

Romans

Bible Study

No Condemnation

Romans 8:1—2

To summarize what we have studied so far in Romans, chapters 1—3 can be characterized as the condemnation of mankind. Chapters 4—5 are about justification. Paul presents the problem then gives us the solution, which is Jesus Christ. Following our justification, we need to understand how to live, which is our sanctification, covered in Chapters 6—8. These last three chapters are specifically written so the believer can live a life pleasing to the Lord and thus able to bear fruit. It's important to keep the big picture in mind so that individual verses are not misinterpreted.

Chapter 6 presented the idea that since we are identified with Christ then we have died with Him. This identification with Him means we have also died to sin. The old nature has been circumcised, cut off, from us so that no longer rules in our lives. We are now able to obey the Lord instead of our flesh by walking in the Spirit.

Chapter 7 continues with the additional information that we are also dead to the Law. Most people, including believers, somehow think that following the Law will please the Lord when, in fact, following the Law is a work done by the flesh. Instead of pleasing the Lord, those who follow the Law are actually displeasing Him. This is because the Law only brings condemnation and death. There is nothing in the Law that can bring justification or righteousness, however, it does a good job of pointing out our failures. The Law is useful only for sinners to point them to Christ (Galatians 3:24; 1 Timothy 1:8—10).

Again, keep in mind that, in general, chapters 6—8 of Romans is written to the believer and concerns our walk in the Spirit. It does not concern our security or our position in Christ. We are absolutely secure in Him whether we live a sanctified life or not.

Condemnation (verse 1)

It helps to understand how the word *condemnation* is used in verse 1. We know that as believers that we will not fall under God's judgment and condemnation, however condemnation can also come from other believers who are working to correct an errant believer. Unbelievers will fall under God's condemnation, while believers can fall under condemnation when they don't live a life according to biblical principles.

The believer not walking in the Spirit is able to fall under condemnation. For those who are walking in the Spirit, it is not possible to be condemned for your actions. However, if you are walking in the flesh, your actions can bring condemnation upon you because you are being judged according to God's word. This type of condemnation is not about our standing, or position in Christ, but is about whether or not the believer is walking in the Spirit. We can judge (condemn) believers who are not living by God's word.

Romans 14:22—23 gives an example of this kind of condemnation. A believer is free to eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols, however, the stronger believer is wrong to eat meat in front of a weaker believer because it may lead the weaker believer, who thinks it is wrong to eat this meat, to sin by eating it. Even though the stronger believer knows it is not a sin, he would fall under condemnation by causing a weaker brother to fall into sin. This believer would be condemned because of his improper walk, not his position in Christ.

Another example of a believer coming under judgement is found in 1 Corinthians 11:32. When believers partook of the Lord's Supper unworthily, they came under condemnation for their actions. Paul said that they were to judge themselves so that others would not judge (condemn) them. In this case condemnation is for the purpose of correcting and restoring a believer.

The second type of condemnation comes from God's judgment against man's sin. We know that even though God is very patient in this dispensation of Grace, that there will come a time when unbelievers will be

condemned by God for their sins. The word *condemnation* is also used in Romans 5:16—18 to show that by the one sin of Adam came judgment unto condemnation. All mankind falls under condemnation because of the sin of one man, but justification and righteousness is available unto all men so that they can be saved from God's condemnation.

Controversy

There is a bit of controversy in verse 1 because of the phrase, “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” This phrase is found in the King James Bible and a few other translations, but is not found in most translations, including the NASB. This is because the earlier (and disputed by certain people) Greek manuscripts do not include this phrase. It is often attributed to copyist error, accidentally copying the same phrase from verse 4 into verse 1.

The problem that arises is that this phrase changes how the verse is to be understood. One interpretation would be speaking of God's judgment while the other would be condemnation by believers. However, neither interpretation changes biblical doctrine, and both interpretations can make biblical sense. The solution, then, would be to see which fits better into the context of what is being said. Is this verse about condemnation of believers or of unbelievers?

Context

Taking a step back to see the big picture, chapter 8 concludes the logical thought presented in chapters 1 through 7 concerning our spiritual life. Previous chapters in Romans presented the problem of mankind, the solution for mankind and the reason believers are able to live a life pleasing to the Lord. Sinful man can believe in Christ and be declared righteous. Those who are righteous are dead in Christ and therefore they are dead to sin and the Law.

As a concluding statement, Chapter 8 begins with a summary statement of chapters 1—5, that believers are not under condemnation by God because of who we are in Christ. Believers have been justified, declared righteous. Chapter 8 continues by summarizing chapters 6 and 7 with the idea that the believer needs to walk in the Spirit. We are able to do this because we have died in Christ. If Romans 8:1 were about the believer not being condemned because he is walking in the Spirit, then Romans 8:1 would be summarizing only chapters 6—7. I believe Chapter 8 is actually drawing together all that Paul wrote previously into one glorious conclusion, therefore the phrase, “Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” does not belong in this verse.

Speaking of condemnation, I know I will be condemned by some good, solid believers who take issue with my stance. The earlier manuscripts that do not contain this phrase are demonized by certain people, making them totally untrustworthy, while the Textus Receptus is accepted as completely accurate. My argument is not one about which manuscript is most accurate, but about what makes the most sense, logically. I am also not berating the King James Bible since it is actually an excellent translation which I use very often. Unfortunately, in this verse, The King James Bible eliminates the idea that we will not see any form of condemnation at the hands of God. Obviously, there are other verses that can be used to emphasize this concept (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2:16; 5:9; Romans 5:9) so there is no change in doctrinal truths.

Free from sin and death (verse 2)

Since we know that we are not condemned, the next logical statement is that we are now free from the law of sin and death. The law of sin and death is superseded by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. We were once living under the law of sin and death as unbelievers, but now we are free from that law having died with Christ. Verse 2 fits perfectly with verse 1 when you understand God will not condemn the believer because of our position in Him.

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