Christ. We are not living in the Spirit but in the flesh. I hope you are hearing or reading this as conviction rather than condemnation. This is a challenge for us to live each day in Jesus and know He is living in us. It is to saturate ourselves with the Word of God, to pray without ceasing, and love God with our all and our neighbor as our self (Mathew 22:37-40). It is to constantly look to Jesus for the direction of His Spirit. At the same time it is to recognize that Jesus paid it all and our every shortcoming is covered.

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, The law could never make us acceptable to God. Our nature is the corrupt nature we inherited from Adam (5:12). We can't keep the law. We could never be acceptable to God on our own, and so God provided a way. He sent His own Son, the second person of the Trinity, in the body of a man (like us sinful beings but without sin). He sent Him to deal with the sin of mankind. Jesus condemned sin in our wicked nature by His perfect life. He showed us what we should have been. Then He condemned the sins of the world to the cross on His own body.

Every penalty for every sin was meted out in perfect justice upon Jesus on the cross. That was so horrific that God hid it from mortal eyes for three hours of darkness (Matthew 27:45). Every sin that you and I have and will commit, He took upon Himself and received the wrath of God for us all. **Sin had to be condemned so that we could be free from condemnation.** It is in that freedom to live in Christ and receive His Spirit that we are enabled to break the chains of sin.

That is why Paul continues with what should be the result of Jesus' sacrifice. *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.* First understand that the requirements of the law were met by Jesus and credited to us. He took our sin debt and swapped it for His righteous credit. That is our positional righteousness, or we could say it is the way God sees us. But Paul is talking about something else. He is saying that Jesus died as a sacrifice for us so that our daily lives might fulfill the spirit of the law.

Commented [notes18]: 1 Corinthians 15:45 (ESV)

⁴⁵ Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being" the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

Commented [notes19]: 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Commented [notes20]: Romans 13:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Commented [notes21]: Romans 13:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Commented [notes22]: John 15:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Commented [notes23]: Matthew 22:37-40 (NIV)

³⁷ Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Commented [notes24]: Romans 5:12 (ESV)

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned-

Commented [notes25]: Matthew 27:45 (ESV)

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

When we live in Christ and are slaves of righteousness, we do love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength as well as loving our neighbor as our self (Deuteronomy 6:5). All the law hangs on those two commands (Matthew 22:40). So as we walk in the Spirit we fulfill the righteous requirements of the law experientially in our daily life. We won't attain perfection, far from it, but as we remain in Christ, we become more like Him. As we obey the Spirit we fulfill the righteous requirements of the law (Galatians 5:16, 25).

Commented [notes26]: Deuteronomy 6:5 (ESV)

⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Commented [notes27]: Matthew 22:40 (ESV)

⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Commented [notes28]: Galatians 5:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Commented [notes29]: Galatians 5:25 (ESV)

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Paul is going to explain for us how this plays out in our daily experience. *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.* If your life is lived out according to the demands of your sinful nature, you constantly think about those cravings and desires (Galatians 2:3). Someone once claimed that men have lustful thoughts every six seconds. That would be in line with what this verse is saying for carnal people living according to the flesh. It can be anything the world has to offer, fame, money, respect, material things, anything that is put above God. When those things are first in our life, we set our mind thinking on those things. James said that is to be a spiritual adulterer and an enemy of God (James 4:4).

Commented [notes30]: Ephesians 2:3 (ESV)

³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Commented [notes31]: James 4:4 (ESV)

⁴ You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

It is a constant challenge to guard our thought life. It is an indicator of the condition of our soul. We can't completely control passing thoughts, but we can decide on what we will contemplate. We can do as Paul suggested to the Corinthians to take our thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ (2Corinthians 10:5). We can refuse certain thoughts and welcome praise worthy thoughts.

Commented [notes32]: 2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV)

⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

Paul is telling us that we can control our thought life. If we live according to the Spirit, we will set our mind on the things of the Spirit. There are so many distractions today, but God has countered that with so many helpful things. A pastor friend was lamenting the fact that our society is becoming so illiterate. He told me that when he gives books to people, they rarely read them because they just don't read. While he was talking, I turned on my phone and hit the YouBible app and it started reading the first chapter of John. God has a solution. There is Christian radio as well, or Pandora radio where you can even select your artists and reject certain songs and favor other Biblical uplifting songs. We have so many ways to help us with our thought life.

It has been said that we are what we eat. **It would be more accurate to say that we are what we set our minds on.** By the way, that pastor listens to sermons from off the www when he rides his bike for exercise. I review my chapters and listen to Bible passages or Christian music from my phone.

Commented [notes33]: Philippians 4:8 (ESV)

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Do whatever it takes to get control of your thought life. Surrender your mind to be an instrument of righteousness. Think on praiseworthy things (Philippians 4:8). Memorize

and review Scripture. Pray without ceasing. Talk to the Lord as you go throughout your day. Refuse those thoughts that are not of God. Remind yourself that you are a new creation and the old one is dead (2Corinthians 5:17)! Meditate on Bible passages. At the end of the service I'm going to invite you forward if you have not already surrendered your mind as an instrument of righteousness or if you need to renew that commitment.

Your thinking affects your attitude and your attitude affects how people perceive you. If you are filled with the joy of the Lord because you are dwelling on His goodness to you, people are going to ask you about that joy. What a great opportunity to share the Lord. But if you have a long face and go moping around because you dwell on the past defeats and pain from hurts long ago, and hang on to unforgiveness, who is going to want what you have? Someone might say that this is mind control. Amen! Who controls your mind, the flesh or 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. Your choice! As Moses said, ¹⁹ *I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ^{20a} loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life...* Deuteronomy 30:19-20a (ESV) Do you want life and peace? Well do you? What do you have to do? Identify with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection. Then set your mind on the things of the Spirit and live. Live in Christ Jesus, obeying his voice and holding fast to Him for He is your life! The mind set on the flesh is separation from God who is life. It is death now and forever. It is no accident that you are here this morning hearing the answer to what you need in your life to know real 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. The reason the mind set on the flesh is death is because that mindset is hostile to the things of God. Like Paul said in the last chapter, even when you know what is good you can't do it (7:19). We need the power of God's Spirit and a mind renewed by the word of God, set on the things of God, directed by the Spirit of God to know life and peace. Now that you know what to do, you must choose.

Questions

- 1 Who condemns believers, and what is his other name?
- 2 What does it mean to be in Christ Jesus?
- 3 What is the difference between conviction and condemnation?
- 4 How can we be acceptable to God?
- 5 How can we fulfill the righteous requirements of the law?
- 6 How do we walk in the Spirit?

Commented [notes34]: 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Commented [notes35]: Romans 7:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

7 What aids do we have for our thought life?

8 How does godly thinking affect your life?

9 What is the result of a mind on flesh?

10 What is the result of a mind set on the Spirit? Which are you experiencing?