

# Romans (8:2-4)

## *Pardon Before Power*

Part 28 – March 6, 2005

### OPPOSING FORCES

In verse one we saw that there is “no condemnation” for those who are *in Christ Jesus*. Two-four elaborates on this reality.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. – Romans 8:1-4 NIV

Notice in verse two that there are two opposing “laws” at work:

- A. “The law of the Spirit of life”
- B. “The law of sin and death”

The word law here is being used the same way we use it to describe the “law” of gravity. The *force* of God’s Spirit frees us from the *force* of sin.

Picture a coin falling toward the ground under the influence of gravity. The coin is powerless against the pull. Unless, you reach out and catch it; and even ... *lift* it. The force of your arm overcomes the force of gravity.

Q: Does this mean that the force of gravity ceases to function?

A: No. It simply means there is a higher law that dominates it.

We sin by nature; there is a force (e.g. power, impulse, etc.) that draws me to do the very evil I don’t want to do. Victory over this impulse is only offered: “through Christ”; and then, it is only offered: “for those who are in Christ”.

### PARDON BEFORE POWER

Q: But, how does the *higher law* of Spirit work to free us from the *lower law* of sin, and reproduce Christ’s life in us?

- 8:1 (*no condemnation*) describes absolution and forgiveness.
- 8:2 (*setting us free*) confirms Spirit-empowered liberation.
- 8:1 is illustrating: “Justification” (*being right with God*).
- 8:2 is illustrating: “Sanctification” (*doing right for God*).

This order of justification *before* sanctification is essential. There is a necessary priority of: pardon before power.

- The only sin I can defeat is a forgiven sin.

Now, there are natural ways to overcome bad habits that aren't based on Jesus at all. But when those changes occur without the foundation of forgiveness, the result is *self-righteousness*.

To get *true* victory over particular sins (replacing them with God's righteousness), we must have *joyful confidence* that those very sins have been totally forgiven.

- The confidence of “no condemnation” empowers transformation.

With that freedom, we'll freely admit our failings and humble ourselves before God and each other so that God can heal.

Q: Are you able to freely admit your failings?

If I don't know, trust, or believe that my sins are forgiven, I can't receive the necessary power to defeat them through Christ.

- *Being right with God* must precede *doing right for God*.

We are not justified because our lives have changed. Our lives are changing because we have been justified through Christ.

## CONDEMNING SIN

We are powerless against sin without Christ's offering.

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man ... - Romans 8:3 NIV

Q: Why were we condemned in the first place?

A: Because of our sin against a sinless God.

So, look what your loving, Heavenly Father did: "He condemned sin"

- God condemned the very thing that condemned *me*!

This doesn't mean he criticized it, or expressed disapproval of it (like saying: The President *condemned* the terrorist attacks). It was the *law* that *criticized* sin this way.

But, "what the law was powerless to do" ... "God did"!

Through the "sin offering" of Christ, sin has been fully and finally condemned, sentenced, and punished.

Q: But wasn't Jesus sinless?

Q: So, how'd God condemn sin if Jesus had no sin to condemn?

- Because, he sent Jesus: "in the likeness of sinful man"

It was your sin and my sin that was condemned in the suffering and death of Christ, not his. This is how Christ's death takes away all our condemnation.

- When Jesus died, God was condemning my sin!

And this brings up another significant point:

Q: Who did all this condemning of sin?

A: "God did by sending his own Son" ... "[God] condemned sin"

Sometimes we get the misguided idea that if it wasn't for Jesus protecting us, an angry God would smite us all!

This rescue was instigated and completed by God. Jesus is an expression of *God's* love.

- Christ is every bit as angry at sin as the Father is.
- The Father is just as caring for sinners as Jesus is.

So then, there is no condemnation because our loving God took on and removed the condemnation for our sin through Christ.

- That is the basis for our justification.
- That's what the law was powerless to do.
- It can only point at, and criticize sin.

## ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

Verse four agrees with verse two that justification (*being right with God*) leads to sanctification (*becoming like Christ*).

... in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. – Romans 8:4 NIV

*Living according to the Spirit* is yet another way of expressing the idea of sanctification.

Last week I said that when a believer (who is in Christ) sins, there is no condemnation:

- A. God doesn't reject them.
- B. God doesn't get upset with them.
- C. God doesn't penalize them.

Q: But, doesn't this give us a license to sin?

A: The short answer is yes, it certainly does.

Q: But then, what's it mean to: "not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit"?

- It doesn't mean finding righteousness through rule-keeping.
- The law doesn't change us at the root of our fallen nature.

Rules can't make Jesus more glorious, valuable, and desirable than the pleasures of sin. Among other things, it means:

- Finding completion and fulfillment only in my Savior.
- Giving him my deepest delight, admiration, and trust.
- Understanding that he is the only all-satisfying joy.

This type of believer comes to see sin as poison, and cancer, and illness. This type of believer hates sin because it takes them away from their treasure.

- This believer, like Paul says: Though I sin, I long to be free of sin.

This believer desires the riches of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control that only come by choosing daily to follow Christ.

If I can *only* see sin as pleasurable, and grace as license to indulge, I need to examine and question my salvation.