

Romans Session 97

Life in the Spirit 2

The Reason for Freedom, Justification

Romans 8:1b-2 (NASB)

¹ *for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

² *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.*

As noted at the beginning of the previous section, the *therefore*, that introduces verse 1 refers back to the major theme of the first seven chapters of the epistle, the believer's complete justification before God, graciously provided in response to trust in the sacrificial death and resurrection of His Son.

The divine condemnation from which believers are exonerated is without exception or qualification. It is bestowed on **those who are in Christ Jesus**, in other words, on every true Christian. Justification completely and forever releases every believer from sin's bondage and its penalty of death.

Romans 6:23 (NASB)

²³ *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

It thereby fits the believer to stand sinless before a holy God forever. It is this particular aspect of justification on which Paul focuses at the beginning of chapter 8

Paul's use of the first person singular pronouns (I and me) in 7:7-25 emphasizes the sad reality that, in this present life, no Christian not even an apostle is exempt from struggles with sin.

In the opening verses of chapter 8, on the other hand, Paul emphasizes the marvelous reality that every believer, even the weakest and most unproductive, shares in complete and eternal freedom from sin's condemnation.

The holiest of believers are warned that, although they are no longer under sin's slavish dominion, they will experience conflicts with it in this present life.

And the weakest of believers are promised that, although they still stumble and fall into sin's power in their flesh, they will experience ultimate victory over sin in the life to come.

The key to every aspect of salvation is in the simple but infinitely profound phrase **in Christ Jesus**. A Christian is a person who is **in Christ Jesus**.

Paul already declared that;

Romans 6:3-5 (NASB)

³ *Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?*

⁴ *Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*

⁵ *For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,*

Being a Christian is not simply being outwardly identified with Christ but being part of Christ, not simply of being united with Him but united **in** Him

Our being in Christ on one of the profoundest of mysteries, which we will not fully understand until we meet Him face-to-face in heaven.

Scripture does however shed light on that marvelous truth.

We know that we are in Christ spiritually, in a divine and permanent union.

1 Corinthians 15:22 (NASB)

²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

Believers are also in Christ in a living, participatory sense.

1 Corinthians 12:27 (NASB)

²⁷ Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

We are actually part of Him and in ways that are unfathomable to us now, we work when He works, grieve when He grieves, and rejoice when He rejoices.

1 Corinthians 12:13 (NASB)

¹³ 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.

So, we see that Christ's own life pulses through us.

Many people are concerned about their family heritage, about who their ancestors were, where they lived, and what they did. For better or worse, we are all life-linked physically, intellectually, and culturally to our ancestors.

In a similar. But infinitely more important way, we are linked to the family of God because of our relationship to His Son, Jesus Christ.

It is for that reason that every Christian can say,

Galatians 2:20 (NASB)

²⁰ "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

God's Word makes clear that every human being is a descendant of Adam and has inherited Adam's fallen nature. It makes just as clear that every true believer becomes a spiritual descendant of Jesus Christ, God's true Son, and is thereby adopted into the heavenly Father's own divine household as a beloved child.

More than being adopted, we inherit the very life of God in Christ.

Martin Luther said,

It is impossible for a man to be a Christian without having Christ, and if he has Christ, he has at the same time all that is in Christ. What gives peace to the conscience is that by faith our sins are no more ours, but Christ's upon

whom God hath laid the all: and that, on the other hand, all Christ's righteousness is ours, to whom God hath given it. Christ lays His hand upon us, and we are healed. He casts His mantle upon us, and we are clothed: for He is the glorious Savior, blessed forever. (Cited in Robert Haldane, An Exposition of Romans: [MacDill AFB, Fla: McDonald, 1958], p. 312).

The relationship between God and his chosen people Israel was beautifully illustrated in the garment of the high priest. Over his magnificent robes he wore a breastplate in which twelve different precious stones were embedded, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Each stone was engraved with the name of the tribe it represented.

When the high priest entered the holy of holies once each year on the Day of Atonement, he stood before God with those visual representations of all His people.

The breastplate was a rich symbolism of Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest, standing before the Father making intercession on behalf of all those the Father has given Him.

Hebrews 7:24-25 (NASB)

²⁴ *but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently.*

²⁵ *Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.*

In what is commonly called His High Priestly Prayer, Jesus prayed on behalf of those who belong to Him;

John 17:21 (NASB)

²¹ *that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.*

Luther also wrote:

Faith unites the soul with Christ as a spouse with her husband. Everything which Christ has becomes the property of the believing soul; everything which the soul has, becomes the property of Christ. Christ possesses all blessing and eternal life: they are thenceforward the property of the soul. The soul has all its iniquities and sins: they become thenceforward the property of Christ. It is then that the blessed exchange commences: Christ who is both God and man, Christ who has never sinned, and whose holiness is perfect, Christ the Almighty and Eternal, taking to Himself, by His nuptial ring of faith, all the sins of the believer, those sins are lost and abolished in Him; for no sins dwell before His infinite righteousness. Thus, by faith the believer's soul is delivered from sins and clothed with the eternal righteousness of her bridegroom Christ. (Cited in Haldane, Exposition of Romans, p. 313)

The phrase, "**who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit**" appears at the end of verse 1 in the King James, but it is not found in the earliest manuscripts of Romans or in most modern translations.

It is probable that a copyist inadvertently picked up the phrase from verse 4. Because the identical wording appears there, the meaning of the passage is not affected.

The conjunction **for**, which here carries the meaning of because, leads into the reason there is no condemnation for believers: "**the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.**"

Paul does not use the term **law** in reference to the Mosaic law or to other divine commandments or requirements. He uses it rather in the sense of a principle of operation, as he has done earlier in the letter, where he speaks of the law of faith, and as he does in Galatians, where he speaks of the law of Christ.

Those who believe in Jesus Christ are delivered from the condemnation of a lower divine law, as it were, by submitting themselves to a higher divine law.

The lower law is the divine principle in regard to **sin**, the penalty for which is **death**, and the higher law is **the law of the Spirit**, which bestows **life in Christ Jesus**.

We should never conclude however that the **law** Paul is speaking of in this passage has no relationship to obedience. Obedience to God cannot save a person, because no person in his unredeemed sinfulness wants to obey God and could not obey perfectly even if he had the desire.

But true salvation will always produce true obedience never perfect in this life but nonetheless genuine and always present to some extent.

When truly believed and received, the gospel of Jesus Christ always leads to the, "**obedience of faith**"

Romans 16:25-26 (NASB)

²⁵ **Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,**

²⁶ **but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;**

The coming Kingdom age of Christ that Jeremiah predicted and of which the writer of Hebrews refers is far from lawless;

Jeremiah 31:33 (NASB)

³³ **"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.**

Hebrews 8:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ **"FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS, AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.**

Release from the law's bondage and condemnation does not mean release from the law's requirements and standards. The higher law of the Spirit produces obedience to the lower law of duties.

The freedom that Christ give us complete and permanent deliverance from sin's power and penalty (and ultimately from its presence). it also gives the ability to obey God.

The very notion of a Christian who is free to do as he pleases is self-contradictory. A person who believes that salvation leads from law to license does not have the least understanding of the Gospel of grace and can make no claim on Christ's saviorhood and certainly no claim on His lordship.

So, the freedom we have in Christ comes through justification, He took our Sin, we took His Life. We then have His righteousness flowing through us.

Next, we will see Paul reiterate the Route to Freedom through Substitution.