



Sermon Notes | Life in Christ | Romans 8:1-4

INTRODUCTION

We are now entering 'rarified' territory in this rich New Testament Letter of Romans. This is not to lessen our view of the other sixty-five books of Scripture, or fifteen chapters of Romans, for each book, chapter, and verse has its own place, inspiration, and treasure within the Bible. But having reached Chapter 8 of Romans, we have reached a peak, a 'summit' after climbing for seven chapters, 'the summit of summits', the 'Everest in the Himalayas' of Romans. So, let us set the table for understanding Romans 8. Throughout history Romans 8 has been regarded as such, a summit peak. No end of commentary has been made on Chapter 8. Some are 'sappy commentary' and understated, as in 'Romans is an inspirational highlight', others are more over the top, as in the metaphorical suggestion that Romans 8 is 'the tree of life in the Garden of Eden'. However, author J. I. Packer, employing the 'Everest analogy', writes many helpful insights about Chapter 8 in his book *Knowing God*, pointing out that the 'ascent' from Chapters 1-7 of Romans is crucial to understanding Chapter 8. Packer reminds us that we cannot just land on the summit of Chapter 8. We need the ascent from Chapters 1-7. He states:

"Here the Everest principle operates. You'll not penetrate the secret of Romans 8 by studying the chapter on its own. The way into Romans 8 is through Romans 1-7. And the impact of Romans 8 upon you will reflect what it has cost you to come to terms with what those chapters say. Only if you have come to know yourself as a lost and helpless sinner, chapters 1-3; and with Abraham, to trust the divine promise that seems to be too good to be true, in your case, the promise of acceptance because Jesus your covenant head died and rose, chapters 5-6; only if, as a new creature in Christ you've committed yourself to total holiness and then found in yourself that the flesh is at war with the spirit so that you live in contradiction, never fully achieving the good you purposed nor avoiding all the evil you renounced, chapters 6-7; only if on top of this, losses and crosses are upon you, illness, strain, accident, shock, disappointment, unfair treatment, See Romans 8:18-23 and 35-39; only if, and only then will Romans yield up its full riches and make its great power known to you."

Hear that! Read that! 'Only then' and 'only that way', climbing through Chapters 1-7, says Packer. 'Only that way will work!' Only then will this chapter yield up its riches. In other words, you cannot 'cherry pick' the Scriptures. You cannot 'cherry pick' Romans and expect to get full return on your gems. You cannot! You cannot read verses like 8:1 in

isolation when you are wrestling with guilt and expect it to melt away without the understanding of why it is true in Chapters 1-7.

Romans 8:1

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

You cannot read verses like 8:15 on its own and expect assurances like a child to a father. You just can't.

Romans 8:15

"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!' "

You cannot read passages such as 8:18-25 in their immensity in isolation. For how can we understand this treasure without first knowing the truths of chapter 5 and chapter 7? Or how can we understand about 'groaning' inwardly and eagerly as we wait for adoption, 'groaning' for the hope for what we do not see? How can we understand that treasure without first understanding Chapters 5 and 7?

Romans 8:18-25

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

And what about such passages that we take for granted?

Romans 8:28

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

Romans 8:30

"And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."

Indeed, where is the weight and value of these verses without Romans 1-7? And of this one:

Romans 8:37-39

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

If we just 'parachute' into a verse like that (as good as it is), we only glean 'thin' surface help. These words lose their potency without the whole force of the complete letter. Riches abound, but only if you ascribe them their proper place and value, and then, Romans 8 never will be the same again. We have made this climb through the first seven chapters, and thus have a 'fitting' introduction to chapter 8. Having ploughed through the hard work of chapters 1-7, there will be sheer joy in chapter 8, for Romans 8 is not merely deep theology. No. There is great reward in this grand chapter 8. So, let us begin.

Romans 8:1-4

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 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, 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."

I. NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST: (vv. 1-2)

Romans 8:1-2

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death."

No condemnation. No separation from God's love in Christ. This is 'life in Christ' from what He gives us from 'salvation' to what He has left us with in the Spirit for 'sanctification', right through to the Father's love guaranteed in Christ to 'glorification'. These riches are only found in Jesus Christ. The key to everything in life is bound up in these two words, 'in Christ'.

So what does it mean to be 'in Christ'? What are the implications? What does it mean that there is 'no condemnation' for those 'in Christ'? Note the word 'therefore' in verse 1. This word 'therefore' means/indicates that there is 'looking back', a 'looking further back' than the nearby verses. We must 'look back' to Chapter 5, to where 'condemnation' was mentioned previously, and where 'condemnation' was established as 'legal guilt'.

Romans 5:16, 18

"And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ... Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men."

A 'guilty verdict' was inherited in Adam, the old head, in the Garden of Eden, thus our 'natural' status is 'corrupted' DNA. Our natural body status, from the womb, is guilty. But this is not just a Chapter 5 situation. No. It goes back further, to Chapter 3, where it is declared that 'all are under sin' and 'all are guilty'. No one is righteous. No one does good. None seek after God.

Romans 3:9-11

"What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: 'None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God'."

But 'condemnation' goes back further still, to Chapter 1, and the wrath of God being against all forms of ungodliness, and where 'suppression of truth' is condemned. 'Suppression of truth', bringing 'condemnation' by our own hands, by choice, by nature, by inheritance, by practice, and therefore, the 'guilty verdict' is just. And so, 'condemnation' is laid out clearly in chapters 1, 3, and 5.

Yet now, in chapter 8 we read, "There is therefore now 'no condemnation' for those who are in Christ Jesus," (8:1). But how is that 'condemnation' overcome through Christ? It is a glorious thing, but it is not new information. Romans 4-6 has established this truth already. We read, for example:

Romans 5:1

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Through Christ, we are declared 'not guilty' with full pardon. But it has nothing to do with our work. It is Christ's work alone! We have nothing to submit; it only is about Christ's work. In response to this 'work by Christ', we only must respond by 'repentance'. Our 'repentance', our 'faith', this being our 'response' to the 'work of Christ', brings on God's peace and the grand assurance, the certainty of our 'justification'. We can be confident in the 'security' of this real truth, and can now work it out and live it out in the 'power of our sanctification'. Chapters 4-6.

'In Christ' sin is broken and we are no longer slaves to sin. 'In Christ' there is a new master, new lordship. Now we are slaves to righteousness.

Romans 6:18

"...and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness."

But 'sin' is still with us, and because of that, life continues to be a 'struggle' because we still carry around 'a remnant' of 'unredeemed flesh' in our humanness. Chapter 7. We very much feel our 'guiltiness'. We feel the futility and anxiety of striving to be good, yet failing, and therefore we continue to 'struggle' and lament.

And such is understandable, for in 'struggling' we feel new waves of 'guilt', even as Paul himself did. "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (7:24).

But now, in Chapter 8, Paul has a new reminder. 'Now'. Now, being present 'in Christ' there is no condemnation. We may not feel this truth, but feelings are not final, are not absolute. 'In Christ' we are forgiven and free. If we have 'repented' in faith and trust then we are no longer 'condemned'.

And so Paul reminds us of new life 'in Christ':

Romans 8:2

"For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death."

This is about our 'not guilty' verdict lived out. Chapters 6-8. Paul connects 'legal language' to the 'manner of living'. He demonstrates how two laws are set against each other, how Christ brought about administrative change, and with the advent of Christ, came death to the 'Mosaic Law', and yet, not death to all 'Law'. 'In Christ' we have a 'new relationship' to 'Law', to the greater Law, to the new wave of the Spirit, no longer to the old code. Now, in the 'new way' of the Spirit, the God 'standard', the 'Law', is placed inside of those who are His. This is 'new Law'. This is 'the law of Christ'. This is 'Law' fulfilled.

Romans 7:6

"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."

Romans 7:4

"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."

And so, the old 'Law', the 'Mosaic Law', is dead and we are set free by the new 'Law of Christ'. But the old 'Law' was not bad, for with and through it came the knowledge of sin, the increase of sin, and the opportunity for sin. It had a distinct purpose.

Romans 3:20

"For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."

Romans 5:20

"Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."

Romans 7:21

"So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand."

Romans 7:8

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

So now, we are in 'union' with Christ, we are 'in Christ', 'under the power' of Christ, thus no longer under the 'Mosaic Law'. For those 'in Christ', they are not only saved from the penalty of sin, but they are being 'sanctified' and delivered from the power of sin. This is the state of 'already'. The 'not yet' is still to come, that state of ultimate 'glorification'. And for those 'in Christ', in the Spirit, there is no condemnation, but that does not mean that there is 'no condemnation' at all. It does not mean that condemnation was magically erased. No. Do take care. As with 'Law' still existing, so does 'condemnation' still exist.

II. CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST: (vv. 3-4)

Romans 8:3-4

"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, 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."

So then, how is there no condemnation for us? The 'condemnation' did not just magically disappear. No. It 'transferred' from us onto Christ's flesh, onto His humanity. Christ took 'our condemnation', took 'our sin', upon Himself. He bore our penalty. The 'perfect' Christ took on our due 'condemnation'.

Romans 8:3

"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."

That which man could not do for himself, Jesus Christ took on! For God required justice. Every sin needed to be dealt with. God is just. God is righteous. He has a 'standard' to be kept. The sinful 'Adam humanity' was unable. So who would deal with the problem? Righteous God sent His 'perfect' and sinless Son to do so, and our 'condemnation' became Christ's condemnation. By judicial exchange, humanity's 'condemnation' was 'transferred' to Christ.

Romans 5:8-II

"... but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

Romans 5:18-21

"Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Living rightfully! Living lawfully! We must fully understand why and how that we can. We must understand what happened to make it so. We must be aware. We must understand our 'sanctification'. We must not lose sight of the 'struggle'. Why, you ask? Because of God's great gift on our behalf.

Romans 8:3

"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."

But while we await the 'not yet' of 'glorification' our bodies continue to have 'indwelling sin', and our 'flesh' wages war against our 'indwelling spirit'. We seek to do good and right, but fail. Evil lies close at hand, making it difficult to see correctly, and therefore we 'struggle'.

Romans 7:21

"So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand."

Romans 7:18

"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out."

But we cannot give up. We must not give up. We are not incapable of living rightly under God. It is a 'struggle' for now, but we can now overcome the 'struggle' because we can now overcome condemnation 'in Christ'. As the hymn reminds us, 'I once was blind, but now I see.' Our hearts are now able 'in Christ'. And as we grow in our 'sanctification', we now delight in God's ways. We now desire God.

Romans 7:22

"For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being."

So while we are aware of the ongoing 'struggle', let us also be reminded that we can overcome 'condemnation' in Christ. Let us focus on these truths to help us:

1. Sanctification is not what we are doing. It is about what God has already done! He 'justifies' in Christ Alone. This is the first step in our 'sanctification'. Then it is an 'ongoing' process, setting us 'apart' more and more. We cannot do this on our own. God had to work initially and foundationally to make the way. And He did so.

Romans 8:3

"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."

Present ability is therefore based and rooted in past action.

2. God has already defeated the power of the Law which, in our flesh, we could not do!

Romans 8:3

"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."

From the Garden of Eden we were crippled against 'Law'. Had Eve not sinned, 'Law' might have had potency, but after the fall, we were impaired. Sin corrupted our nature and ability to obey. 'Law' is good, but it cannot liberate. Such was never its purpose. Some will say, 'I'm okay. I do good works.' I am 'Law' abiding so I will be okay.' But we cannot take refuge in 'Law' because 'Law' is not the Saviour, and we cannot do enough 'Law' to be saved. And it is also true, we are not 'justified' by 'Law'.

Romans 3:20

"For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."

Weakened by the 'flesh' (8:3), 'Law' is helpless and impotent. But what 'Law' could not do, Christ did, which enabled our 'sanctification' and ability to live lawfully.

3. The sent Son 'Incarnate', fully God, yet 'sent in the Flesh' dealt with our sin problem! God does not act with a magic wand, erasers, nor does He wink away our sin. No. Our 'sin' must be dealt with. Our 'sin' has been brought into 'condemnation' and therefore our 'penalty' must be actually, rightly, and appropriately dealt with. We all want justice today, but not for ourselves, not for our sinful state of being. But the 'good news' is that Jesus Christ has, indeed, dealt with it. Christ has dealt with our 'sin' problem.

'Salvation' was necessary for the human problem of 'sin', but there was no human able to take on the role, no human able to pay the penalty.

Psalms 49:7

"Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life."

Only 'perfection' was able to pay the penalty ransom, yet all of humanity was fallen. Only the 'perfect' Christ was able. Only He met all the criteria.

Christ: Born of a woman.

Luke 1:30-33

"And the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'"

Luke 2:7a

"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him a manger..."

Christ: Born of Adam

Luke 3:23-38

"Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God."

Christ: The Seed. Conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Luke 1:35

"...The Holy spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God."

Christ: Fully man, like us, but not like us.

Christ: Fully God, yet born in 'likeness' of man, having humanity.

Philippians 2:5-6

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."

Galatians 4:4-5

"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."

And so God sent His Son, Jesus, born of a woman, born under the 'Law' so that we might be 'redeemed' under that 'Law', the very thing that we could not do for ourselves. And so the perfect Christ 'took on' the likeness of 'sinful flesh'.

Romans 8:3

"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."

4. God sent His Son 'in likeness' of sinful flesh!

Christ came to redeem our 'sinful flesh'. No human was able to do this because of their 'sinful flesh'. But Christ, the 'perfect' God-man, He Alone had no sin. He Alone was able to redeem humanity because He had 'perfect flesh'.

I John 1:5

"This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

In order to 'redeem' our 'sinful flesh', Christ took on the 'likeness' of our flesh, the 'likeness', not the 'exactness' of our flesh, thereby remaining 'perfect' and 'sinless'. Christ became our new head. It was now Christ who was 'standing' for us, not Adam. Christ took on our 'sinful flesh' even while He lived in 'perfect flesh'. Perfection wrapped in imperfection! It was not His 'condemnation', it was ours; our 'condemnation' borne in His 'perfect' Body. The guilt did not belong to Him, but He bore it on our behalf.

Romans 5:8-11

"—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

Romans 5:18-21

"Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Romans 8:4

"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."

And so we have the purpose statement for what has happened. Christ did what He did to fulfill the righteous requirement of the 'Law'. He did not just die because of and for our 'sins'. No. He took on our 'condemnation', our 'guilt', and gave us His 'righteousness' and His 'not guilty' standing. It was an incredible exchange! We are 'pardoned' because of Christ's 'not guilty'. NOTHING LESS!

The result and context of our 'justification' 'in Christ' is that we might walk by the Spirit. Authentic 'justification' always produces 'Spirit walking' in us, 'not guilty' walking. Christ has given us this position in Him.

Believers, obedience has its foundation in the Work of Christ on the Cross. We are not saved to self! The believer has received 'a slave transfer'.

Romans 6:17-19

"But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification."

We are saved to serve God! We are saved for 'good works'.

Ephesians 2:10

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

We are a slave to righteousness, 'saved' to a life in the Spirit. His Work accomplished, leads subsequently to our life in the Spirit. There is 'no condemnation' in Christ. He took on our sin and our debt to give us 'righteousness' so that we might be 'not guilty' before God.