

**Romans 8:1-12 “Free to Live” March 6-8, 2021**  
**Pastor Don Sutton – St. Paul’s Lutheran Church – New Ulm, MN**

**Romans 8:1-12**

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,<sup>2</sup> because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you<sup>[a]</sup> free from the law of sin and death.<sup>3</sup> For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh,<sup>[b]</sup> God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.<sup>[c]</sup> And so he condemned sin in the flesh,<sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.<sup>5</sup> Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.<sup>6</sup> The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.<sup>7</sup> The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.<sup>8</sup> Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.<sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.<sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.<sup>11</sup> And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of<sup>[e]</sup> his Spirit who lives in you.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it.

**Introduction**

In Romans 7 the apostle Paul described the battle that raged between his sinful nature called “flesh” left over from his pre-conversion condition, and his spirit, the new spiritual life that the Holy Spirit created in his conversion. He said, **“What I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate I do.”** (Romans 7:15)

Can’t you relate to this? While there are many times that you want to do good and you do it, aren’t there times when you want to do good, you plan to do good, you even promise to do good, but then you don’t? How do you feel then? Like a failure? Worthless? Afraid of God’s condemnation? In doubt about your eternal destiny?

In God’s Word for today – Romans 8:1-12 – God has both good news and godly direction for us. Here God tells us that we are **...Free to Live ... free from God’s condemnation of sinners ... free from control of the sinful nature ... free to live according to the spirit.**

**... free from God’s condemnation of sinners ...**

In the United States at the end of 2020 there were over 2,500 prison inmates condemned to death. Aren’t you glad that you aren’t one of them?

But do you realize that at one time we were all on a death row and condemned to die? In Romans 5 Paul wrote, **“<sup>18</sup> Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men ... <sup>19</sup> For ... through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners...”** Because of man’s fall into sin the destiny that awaited us because of God’s condemnation connected with sin was death and the torments of hell.

In Mark 9 Jesus described this deserved destiny as **“...hell, where the fire never goes out ...where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched (v.44,45).”** In Revelation this destiny is described as the **“lake of burning sulfur where ... they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever (20:10).”**

But the God has good news for us in Romans 8:1: **<sup>1</sup> Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...”** Isn’t that comforting...amazing...wonderful?

How can this be? Paul explains, **“<sup>2</sup> ...Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned**

**sin in the flesh,<sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”**

Paul makes it plain that our freedom from condemnation is not the result of the law, the Ten Commandments. Paul says that they, even though good and godly, were unable ... unable to keep us from falling into sin ...unable to perfectly restrain us from sinning once we became sinful ... unable to save the fallen sinner. Once a person is infected by sin the law becomes ineffective in these things.

But what the law couldn't do, Christ did. He became human but was without sin. Then he took our sin and that of all humankind upon himself becoming the greatest of sinners. As our substitute he put himself in our place and allowed his Father to take out all the wrath, justice, and punishment that we deserve for our sins. The fires of hell that never go out, he suffered. The worm that does not die, he suffered. The torment that never ends, he suffered. As his perfect life fulfilled all the righteous requirements of God's law, his suffering and death on the cross fulfilled the law's righteous requirements that the soul that sins must die (Ez18:20). **“God made him who had no sin, to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2Co5:21).”**

Now those who have faith in Jesus are free from the law with its proclamation of death and condemnation on sinners.

When you fail to do the good things you want or to avoid the bad things you should, and you feel worthy of God's condemnation, that's right, you are. But when Satan or your conscience tries to convince you that you are hopelessly condemned, you aren't. Because of Christ you are free from God's condemnation. You are also...

**... free from control of the sinful nature (the Flesh)...**

The sinful nature is the natural condition of people since the fall of humankind into sin. Paul also refers to it as **“the flesh”** or **“the sinful mind.”** This is our default setting at our conception and birth. This is spiritual condition of the unbeliever today.

Paul describes its bondage. **“<sup>5</sup> Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires;...** “If they seek a relationship with a god, it is on their terms. Their purpose is to satisfy self ... to believe that they are “the shapers of their destinies and the captains of their ships.” Their satisfaction is central and their will supreme.

Paul continues, **“<sup>6</sup> The mind governed by the flesh is death ...”** Not only the person controlled by the sinful nature spiritually dead so that they cannot love and serve God, but they can also only think things that in the eyes of God lead to death and damnation.

**“<sup>7</sup> The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.** The person controlled by the sinful nature is God's enemy and is unable to submit to God and his will.

**<sup>8</sup> Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.** Try as they may to be as moral as can be, the unbeliever cannot please God. In Hebrews 11:6 it is written, **“...Without faith it is impossible to please God.”**

**<sup>9</sup> And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.** This reminds us of what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:3, **“No one can say Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit.”** If we don't have the Holy Spirit, we cannot believe. If we don't believe, we are not part of the body of Christ.

**<sup>12</sup> Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.** As the Holy Spirit has brought us to faith in Jesus and freed us from the condemnation to sin, the Holy Spirit has also freed us from the control of the sinful nature. When we came to faith the sinful nature was put to death and

buried with Christ. But the sinful nature has its own defibrillator that shocks it back to life so that it lurks about in our soul, not in control in the believer but always seeking to gain control.

Paul says we have no obligation to it. But doesn't it lead us to think we do? Doesn't it say to us, "Come on, satisfy me.... Check out that web porn... You haven't been drunk it a long time, it's time ... So you're not married to him or her, you deserve, you need some intimate action. Go for it! ... Why waste your time with God's word and worship, you've got better things to do. Besides, what good has God done for you lately?"

God's point to us is, "As Christians you are not controlled by the sinful nature. Do don't let it get control. It's deadly. It will lead you away from God. It will not bring you anything good."

If you go to your doctor and the doctor tells you have diabetes. Therefore, you need to control it with diet, exercise, and medication, what are you going to do? Control it. The same thing is true with the sinful nature. To do that, let God's Word well in your richly. Crucify your sinful nature by daily repentance. Watch and pray so that you do not fall into temptation. Stand firmly on God's word and resist the devil. You are free from the control of the sinful nature. You are also ...

**... free to live according to the spirit.**

**"<sup>9</sup>You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the S(s)pirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you."** The NIV uses Spirit with a big "S" to refer to the Holy Spirit. In this section that would be the Spirit of God. But as the apostle Paul usually contrasted the sinful nature with the new man or spirit created by the Holy Spirit, Paul is most likely referring to the spirit with the small "s."

In contrast to those controlled by the sinful nature Paul describes those controlled by the spirit created by the Holy Spirit in this way - "<sup>5</sup>...**but those who live in accordance with the S(s)pirit have their minds set on what the S(s)pirit desires.**" Paul is saying that the nature of the Christian, the believer in Jesus, is to care about the will of God. He or she thinks about God's love and then God's commands. "What does God want? That's what I want too."

Paul also emphasized, "<sup>6</sup>... **but the mind controlled by the S(s)pirit is life and peace...**" It's life because the spirit of the believer is alive with faith in and love for God. It lives for God and looks forward to living with God in glory as the spirit trusts will be the case in eternity. Therefore, there is peace – the peace of knowing there is no condemnation, the peace of knowing God is with him or her, the peace of knowing all things will work for good, the peace of having eternal life.

This also includes the peace of knowing that even though we have mortal bodies affected by sin, one day God will change our bodies to be like Jesus glorious body. If our body has died, God will raise and glorify it. "<sup>10</sup> **But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.**" God has given us the righteousness of Christ through faith in him. God has freed us from condemnation and bondage to sin. He has given us eternal life, even the resurrection of the body - "<sup>11</sup> **And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of<sup>el</sup> his Spirit who lives in you.**"

<sup>12</sup> **Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it.**" Our obligation is to live according to the spirit not to earn anything, but because Christ has earned it for us. If you were held hostage in life-threatening circumstances and someone risked all to save you, would you feel thankful and indebted to that person? Would you want to do something to show your gratitude? You would, wouldn't. God has freed us. Now we are free to live for him. Remembering his love for you, take those commandments and let them be your guide in life. Let your spirit be in control. Live according to the spirit. Amen.