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# No Condemnation

## Romans 8: 1-11

Earlier in Romans Paul made the case that all of us are guilty before God for failing to live His way – we haven't loved Him or our neighbours as we should. The righteous response to our guilt is punishment, condemnation, but here Paul says that there is *“no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”* (verse 1).

Humans have many ways to deal with being sinners – from re-branding our faults as virtues, to working hard at being moral or productive. We often feel guilty, or ashamed, or powerless, and Satan our enemy attacks us remorselessly to make us feel stuck in these ways. The good news of the gospel, however, is that Jesus has set us free from unrighteous living and the condemnation we deserve.

Many of us would call ourselves Christians but Paul preferred a different phrase to describe believers: **in Christ (1)**. It's a statement of something that has happened, which Paul describes in the following verses (as well as elsewhere in Romans).

Being *“in the flesh” (8)* describes our natural condition, the state we were all born in. We oppose God by default, we're willingly entrapped by *“the law of sin and death” (2)*. These are powers we cannot escape from: we sin every day and each day draws us closer to our inevitable death. Even God's perfect law, given in the Old Testament, cannot help us because it is fatally weakened by our flesh, powerless to change us (2, 7).

God's loving solution was to send Jesus as one of us, *“in the likeness of sinful flesh” (3)* so that we would have a sinless representative who would also take all the punishment we deserve: *“he condemned sin in the flesh [of Jesus]” (3)*. Jesus died on the cross as a sinner but He was sinless and death couldn't hold him - the Powers that have conquered every one of us are impotent against Him. His resurrection from the

dead proves this.

Something had to happen for you: God sent His Son. Something has to happen to you: God sends His Spirit.

Paul associates the Holy Spirit with the transformation that God makes to all His people: *“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit”* (9) This is because it is the Spirit who gives us the new life of salvation: it is Him who makes us born again (*John 3:5-7*) so that we can believe that Jesus is Lord (*1 Corinthians 12:3, Romans 6:3-4, 5*).

This wonderful salvation means that there’s no need to pretend that you’re better than you really are, or try to explain away the wrong things you do, because God has dealt with all your sin. *Martin Luther: “So when the devil throws your sins in your face and declares that you deserve death and hell, tell him this: ‘I admit that I deserve death and hell, what of it? For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction on my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, Son of God, and where He is there I shall be also!’”*

A lot of Christians think they still have a foot in the coffin of their past identity, that they’re still partially in the flesh. (See below for discussion of Romans 7.) We do still have our flesh with its weakness and habits but that is not who we are any more: *“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit.”* (9) The Holy Spirit in us enables us to live in accordance with this new way, creating in us life and peace (6). We don’t have these things fully yet but their appearance and growth in us are evidence of the Spirit’s presence. Like Jesus’s reign over all the earth, it has begun but it is still awaiting completion: it is now and not yet. Paul concludes this section by reminding us of that future hope – the resurrection power of God will give us eternal life with Jesus (11).

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## Questions:

- Luke shared a story of when God spoke to through Romans 8:28 – do you have a similar example of when God spoke to you through His Word?
- How would you explain human sinfulness to someone who wasn’t a Christian?
- Failing to understand the full implications of the gospel can leave us feeling guilty, ashamed, and powerless – which of those three tends to be how you react?
- Look through Romans 8:1-11 and find as many descriptions of a Christian (i.e. “in Christ”) as you can. What are the implications of each of these?
- Paul makes a clear distinction between those who are “in the flesh” and those who

are “in Christ” – does that distinction always seem clear to us? Why is this?

- How can we be confident that Jesus has taken us out of the coffin of our flesh and brought us into Himself? What suggestions does this passage give us about this?
- What do you think “living according to the Spirit... setting the mind on the things of the Spirit” looks like? How can you as a group help each other to live this way?
- In what areas of life are you experiencing “eschatological tension”, the Kingdom of God being both now and not yet in your life and in the world?

(Some people may be aware that Romans 7 is often described as being a description of a Christian experiencing the struggle of half-and-half living but we believe that it is rather about someone trying to please God through obeying the law. The absence of mentions of the Spirit in chapter 7 after verse 6, and the abundance of mentions of the Spirit in chapter 8 supports this view, as does Paul’s general confidence in regards to his salvation and his way of life in all of his letters. Scholars disagree on this and it isn’t an essential point but this is the view we take.)



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