

Romans 8

By: Charles Stanley

From: On the Epistle to the Romans

Verse 1: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” What a wonderful statement! It is not a question merely of what will be the justification of the believer when manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, but “now” *there is nothing to condemn* to those who are in Christ Jesus.

If I look at myself in the flesh, it is, “O wretched man that I am!” If I look at what I am in Christ Jesus, there is now no condemnation. Dead to all that I am, as a child of Adam — dead to sin, dead to law, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Thus, being in and to another, to Christ Jesus raised from the dead, it is not only to bring forth fruit unto God, but “there is therefore now no condemnation.” Do you get hold of this? Is there any condemnation possible to that risen Christ in the glory of God? Then, if you are in Him, how can there be condemnation to you?

The next words, “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” are omitted in the best translations; we shall find them, however, as a result, in verse 4. Here (in vs. 1) they have at some time been inserted as a condition, or guard. We would, however, linger over and press this verse as the very foundation of deliverance.

No soul ever can know real deliverance from the power of sin that does not first know the unclouded favor of God in Christ. How marvelous, after such a chapter of bitter experience, after coming to the utter end of all hope of good in self, the old nature, to find that, as dead with Christ, and alive from the dead in Christ, we are in the unclouded favor of God, without condemnation! What perfect peace! Nothing to disturb, nothing to condemn. And it is God that speaks the word — NO CONDEMNATION.”

Dear young believer, is this the solid foundation on which, and in which, you stand? Then we will now look at:

Verse 2: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” We have seen the terrible law, or power of sin; have we not also known and felt it? But what new law, or power, or principle, is this? Is it the power of my new nature as born of God? No; though, as such, I did delight in the law of God; but that did not make me free from the law of sin, as we have seen. But this does — the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. This is God the Holy Spirit dwelling in us; it is not now death, but the Spirit of life. Thus, as we have seen, we have a justified life.

Now we have power — the law of the Spirit of life. Elsewhere we learn that the life we now have is eternal, and the Spirit is eternal. Thus the power we have is eternal. We have seen that the flesh, or sin, is still in us — that which is born of the flesh; but here is DELIVERANCE from its power: made free from the law of sin and death; made free by infinite, eternal power, the law of the Spirit of life. It is not “will” do, but, “hath made me free.” So terrible is our depraved old sinful nature, that, though born of God, and I delighted in the law of God, longed to keep it; yet the law of sin in my members brought me into captivity. Has it not been so? But now we are made free from its power, by a greater power — the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Oh, for more simple faith in the word of God; yes, and also in the Holy Spirit dwelling in us! This verse sums up the whole of Romans 6. It is the principle of reckoning ourselves dead unto sin, and alive unto God in Jesus Christ, applied by the power of the Spirit.

Still, many a young reader may have this difficulty in passing through the experience of the utter badness of the flesh, as described in Romans 7. He may say, “I see how my sins were forgiven me; but to find since that, the old nature I have is so utterly bad; to have found no

power in trying to keep the law of God, however much I desired to do so; to find, to my surprise, an evil nature, a law of sin, that held me captive; the law I longed to keep could only curse me; my very nature — sin in the flesh — only did that which I hated and condemned. How, then, can you tell me there is *no* condemnation?” We will look at the next verse for an answer.

Verse 3: “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Here is what the law could not do, and what God has done. The law could not deliver from either the guilt or power of sin. It was weak either to deliver or help man in the flesh, for the flesh was sin; and if it acted under law, it could only transgress, even in one quickened and longing for deliverance.

Now just here arises this question: Is deliverance a matter of apprehension of truth, or mere knowledge of truth? Deliverance from Egypt answers that question. Like a quickened soul, they believed the word of God through Moses and Aaron (Ex. 3:7-10; 4:31-32), and they longed for deliverance (Ex. 5:1-3), and they, as it were, passed through the Romans (Ch. 7) in the brick-kilns of Egypt, and became more wretched than ever, and not delivered at all. Was it, then, increase of knowledge, or apprehension, that delivered them? Did the knowledge of the promises in Exodus 6 deliver them? Did the farther knowledge of the providential favor of God deliver them, in Ex. 7-11? Not in the least. They were delivered truly on the ground (or, basis) of redemption, but it was by the power of God (in crossing the Red Sea).

(The blood (Ex. 12) sheltered them from judgment; they were *safe*. In Ex. 14 they are still in dread of the power of the taskmaster, and are told to stand still and see the *salvation* of Jehovah. The Red Sea opens by divine *power* and they are delivered from the power of the taskmaster. Then, thus delivered, the first

recorded song in Scripture is given — the song of redemption. In the New Testament *salvation* includes being *safe*, but also more, even deliverance. The quickened one looks away from the principle of law (working to be acceptable) and *rests in the finished work of Christ*, knowing he is in a position of forgiveness. He is sealed with the Spirit in connection with this.

Cornelius’ case illustrates the difference between being *safe* and being *saved*. He was already born again before he was told to send for Peter “who shall speak words to thee whereby thou shalt be saved...” (Acts 11:14). Saved includes within the scope of its meaning that the person believes on the person and the finished work of Christ for the knowledge that his sins are forgiven; he stands in a position before God of being judicially forgiven.)

Now there was no power in the holy law of God to deliver, its only prerogative was to curse the guilty. In Romans 8:2, then, we have the power that has set me free from the law of sin and death. In Romans 8:3 we have the helplessness of the law to deliver through the weakness of the flesh, and then how God has delivered, and the ground on which deliverance is wrought. This part also answers your difficulty — how can there be no condemnation to me, seeing the flesh is so utterly vile? “God sending His own Son.” Just as when all had failed to deliver from Egypt, then the lamb is to be put up, and slain; the Israelite, though not yet delivered, was completely sheltered by the blood.

So the ground of deliverance here, is “God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [or, a sacrifice for sin] condemned sin in the flesh.” Not only delivered for our iniquities, and raised again for our justification, as we have already seen; but the atoning death of the sent Son of God for SIN — the very root. Thus now, both sins and sin having been condemned, judged, there is therefore nothing, positively nothing, left to condemn. Thus, on the ground of the atoning work of the Son, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus gives complete deliverance. And as

deliverance from Egypt was being brought out of one place, or condition, in bondage, into another in liberty; so the believer is, by the Spirit of life, brought out of one place, or condition, called “in the flesh,” into another place, or condition, called “in Christ”; sin having been perfectly judged, by the Holy Son of God being made sin for us. And this, not that we should continue in bondage, but be free, delivered, that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Israel were in bondage then, now they were free, delivered, to serve Jehovah. So we, after we were quickened, were still in bondage to the flesh, or under law. Now we have learned the utter badness of the flesh, and our powerlessness, and no longer seek its improvement. We are no longer in it, but in Christ, made free by the Spirit. We are now to walk after the Spirit, and the Spirit will act in us in power, on the ground of the work of Christ.

The flesh is given up by those “who walk not after the flesh.” Another position is taken by those who walk “after the Spirit.” There are, so to speak, two parties (vs. 5). “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.” The one is death, the other is life. And, further, the mind of the flesh is enmity against God. For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (vs. 7). Then it follows that they that are on that ground, they that are in the flesh, cannot please God.

Have you, dear young believer, come to that conclusion — that your old nature, the flesh, sin, is utterly incapable of pleasing God? It is a root that only bears evil, however you seek to improve it. It is only enmity against God. Do not listen to that abominable sentiment, that lust is not sin, unless you commit it in act. Sin is the very root of lust, as we see in Romans 7:8. No, this very root had to be judged, and the infinite sacrifice was for SIN. “For He hath made Him [to be] sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

On this ground alone we are delivered from the guilt and condemnation due to our sin, the flesh; and on this ground we are no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit. Here comes in a deeply interesting question. When, and how, may we conclude, or know, that we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit? This is a very important question for both young and old believers. Let us look at it most carefully. There is no doubt, “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” Yet there are different stages of the work of God in the soul, as we have seen typified in Israel’s redemption.

Verse 9: This verse will answer the important question — when may we conclude we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit? “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” Then, plainly, if the Spirit of God dwell in you, you may safely conclude you are not in the flesh. Is there, then, a distinct stage between the quickening, or new birth, of a soul, and the dwelling of the Spirit of God in us? Be it long or short, scripture bears out the fact in every case. Yes, in the case of Cornelius and his company, as well as in the baptized believers at Samaria, who did not receive the Holy Spirit until the apostles came down from Jerusalem.

Cornelius was evidently a quickened soul, and all his house (Acts 10:2), but not delivered, and hence it was that he was in the flesh, until the word came with the power of the Holy Spirit, and then the Holy Spirit Himself (vs. 44). This, then, is the question — have you received the Holy Spirit? If not, though quickened, you are still in the flesh, seeking its improvement — it may be by works of law. Cornelius could not be said to be a Christian until he received the Holy Spirit; neither can you, in the full sense of the word, until you have received the Spirit. “Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom. 8:9).

(The Spirit is here called “the Spirit of Christ,” and that means that He is the formative power of Christ in the sealed saint. The quickened man of Romans 7 was born of God but had not

the Spirit of Christ. Thus, he was “not of Him,” meaning not of Christ as a sealed soul is. However, in his case, he belongs to Christ, though Christ is not formed in him. The unquickened soul is not Christ’s in such a sense, though purchased/bought by Christ as Christ by His death has bought everything.)

We met an aged man, the other day, who said he had been in Egypt thirty years. Where are you, reader, in bondage, or delivered? — In the flesh, or in the Spirit? This is not a question to be trifled with.

Verse 10: This does not imply sin eradicated, or the evil nature improved. “And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin.” If the doctrine of perfection in the flesh were true, the body could neither be dead, nor could it die, for by sin came death. We see the effect of sin in the body, even death. “But the Spirit is life, because of righteousness.” There is death, on account of sin; there is life, on account of righteousness — not ours, but the righteousness of God, accomplished by the death of His Son for us.

Is the body, then, to remain dead because of sin? No (vs. 11). “But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from among the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from among the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” How complete the victory of Christ! The redemption of our bodies is thus certain. Does the Spirit of God dwell in us? Then the quickening of our mortal bodies is certain.

We are not, then, in the flesh, though it is in us; but we are not debtors to it, to live after it. The end of sin, or flesh, is death. It is ever ready, we find, to our sorrow, to act in the body. “But if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” If our old nature was not still left ready to act, we should not need to mortify the deeds of the body. It is not mortifying the body, but the deeds of the body. The great thing to see, is, that it is **THROUGH THE SPIRIT**. This is fully brought out in Galatians 5:16-25.

Verse 14: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Jesus said, “And the servant abideth not in the house forever; but the Son abideth ever” (John 8:35). We are not in bondage, but in the wondrous liberty and privileges of the Son. Was not this His first message by Mary, in resurrection? “Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God” (John 20:17). “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God” (1 John 3:1). And what is the proof of all this? “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” It is also said, “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under law” (Gal. 5:18). Assuredly the Spirit cannot lead us under that ministration of law which is done away. (See 2 Cor. 3:7-18.) As we have seen all along, for a believer to be placed under, or led under, law, is to be under the ministration of death and the curse. The Spirit will ever lead us to behold the glory of the Lord, and to be changed into the same glory.

The Spirit gives liberty, not bondage. Which is your portion — the liberty of the sons of God, or the bondage of the servant, the slave? And the sons do not cease to be sons, and become slaves again.

Verse 15: “For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage AGAIN to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father.” Can a son cease to be a son? Can Christ, the Son, cease to be the Son? Have we not heard from His lips that God is our Father, even us He is His Father? That relation can never change, can never cease to be. Oh, the riches of His grace! We, who are conscious that we only deserved His eternal wrath, to be brought into such an unchanging relationship — the sons of God. One spirit with the Son. No bondage or fear again, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby do we cry, as sinners, far from God, Have mercy upon us? No; but, Abba, Father. And mark, this is the very special witness of the Spirit.

Verses 16-17: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.” Yes, the two great facts of which the Spirit bears witness, are these, in this scripture, to our abiding sonship, heirship; and in Hebrews 10 he bears witness that we are perfected forever, continuously, by the one sacrifice of Christ; so that God will not remember our sins any more. Nothing is more frequently denied, or, at least, doubted, than these two blessed *facts*.

Yes, it is a fact, that we, if believers, are perfected forever. And it is also a fact that we are joint-heirs with Christ. The Spirit bears witness. And mark, if we are joint-heirs of all the coming glory of Jesus — Son of man — do not overlook these few words; “if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.” That this was the case, see the whole history of the Acts. The world, and especially the religious part of it, hated the Disciples of Christ, as they hated the Lord. And they suffered *with* Him. How is it that it is not so now? Because the religious world now pretends to be Christian; and, alas! we sink—very much to its level. But, in proportion as we are led by the Spirit, we shall certainly suffer the world’s hatred.

Do you, beloved reader, know anything of being led by the Spirit? or are you led by the organizations and plans of the religious world? If so, is there any wonder that you should be a stranger, both to the enjoyed relationship of a child of God, or of suffering for Christ’s sake? Can you say you are led by the Spirit in your daily life — your shop, your business — or are you led simply by the maxims of the world? If so, you grieve the Spirit, and cannot enjoy the blessed relationship of sons of God — joint-heirs with Christ. It is a wonderful thing to have the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, always abiding with us, well able to take care of us, and all our interests here below, as the children of God. Oh, to be led at all times by Him.

We cannot over-estimate or over-state the work of the Spirit, whether *in us*, as verses 2-13, or His work *for us*, verses 14-27. Then, to the end of the chapter, we shall find God for us, in all His eternal and absolute sovereignty — blessed ultimate purpose of God, that we may be also glorified together with Christ. Yes, let us remember this is the end God has in view, in all our sufferings and afflictions. Let every reader, however, know, that if he has not the Spirit of Christ, if that does not characterize him, he is none of His. And, further, if he is not suffering with Christ, it is most questionable whether he is a joint-heir of Christ, led by the Spirit.

Refuse to be led by the Spirit, and you may have the honors and applause of the religious world. If led of the Spirit, you will certainly be despised, as Christ was despised, and it will be your happy privilege to suffer *with* Him. But, oh, the glory so soon to be revealed in us. What a contrast! to be led by the Spirit, or to be led by the fashions of this world. Oh, how many there are that will sacrifice eternity for the fashions of this poor deceived world, and, all the while, pretend, yes, think, themselves Christians. Fatal delusion! If this should be the state of any reader of these lines, may God use these words to awaken him out of this delusive slumber.

Surely we all need these searching words: “If so be that we suffer with Him.” “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” Whoever was better able to reckon on this matter than Paul? Bonds and imprisonments awaited him in every city — life of constant suffering with Him he so loved to serve; yet he says “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Indeed, even “the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” What a solution of the perplexing paradox of all creation! The groans of battlefields shall cease; the misery and poverty and degradation of the

multitude; the sufferings of creation, shall come to an end.

Verse 21: “Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” What a day will that be! Yes, creation must share in the glorious liberty. “He tasted death for everything.” It is a pleasant thought. If misery and death has reigned so long, and man’s sin so affected creation, even so the emancipation of creation shall be the result of the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

Verse 22: “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” Note it is not for the salvation of our souls *we wait*, and hope, but for the redemption of the body. It may be from the grave, or it may be we shall be changed in a moment. It will be at the coming of the Lord.

As to the body, even we have no relief from groaning, and suffering, until the coming of our Lord. We see not that yet, and therefore we wait and hope. It is a fatal mistake to suppose all this means that we do not know we have salvation; on the contrary, we *know* we have eternal life —“He that believeth HATH eternal life.” There is no waiting or hoping for that. But we can wait in patience for the redemption of the body.

Verse 26: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the heart, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” This is very blessed for us. He knoweth all that concerneth not only us, but the plans and purposes of God. We may be a few days’ or years’ distance of the redemption of the body. He surely knows what is suited for us in such circumstances. And God who heareth, knoweth

what is the mind of the Spirit. If we do not pray in the Spirit, we shall be sure to ask for things quite inconsistent with the dispensation or period in which we live.

We now enter upon the third or last division of our chapter. We may not be able always to understand.

Verse 28: We can, however, say, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” We know this because God is absolutely for us. This is now brought out to the end of the chapter. “To them who are the called according to His purpose.” God has not called us on account of any good in us, or any purpose in us. Let us carefully mark what His purpose was, for His call is the result of His purpose. This, then, is His purpose: “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” He foreknew whom He should call; and He predestinated them, those whom He called, to this glorious destiny, to be conformed to the image of His Son. What a purpose that His Son should be the firstborn among many brethren! How great the privilege to be called to share this place of glory!

Verse 30: Let us not alter a single word to suit human thoughts or reason. “Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” Here all is of God, who cannot fail. This is His order. Predestinated; called; justified; glorified. From eternity to eternity. What a golden chain! What solid comfort to the sorely-tempted children of God! Has He called us? Then that proves He had predestinated us; and He has justified us; and will not fail to bring us to glory. Faith will surely trust Him. Unbelief would gladly let Satan reason all this foundation-truth away. Now “what shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” Yes, if God be thus for us, who is he, and what is he, that can be against us? See how God condescends to reason with us.

Verse 32: “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” What a question? Thus it is manifest that all things must work together for good to us, since God spared not His own Son. What infinite and eternal love to deliver Him up for us all! We can expect all things according to the immensity and character of that love.

Verse 33: Since it is God in His righteousness, as has been seen in this epistle that is the Justifier, “God that justifieth”; “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Who is he that condemneth? If God is our Justifier, can any creature condemn us? It was God who showed His acceptance of our ransom by raising Jesus from the dead for our justification. God delivered Him up for us all; and He raised Him from the dead for the justification of us all; and He is the unchanging righteousness of all God’s elect. “Who is he that condemneth?” God cannot condemn us without condemning Him who was raised from the dead to be our righteousness. Our justification could not be more perfect, for it is all of God. Our justification, then, is of God, and complete and settled for eternity.

There is just one other question. Can any possible circumstance alter the love of Christ, or alter the love of God in Christ to us? There are so many who doubt the love of Christ unless we in some way continue to deserve it, that this is a serious question. Now is it not a great mistake to suppose that we ever did, or do, or shall deserve that love? But does the Spirit of God set before us our deservings?

Verses 34 to 39: How beautiful and simple: He sets Christ before us. Let us follow the word sentence by sentence. “CHRIST THAT DIED.” Did He die for us because we deserved His love? Was ever love like His, and for us when dead in trespasses and sins? “Yea, rather that is risen again.” View Him risen from the dead to be the beginning of the new creation. For this express purpose — for our justification. And all

when we deserved eternal wrath. “Who is even at the right hand of God.” He who bore our sins, and was made sin for us, our Representative, is at the right hand of God, as it were in possession of that place for us. Now the enemy who deceived Eve would just step in here, and say, that is all true if you never sin after your conversion, but if any man who is a Christian should sin, then surely that sin will separate him from the love of Christ.

Dear young believer, mind your shield is not down when the devil gives you this thrust. Precious answer, “Who also maketh intercession for us.” Yes, “He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25). From how many sins does that intercession preserve us! But to the point, if a believer, a child of God, through unwatchfulness, should sin, will He then still, in His own infinite unchanging love, plead the cause of the failing one? “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:1-2). Yes, even then, in unchanging love, He is the same Jesus, “who also maketh intercession for us.” Thus all is of God and cannot fail.

Read now the whole list in these verses, and let us, with the apostle, be persuaded that nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” There is no condemnation to those whom God justifies, whom He accounts righteous. And there is no separation from the infinite and eternal love of God, to us in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

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